

Chapter 131 - The Vampire's Servant

Dinner was lovely. Sean seemed to be really tired. I could imagine it was a long day for him. He excused himself half way through the meal and told Rosario to stay, he was going to bed.

After Sean left, Cam turned to Rosario.

“What the hell happened to Sean? He smells really upset, but he didn’t smell like that this morning. Just since lunch.” He asked.

“Melissa.” Rosario growled. “That bitch tried to steal Sean from me. She jumped him in the nurse’s office. He’s been like this ever since.”

“Jumped him?” I asked.

“She climbed on him and started trying to get him to have sex with her.” Rosario grumbled.

“Ew, that’s so gross.” Dillon said with a scrunched nose.

“You want me to kick her ass?” Harmony asked.

“Why would she do that?” I questioned.

“Melissa wants what she can’t have. She saw a healthy, happy relationship and wanted it for herself. She decided Sean had to be hers for her to have that relationship. It’s how she is. She doesn’t believe in working hard to get what she wants, just taking it.” Harmony said.

“I managed to stop her and she tried to make it look like Sean had come on to her. If it had been anyone else, he might have gotten in trouble.” Rosario stated with a really angry look on his face. “He was shaking so bad. I wanted him to go home, but he insisted on finishing school. Nothing like that has ever happened to him before. I don’t even know what to do about it.”

“I can talk to him.” I said softly. “Something like that used to happen to me practically once a week. If I can help, I would really like to.”

I pretended not to notice the pitying looks from the people around us. Sean needed help so he could be happy. It wasn’t fair that both of us had our happiness taken away just as we were growing accustomed to it.

“Could you? He likes you a lot and you were the only one he wasn’t wary of today.” Rosario requested.

“Sure. I finished everything on my plate. I can have more later.” I told him and got up from the table.

When I got to Sean’s door, I knocked. I hoped he would see me.

“Who is it?” A muffled voice called out.

“It’s Echo, can I come in?” I asked.

“Yeah.” He replied.

The room was dim. He had a lamp on the bedside table turned on. I approached the bed. Sean was turned away from the door.

“Can I sit with you?” I asked.

“I guess.” Sean mumbled.

I perched on the edge of the bed. I folded my hands in my lap. I didn’t want to touch him and upset him.

“Rosario told us what happened. I wanted to come check on you.” I told him.

“I figured he might. He really doesn’t like keeping secrets.” He sighed.

“This shouldn’t be a secret. We’re more than just the curse team, Sean. We’re friends.” I said.

“Are you here to tell me I’m safe and I don’t have to be like this?” He scoffed.

“Do you feel unsafe? There are only five women in the house and you know none of us would ever do that to you. You can be how ever you want to be. I’m not here to police your behavior.” I replied.

“Then why are you here?”

“I’m here so you know you can talk to me. Once a week, I used to feed vampires. They would touch me and tell me things they wanted to do to me. I felt so dirty and disgusting. I can imagine that’s how you feel.” I told him.

“How did you get over it? I don’t want to feel like this.” Sean sighed and turned to me.

“I fell in love with someone who could protect me. The first week I was here, I locked my bedroom door. I trusted Victor in a lot of things, but I was still afraid. I was afraid he would try

to do something to me. But, I found myself falling in love with him little by little. I felt safe with him, and I knew he would protect me.” I explained.

“It’s different for me. I’m a guy. I’m not supposed to be like this.” He said softly.

“Says who? She treated you in a way you had never been treated before. It was a violation. You were shaken in every sense. No one can blame you for that. Rosario doesn’t. He wants you to be okay because he loves you, not because you should be. Don’t let this stop you from enjoying your life with us. Don’t let Melissa win.” I pled.

He reached out his hand to me. I accepted it and squeezed it tightly. Sean smiled a little.

“She does win if I let this affect me. I don’t know what to do, though.”

“Just let Rosario take care of you and know that you are safe here. Heal at your own pace and train to get stronger. I feel safer because I know I can take care of myself if I have to.” I told him.

“I’ll do that. Thanks, Echo. I’m glad I have you.”

“You can talk to me any time, Sean. I’m your friend. I’m your family.” I winked.

“My favorite cousin by far.” He chuckled.

“I’ll let you rest. We have training in the morning.” I said, standing and releasing his hand.

I left the room with a wave. Rosario was standing in the hall, looking worried. I smiled at him.

“How is he?” Rosario asked.

“I think he needs a little time and a lot of cuddles. He’ll be fine. I’m sure of it.” I promised.

“Thanks for talking to him, Echo.”

“No problem, Rosario. How are you doing? This can’t be easy for you.” I said, putting my hand on his shoulder.

“I just can’t believe she would do something like that to him. Sean is so good and so sweet. I wanted to kill her.” He growled a little.

“I think I would feel the same if I caught a woman doing that to Gray or Victor. Are you going to be okay?” I asked.

“Kind of have to be. Sean needs me.” Rosario said.

“You don’t have to be. You can be vulnerable with Sean. He’s your true mate. You can hold each other and comfort each other. You can let him know how much you wished he hadn’t gone

through it and how you intend to be there for him to make sure it never happens again. Just love him, Rosario. And let him love you. You've been hurt so much in your life that you're missing the best parts of it." I insisted.

He chuckled. "You're going to be an awesome mom someday. That sounded just like something my mom would've said."

"I can only hope my children are happy and healthy when they do come along. For now, I think I'll stick to taking care of my friends." I replied with a blush.

"It's official, though. You're the mom friend. The one who takes care of everyone. Even the plants know the goodness of your heart." Rosario smiled.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"They sing when you're near them. My vines itch to come out and embrace you. The plant side of me wants to be near you. I think that's why people are drawn to you. They can feel the way you care."

"I think I'll turn in a little early. I'm not feeling great today." I sighed and patted his shoulder.

"Good night." He beamed and headed for the stairs.

I went to my room and locked the door. I needed to get some sleep. There was still so much to do.

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[Gray]

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When I got done with work, I really wanted to get home. The scent of Echo's desire was, somehow, still surrounding me. It was like I would catch little whiffs of it from time to time. It made working very difficult.

I parked my truck in its normal spot and grabbed my work clothes. I'd gotten someone to cover my Friday shift. I wanted to focus on the curse over the weekend and start working right after school tomorrow.

Entering the house, it was fairly quiet. Being eleven-thirty, I wasn't entirely surprised. Val was coming out of the hallway as I mounted the stairs.

"Gray. I need to talk to you." He said.

"Can it wait? I just got off work and wanted to shower." I sighed.

What I really wanted was to go see if Echo was up. I knew she was close to cracking. Now that Victor was feeling normal again, it would be alright. I couldn't take much more being without her.

"Please. It's important." Val insisted.

I turned around and got off the stairs, meeting him in the middle of the entryway. Val wasn't as broad as me, but he was as tall and was well built, for a human. I'd heard from Cam what a strong fighter he was, almost like it was second nature to him.

Male dhampyrs were all fighters, according to Trent and Victor. I certainly didn't want to test his skills. Especially since he had magic on his side.

"What's up?" I asked.

"Look, I know the type of relationship you and Victor have with my sister. Harmony told me when she was defending staying out all night after prom with Cam. You're her mates, her husbands... I guess. But, I want to ask you to not sleep with my little sister while I'm living here. I already talked to Victor and he said she decided she wouldn't sleep with either of you until the curse was broken, but I've seen you touching her and whispering things in her ear. I don't want you to do that anymore." He told me.

Rex was angry. He wanted her as much as I did and he didn't like having someone tell him not to. I managed to keep my cool.

"Werewolves are very physical beings when it comes to our mates. Right now, Victor is back to himself. Echo needs us as much as we need her. I was just trying to get her to take what she needs. You don't understand." I sighed.

"I do understand that my sister made a decision which was important to her. You have no right to make her doubt it. If you care about Echo, you'll stop trying to seduce her. God, just saying that grosses me out. Stop trying to fuck my sister, Gray. I tried asking, but now I'm telling you. Back the fuck off." Val growled.

I squared my shoulders and snarled a little. Rex was getting harder to hold back as I was getting angry. I didn't want to fuck Echo. I wanted to make love to her delicious little body and give her everything she's been craving since giving us up.

He met my eyes with a look of defiance. I could see the challenge in them and I was up for it. I tossed my work clothes onto one of the tables along the wall.

"Grayson. Valor. Stop this now." Victor ordered, walking into the room.

Rex growled at Victor. He raised his eyebrow in an unamused way. I didn't care. I would fight for what I wanted, and I wanted Echo.

“Valor. Go to bed. I’ll finish this conversation with Grayson in my office.” Victor said.

“I want to be there to hear him promise he won’t touch her.” Val replied, glaring at me.

“That’s never going to happen.” I responded with a glare of my own.

“Gray, Val’s going to be your brother in a little over a month. Do you really want to start that relationship with a brawl?” Talia asked.

I hadn’t seen her come in. Damn. That was part of my training. I was supposed to pay attention to everything. At least I knew I was safe here and they wouldn’t attack me. I’d do better next time.

“Maybe I do.” I snarled.

“I’d be more than happy to kick your furry ass.” Val growled.

“The two of you need to calm down before I throw you both in the cells.” Victor stated firmly.

Moving so I could keep them both in sight, I prepared to have to fight Victor and Val. I’d show them that they couldn’t tell me what to do with my own mate. I could feel Rex starting to take over.

“I’m sure Echo will enjoy waking up to find the three men she loves fighting. That won’t make her feel terrible at all. Should I go wake her now so she can see how it starts, or did you three just want to wait so she can see the bloody mess it will become?” Talia asked.

Guilt washed over me. Echo would be heartbroken if the three of us were fighting. She never wanted anyone to fight or be unhappy. I pulled Rex back, properly chastised. Val had the same guilty look on his face.

“I just miss her.” I murmured. “I miss the way she sighs. I miss the sound of her breathing while she sleeps next to me. I miss the feeling of sleeping with her in my arms and waking up to her smile. It’s not fucking, Val. It’s all the little things that have nothing to do with sex. All the ways she makes me feel whole.”

“As your future brother, I’m asking you, please stop trying to seduce my sister. You can have the little things. If Victor and Echo are okay with it, you can sleep next to her while he’s in his right mind. Just don’t try to... you know... do it with her.” Val replied.

“There may not be a choice in the matter. Which you would’ve known if you were listening to me, Valor.” Victor said.

“What do you mean? You said Echo wasn’t going to have sex with either of you.” Val questioned.

“I think Echo’s experiencing heat. Where fertile female wolves crave their mates.” Victor told us.

“Harmony hasn’t had that.” Val countered.

“Harmony’s body is still becoming a werewolf. She’s still experiencing a lot of things like a human would. Missy said it could take another month before she’s fully wolf.” I told him. “Why do you think Echo’s in heat?”

“I noticed a rise in her temperature and the way she was kissing me this afternoon was more persistent than it has been in a while. She smelled aroused in a way that she never has before. It was clinging to her skin.” Victor explained.

Talia started laughing. We turned to look at her and she started laughing harder. This was serious. If Echo was going into heat and the other Victor came back, it could be bad.

“That’s what you’ve been worrying about?!?” She nearly fell over with laughter.

Victor looked confused for a moment, but regained his composure, crossing his arms and waiting for her to be finished. I looked at Val, who shrugged. Finn came into the entryway, probably drawn by the sound of Talia’s laughter. When she finally calmed down, Talia wiped her eyes and started to speak.

“Echo can’t go into heat. She’s an immature dhampyr. They aren’t fertile until they’re nearly nineteen. Harmony is probably the same. We should find out if she’s ever menstruated. I wouldn’t be surprised if she hasn’t.” Talia chuckled. “I can’t believe you thought Echo was wolf enough for heat. She’s just dealing with two attractive mates who want to be with her and aren’t shy about showing their interest.”

Val looked disturbed by that. I was glad Echo wasn’t going through heat. I wasn’t prepared for having to avoid her. She wanted her first baby to be Victor’s and I supported that decision. Then something struck me.

“So.... You mean, we didn’t have to wear condoms when we were with her?” I asked.

“Dear lord, Gray! I’m in the fucking room here! Don’t talk about that shit when I’m right, fucking, here!” Val shouted, covering his ears.

I blushed. Victor started chuckling. Of course he would find this funny. He probably already figured it out and was getting a kick from me having to ask.

“Teens, go to bed. Victor, back to your office. You have work to do. Finn, I want you to go hunt more leads. You’re spending entirely too much time here.” Talia directed.

There was no way I was going to fight her. She kicks my ass every morning without even trying. I grabbed my clothes from the nearby table and headed up to my room. Val was roomed right across from me, so I didn't stop at Echo's room like I wanted to.

With a heavy heart, and more questions than answers, I went to my room and closed the door. I needed a long shower. I was still keyed up from nearly fighting Val and Victor. At least one thing was resolved. I wouldn't be pressuring Echo anymore. I didn't want her to suffer.

At His Mercy

Chapter 132 - The Vampire's Servant

[Rosario]

I woke to find Sean curled up on my chest. I reached over to turn on the bedside lamp. The dark tint on the windows in here made it too dark to see much without a light and I wanted to see his face.

He gripped me in his sleep, trying to keep me close. It was a little bit of a struggle, but I managed to get the light on without waking him. He had no reaction to the added light. My poor mate was still exhausted.

Gently, I traced lines connecting the freckles on his nose and cheeks. I loved each and every one of them. He scrunched his nose up and rubbed his face against my chest.

"That tickles." Sean whispered.

"I couldn't resist. Did you sleep well?" I asked.

"My legs are stiff and sore." He groaned, rolling off of me.

"Lay on your stomach. I'll give you a massage." I told him.

"No funny stuff. I'm not up for sex today." Sean replied.

"As much as that would normally sadden me, I only want to make you feel better. I don't want sex every time I touch you, Sean. Let me rub your legs, babe."

"O...okay." He said and laid on his stomach.

I started rubbing his ankles and calves. Sean groaned enticingly as I made my way up to his thighs and ending at his ass. Sean had a sexy ass. I loved the feeling of his body under my hands.

He moaned as I worked my hands over his hips, to his lower back and down again. I could feel the tension and stiffness start to leave Sean's muscles. It felt good to be relieving some of his pain. It made me feel capable.

When I was done, I caressed his butt and got off the bed. I needed to hide the fact that I was hard as a rock. The mix of his moans and touching his body had aroused me.

"Where are you going?" Sean asked.

"Just to the bathroom. We should get ready for training. We don't want to be late. Get dressed while I'm in the bathroom. I'll be out in a couple minutes." I replied.

"Oh.... Okay." He said softly.

I could hear the disappointment in his voice. I couldn't stand it. I turned around and went back to him. Sean was sitting on the side of the bed. His eyes widened as he scanned over my body, stopping at my raging erection.

"I'm sorry, Sean. Touching you did this to me and you said you didn't want sex today, so I was just heading off to take care of it." I reached out for his hand and he grasped mine tightly.

"Just a little might be okay." Sean whispered and pulled me closer, his hands going to the waist of my pajama bottoms.

"Babe, I don't want you to feel pressured just because I'm hard." I insisted.

"I don't feel pressured, Rosario. I want to do this because you did massage me without an ulterior motive. Think of it as my thank you for keeping your word." He murmured as he pulled down my pants and came face to face with my erection.

His hands wrapped around me and he urged me forward until I was standing between his legs and his mouth was descending on my cock. I gasped a little at the feeling of entering his mouth.

Sean's hands and mouth worked me diligently. I was straining, trying to stop myself from cumming before I really got a chance to enjoy it. Sean was still learning, but he was managing to do all the things I enjoyed. His tongue traced over my head and swirled around the tip while he stroked me with his hands.

I wrapped my fingers in his short hair and thrust a little. Sean moaned and picked up his pace. I let my vines loose and retracted their thorns. I wanted to introduce Sean to the pleasures of vine play.

Two of my vines slid down his body to manipulate his nipples, while the other two slipped into his pants and wrapped around his burgeoning erection. Sean pulled away from me and looked down before turning his face up to look at me.

“What are you doing?” He gasped and groaned as my vines started stroking him.

“My vines can be used for more than just fighting.” I murmured. “Let me make you feel as good as you make me feel, my love. You’re just so perfect, I want to touch you with every part of me.”

Sean whimpered as one of my vines started teasing at his balls. I slid a hand down to caress his face. All of his reactions were just perfect. He seemed to forget what he was supposed to be doing.

I chuckled as he writhed helplessly. My vines continued their sensual assault on him. That seemed to snap him out of his touch induced trance.

He slid me back into his mouth and started stroking and sucking vigorously. Trying to control so many limbs at once was difficult without the distraction of what he was doing to me. It was wonderful training.

The sounds coming from him were enticing as hell. I wanted to lay him back and plow into him. I thrust into his mouth and Sean moved one of his hands, making it easier for him to take more of me, and started cupping my balls.

Every sensation, the feeling of him in my vines, his mouth on me, his hand stroking me while the other massaged my balls, all of it raised me quickly to my climax. I threw my head back as I felt my seed spill into Sean’s precious mouth. I could feel his jaw and throat working to swallow everything I gave him.

I withdrew and sank to my knees, kissing him deeply before trailing kisses down his chin, neck and chest. My goal was in sight. I really would make him feel as good as he made me feel.

As I pulled him free of his pants, I released him from my vine and took him in my hand. I let my vine go to trace the sensitive parts of his neck while I finished him off with my hands and mouth.

While I sunk my mouth down on him, I focused on pleasuring him. He was my darling true mate and I couldn’t imagine anything more perfect than spending the morning making him moan.

The feeling of Sean’s fingers on the vine that was caressing his neck made me jump a little. When he’d touched my vine the other day I’d loved it. He wasn’t afraid of them even with my thorns out.

“Oh, Rosario. That feels amazing.” Sean sighed.

His hand closed around my vine and he brought it to his mouth and kissed it. I shuddered with pleasure. They had never been more sensitive than when they were touching his body.

I groaned as he slipped it past his gorgeous lips and began teasing it with his tongue. I was thrilled that he was so comfortable with my vines. It solidified the fact that he was my true mate. He accepted all of me, even the weird parts.

Moving my hand from him, I sunk down and took him into my throat before pulling back again. I felt him swell and I knew he was close. I ran my tongue over him and sucked him down again.

Sean groaned and started pulsing in my mouth. The heat of his cum matched the heat of my mouth. I tasted the salty, starchy flavor of him and started swallowing. Slowly, I pulled my mouth from him, making sure he was totally emptied.

My vines slowly started pulling back from his body. I looked up at his face and it was full of love and wonder. I tucked him back into his pants and sat back on my heels. He grasped the vine that had been in his mouth and stroked his hands over it.

“Do you think I’ll have vines, too?” He asked.

“It would depend on what type of fae your family line came from. It’s something to do with plants, judging from the abilities Echo, Val, and Harmony have. You might have vines, you might have wings, you might have leaves that grow in your hair. There are a lot of different options.” I replied.

“We should get ready for training. I think we’re late.” Sean smiled a little.

“Shit. Come on, babe. I don’t care what they do to me, but I don’t want them to punish you for being late.” I insisted and stood, pulling him up and taking him to the closet to change.

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We made it to the training spot a few minutes later. Everyone was gone except for Dillon. He had a smile on his face as we approached.

“Sorry we’re late. It was my fault.” I told him.

“We already figured you guys would either be late or skip altogether. After what Sean went through, we weren’t going to penalize you. Since I’m having Echo train with vampires now, I’ll be training Sean. You’re way behind everyone and I want to try to get you trained up as well as I can in the time we have. Rosario, why don’t you go catch up to the wolves? I’ll stay here and start Sean’s training.” Dillon said.

I kissed Sean briefly and ran to catch up with them. It was a good training session. I was glad to see my boyfriend training without getting bruised up like he did yesterday.

We cleaned up and got ready for the last full day of school. I had a presentation in my English class, but otherwise it was slated to be a chill day. Everyone was excited to be able to focus on the curse. None of us were particularly worried about tests.

Echo looked more tired than she should have for a person who went to bed as early as she did. Victor watched her intently from the head of the table. Gray was seated near him. It looked like they were trying to give her space.

Some part of me was glad I didn't have to deal with that in my own relationship, but I was sad for her. Mom liked her, that was rare. Mom was usually very closed off to strangers. Thinking of my mom reminded me that I had to go pick up my other bag from her house.

"After school today, I'm going to my mom's house. I need to get my other bag and update her on how the curse is going." I announced before we were finished with breakfast.

"Will your father be there?" Sean asked stiffly.

"He shouldn't be. Dad doesn't hang out around the house much. He's been trying to get mom to move into the forest for years. He hates the human world." I told him.

"I don't like the idea of him potentially coming while you're getting your things." He responded. "I'm going with you."

"Sean... That's not a great idea, babe. I love you and I don't want you to get caught up in whatever could happen."

"I know the rules for dealing with fae, Rosario. I want to be able to pull you out of there if something happens." Sean insisted.

"I don't like it, either." Echo said. "Call me if you need to leave and he won't let you. If you focus your thoughts on me, you should be able to contact me. I'll come take you away and we can go back later with Talia to get your car."

"Echo's right. Your father is a danger to you. Take Sean with you and call Echo if you need help. I'll sleep earlier in the day so I can come with her if you need me." Talia stated with a nod.

There was no talking them out of this. I could hear the resolve in their words. I sighed and accepted it.

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The bell rang indicating the end of the school day. It had been fairly uneventful. Harmony used her influence to get rumors about Melissa going. She told people that Melissa had come on to Sean and he turned her down hard.

When she walked into the cafeteria, the room filled with whispers and people pointing at her. That hadn't stopped Melissa from coming to our table and making sure we knew she was throwing a party and wanted all of us to come.

We told her that we wouldn't, but that didn't seem to stop her from acting as if we said yes. I wanted to punch the bitch. I didn't care if I shouldn't hit girls because I'm a man. The way Sean shut down when she approached enraged me.

The rest of the day, I'd thought of ways I'd hurt her if she ever touched my mate again. Fuck it, I'd do the time for the beating I'd give her. I only calmed down when I saw Sean standing next to my car at the end of the day.

I picked up my pace and hurried to him, wrapping my arms around his neck and pulling him into a deep and passionate kiss. I felt him put a hand at the small of my back and pull me to him more tightly.

He may be a gentleman, but I wasn't. I pushed him against the car and rubbed myself against him. Sean groaned and pulled me tighter against him.

"Get a room!" Someone shouted and a few people laughed.

Pulling back, I smiled at Sean. "That sounds like a great idea. Let's go home. I can get my bag tomorrow."

"No. We're going to go get your bag, then we can go home and do whatever you want." He said.

"Babe. It's not that important right now." I sighed.

"It was important enough for you to mention it this morning. Come on. Unless there's a reason you don't want to take me home." Sean questioned.

"No. There's no reason you shouldn't go. I would just rather if we could go home. Get in. We'll take care of this real quick and then we can go home and I'll show you what else I can do with my vines." I winked.

"Can't wait, babe." He chuckled.

We got in the car and headed to my mom's house. Sean talked about game night for tomorrow. I was excited about it. He was so confident and in control when he was running a game. It was terribly sexy.

A few minutes later, I pulled into the driveway at my mom's house. I expected that she was home. Mom had a lot of money from inheritances and investments. She was able to spend her time with plants all day.

When we reached the door, I didn't even have time to knock. Mom threw open the door and pulled me into a hug. She squeezed me so tight, you would think I had been gone longer than a couple days.

"Oh! Rio! I'm sorry. Your injuries. Are you alright?" Mom asked, holding me at arm's distance and caressing my face gently. "My poor child."

"I'm alright, Mom. Echo healed me. We're just here to get my bag." I explained.

“We?” She asked and looked behind me. “Oh! Sean, I didn’t see you there. Come in. I want Rio out of his glamour.”

Mom moved out of the way and ushered us into the house. I let my glamour fade. Mom always preferred to see the real me. She said I was the most handsome elf in the region. I think it was just one of those mom things. Even if I were ugly she would probably say that.

“I’m gonna go get my bag and make sure I have everything I wanted. Sean, will you stay here with my mom?” I asked.

“Sure. I’ll be right here when you’re ready to go.” He smiled.

“Come sit with me, Sean. I should get to know you if you’re going to be my son-in-law. Rio says he’s pretty sure you’re his true mate. If that’s true, we will have to look into changing you so the two of you can be together for as long as possible.” Mom said, pulling Sean to the couches in the living room.

I smiled and waved as he looked at me a little helplessly. He was so cute. Turning, I went to my room. I wanted to get out of here before dad’s spies reported back to him.

Oath Breaker

Chapter 133 - The Vampire's Servant

My bag was mostly packed and still on my bed. I rushed around my room, packing things in the bag, pulling out a small duffel for a few other things. I would carry the clipping of my grandfather. He died before I was born and it was the only thing I had of him.

I was betting Sean would love hearing the stories of my grandfather. I smiled and wondered what sort of fae Sean would be. I could imagine him with the delicate wings of a pixie. It would suit his thinner frame. The leaves in his hair like a nymph would be gorgeous, too.

He reacted perfectly to my vines this morning. I could imagine wrapping them around his wrists and thighs, whipping them lightly along his tight little ass. I shivered and felt my dick twitch at the idea of his moans while I gave him a gentle lashing. This morning had given me hope that he would be into the same things I was.

Once I had everything packed up, I headed back to the living room. Everything was coming together. I couldn’t wait to go home and get my things put away. Maybe I could take Sean out to that little clearing I saw while running this morning. It was off the beaten track a bit and far enough from the perimeter to be out of the way of the patrolling wolves.

The glimpses I'd seen of it and what the trees told me of it made it seem perfect for some public-private time. I'd been turned on at the idea of being caught in the library. It was even more tantalizing when it really happened. Sean had been a little embarrassed, but the way he kissed me when we got back to our room made me think he liked it too.

I walked into the living room and froze. Either I spent too long packing, or my father's spies were faster than I remembered. He was standing in the living room, staring at my boyfriend sitting on the couch.

"What did you say to me?" My father growled.

"I said, you need to leave." Sean replied standing and glaring at my father.

"Maeve, why does this human think he has the right to order me around in my own lands?" He scoffed.

"I told you, Hollis. I have company and you were not invited. These are my lands. You rule the forest and our village there. I rule the human lands." Mom insisted.

"I am your husband. I should be able to come see my wife whenever I want."

"You asked where Rosario was. He's not your wife. You came here to hurt him again and I won't allow it." Sean said firmly.

Seeing my fragile human mate standing up to my father made my heart flip and my stomach sink at the same time. It was a terribly irritating feeling. I set my things down and entered the living room entirely.

"There he is. Tired of hiding in the shadows, boy?" My father scowled.

"I wasn't hiding. I was assessing the situation. You are welcome to stay and visit with my mother. Sean, come with me. We'll get my things and leave. Thank you for having us, mom." I said politely and crossed to Sean.

He took my outstretched hand and held it in his. I had him now. I felt he was safer now than he'd been a few moments ago. I could protect him.

I turned my back on my father. Never a safe idea, but I wanted to show him that I valued Sean in this interaction, not him. I caressed Sean's face and pulled him toward where I left my things.

"What, precisely, is going on here? Who is this human, Maeve?" He questioned in sylvan.

"This is Sean Flowers. He's Rosario's boyfriend." Mom answered, also in sylvan.

With a shocked expression, I turned back to her. How dare she call him my boyfriend and not my mate! My father looked at Sean disdainfully.

“You let him date a human, Maeve? I knew I shouldn’t have let you raise him! He’s weak! He’s been weak since he was a child and he’s grown into a weak man! How could you let this happen?” My father shouted.

“He is not weak! I let our son grow naturally, just like our other children. He’s not weak because he loves a human. If you would stop holding him up against his sister and brothers, you’d see that Rosario’s a very strong man and a good leader.” Mom told him.

Sean was searching my face. He got close to me.

“What are they saying?” Sean asked. “You look upset.”

“Same argument they always have. Come on.” I said and turned back toward the hall.

I didn’t need to hear this again. I knew he was disappointed in me. I knew I wasn’t good enough in the eyes of ‘King Hollis’. I didn’t need him. I had Sean and I had friends who thought I was amazing.

Sean stopped moving. I turned back to look at him. He had a worried look on his face. I returned to where he was and looked into his eyes. Sean stepped forward and raised his hand to my cheek.

Closing my eyes, I savored the feeling of his caress. His hand moved past my cheek and traced along the outer edge of my ear. My eyes flew open and I stared at him as he stroked my ear. I couldn’t contain the groan that built up inside me.

“Now that I’ve gotten you out of your head, please tell me what’s going on.” Sean murmured as his fingers traversed the length of my pointed ears.

“Dear goddess. Do you see what that human is doing to your son in the middle of the fucking living room?! How can you allow disgusting displays like that?!” My father snarled.

“If he wanted to take down Rosario’s pants and fellate him right here, then he would be in his rights to. Sean is not just Rosario’s boyfriend, he’s his mate. I will not come between true mates. They are my guests and they are restraining themselves as much as possible.” Mom responded.

“Enough.” I said, in English. “That’s enough. We’re taking my things and going. I don’t care if you think I’m weak. I don’t care if you’re disappointed in me. You will not talk about my true mate like he is an animal.”

Sean looked shocked. His hand dropped from where it was teasing my ear. I missed the feeling of his fingers on my sensitive ears. I’d see if he’d be up for rubbing them later.

“Come on, babe. Let’s go home.” I whispered with a wink.

He blushed a little and nodded. We grabbed my things and I went to my mother to give her a kiss before I left. My father stood to the side, glaring at me. I gave him a little bow. It was only proper.

As I turned back to Sean, I saw a concerned look in his eyes. He set the cutting of my grandfather down, rushed over to me, grabbed my shirt and spun me onto the couch. I landed in just enough time to see my father's vines strike Sean's back.

Sean didn't cry out. He didn't fall. My father had struck a blow meant for a fae and my human mate had taken it, full force, on his back.

I saw red. My anger overwhelmed me. I jumped to my feet and lunged at my father. Sean grabbed me and held me back. I was shocked that he didn't want me to fight for him.

"Queen Maeve. I asked you if it was safe for me to be here and you vowed that no harm would come to me as your guest." Sean said in a low tone.

My mother covered her mouth with her hands. I looked at him. He was really going to use this to leverage something?

"Hollis. How could you? Your anger has made me an oath breaker." She whispered in sylvan.

"He wasn't supposed to get in the way. It wasn't me, but him that made you an oath breaker." My father insisted.

"You had time to pull back. You chose to keep going when you saw him move Rosario from your path. You stupid stubborn ass!" Mom growled.

"After everything I've done for our people. After everything I've given up. None of this would have happened if you had come back to the village like I told you to all those years ago." He replied.

"You haven't done anything but stagnate! You preach tradition and hide away!" I shouted in sylvan.

"If that fucking vampire hadn't killed himself, none of this would have happened. You wouldn't be mated to a human. You wouldn't be weak. And your mother wouldn't be bound to grant a boon to your pathetic human." My father snarled.

"He's not pathetic! He took that hit and barely flinched. He's more of a man than you! You attack the backs of others, too scared to face them!" I yelled. "You've drawn the blood of my mate. I could kill you for that!"

"You could try, boy." He glowered.

I wanted to, but Sean's hand gripping my shirt kept me from attacking. I turned to him and saw the blood coming from the gashes on his back. If I couldn't attack him, I knew who could.

With every bit of focus I had, I tried to contact Echo. I told her to bring Talia to my mother's house. I needed Echo to heal Sean. He was losing a lot of blood.

"Is everyone done yelling?" Sean asked.

"I'm sorry, baby. I was so mad I forgot to speak English. We were just yelling at him for hurting you." I murmured and tucked some of his hair behind his ear. "Do you need to lean on me? Echo will be here soon. She'll heal you."

"I'm fine. If my game is correct, I am owed a favor from your mother because I was hurt." He said softly.

"That's true. It's a requirement that she perform a boon to you since she broke her oath." I answered.

"What do you require to relieve me of my debt to you, Sean." Mom asked.

"Make me a fae. As soon as I'm healed, I want to become a fae." Sean insisted.

"I thought we would wait until the curse was broken." I said.

"No. I want it now. His problem with me is that I'm human. He had no other issues that I understood. You were all speaking a lot faster than I'm used to." He chuckled.

"You understand Sylvan?" My mother asked.

"A little. Tolkien's elvish is similar. There were some words I didn't quite understand." Sean said.

I managed to stop myself from hugging him. He was so cute and geeky. I couldn't believe he actually understood some of my native language. I would relish teaching him more.

"Even if you're turned fae, I'll never accept you." My father growled in English.

"Good, because I don't need the acceptance of asshats with anger issues." Sean scoffed. "You can go fuck yourself, King. You're not worth my time, or Rosario's."

My father scowled, but his face entirely changed when Echo appeared. She had Talia with her, like I'd asked. My mom looked terrified.

"I-I didn't invite you in. You can't be here." She insisted, her voice quivering.

“I am the Traveler. I can go anywhere I desire, anytime I desire. Who has harmed this child? I smell his blood.” Talia snarled.

“It was my father... again.” I answered.

To his credit, my father had the sense to look scared in the face of the infamous Traveler. Echo made her way over to Sean, tore his shirt in half, and started pulling his skin together while focusing on the cuts. I watched her healing abilities start to work on him. I was sure the four cuts would be less work for her than the dozens I had on Wednesday.

“You seem to enjoy harming children, elf. Maybe I should see how much you enjoy being harmed by an elder against whom you have no defense.” Talia said with a deadly expression on her face.

“I was merely disciplining my child. Like any parent would.” My father replied in a less than confident tone.

“It seems to me that you weren’t disciplined properly when you were young, King Hollis.” She smiled.

“H-how did you know my name?” He asked.

“I am one of the oldest beings on earth. I know everything. Like how you helped Fenton Aimes with his spell on the fae.” Talia smirked.

I stared at my father as he paled. My mother turned to him enraged.

“You did what?!? Hollis! How could you? Our people have suffered! You let our people suffer. Why did you do this? What were you thinking?” Mom pressed.

“I was thinking our people were safer in our village than in this neighborhood in the land of humans. I was right. You can’t see that, but it’s true. I did what was right for our people.” He insisted.

“You hurt our people! I cannot believe you! How did you find this out, Traveler?” She asked.

“He just told me. I was thinking on what Lila said about something of the fae being needed for the spell that took away your glamour. It wouldn’t have been some lower level fae, but one of the ruling family that could affect all of you. I thought, maybe Fenton stole a hair or something, but decided to press my luck with the guess that the king chose to help.” Talia explained.

“What else did you help him with?” My mother snarled at my father.

“I don’t have to answer these questions.” He replied with a glare.

“Yes, you do.” Talia said coolly. “Or I shall hunt you down and drain you for your part in harming, not only my childe, but your own.”

“You’d have to find me first.” My father scoffed.

“That would be the fun part.” She laughed. “And, when I did, I would subject you to horrors far beyond your imagining. You see, I love my childe and his life is in jeopardy. If you have something that could help save him, I would torture you until I had all the answers. Or, you could answer now and be spared my wrath. Think quickly, though. I am very old and have grown impatient over the years.”

My father looked around the room. He eyed the doors as if he were trying to assess his options for flight. I knew Talia was much faster than my father, he wouldn’t stand a chance.

“All done.” Echo said with a heavy breath.

I turned to see what she had done. Sean’s skin was healed, but there were thin, shiny scars on his back. She looked at me.

“I couldn’t get rid of the scars. I’m sorry.” She murmured.

“It doesn’t matter. It only matters that you healed him. He doesn’t have to be in pain. Thank you, Echo.” I replied.

“Thank you, Echo.” Sean said.

“It’s what I’m here for. Sit down and rest for a while. We need to hear what King Hollis did, so we can take the information back to the team.” Echo told us, and guided Sean back to the couch.

I sat next to him and put my arm around him. My mother sat in an armchair. My father looked around and sighed.

“Fenton Aimes approached me. He knew I didn’t like my people living with the humans. He told me Maeve had known about the affair his daughter was having with the vampire and chose not to tell him.”

“It was none of my business and I don’t like getting involved in the relationships and lives of vampires!” Mom said.

“It doesn’t matter. I wanted you back in the village, where you belonged. I wanted our people safe and he told me about the curse he planned to lay upon our people. I liked the idea of no one being able to hide, because that meant they would have to stay in the village to be safe.” My father admitted. “I helped gather ingredients he needed and gave him one of my hairs to use in the spell that countered our glamour.”

For most of my life, my father had seemed like an infallible, unshakable, god-like man. I'd actually tried my hardest to make him proud of me for most of my life. All this time, he was the one who caused the greatest hardship for our people. He didn't even see it as a mistake. He thought he was in the right.

I would never forgive him for the hardships he put our people through. I silently vowed to be a better king than he was. I would let our people grow how they wanted to. I would never try to parent them like he did.

A Boon

Chapter 134 - The Vampire's Servant

"Where is the spell buried?" Talia asked.

"I don't know." My father replied.

"Do not lie to me, elf. I have no tolerance for it." She growled.

He looked around, but would find no help here. None of us were on his side. He was a traitor to our people.

"Fine. It's in the park at the center of the neighborhood." He answered.

"Take me there. We will bring the spell back and I will contact a witch to find out how to destroy it. You had best not be playing me false. You really wouldn't like me when I'm angry." Talia warned.

My father headed toward the front door. Talia followed after him. I couldn't believe that he'd helped with the curse. He couldn't remain king.

"Mother. He needs to be deposed." I said once the door closed.

"I will talk with your sister. It's time for her to step up if he's gone to these lengths to harm our people. Your father isn't the man I fell in love with anymore. I've been seeing these changes over the last two hundred years. I'm so sorry Rosario. I thought he would go back to how he was before if I had another baby. It was stupid." Mom sighed.

"It wasn't stupid, mom. You were hoping to have your mate back. I understand. It was his own stubbornness that did this. I'm glad I'm here for you while you're dealing with this. The curse might have stayed if I didn't exist." I told her.

“We still have to talk about my favor. I’m healed now. I want to become a fae.” Sean said.

“Sean?” Echo whispered. “Are you sure?”

“Yes. I’m Rosario’s true mate. I want to be by his side forever. Being fae will ensure that. I don’t want to wait. You shouldn’t wait with Victor and Gray either. I’ve heard that you’re waiting for school to be over to get marked by them. We can have Harmony help with clothes and makeup. We can hide their marks. You should do it as soon as you can.” Sean urged.

I looked to Echo. She seemed sad. I understood. She was dealing with a lot. Being unmarked by her mates wasn’t what she wanted. I knew there was no hiding a wolf’s mark. It would make her a target for hunters.

“Sean. Don’t pressure her. We all do things in our own time.” I whispered.

“Fine. I will grant you this boon in return for my debt being wiped clean. I’ll be right back.” Mom said and got up to go to the kitchen.

Sean took off the remains of his shirt. I ran to my room to get him one of mine. I didn’t like him being bare chested in front of so many people. I was feeling a little possessive.

When I returned to the living room, Sean and Echo were talking quietly. I smiled at them. They really were very close. You could see how much they cared for each other.

After a few more minutes, mom came in holding a small cake. She handed it to Sean. He looked at the little pastry curiously.

“The magic works better with digestion. We found long ago that ale or cakes make the best vessel for the magic. Once you do this, there’s no going back. Do you understand, Sean?” Mom asked.

“I understand, Queen Maeve. I appreciate this so much. I know I’ll be stronger once I’m fae. Then I can protect Rosario.” Sean grinned.

“You protected me without being fae, Sean. You didn’t need to, but you took my father’s attack for me.” I said.

“I did need to. I told you I wouldn’t let him hurt you again. I meant that. Your father will never hurt you as long as I’m around. I don’t break my promises.” He replied.

“Then you already have some of the traits of the fae. Eat the cake and you will change while you sleep tonight. In the morning, you will wake as a fae. You can choose to eat the cake now, or save it for later.” Mom told him.

Sean looked at me and started eating the little cake. I couldn’t believe he was actually doing it. I thought there would be more time with him as a human.

I loved Sean, no matter what species he was. Seeing him so intent on becoming fae had me worried. I hoped he wouldn't regret his decision. I never wanted him to regret the choices he made for our relationship. Sean was my whole heart.

When he was finished, he complimented my mother on her baking skills. Mom loved it when people enjoyed her foods. It made her very happy to receive compliments.

Suddenly, I remembered the shirt in my hands and handed it to Sean. I couldn't believe I was just sitting there, watching him. I must have looked foolish just standing there with the shirt.

Sean slipped it over his head. I was bigger than him, so it was a little loose, but I felt like it suited him. I sat on the couch and put my arm over his shoulders again. This felt so comfortable and so right. I was starting to become giddy about him changing.

The front door opened again. We turned to see Talia come in, talking on her cellphone, with my father trailing behind. He looked flustered. I could imagine that Talia probably scolded him the entire time they were together.

"Thank you, Lila. I'll take care of it." Talia said into her phone and hung up. "Is there a bathroom I may use, Queen Maeve? I need to get rid of this spell bag and this portion of the curse will be released."

"Down that hall, second door on the right." Mom told her.

"You have my thanks. I shall return."

My mom glared at my father. He seemed embarrassed. Did he really think he wouldn't be caught? Did he actually think he'd gotten away with it?

I balled up my fists. My anger at him didn't seem to dissipate. It only grew. He had harmed our people and my mate. I didn't know which actually pissed me off more.

All the people who had lost their families. The ones who couldn't use their glamour and were forced to live in the village instead of with the people they loved. They popped into my head. I had a friend in the village who always wanted to go to human school, but couldn't use glamour and was stuck in the village. He grew bitter and stopped talking to me.

"I did what was best for our people." He murmured.

"You did what you wanted and used the excuse that it was what was best for our people." I replied. "You only thought about what you wanted. You didn't even think of them! I'm ashamed that you're my father. You're a terrible king and a terrible man."

"Hollis, unless there's something else the Traveler needs from you, I want you to leave my home. You are not permitted back on my lands until you've given up your title. I will make sure

our people know what you did to them. I can't imagine they will take kindly to you ruling over them when you don't even think of them while making decisions." Mom said.

"Our people aren't safe here. They need to be in our home." My father insisted.

"No. They need to know their rulers are there for them no matter where they choose to live. The whole reason we started this neighborhood was so we could take care of those who chose the human world over ours. You harmed them. You didn't even care that you were harming them. That makes you as bad as some of the human rulers we've seen over the centuries. You are over seven hundred years old, Hollis. How could you do something so childish and selfish?" Mom cried.

She really was crying too. Tears had welled up in her eyes. He hadn't only betrayed our people, he had betrayed her. It made me even angrier. I hated when my mom cried. I stopped telling her when he beat me because it made her cry.

Talia came out from the hallway with a smile on her face. I took it that the spell was destroyed. She walked over to my father and looked up at him.

"That's taken care of and I've passed the information you gave along to one of our witches. I will share with the other once I get home. I do hope you'll take my advice, King Hollis. No one will trust you after this. Show me that your glamour is working again and go home. I'm sure your wife needs time to process this offense." Talia said.

"Maeve?" My father looked at her like he was sad too. "Please. I was trying to do what I thought was best for everyone."

"Get out of my lands, Hollis. I will contact you when I'm ready to speak with you again. Make sure you tell people in the village that this spell was broken and families can be together again. Go." Mom replied sullenly.

He sighed and walked through the house and out the back door. I wanted to follow him and try to kick his ass, but, when I tensed to go, Sean put his hand on my arm and squeezed. I couldn't leave him after he'd just eaten a magical pastry. It wouldn't be right. What if he had side effects?

"Mom. Are you okay?" I asked.

"I will be. I'm just thinking over all the signs I missed. I should have realized that he would try something like this." She sighed.

"This wasn't your fault. As men get older, no matter the species, they change. He may have actually thought he was working for the sake of his people. In the beginning at least. He probably saw the harm it was doing and felt better when he started blaming it all on Grigori. The sad part, was that he saw all of this and could have ended it for your people, but chose to stick with his stubborn decision." Talia told her.

I watched my mother accept comfort from an ancient vampire. My life had become a little weird. I didn't entirely mind. That was what made it interesting as well.

"You should get going, Rio. I'm sure you would rather be with your friends right now." Mom said.

"I can stay here. I don't want to leave you alone after all this." I told her.

She smiled. "More than anything, I want you to be happy. This arrangement isn't forever and now I know you have a powerful vampire looking after you, I won't be as worried. I need some time alone. Some time to process all this. I need to get in contact with our people and let them know they can use their glamour as much as they want again and go settle the glamour over our neighborhood so humans will stop encroaching. I have a lot of work to do. I won't just sit here moping. Go on. Go have fun and try to break the rest of this curse."

I got up from the couch and went to her. I knelt in front of her chair and put my head in her lap while wrapping my arms around her waist. She stroked my hair like she always did when I was little. It made me feel much better.

"My darling Rio, you have shown me today how much you care for our people and for your mate. You are a born leader, my son. When I hand all this over to you, I will know that I'm giving my people the best possible king. One who learned from the mistakes of his father and grew up compassionate and caring." Mom murmured.

"I'll do my best to never let them down, mother." I promised.

"You will be held to that. You know never to make a promise you cannot keep. I know you would never break an oath. Go. I have much to do and the day will not last forever." She said, patting my head.

I got up and went to help Sean stand. He was looking at me with a goofy sort of smile. Echo got up and walked over to Talia.

"Let's go. Victor will be waking up soon and I want to tell him about what happened." Echo bounced.

"Are you sure you have enough energy after traveling and healing?" Talia asked.

"I have tons of energy! I'm so excited, I can barely contain myself. We broke part of the curse and got a lot more information! We're going to save Victor, Talia!" She squealed.

"Alright. We'll see you boys back at the house. Travel safely." Talia said before she and Echo disappeared.

We grabbed my things, and the cutting of my grandfather, before I put my glamour back on and headed to the car. Once we had everything loaded, I gave my neighborhood a look. Soon it

would be bustling with all sorts of creatures in their natural forms. I couldn't wait to come home and see that.

Sleeping In

Chapter 135 - The Vampire's Servant

[Echo]

When I got home, I released Talia and ran up the stairs. Victor would be waking up soon and I wanted to see if it was him again. I hoped so. He would be so happy that we did so much today.

I went into his room. I'd turned on the blanket before we left, just in case Victor woke while we were gone. I was happy we'd gotten back early enough that I could be here when he woke.

In his room, I crossed to the bed and climbed on. I sat next to him with his hand in mine. I was practically vibrating with excitement.

Maybe this had changed the nature of the curse. Every bit that we relieved had to change how it affected Victor. Maybe this would keep the other Victor from coming back.

It was taking longer than I thought for Victor to wake up. I looked at the clock on my phone and he was five minutes late. My stomach started to twist. Could vampires sleep in? I didn't think that was possible.

Finn woke up and stared at me, then Victor. He looked concerned.

"He's not up yet? That's not possible." Finn muttered.

"What's going on, Finn? Why isn't Victor waking up?" I asked.

"I don't know, but I called Talia. She'll be here soon. We'll figure it out, Echo. Don't worry."

Of course I was going to worry. What if the way the curse took him was to make him never wake up again? What if last night was the only chance I had to spend time with him and I wasted it going to bed early?

Tears started filling my eyes. I held Victor's hand and kept squeezing it, trying to get him to react. I would even take curse Victor if it meant him waking up.

The door opened and Talia rushed over to the bed. She looked Victor over diligently. Talia put her hand over mine and pulled out her phone with her other hand.

“Marius. Go get Felix and bring him to Victor’s room. It’s an emergency.... No.... Echo’s fine. It’s Victor. Get him now!” She ordered.

I shook Victor, trying anything to wake him up. It was now twenty minutes after when he was supposed to be up for the day. I wasn’t ready. I wasn’t ready to lose Victor.

Two strong hands pulled me away from Victor. I fought to stay by his side. I gripped his hand even harder. I wouldn’t let anyone take me away from him. He was mine.

“Echo. Let go. Master Felix needs to get to Victor.” Finn said from behind me.

“No! Mine!” I shouted.

“Echo. Angel. Let go. I’m here. Let them try to fix Victor.” Gray murmured from next to Finn.

I didn’t want to let go of Victor. I wanted to stay near him. Finn put me back down and I laid with my head on Victor’s chest. I could hear that faint heart beat that told me he was alive, just not living.

“Daughter, trust me. Felix will figure this out and you will have your Victor back. You need to let him see Victor. He can’t do that with you laying on him.” Marius insisted.

“We’ll just go to the couch, angel. You can see and hear everything that’s going on in the room.” Gray crooned to me.

“No. It’s too far. I can’t leave my Victor.” I whispered.

“She can stay on the bed as long as she moves to the other side. I just need access to the body.” Felix said in an eager voice.

“You’re excited about this?” I asked.

“No one has ever slept in before. At his age, Victor shouldn’t be this weak. I want to see what could be causing it. Now, shoo so I can examine your husband, Mistress Nightshade.”

I crawled to the other side of Victor and sat beside him. Gray climbed on the bed and sat, cross-legged, next to me. We watched Victor be examined.

Felix started at Victor’s head and laid his hands on him, closing his eyes. I watched his hands slip down to Victor’s neck. Gray growled a little as Felix’ hands encircled Victor’s throat.

“Awfully protective of a vampire, pup.” Felix scoffed, not moving his hands.

“Our vampire.” Gray responded.

“Gray is part of Victor and Echo’s relationship, Felix. Just ignore him and find out what’s wrong with my childe.” Talia insisted.

Reaching over, I took Gray’s hand. He was really concerned about Victor. Gray picked up my hand and kissed it. We held each other as Felix finished scanning over Victor with his eyes closed.

He moved back to Victor’s head and opened his mouth, examining his teeth. He opened Victor’s eyes and sighed. Felix put his head on Victor’s chest and nodded after a little while.

“He’s asleep, not dead. Talia, feed him some of your blood. Let’s see if his sire’s blood can call him back to his body.” Felix said.

Talia moved to Victor’s head and bit her wrist while she opened his mouth with her other hand. She put her wrist up to his open mouth and bled into it. I gripped Gray’s hand tightly.

“He’s not swallowing.” She told Felix.

Felix got beside her and started working his hand over Victor’s throat making him swallow the pooling blood. I put one of my hands on Victor’s stomach and silently begged for him to wake up.

“That’s enough.” Felix told her and she pulled her wrist back, sealing the wound.

She stepped back and went to stand beside Marius. He took her hand and I saw him squeeze it. Their expressions never changed, but I could almost feel his concern for her.

I watched Felix move in and place the palm of one hand over Victor’s forehead and the other over his heart. I took my hand off Victor, just in case it could interrupt what Felix was doing. I wasn’t taking any chances.

He started muttering something in a language I didn’t know. I could understand when he started saying Victor’s name. I started chewing my bottom lip.

Victor’s body tensed, then relaxed. He didn’t move again. Felix started chanting again and saying Victor’s name. He was louder this time, more forceful.

This time, after Victor’s body tensed, it started moving, like he was trying to pull Felix off of him. He was weak and couldn’t move his hands much. Felix started again, still louder. I had a great deal of hope.

Gray was holding my hand tightly. He was as worried as I was. I could hear him praying to his goddess. I tried it myself. Anything to save Victor.

“What the hell is going on?” Victor asked. “I feel like I’ve been trampled by horses.”

Felix managed to pull away moments before I threw myself onto Victor and started kissing all over his face. His hand rubbed my back as I lowered my head to his shoulder and started sobbing. I was so relieved that he was alive again.

“Echo, what’s wrong? What happened? Talia? Why is Master Felix with us? I didn’t have anything prepared for a guest. Master Marius? Why is everyone in my room?” Victor pressed.

Talia came up beside him and told him what happened while I kissed his neck and savored being in his arms. Victor’s hand continued stroking my back while he listened. I was so worried before he woke up that I didn’t trust myself to speak without crying more.

“I see. That’s frightening. I’m awake now, princess. Don’t worry. Is this going to be how I have to be awakened every evening now?” Victor asked.

“I don’t think so. I do think you may end up sleeping later than you’re used to. There’s no telling what could have caused it. I’ve never heard of anything like this.” Felix admitted.

“Victor, it could be the curse.” I sniffled.

“What do you mean, princess?” He questioned.

“Today we got a break in the curse and were able to remove the hidden things spell from the fae. Maybe this is like a snap back after part of it was broken.” I told him.

“You were able to find where he buried the spell? That’s wonderful news! I’m sure this has something to do with that. Don’t worry, Echo. We’re even closer to breaking the curse. Please don’t cry anymore, my little love.” Victor whispered.

“How are you feeling? Still in pain?” Gray asked.

Victor turned to Gray and held his hand out to him. Gray took Victor’s hand and patted it with the other. I rested my head on Victor’s chest and smiled at Gray.

“I’m much better. If you’ll all excuse us, I need to reassure my Solus Amor. We can talk about this later.” Victor said to the room. “Thank you for your assistance, Master Felix. I’m greatly honored to have had you attending me.”

“Of course. I’m happy to have helped. Marius, I’d like to go home now.” Felix said in a low tone.

The room cleared out as quickly as it had filled. Gray started moving off the bed after a few moments.

“Not you, Grayson. You’re part of this. Lay with us.” Victor insisted.

Gray scooted back and laid next to us. I slipped between them pulling Victor to lay on his side. He caressed my cheek as he looked down at me.

In the narrow space between them, I felt safe and secure. Gray got up on his side and put his hand on Victor's shoulder. Victor looked at him curiously.

"Never do that again. I was scared you wouldn't wake up." Gray said quietly.

"I didn't know you cared, Grayson." Victor chuckled.

"Stop with that bullshit, Victor. You can't die like that. I didn't have the chance to try and save you. There was nothing for me to fight. All I could do was sit here and watch. You're my friend. I don't want you to die." Gray growled.

"I'm sorry, Grayson. I'm not trying to worry the two of you. I'm trying to stay alive." He sighed.

"What's it like when you sleep, Victor?" I asked.

Victor looked down at me and smiled a little. I returned his smile. I was so glad he'd woken up as himself.

"I just close my eyes when I feel like the sun is getting high enough. Then, there's nothing. I don't even realize how much time has passed when I open my eyes again. All I know is that I'm hungry." He explained.

"Are you hungry now?" I asked.

"A little, but I can wait. I can go several days without any blood, if I have to." Victor said.

Gray put his wrist up. "Feed on me. I'm O negative. I remember you saying once that you prefer negative blood types. Plus, Amy says vampires like powerful blood and I have alpha blood."

"Are you sure, Grayson? You don't have to do this." Victor told him.

"Shut up and drink my blood." Gray smiled. "You're my friend."

Victor took Gray's wrist and began licking it. Part of me wanted to look away, I didn't like watching Victor feed, but this was Gray. They were both mine and I wasn't going to ruin this moment by looking away.

I watched Victor's fangs slide into Gray's wrist. Gray hissed a little, like it hurt. Victor looked up at him with concern.

"Are you okay, Gray?" I asked.

“His fangs are bigger than yours. I was just watching and it looked like it should hurt. I didn’t feel anything, angel. Victor knows what he’s doing.” Gray said.

Soon, Victor was licking Gray’s wrist clean. I watched the whole thing without panicking or feeling sick. I was a little proud of myself.

“Thank you for that, Grayson. I appreciate you being willing to share your blood with me.” Victor murmured softly.

“Um.... No problem. We’re all in this together, right?” Gray mumbled.

“Now kiss.” I giggled.

They both started tickling me while I wiggled around and played at trying to fend them off. I wanted this. I missed the playful part of our lives.

Eventually, the tickling turned to groping. The feeling of their hands on me was delicious. Gray started kissing the side of my neck, while Victor began kissing my lips. I moaned under their attentions.

Gray started kissing lower. His lips trailed over my collarbone and headed down to my breasts. He nibbled my nipple through my shirt and bra. Victor’s hand trailed from my other breast down to my pants. He deftly unbuttoned the top button and slid the zipper down.

His hand slipped inside my pants. Gray must have seen, because his hand joined Victor’s. Together, they teased at my body.

Victor’s long fingers slid inside of me while Gray’s rubbed around my clit in circles. I moaned into Victor’s mouth. My entire body was on fire and I desperately needed them to put it out.

I arched and moaned while they touched me in just the right way. Victor’s strokes were sure and confident. Gray was almost reverent in his touching and suckling. He’d pulled my shirt up and was latched onto my nipple through only my bra now. His tongue licked languorously over the tip, while his finger danced over me exquisitely.

Was this going too far? I said I wouldn’t make love to either of them. This wasn’t making love though, it was something else entirely.

I pulled away from Victor’s lips and he started kissing my neck. I groaned. The feeling of him delicately kissing down to the crook of my neck was sending me over the edge on top of everything else.

Still keenly aware that my sister and brother were in the house somewhere, I tried to stay as quiet as possible. It made both Victor and Gray chuckle as they continued with their sensual assault on my body. I moved my head to the side, giving Victor access to my neck.

He nipped at my soft, sensitive, skin making me squeak a little. Gray nibbled too. I wanted desperately to tear my clothes off and let them have me. I was building up to another peak. I felt my body start to clench around Victor's fingers. I sighed and arched as my body reached glorious heights.

"Please." I whispered.

I tried licking my lips. They felt dry from how much I was panting. I needed them so bad.

"Please, what, my little princess?" Victor murmured while nibbling on my neck.

"I... I don't know. I want you both so bad, but we can't. Not until the curse is broken."

"I understand. We promised your brother we wouldn't be with you like that while he lived here. Instead, we will make you feel good. You've been craving us and we haven't been helping you stay strong. We'll raise you to your peaks until you are fulfilled, princess." He told me.

"Anything for you, angel. Just hearing you, smelling you, touching you, is enough for now. I'm sorry I tried to get you to break your rule, Echo. I love you. I'll make it up to you in any and every way possible." Gray said, looking up into my eyes.

"I love you, too, Gray." I moaned.

"And you love me still?" Victor asked.

"Yes, yes! I love you so much, Victor!" I squealed as another orgasm rocked me.

"Good. I love you, Echo. No matter what else happens, remember how much I love you." He purred as he turned his attention back to my neck.

Gray pulled my breast from the cup of my bra and started teasing at the tip with his tongue. The velvety feeling after being teased through the much rougher cotton was enough to nearly shatter me again.

I made little squeaking sounds and tried to keep myself from getting too over stimulated too quickly. It seemed like they were coming closer together, each more powerful than the last. I was so desperate for Victor and Gray's touch, that I couldn't control my body.

Victor's fingers brushed a sensitive spot inside me. I felt my whole body tense. He moved his lips back to cover mine before he started fluttering his fingers on that spot until I was practically screaming as my body convulsed.

As I came down from the high they'd just sent me on, I hummed a little. Victor's kiss turned gentle. He pulled away and Gray kissed his way up to my lips before giving me a gentle kiss as well.

“You were perfect, as usual, angel.” He whispered, laying a little kiss on the tip of my nose, making me giggle.

“Quite correct, Grayson. None of my imaginings are ever anything like our princess. I always imagine her more innocent and less demanding than she can be.” Victor chuckled.

“Demanding? How am I demanding?” I asked in a shocked tone.

Gray snorted. “You didn’t realize what you were doing with your hands? You were pulling our hair, directing us on where to go. Not that I minded. I’m into that.”

I was so embarrassed. I covered my face and groaned. Victor and Gray worked on putting my clothing back to rights.

“What about you two?” I asked.

“We can take care of ourselves.” Gray said.

“Amy actually suggested something... if you wanted to try it. I would use my ability to make you see and feel the things I think of doing with you. It could help.” I offered.

“Mmm. As interesting as that sounds, princess, I’ll pass. We don’t know when the curse may come back for me. I don’t want it to decide you’re attacking or something. Feel free to indulge with Grayson, I waited over eight hundred years for you. I can wait longer.” Victor said, kissing my cheek before climbing out of bed.

“I’m down to try it. Tonight?” Gray asked, hopefully.

“Yes. Tonight.” I grinned.

He kissed me too and helped me out of the bed. Gray hugged me before heading off to his room. I fixed my hair and straightened my clothing some more. I felt better than I had in days. With luck, tonight would go well.

Change and a Twist

Chapter 136 - The Vampire's Servant

Once he was dressed, I walked downstairs with Victor. I didn’t want to let him out of my sight. I was really worried about him after what had just happened.

“Princess. You don’t have to watch over me. Go. Enjoy your evening. You have so many more interesting people to spend time with.” Victor said.

“But I want to spend time with you, Victor.” I insisted. “I miss you.”

“I have work to focus on. We’re getting updates on what the rest of the curse team has. I’m sure Finn will brief all of you in the morning. You should go have fun. It would make me happy to know you’re having fun instead of worrying over me.” He murmured, taking my hand in his and kissing it gently.

“I... I guess. If it will make you happy, Victor.” I replied.

He kissed me on top of my head and went into his office. When the door was closed, I sighed. Gray called out that he was heading out to get a couple journals from his great-grandfather. There had been some with spotty bits about the curse which were written later.

I didn’t know where anyone else was. I wandered to the TV room, hoping someone would be playing. The door was open and I saw Val sitting on the couch playing one of the shooting games. I sat next to him and watched.

Back before all this happened, Val would’ve been out on a date tonight. Ever since his girlfriend broke up with him, a few months back, Val had gone on a lot of dates. He told me it was hard finding a girl who fit him just right.

Val had to have a destined mate like me and Harmony. There was a girl who was a perfect fit for him somewhere. I wanted to find her. Maybe that would be the next thing we could work on.

“Hey, Echo. Everything okay?” He asked after finishing the mission he was on.

“Everything’s fine, Val.”

“I saw Talia running to Victor’s room followed by Gray. I thought he might have taken a turn. I paced the hallway, hoping to find out what was going on. Talia told me Victor couldn’t wake up tonight. He’s fine now, right?” Val pressed.

“Yes. He’s awake and feeling normal. We had a bit of a scare.” I admitted.

“You know I’m only interested in making sure you’re safe. You and Harmony are my little sisters. I want to always protect you. I wish I had known a way to save you sooner.... I won’t let you get hurt this time.” He promised.

“Val. Don’t be so hard on yourself. You couldn’t save me. Victor just happened to have what they wanted. I don’t blame you. I blame them. They did something horrible and saw nothing wrong with it. You tried, but they threatened me and you couldn’t risk it.” I said.

“You were in Victor’s room for a long time. Talia forced me to leave after I tried to get to the door. I didn’t like them leaving you alone in there. You never let on when you’re hurt. Lately, I’ve seen a change in you. You’re more vulnerable. It makes me worry.”

“Oh. I didn’t realize I was doing something worrisome. I just felt so safe and I guess I got caught up in it. Now, everything is different. Now, nothing is safe.” I sniffled.

Val set the controller down and wrapped his arms around me. I rarely got hugs from my brother and sister before. Now, I was able to hug them whenever, but I lost the ability to hug my mates.

“Where’s Harmony?” I asked while holding my brother tightly.

“On a date with Cam. They’ve been having dates every Friday night since we moved to the pack lands. They’re practically inseparable. It makes me miss how we used to be. She would talk to me about everything, but, now, she doesn’t.” Val sighed and let me go.

I leaned against him. “She’s growing and changing. It’s going to be okay, Val. You’ll find your mate and you’ll understand what it’s like.”

“Yeah. I guess. I wonder what she is. When the spell is over, I can cast a soulmate spell. Uncle Preston was telling me about it. The spell helps witches find their perfect matches. It’s used by single affinity witches. You have two mates, maybe I’ll have three.” He chuckled.

“I don’t think you can handle three.” I laughed. “That’s a lot of women.”

“Maybe. You know I only want you to be happy. I don’t want Victor and Gray only thinking of the things they can do to your body. I want them to know you and love every part of you.” Val whispered. “I want all of you to be loved.”

“They love me. When Victor’s not like he has been, Gray and I spend a lot of time with him. He watches movies with me. He doesn’t even mind that they’re sometimes childish and don’t have a lot of fights or explosions. Gray helps me in the garden. He’s sweet and playful. The other stuff is just one of the ways we show our love. It’s not the only way we do.” I assured him.

“Well, I—” Val was cut off by a loud crash that seemed to come from Victor’s office.

We jumped off the couch and ran out of the room. There was another crash and some shouting. I was faster than Val and made it to Victor’s office first.

“This is my territory! You’ll never take it from me! I’ll kill you first!” Victor roared.

He was grappling with Talia. The furniture had been tossed around the room. Finn was laying on his side with a chair leg sticking out of his chest.

Val and I grabbed him and pulled him into the hall. The chair leg wasn’t going through his heart. I held him down while Val worked to pull the leg from his chest.

While we watched, Finn's skin knitted itself together. He grinned at us. I didn't know why he was smiling. Victor was going insane.

"Thanks. I had to play dead so Talia could draw his attention. We need to get him into the cells. Echo, can you travel there?" Finn asked.

"I haven't been in the cells, but I have been in the basement and I saw the plans for the cells. I think I can get into them." I replied.

"It'll have to be good enough. Fingers crossed. I'm going to run down and lock both cell doors. I want you to get ahold of Vic and take him to the cells using your ability." Finn said.

"She can't do that! She's a small dhampyr and he's a whole ass vampire! You can't send my sister in there!" Val shouted.

"Shh! Keep your damned voice down, boy. Talia can't distract him all night and he's too erratic for me to fight. The curse has him good. That's not Victor in there. That's a mad vampire." Finn replied.

"You want to send my little sister into a room with a mad vampire? Are you fucking insane? This isn't happening. Call Marius. Echo isn't going." Val insisted.

"I'll go. Val, you can't keep me from doing this. I need to make sure Victor's safe. The sun is only just setting. If he's truly mad, he could go running out into the sun and I'd lose him. I can't lose him, Val. I love him." I said, pushing past him.

I rushed into the room and quickly assessed what was going on and where it was leading. I needed to get Victor away from Talia. She couldn't get caught up in this trap.

"V-Victor. Help me!" I cried.

It worked last time and I had a great deal of hope that it would work this time. I needed Victor to focus on me now. I just had to get ahold of him.

He turned, looking enraged. I gasped and took a step back. Val came up beside me and tried to pull me from the room.

Victor snarled and threw Talia off of him. He was running straight at my brother. I was trying to push Val off of me.

Val turned to Victor and shouted, "Stop!!!"

Almost immediately, Victor stopped his charge. It was like he couldn't move. I looked over at Valor.

"What did you do?" I asked.

“His vampiric ability.” Talia chuckled. “He must have the ability to order other vampires to do his bidding. There’s no way that would have worked on Victor if he was in his right mind. The curse is weakening him along with making him crazy. This is an impressive ability, Val. Great job!”

“I’ll kill you! Let go of my Solus Amor!” Victor yelled.

I brushed Val’s hands off me and walked over to where Victor was standing. He snarled and growled. I folded my hands together over my chest.

“Echo. Don’t.” Val warned.

“He won’t hurt me. I need to do something before your ability wears off. Trust me.” I told him.

When I reached Victor, I was holding back tears. He wasn’t in there anymore. Not even a little bit.

“Mine. My Solus Amor. Only mine!” Victor was muttering over and over.

“I’m here, my Victor. No one will take me from you. You need to calm down so I can hold you. Will you calm down for me?” I asked quietly.

“You. Are. MINE.” He growled.

“I know. Everyone here knows. I am only yours. Calm, my love. Calm.” I repeated.

He seemed to calm down and I put my hands on his shoulders before pressing my body into him. I needed to get him moved before he broke free from Val’s hold on him. I worked on picturing the basement and how it might look with the cells.

I remembered the schematics of where the cells would go in relation to everything in the basement. I hated the idea of putting him in there. Victor hated the basement as much as I did.

Closing my eyes, I held on to Victor and imagined being in the cells. When I opened my eyes, I was in a dark room. There was no light to show me any part of the cell. Just pure black.

“No one can take you now. You’re mine. They can’t steal you if they can’t find you.” Victor’s voice hissed in my ear.

His arms snaked around me and he started kissing and nibbling down my neck. A sob escaped me. He didn’t even sound like himself.

He pulled back. “Why are you crying? Is something hurting you again?”

“I love you, Victor. You know that, right?” I asked.

“Of course you love me. You are mine. You must love only me.” Victor answered with a small scoff.

“Right. I can’t see, Victor. Is there some place I can sit down?”

Victor took my arm and guided me across the room. He stopped, spun me around, and settled me on a cot. I was grateful there would be some place for him to sleep.

“Can you figure out how we’ll find food? We can’t just feed on each other.” I said.

“Why not?” He asked.

“Because, I need real food. I’m still alive, remember?”

“I can turn you, Amor. You can be mine for eternity.” Victor said.

His hands came down on my shoulders and he held me still. I could feel his breath on my neck.

“No. Not yet, Victor. We were going to have babies. Remember? I can’t have babies if I’m a vampire.” I pled.

“You’re having my babies. I can’t turn you and hurt the babies. I’ll find food for you and the babies.” He said with a happy voice.

He must have misunderstood and thought I was pregnant. That was going to make this even harder. Now, he’d think someone stole me and our babies.

I closed my eyes tight and focused on Victor’s office again. I didn’t want to be too close to the cells. I didn’t want to hear him when he discovered I was gone.

Opening my eyes again, I squinted against the harshness of the overhead light. I expected to be alone, but Talia was there. She came over and hugged me tight.

“Everything will be alright, Echo. I promise. You did so good.” She crooned.

“He thought I was pregnant. He’s going to think someone stole his pregnant mate.” I sobbed.

“I understand. You did what you had to do, Echo. He’ll forgive you once we cure him. Victor is in the safest place possible. Trust me, Echo. We’re doing everything we can to save him.” Talia promised.

“I know. I just wish I didn’t have to hurt him. What happened?” I asked.

Talia let me go and started trying to straighten out the office. I would need to buy some new pieces for it. I was growing impatient.

“Sorry. I just wanted to make the room feel a little more normal. You have no idea how badly this is affecting me, Echo. Victor is my child. When I turned him, I did something terrible. He didn’t want to live. I worked over the first thirty years of his second life to give him things to live for. When he came back to himself, Victor tried to find ways to die. He didn’t want this life.” Talia explained. “You have no idea how hard I fought to get him to want to live. I have been fighting for his life since the beginning. When he told me you might be his Solus Amor, I was thrilled. Victor enjoyed power, but he needed love.”

“You were sure he would fight harder to live if he had me.” I murmured.

“Of course. And I was right. Victor has been fighting to live ever since he heard about the curse and what it does. He has taken every setback in stride and every hint of progress with a grain of salt. My realistic boy. Ever levelheaded.” She chuckled.

“What happened, Talia?” I asked again.

“I told him about the part of the curse we broke. Finn said he feels something coming close that will get us answers. I was just telling them about Hollis’ involvement, when Victor started acting strangely. He started shaking his head and growling. When I mentioned Hollis’ territory, Victor started yelling about his territory and how we weren’t going to steal it from him. I was so shocked, I didn’t register him moving and he attacked Finn. It was as if he felt no pain. He fought me off, broke a leg off from one of the armchairs, and tried to stake Finn.” Talia told me.

“Finn went to lock the cells after Val and I pulled the chair leg out. He should be back soon.” I said.

As if he were called by that comment, Finn walked into the room. Val was with him. Neither one looked particularly happy. Val rushed to me and pulled me into a hug.

“Thank god, you’re okay. I went down to the basement and heard him raging. I was worried you were in there, but Finn said he was sure you weren’t. Don’t ever do anything like that again.” He murmured, holding me tightly and stroking my hair.

“Valor. You have to stop treating me like a child.” I said, pushing him away. “I am the Mistress of this territory. I haven’t been a child for a long time. Talia, what are our next steps? Finn, where are we on the curse? Did you figure out who it was that we needed from the nursing home?”

I went around Victor’s desk and righted his chair before sitting in it. Val stared at me in shock, but Talia and Finn arranged the remaining chairs around the desk and got to business. I was the leader of this territory when Victor wasn’t available. I wouldn’t let anyone down. I wouldn’t let Victor down.

Mistress of the Territory

Chapter 137 - The Vampire's Servant

Val started straightening up the office while I talked to Finn and Talia. I was grateful that he didn't decide to fight me on this. Once the updates were in, I needed to organize the territory. I didn't have any idea about what needed to be done to take care of a territory full of vampires.

"Talia, I want you to take Victor's work and divide it between Talon and Silence. Tell them Victor is not available and they need to step up their roles while we get him taken care of." I said.

"Got it." She replied and left the room with her phone.

"Finn, you said there was something happening. Any idea what? When did you want to get into the nursing home?" I asked.

"No idea what. Just waves that are telling me our window for getting to whoever has the information is closing. I'd love to go tonight, but with what just happened to Victor, I'm not sure you're up for it." He said.

"I say what I'm up for. No one else. We'll go after dinner. Change your shirt and get ready. I don't want to dawdle." I told him.

Finn stood with a small bow and left the room. I tried to focus. I needed to do something else.... What was it?

"You should probably call Marius." Val suggested.

I smiled at him, grateful that he helped. "Thank you. I lost focus for a moment. Thank you, also, for picking up. I really appreciate it."

"I'll help however I can. Victor has Talon and Silence for his lieutenants, you have me." He smiled.

"You and Gray. He'll be a big help too." I replied as I pulled out my phone and dialed Marius' number.

He picked up on the third ring. I was a little worried that he would be too busy. He had a territory of his own to run.

"Echo? What's happened? You rarely call me." Marius said.

I realized that he was right. I was a terrible child for not staying in contact, there was just so much going on. I promised myself I would do better in the future.

“The curse has taken Victor’s mind. He’s in the cells. I need you to start coming over in the morning to train me on how to fight vampires. I can’t be defenseless against them and Talia is already training Gray. I want her to keep teaching him.” I told him.

“Gladly. You need a good education if you’re going to be Mistress of this territory. I’m assuming you are. You sound more confident and sure of yourself than you have in the past.” He chuckled.

“Yes. I am taking over as Master of this territory since Victor is unable to take care of things. Talia is dividing his work between Talon and Silence, and Finn is working on the next steps of the curse.” I said.

“You seem to have this well in hand. I will be there first thing in the morning to start your training. I will not go easy on you, daughter. Learning to fight vampires is a life or death endeavor.” Marius answered in a stony voice.

“Good. I don’t want someone who will baby me to train me. I need to be able to fight for myself while Victor can’t defend me.” I replied.

“I shall see you in the morning. Make sure you’re well-rested.” He said as he hung up the phone.

I set my phone aside and put my head in my hands. That was all I needed to do, aside from letting everyone know what happened. They all needed to know to leave Victor in the cells.

“I can text Cam and Harmony.” Val said, sitting in one of the chairs.

“Please do. Make sure they know that they don’t have to come home over this. Just stay out of the basement.” I told him.

I got up and went down the hall to the kitchen. Lisa and Wendell were working on dinner. I quickly briefed them on what was going on.

“You should probably call Alpha Trent and let him know what’s going on, since he has a treaty with Master Nightshade.” Lisa suggested. “It’s important that he knows who to contact about stuff like that.”

“Thank you, Lisa. I hadn’t thought of it. I should have. Victor can go several days without feeding, but I want to make sure he’s healthy. Only vampires are allowed to feed him. The scent of werewolf could make him more violent and I don’t want you getting hurt.” I answered before heading back to the office.

I called Trent and got things settled with him quickly. He asked if there was anything he could do to help us. I told him that his guards could probably use a day off and it would be nice if he could send someone out for a day or two to relieve them.

It was really the only thing I could think of. I didn't want them growing bored or upset and not doing their jobs properly. Trent said he would arrange for a third and fourth team to come out and cover weekends so the men could go home and visit their families and friends.

Lisa and Wendell had told me we could discuss days off after the curse was resolved. They didn't want us to split our attention. I was grateful to them.

Val and I worked on cleaning up the rest of the office. I filed away the papers that had been on Victor's desk, there wasn't much I could do with them. We sat down and rested afterward.

"You found your vampire power." I grinned at Val.

"Thank god for that. I wouldn't have survived a fight with Victor." He sighed.

"Marius is going to be so proud of you. That is an amazing ability. I wonder what else you can do with it." I continued, trying to keep the topic away from Victor.

There was a knock at the door and I looked up. It wasn't closed, so I could see Uncle Preston standing there. I waved him in.

"I was looking for Finn or Victor." He said, coming over to the desk warily.

"Finn is busy with something else at the moment. Victor is unavailable. I'm the Mistress of this territory. You can speak with me." I stated firmly.

"Well. I think I know why supernaturals can't leave the area. I was assessing the materials and nothing was coinciding with anything which could create a spell like that. Then, I started thinking outside the box. What if he did an intruder spell, but reversed it? If he lined out a certain area and set up wards, he could have made it so the rest of the world was protected from people coming from here. If he changed the word 'intruder' to 'supernatural', then it would affect everyone. Family members are rarely regarded as intruders, so they can come and go as they please without any negative effects." Preston explained.

"How do we break it?" I asked.

"We need to find the wards and a member of Fenton's family needs to break them. Only blood of the original caster can remove a protection like this. Normally, these wards are put up around coven towns to keep witches safe." He told me.

"Where would the wards be, though?" I asked as I turned and opened a long drawer where Victor kept his maps.

I searched the labelled rolls until I found the one for the territory. Pulling it out, I slipped the ties off and unrolled it on the desk. The map showed several states and the border of the territory was drawn on it.

“That’s a huge territory. I don’t think he would have had the ability to ward this area in the amount of time noted from when he found out, to when he sent Grace back East.” Preston said.

“Do you think he just warded the town and Grigori’s death pushed the wards back to the edges of the territory?” Val asked.

“That doesn’t make sense. Amy can leave the state without a problem. So can Lucien. That means that beyond this town, people aren’t as affected.” I replied.

“But people from here can live inside the territory boundaries without a problem.” Val countered.

“It could be the safety zone was pushed out. It’s not as tight as the borders. There’s usually a safety zone in these so that people who pop into the boundaries by just, say, stepping over the border, aren’t going to be affected. Instead of it being something like a quarter mile, what if Grigori’s death pushed the safety zone to the borders he held? It could make sense if this was tied to all the other spells involved in this curse.” Preston suggested.

“That makes sense.” I said and opened up the curse file on Victor’s computer.

I typed in the information on the spell Preston thought Fenton used. I put in our speculation on the safety area and how Grigori’s death changed that part of the curse.

“What do we do about it?” Val asked.

“If I can find out where the wards are, I can break them.” Preston said.

I dug through the map drawer and pulled out a map of the city and surrounding area. I linked Rosario to have him bring Sean to the office. He would know exactly what we were looking for.

“Sean’s on his way. I’m betting the original spell was centered on the city and surrounding areas, because Fenton would have wanted to ensure that Grigori couldn’t leave. He didn’t want anyone to bring Grace back to him. It would’ve had to have included the surrounding areas so it could include the pack lands.” I pointed out.

“I’m glad we’re seeing that serious, commanding personality again. I wondered what happened to you.” Preston chuckled.

“What do you mean?” I asked as I pulled pencils out of a drawer.

“When we first met, you were just like this. When we moved in here I thought I would see a cool, in-control woman, but you’ve just been weepy, weak, and nervous. I was so confused.” He explained.

“Oh. Well, that was because of the curse. Not having Victor and Gray safe has taken a toll on me. I’m the Mistress of this territory since Victor can’t take care of it right now. I can’t give in to my emotions. It seems everyone thinks I was acting differently.” I shook my head and sighed.

Rosario and Sean came into the office. Sean looked a little pale and sickly. I worried about him, but I was sure this was part of the changing process that he had taken on. I would support my friend if this was what he felt he needed.

I waved them over and pointed to the map. “Sean, I need to know where Fenton’s property is. The curse was solidified there, I bet that’s where the center of the spell is and it would give us an idea of how far out the wards could be.”

“Good thinking, Echo.” Preston smiled and moved aside so Sean could get to the map.

Sean picked up a pencil and examined the map. After a few moments of consideration, he circled an area carefully. He looked closely and drew another circle inside of it.

“This is my family’s land and the other circle is where the house stood.” He said.

“Rosario, where is the fae village and neighborhood?” I asked.

Rosario took the pencil from Sean. He looked over the map and drew two circles. He set the pencil down and put his arm around Sean’s waist.

“You need anything else?” Rosario asked.

“Will you two be down for dinner?” I asked.

“Yes. Sean’s just experiencing some weakness right now. He’s going to need a lot of fuel before he sleeps.” He answered.

“What’s going on? Why does he need fuel?” Val asked.

“I’m becoming fae. I had a cake imbued with the magic to change a human into a fae. Maeve said I would wake up in the morning fully changed.” Sean replied.

“Why would you do that?” Val pressed. “Was it just because you didn’t have an affinity? You could have been a powerful alchemist.”

“Valor. He did what he wanted to with his own body. You have to respect that.” Rosario glared.

I put my hands up, drawing their attention. All arguments died down as they looked at me curiously. I didn’t have time for pointless fights. It wouldn’t change anything and would just annoy me while I was working.

“If you don’t have business here, leave.” I said finally.

“Gladly.” Rosario picked up Sean and turned to leave the room.

“Echo, you can’t be okay with this.” Valor whined.

“It’s Sean’s life, it’s his decision. I’m not here to parent him. I’m here to beat this curse and take care of my home.” I replied. “Do you know how big the pack lands are?”

“N-no. Your seriously okay with him changing himself like that?”

“Yes. I need Gray. Cam’s out on a date, Uncle Samuel wouldn’t know this. Do you think Lisa or Wendell might know? I don’t really want to pull the guards from the perimeter to ask and the others might be in bed still.” I pondered.

“Gray should be home soon. He was just going to go get those journals right?” Val said.

I nodded and pulled out my phone to text him asking him to come to Victor’s office when he got home. I looked at the map and chewed on the end of the pencil. I wondered where Grigori’s house had been. We’d need that information to get a solid idea as well. There had to be a vampire who could tell us.

“Dennis. I need to call Dennis. He’s been here since the territory was settled by humans.” I whispered.

Quickly, I dug into Victor’s files and pulled up the information on Dennis. I was pretty lucky that there were only three vampires named Dennis in the area. I pulled out his number and called him.

“Hello?” He answered over some loud music.

“Dennis, this is Echo Nighshade. I needed to talk to you.” I said.

“Just a moment.” Dennis replied.

The loud music got quieter until it was completely gone. I suspected that he’d moved from the main part of his club to the office or outside.

“How may I help you, Mistress Nightshade?” He asked.

“Do you know where Grigori used to live?” I questioned.

“Yes. I was a guest in his home several times. He was very interested in my club.” Dennis answered. “It used to be a jazz club back then.”

“I don’t know what that is. Anyway, I need you to come to my home and show me on a map where that was. I’ll send someone to get you.” I told him.

“Of course, Mistress Nightshade. Will I be meeting with Master Nightshade as well?” He asked.

“No. Master Nightshade is extremely busy out in the territory. I’m using his office while he’s out, I’ll send Finnick to you. I believe you met him the other night at Victor’s ball.” I replied.

“I’ll be ready for him. Thank you for allowing me to assist, Mistress.”

“I’m glad for your assistance, Dennis. I’ll see you soon.” I said, hanging up.

Finn came into the room while I was wrapping up the call. He looked at me curiously and waited for the call to be over.

“Who am I getting for you, Lady Nightshade?” Finn asked.

“Dennis. The one who owns the all species club in town. I need him for this.” I told him.

“On it.” He nodded and left the room.

I sat down and looked over everything. Visiting the nursing home would have to wait. This was a lot of work, but I was serious about running this lead down. Victor couldn’t do it himself, so I was going to do it for him. I wouldn’t give up.

Try to be Friends

Chapter 138 - The Vampire's Servant

[Gray]

I was talking to Grampy and Gammy when Echo’s text reached me. I had worried earlier when I felt her get scared, but she’d calmed pretty quickly and I figured Victor had resolved whatever the issue was. The text brought that worry right back.

Gammy gave me a few pies in boxes to take to the house. I gave her and Grampy big hugs before carting my things out to my truck and heading back home. It was a struggle to keep my speed low.

When I got to the house, I handed the pie boxes off to Wendell.

“Where’s Echo?” I asked.

“Mistress Nightshade is in the office.” She replied.

“Why are you calling her that? I thought she told you to call her Echo.” I said.

“She’s the Mistress of the territory now. We’re calling her that out of respect.” Wendell told me.

That didn’t sound good. Echo was only in charge of the territory when Victor couldn’t be around to take care of it, but he was awake. I headed to the office.

The door was open. I walked in and looked around. There was a person sized hole in the wall, one of the chairs was leaning where a missing leg had been, and there were some slashes on walls and other furniture. This wasn’t good.

“What happened? Where’s Victor?” I asked.

“The curse took Victor over.” Talia said. “He’s in a cell. Echo got him in without any problems and we found out Valor’s vampire ability.”

“Echo? Are you alright, angel?”

“I’m fine. Sorry I texted you like that. Talia reminded me there was a map of Trent’s territory, so it turns out I didn’t need you. Did everything go well with getting the journals?” Echo replied, her attention fully on copying the lines of one map onto another.

“Yeah.... Gammy sent some pies.” I said.

“Good. Everyone will enjoy that.” Echo smiled a little. “There. That’s the pack lands. Now, we only have to wait on Dennis and Finn to return. That should give us an idea of all the places Fenton would have wanted trapped in the border.”

She was different. This was the Echo I’d met with my brother and Val. She was focused on her work and wasn’t emotional at all.

A swell of pride filled my chest. My cleaning demon was as focused and serious about something other than cleaning and I couldn’t be more proud of her. I loved my sweet, needy, angel, but there was something just as enticing as my serious little demon.

“What can I do?” I asked.

“Give Talia the journals. I want her to get started on reading through the material. We may not need it anymore, but I’m not taking any chances.”

Echo rolled up the map and slipped the ties over it. She then pulled another map out from under the one she was working on and rolled it as well. I handed the journals off to Talia as Val sidled up to me.

“She’s just like she was before. This is a lot like how Echo acted back home.” He whispered. “I never really realized how much she’d changed.”

“No matter what, she’s perfect. Look at how she’s commanding the whole room. My little vampire queen.” I grinned.

“Dhampyr queen.” Echo corrected with a wink before turning back to where she and Preston were analyzing the map.

Val and I chuckled. I started talking to him about his new vampire ability. He was excited about it. He’d worried that he didn’t have one.

Dinner smelled like it was nearly done when Finn arrived with an older looking vampire. The man was thinly built, but had an air of danger about him. He had salt and pepper hair and greenish blue eyes that seemed to glow without the vampire power behind them.

“Mistress Nightshade.” He said with a deep bow.

I liked that he was respectful of my mate. Echo deserved respect and so much more. She nodded to him regally.

“Come here, Dennis. I need you to map where Grigori’s house was, please.” Echo requested.

“Of course, Mistress Nightshade.” Dennis replied, straightening up and walking to the desk.

He looked over the map and muttered about how the town had gotten bigger. I watched him carefully follow the little lines of streets until he came to a specific corner and he circled it with the pencil Echo handed him. Dennis nodded and handed the pencil back.

“Preston, what do you think?” Echo asked.

“Where is the local coven?” He sighed. “I think that’s actually the last piece.”

“I know!” Val grinned.

I’m sure he felt as useless as I did at that point and was just happy to have something to contribute. He went to the map and examined it closely, then drew two more circles on it.

“The first one is where they meet in town, the second is where they meet in the woods. Missy took me to visit the coven. She was trying to get me to join, but I found out they wanted to marry me off to the coven leader’s daughter and noped on out.” He laughed.

“Why didn’t you want her?” I asked.

“Because she’s thirteen and I don’t do kids. Plus, my sisters have soulmates. I do too. I know I do. I’m going to marry the perfect girl for me. Not some random witch kid just because she has two affinities.” Val scoffed.

The poor girl was going to end up in an arranged marriage, but it wouldn't be to Val. I hoped it worked out. I didn't think her parents would stop trying to find her a husband just because Val turned her down.

“With your luck, it will turn out that the girl is your soulmate and you'll have to win her affections.” Talia snorted.

“Don't put that energy out there, Talia. I want to marry someone who's at least close to my age.” He insisted.

“Five years isn't a huge gap, you'll see that later in your life. I understand, she's not matured enough for your tastes. You are a healthy young man, after all. You want a woman, not a child.” Talia responded.

“If you're all finished talking about how my brother turned down the love of his life, I need to discuss this circle Uncle Preston just drew.” Echo giggled.

“Don't you start too. You're supposed to be on my side.” Val whined.

“I'm over eight hundred years younger than Victor, Valley. She could be your soulmate.” Echo winked.

“Let's deal with this.” Val grumbled.

We all crowded around the desk. There was a large circle that was off center from the rest of the town. I knew a lot of the part that was cut off had sprung up over the last fifty years or so.

Our school was only forty years old. It had been some farmer's field until there was no one left to inherit and he left the land to the school district to build another school on. The circle cut through the land where the school was.

“If Fenton made the circle this large where would he have put the wards?” Echo asked.

“He would've used an eight point star. It would provide more complete coverage than the traditional five points. He would have them at exact directional points. As you can see, I've centered the circle over his home. All the spells should be centered there.” Preston explained.

“Except the spell that took the fae's glamour.” Talia said. “That one was in the center of the park in their neighborhood.”

“That should be the only exception.” Preston nodded.

“Are you getting any ideas?” Echo asked.

“Yes. These points should be where the wards are located.” Preston responded, marking several places on the map. “I can go to the one nearest here and check it.”

“When can you do that?” I asked.

Echo smiled at me. I knew that was going to be her next question. With Victor in the cells, Echo was going to be more driven than ever to resolve this curse.

“Since dinner will be done soon, how about after dinner. It looks like I can drive there.” Preston said.

I looked at the place he was talking about. “That’s the movie theater. The old one that used to be a regular theater. Where could he have put a ward?”

“I can help find it.” Finn offered.

“I... I guess I can take you with me.” Preston said.

“Thanks. I didn’t know what I’d do with myself.” Finn winked. “Promise I won’t bite.”

“Is there anything else you need me for, Mistress Nightshade?” Dennis asked.

“Sorry, Dennis. No. This was all I needed from you. Thank you. I’ll let Victor know how you helped. Do you need a ride home?” Echo smiled at him.

“No. I can fly. It’s a rare ability, but I was blessed with it.” He replied and took his leave.

We turned our attention back to the map. Val and I worked to identify the places where the wards were. A couple were in the woods. They would be the easiest to access.

Lisa came in to get us for dinner. Echo took my hand and led us to the dining room. Dillon and Jean-Claude were already there.

Echo went to the head of the table, where Victor normally sat, and took a seat. She pulled me to sit to her left and Talia sat to the right of her. Everyone else sat in their normal seats.

When Rosario and Sean arrived, they stared at the new seating arrangement. Once they were seated, Echo called Lisa and Wendell into the room. She stood and looked over everyone.

“For everyone who was not aware, the curse has taken Victor over completely. He’s currently in one of the cells in the basement. I’m in charge of this territory now, and I’m taking over the running of the curse team. We’ve had several big breakthroughs today. The first was the removal of the spell on the fae and the revelation of King Hollis Adair’s involvement with the curse. The second, a list of the ingredients King Hollis got for Fenton. The third, an intruder spell which was used to create the part of the curse that stops supernaturals from leaving the area. I’ll brief Cam and Harmony tomorrow. Only vampires and dhampyrs will be allowed in the basement.” Echo explained.

Sean held Rosario's hand tightly. Samuel seemed unaffected. Dillon and Jean-Claude looked at each other with worry.

"Are you alright, Echo?" Dillon asked.

"I'm fine. We knew something like this could happen. What's important is that we get this curse resolved as soon as possible." She replied before sitting. "Lisa, Wendell, please serve dinner."

"Yes, Mistress Nightshade." They said and went into the kitchen.

The girls put out dinner quickly. Sean started piling food on his plate like he was starving. He piled it as high as I normally do. I'd never seen a human eat that much.

There was little conversation as we ate our meal. I watched everyone. This was where Echo normally sat, before Victor started seating her between her sister and brother.

Samuel talked with Jean-Claude about training. It seemed he wanted to take a training plan back to his pack. Trent had already asked me and Cam to note the training we went through so he could integrate it into our pack's sessions. Daylight Moon had some of the best warriors and everyone knew Lune Rouge was getting the same training.

I was excited for how powerful it could make our pack. Trent told me how useful some of Amy's games had been in training already. We didn't play games as much anymore, not now that fighting had become more of a focus for all of us.

"You're sure eating a lot, Sean." I said as I saw him refilling his plate. "Leave room for dessert, my great grandma sent some pies."

"I'm sure I'll have plenty of room. I feel like I'm starving." He chuckled.

"What's up with that? You've already eaten twice what you normally do." I asked.

"I'm becoming fae tonight. Rosario says it's really trying for my body. I was feeling sick earlier, but it was like a switch flipped and I went from nauseous to starving." Sean answered.

"Sean will go through a lot tonight. Turning fae isn't as easy as all the stories say. You don't just wake up fae. It will be a bit easier on Sean than on a normal human, because he has fae blood." Rosario explained.

"I thought you'd wait until we were done with the curse." I said.

"No. I want to be stronger. I want to be more useful. My brain shouldn't be the only thing I can contribute. As soon as I got an opening to request it, I did." Sean smiled and put another fork full of food in his mouth.

“I would like to request that Sean and I be relieved from training in the morning. He may still be feeling bad, depending on how the change goes.” Rosario told Jean-Claude.

“That should be fine. Monday training will not be optional. You both need to be there.” Jean-Claude replied.

“On that note, I will be training with Marius in the mornings now. I will also be training on Sundays.” Echo stated nonchalantly.

“What? Why?” I asked. “Victor’s locked up. There are no other threats.”

“There are always threats, Gray. I’m not running and hiding behind you and Victor anymore. The sooner I can fight for myself, the better.” She answered coolly.

“Angel, think about this. All that training without a break will make you burn out. I don’t want you to have trouble.” I said.

“I have thought of this, Gray. Don’t worry. If I start to feel myself burning out, I’ll take a break. Trust me. I’ve got this.” Echo smiled. “Eat. You have to finish your dinner if you want pie. It’s the rule.”

I looked at the food on my plate. I was worried. She was throwing herself into training and acting more like a vampire. I didn’t like it, and neither did Rex.

“Val, Gray will be sleeping next to me tonight.” Echo said after a little while.

The surprise on my face made Talia start to giggle. I looked down the table at Val who seemed to be struggling with something. He put his fork down and glared at me.

“Just sleeping.” Val growled.

“Valor, you do not run my life. I already said I wasn’t doing anything else until the curse was broken. Do you have so little trust in me that you would make a command like that?” Echo scoffed.

If I looked shocked before, it was nothing compared to the look Val was wearing. It made Talia laugh even harder. I tried not to stare or even smile, though, Talia’s laughter was starting to seep into me.

“It’s not that I don’t trust you, Echo. I just don’t trust him.”

“He is my husband. I’ve marked him as mine and I’ll do with him as I please. I love you, but you aren’t my father, Val. You need to observe some boundaries. I’m fine with you being a little overprotective, but this is my house and my husband doesn’t need to be reminded to respect my requests.” Echo stated with a glare.

“Just yesterday he was trying to get you to give in to him!” Val snapped.

I had the decency to be embarrassed. Echo was defending me while her brother was making some pretty good points. I didn’t have the nerve to try and say anything. I didn’t want Echo to be mad at me. I may not always be wise, but my instincts were screaming at me to stay quiet.

“That was yesterday. If you haven’t noticed, a lot has changed since yesterday. If Gray tries anything, I’ll take him to his room and leave him there. Please, Valley, stop picking on Gray. He just wants to be there for me and I need him. I can be strong all day long as long as I can be soft at night.” She said softly.

Under the table, my hand found hers and she squeezed it hard. I would be there when she needed me. She was my angel.

“Fine. I’m not apologizing, though. You better not cross the line or going to bed on your own will be the least of your problems, Gray.” Val huffed.

“I promise. I will not do anything to your sister.” I vowed.

The room was uncomfortable as Wendell cleared the plates and Lisa dropped a slice of pie in front of everyone. Echo didn’t seem to be bothered as much as everyone else did. Even Val seemed a little uncomfortable.

“Well... Now that awkward dessert is over, I’m taking Sean to our room. He’ll need to lie down soon. Mom told me what to expect before we left today. Good night everyone.” Rosario said, pulling Sean up and dragging him out of the dining room.

Everyone broke up slowly.

“Val, Gray, I’m heading back to the office to work some more. You can either come with me or you can go play video games together. I want you two to work on your relationship. I won’t have you two bickering and fighting all the time.” Echo announced.

“I’d rather if we could work on that too.” I said.

“I suggest the two of you play the games. I don’t want you distracting Echo. I didn’t know she could be like this and she’s proving to be as effective as Victor. Go play while we do grown-up work.” Talia smirked, waving us away.

“Let’s go, Talia.” Echo said, standing.

I was left in the room with Val. He looked a little uncomfortable and sullen. I stood and sighed.

“Come on. We better do as she says.” I told him.

“Fine, but I’m only doing this because my sister wants me to.” He grumbled.

“Whatever.” I replied.

We headed to the family room and played games together until Echo came to get me for bed. We actually started having fun after the first hour of him hunting me down and shooting me in the game. I hoped it was enough to start us on the road to friendship or this was going to be a very long and difficult life for both of us.

Fae Design

Chapter 139 - The Vampire's Servant

[Sean]

Sleep was difficult. It felt like things were moving under my skin. Sometimes I felt like I was on fire and other times like I was doused in ice water.

My skin itched and every joint in my body hurt. Rosario didn't seem to know what to do. His touch soothed me and I could only sleep with his arms wrapped around me.

It was after midnight when my body seemed to soothe and I fell into a deep and heavy sleep. It was like being dragged down inside myself. I couldn't fight it and, frankly, I didn't want to.

I dreamed of a field of wildflowers next to a forest. I heard a stream bubbling nearby. I was drawn to the sound of it.

This was a place unlike any I'd seen before. The sun was warm and inviting. The scent of the area was soothing and sweet.

As I walked, it was as if the flowers and plants moved aside to let me pass without damaging them. When I made it to the stream, it was beautiful. Crystal clear water rolled over a multitude of shining rocks and stones beneath the stream. There were some little fish swimming in it.

Sitting on the bank of the stream, I put my hand out to feel the water. I gasped as I realized my skin was now a light green. I wished there was a bit of water still enough to see my reflection.

“Hello again, Sean.” A familiar, soothing, woman's voice said.

“Goddess?” I whispered and looked up.

It was daytime in the dream, but she seemed as ethereal as she had in the night scape of the last dream I had. Her hair seemed to hold a light all its own. She came down the bank and walked

over the stream before sitting next to me. I wasn't nervous. I felt super calm and wondered why she was here.

"I'm so glad you fought through your feelings and accepted everybody. It led you to becoming the man I always planned for you to be. Now do you see how perfect this family is? How perfect Rosario is for you?" She asked.

"I do. I love him so much. Thank you for giving him to me." I smiled.

"You showed just how strong you are by taking that lashing meant for Rosario. You were very brave. I'm so proud of you, Sean." The goddess replied.

"What kind of fae am I? What do I look like? And why are you here?" I asked.

"Here, let me show you and you can probably guess what you are. I will tell you the rest in a moment." She replied, standing.

Following her lead, I stood as a mirror rose from the dirt. That was the first time I realized, I wasn't wearing my glasses. I was able to see perfectly without them. I approached the mirror.

My skin was the color of a honeydew melon. My blond hair had turned the deep gold color I'd seen in my mom's flower garden. I wondered if it was the same color as the melon's flower. My freckles were still there and were now a dark green instead of brown. My eyes had stayed the same light brown, but there was something in them that made them seem richer and almost syrupy.

"You're beautiful." The goddess murmured.

I felt something flutter and my eyes were drawn behind me. Two sets of clear wings with green veins stood behind me. They looked like the wings of a dragonfly. They moved just like limbs. I didn't even need to tell them to move, one wing just came forward and I touched it.

"I'm a pixie?" I asked.

"Yes. Good job! You got it on the first guess. The biggest positive about this, is that you don't always have to have your wings out. Just think of them gone, and they will fold away. Try it." She urged.

Looking in the mirror, I thought of the wings being gone. They folded against my body and seemed to disappear under my skin. In their place were markings over my back. They led down into my pajama pants.

"Amazing." I whispered.

“A human sized pixie is rare. Your muscles, bones, and joints had to be reinforced to withstand flight. Dragonfly wings are best for supporting that weight. You’ll need a lot of practice before you can fly, but you should be able to manage it.” The goddess smiled.

“So are you just here to introduce me to my new form?” I asked.

Her smile faded. The mirror disappeared. She walked over to me and took my hands.

“Sean. Finnick will be asleep when you need to leave for the next piece of the curse. I need you to take Echo to visit your great uncle again tomorrow at noon.” She said solemnly.

“And my great uncle will just be fine with her doing whatever she needs to? I doubt that. He doesn’t want us resolving the curse.” I scoffed.

“He won’t be able to stop anything. He’s a very old man, Sean. Older than most witches live to be. The curse is starting to unravel as the individual spells that make it up are coming undone, and it’s fighting back. That was why Victor took a turn. It’s designed to fight off any attacks.” The goddess explained.

“Like a computer.” I murmured. “We’ve been deleting lines of code and the anti-virus is trying to stop us from destroying the whole program. Every change we make creates bugs and makes it function differently.”

“I don’t understand human technology, but that sounds about right. There are parts to the curse that can’t be found out in the world. You need the connection Finnick was talking about.” She insisted.

“What is it? Who is it? Can’t you tell me more?” I asked.

“No. I can’t risk the information getting out in the human world. The curse is on high alert for attacks now. Echo will know what to do when the time is right. I can connect with you better than I can connect with her. You were open to the idea of gods and goddesses. Echo is only just starting to be open to me.” The goddess told me.

“I’ll make sure she gets there. Noon on Saturday. Are we going to be able to save Victor in time?” I asked.

“I think so. I can’t be sure. Everything as little room for error at this point. Getting him into that cell will give you more wiggle room.” She replied. “Now, you’ve slept the whole night and your mate is eager to see you. Go on, Sean. Good luck.”

Everything faded into black and I opened my eyes. The room was dark, as always. I could feel Rosario’s hands skimming over my body in the dark.

“What are you doing?” I asked.

“Checking for extras. Arms, legs, vines, flowers. That sort of thing.” He answered.

“Find anything?”

“Your skin is softer, like flower petals. I love how it feels. It makes me want to roll around on you.” Rosario chuckled and rubbed his face in the curve of my neck.

“Let’s go use the mirror in the closet. I want to see.” I said, pulling away from him and getting out of bed.

We found our way to the closet and turned on the light. I could see myself in the mirror. I looked just like I did in the dream.

In the reflection, I could see Rosario’s eyes on my back. He reached out to touch me and the feeling of his fingers on the edge of my wings made my knees weak. I pulled off my pajama pants and let my wings out of my skin.

Rosario reached out again and his fingers traced over the cell like membrane of my wings. I let out a soft moan. It was like they had a direct line to my groin.

“You’re the most gorgeous pixie I’ve ever seen.” He whispered.

I turned to him and slipped my arms around his neck, pulling him into a deep kiss. Rosario’s hand slid up between my wings and started tracing up and down my spine. It was unlike anything I’d ever felt. Rosario pulled away and caressed my cheek with his other hand.

“You kept your freckles. Have I ever told you just how much I love them?” Rosario asked.

“I think you’ve mentioned it a few times.” I chuckled.

“If I ever go a day without telling you how much I love those darling little spots, I want you to hit me, because I’m obviously an imposter.” He grinned.

“We need to get dressed. I have things to get done today. Important things.” I said removing myself from his arms and tucking away my wings.

“I thought we might spend the day in bed. Letting me get used to your new body. Letting your new body get used to me.” Rosario purred as he caressed my backside.

“Sorry, love. This is important and I can’t put it off. There will be plenty of time for you to get used to my new body. We have a very long life together.” I told him and started pulling out my clothes for the day.

My new body was a little thinner, but I could see that there was a lot of muscle where there hadn’t been muscle before. I ran my hand over my new abs. I would make sure these were well taken care of.

“Ooo. Let me feel.” Rosario lunged for me and ran his hands over my stomach.

“You felt them this morning when you were touching me in bed.” I laughed.

“Yes, but now I can look at them while I touch them.” He winked.

I laughed more and pushed him away. He made a pouty face, but dressed when I did. I tightened my belt as much as I could and sighed.

“Pixies have very little body fat. They have to be able to fly, so extra weight doesn’t help. The muscle groups that help them fly are the strongest and usually the largest. That’s why you’ll see a lot of pixies who look like they missed leg day. Not all of them consider their legs because they’re always flying.” Rosario explained.

“Well, I’m not going to let that happen. I’ll take care of everything, top to bottom.” I said.

“And a glorious bottom it is.” He replied seductively.

I shook my head and went out into the room. I grabbed my phone and looked at the time. It was almost eleven! I needed to get Echo and head to Uncle Fenton’s.

We went into the hallway and headed down the stairs. The comfortable scent in our room was replaced by something earthier and I thought I smelled dog. There was another scent that lingered in the halls. Something old and dry. Almost like old books.

Dillon and Jean-Claude were in the entryway. They glanced at us before returning to their conversation, then turned back and stared.

“Looking a little green there, Sean.” Dillon said, chuckling at his own joke.

“Very funny. Where’s Echo?” I asked.

“She’s in the office with Gray, Val, Harmony, and Preston. They’re going over the locations of the wards.” Jean-Claude answered. “How are you feeling this morning?”

“I’m fine. It was a long night, but everything went well.” I told him.

“Sean’s a pixie.” Rosario said proudly. “You should see his wings, their fucking beautiful.”

His hand tightened around mine a little. I was glad that he was proud of the fae I’d turned into. It would be difficult when I had to tell my parents what I’d done. I wasn’t looking forward to that.

Those thoughts brought me to the realization, I didn’t know how to use glamour. I needed to be able to do that so I could finish the testing week in school. I needed it for visiting Uncle Fenton.

“Rosario, how do I do glamour? I didn’t even think to ask.”

“Oh, it’s pretty easy. Since you’re not trying to change things as much as I do, you shouldn’t have a problem. Just focus on the way your skin used to look, the way your hair used to look, and turning your freckles brown again.” He replied simply.

I did what he said and watched as my hands changed back to the color they had been before. I was still thinner, but I figured most people wouldn’t notice that. I grinned at Rosario.

“Oh! I forgot that your teeth would be sharper now. Can you make them look a little more like an omnivore’s teeth? Pixies are mostly carnivorous.” Rosario said.

Closing my eyes, I tried to remember what my teeth looked like. They were pretty straight. My dentist always said they were perfect.

“Better?” I asked.

“Perfect.” He answered.

I opened my eyes again and smiled. Dillon and Jean-Claude looked impressed. I was pretty proud of myself. What else would I be able to pick up as easily as I got that? I couldn’t wait to find out.

“We need to get to the office. I have to get Echo and go or we’ll miss our chance.” I said, heading toward the hall.

“Miss your chance for what?” Rosario asked trailing behind.

“I’ll tell everyone when we’re together. I don’t want to take too long by explaining it twice. Come on.” I replied.

“Now we have to go. I need to hear this.” Dillon said behind us.

I knocked on the door of the office and it opened. The smell almost knocked me over. It was that old book smell, mixed with the earthy smell that I had deduced was werewolf, and there was a smell like atmosphere. Something ethereal and electric.

“You all need to crack a window if all of you are going to be in here. Sean’s new to smelling everyone.” Rosario said, steadying me.

“You’ll get used to it.” Val chuckled.

“I don’t know. I’m still not used to it.” Harmony grumbled.

Echo was standing behind the desk with her hands on it. The map she had me mark yesterday was still spread out on the desk and she was leaning over it. Her uncle turned to look at me.

“You look the same.” Preston said.

“No, he doesn’t.” Echo told him. “Sean is thinner now and a little shorter, maybe an inch. His eyes are different and he’s not wearing his glasses.”

“I hadn’t even noticed.” Val said, moving in and looking at me closely. “Huh. I guess so. It would fool anyone, but my sister. Echo has always seen when we look even a little sick or sad. She’s more observant than most people.”

None of this was important, though, it was good to know I could fool most of the people and just tell them I was wearing contacts. I was betting people would buy that. I was dating one of the hottest girls in school, it made sense that I would change my appearance a little.

I entered the room and made my way to the desk. Echo looked at me with a raised eyebrow. She looked a little like Victor at that moment.

“We need to go to Uncle Fenton’s home. I had a dream last night. The goddess came to me and told me I needed to take you there by noon today and you would know what to do when we got there. It’s just after eleven now, if we leave soon we can make it. She said there’s very little room for error and we need to get this if we want to save Victor.” I insisted.

“Okay, Sean. Let’s go. Everyone, stay here and work on this problem. We need to know how to erase these wards when they keep fighting back.” Echo stated. “I’ll be back soon with more.”

She walked around the desk and looped her arm through mine. “Thank you, Sean.”

“For what?” I asked.

“For being a big help to us. I really appreciate all that you’ve done.” Echo smiled.

“It’s what friends do. Come on.” I said and we headed out the door.

“Wait!” Rosario shouted.

We turned to him. I didn’t know what he could want, we needed to go.

“Car keys.” He held up his keys.

I groaned. “Sorry. I forgot about needing a car.”

I reached out for them, but Rosario held them over his head. I was starting to get angry, when he turned his head and tapped his cheek. I laughed and gave him a little kiss before getting the keys and leaving.

[Return to the Home](#)

Chapter 140 - The Vampire's Servant

We drove in near silence. Echo seemed more distant than she had in weeks. I knew that the situation with Victor had to be part of it.

“Are you doing okay?” I asked.

“Yes. I’m eager to find out what it is that the goddess was telling you about. We had a setback last night. I was hoping this would make up for that.” She replied.

“What happened?”

“We found the wards for the spell that’s keeping all the supernaturals in this area. When Preston and Finn went to examine one of them, they were attacked by a witch. She didn’t seem to understand what was going on. All she knew was that her body was fighting on its own. If Preston moved away from the ward, she would stop attacking him. He’s a fire witch and she was a water witch with an ice ability.” Echo explained.

“Damn. I guess the curse is trying to stop you from removing anymore spells. You’ve already gotten rid of one and pushed back another. When I was talking to the goddess last night, she said that the curse changes as you remove bits of it. I was thinking it was a lot like a computer program. If you make changes to the code, it doesn’t do what it was supposed to because each piece depends on the codes working in a certain way. When Grigori killed himself before it solidified, it made gaps, or bugs, in the code. It was what gave some people bits back. If that makes sense to you.” I said.

“Not really and yes all at the same time. I get what you’re saying. Every time we remove part of it, something else collapses. I think that’s why the curse changed Victor entirely. It could go slowly when we were just testing it, but destroying the spell used on the fae made it increase its attack on Victor and on the curse team. He knew that it was trying to make him doubt and try to kill Finn. Finn’s the leader of the curse team and that would hurt us. It’s part of the reason why I took over and I took over the territory.” She responded.

“The curse is against the Master vampire. Not the Master dhampyr. You’re hoping it gets the curse to leave Victor alone.” I realized.

“Exactly. If a dhampyr holds the territory, there’s no reason for it to keep attacking Victor. I will work to make sure that nothing falls between the cracks while Victor isn’t able to take care of his people. With luck, I can get Victor back soon. Talia named me Master of the territory last night.” Echo told me.

“That was a great idea. Here, I’m supposed to be the brain, but I’ve been busy with other things. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. We all had to grow and change a little when we started living in Victor’s house. This was just your time to do that. Now, you’re back and ready to solve this.” She smiled.

“I’ll cancel my game tonight and let my parents know that I won’t make it.” I said.

“Don’t do that. I have a feeling that you’ll need your family tonight. None of this is sitting quite right with me.” Echo sighed. “Sean, you need to be prepared. He... he may be....”

“Dead. I know. She was talking about how old he is. I’ve been ready to get the call that he’s gone for most of my life. Don’t worry. I’ll go home tonight if he is. My father was really close to Uncle Fenton.” I said softly.

I worked to keep my eyes from filling with tears. Uncle Fenton was like a grandfather to me. I didn’t know how strong I could actually be. If he was gone.... I didn’t even want to think about our last interaction being me shouting at him like I had.

Echo put her hand over mine on the steering wheel. She was a comfort to me, even now, when she smelled like old books. Especially now that she smelled like old books. That was one of my favorite scents.

We pulled in to the parking lot and I locked up Rosario’s car before we went in. Cindy was working. She was one of the weekend receptionists. I waved at her as Remi came up to the counter.

“Hi, Sean! Hi, Echo. Glad to have you come visit again. Our residents love getting visitors. Are you heading up to see Mr. Aimes?” Remi asked.

“Yeah. How was he doing this morning?” I smiled.

“He came down for breakfast like he had not a care in the world. He even flirted a little with Mrs. Leslie.” Remi giggled.

“That’s great. Our last visit didn’t go well. I was hoping he would be in a better mood today and we could try again.” I told her.

“I understand. When they’re moody they can be like children. I’ve got you all checked in. Have a great visit.” She waved us off.

I took Echo’s hand and led her to the elevator. She was a little nervous getting on. I thought it was actually a little cute the way she jumped last time. Echo was always so different from other people I knew.

Neither one of us talked while the elevator was going up. She clung to my hand and stroked my arm. I was grateful it would be us and not some orderly or housekeeper. If he was actually dead, I wanted it to be family who found him. I still held out hope that he would be alive.

We got off on his floor and walked to the door I'd knocked on every weekend since I was a little kid. We waited in silence for the answer, but none came. I knocked again. Still no answer.

I swallowed and reached out, turning the knob. It was unlocked, that meant he was in. He always locked the door when he was going downstairs. I opened the door.

The sound of the TV softly filled the room. Uncle Fenton was in his favorite chair. His eyes were closed, like he was napping. I prayed to the goddess that it was really just him napping. I would rather deal with a grumpy old man than a dead one.

Unfortunately, I could smell the death on him. There was nothing warm coming from him. The smell of atmosphere and electricity that I smelled in Victor's office was there. It was strong.

That must be the smell of witches. We drew close and I took his hand, placing my fingers on his wrist, looking for a pulse. There was none.

"He's dead." I whispered.

"I'm so sorry, Sean." Echo said, putting her hand on my back and rubbing it.

My wings fluttered a little under her hand, making her yip and pull back. I chuckled a little and placed Uncle Fenton's arm back on the arm of his chair.

"Sorry, it was my wings." I murmured.

"No, I'm sorry. I was just a little shocked. I didn't mean to do that. You know I love you, Sean. I just wasn't expecting it." She giggled a little. "What do we do now?"

"We need to call the front desk and report it. I need to find The Old Man. He hates anyone who isn't family. I can't have him attacking people who are trying to take care of Uncle Fenton's body. Can you get his carrier? It's in the bedroom." I asked.

"Okay. I'll go look." Echo said and wandered away.

I turned off the TV and sat on the coffee table across from Uncle Fenton's body. I couldn't believe he was really gone. I thought I was prepared for it, but I wasn't.

"Stop your crying. He wouldn't like it. Fen hated whiners." A voice said from behind me.

"I think he would be fine with me shedding a tear or two. He was like a grandpa to me. I loved him and our last visit ended in a fight." I said softly.

“You smell different, boy. What did you do to yourself?” He asked.

That was when I realized the only other person who was supposed to be in the apartment was Echo. I jumped up and turned around, but all I saw was my uncle’s large black cat.

“Well?” The Old Man asked. “What have you done?”

“Echo.... Can you come here?” I called out.

She came out from the bedroom with the cat carrier and froze. “That’s who we need. We need the cat.”

“Can’t break the curse without me. Then what? Are you going to have me put down?” The cat chuckled.

“No. We can take care of you. Will you come home with us?” Echo asked.

“Hmph. Leave it to you to not be surprised by a talking cat.” The Old Man said.

“I’ve seen a lot of odd things in the last few months. Please come with us. We can make sure you have all the fish you can eat and we have a huge yard full of plants and trees. I’ll make sure the werewolves don’t chase you.” Echo promised.

“Fine. I’ll go. But I want one thing before I get in that carrier.” He said.

“What do you need?” I asked.

“I want her to be the one who puts me in and I want to be here when they take him. He was always a good boy.” The Old Man whispered.

Echo put the carrier down and went to the coffee table and picked up the large cat. She held him tight and he rubbed his face on hers. She loaded him into the carrier and secured the little door on it.

I picked up the phone off the hook and dialed the front desk. It took a few rings before Cindy picked up.

“This is Sean Flowers. I’m in room 336. I need someone up here. My great uncle is dead. We caught the cat and put him in a carrier, so it’s safe for people to come in.” I explained.

“I’m so sorry, Sean. I’ll send the crew up and contact your father.” She replied.

“Thank you. I’ll stay here until someone can come get his body. Echo and I will take the cat with us.”

“We appreciate it. We didn’t know what to do about him. I’m sure Remi would have taken him home, though.” Cindy said.

“He’s family. We’ll take care of him. Thanks, Cindy.” I answered before I hung up and went to open the door so they wouldn’t have to knock.

Echo put the carrier on the coffee table with the cat in it. He turned and looked out the holes on the side. I looked along with him. Uncle Fenton looked peaceful and relaxed. I was going to miss him.

“How old are you?” I asked the cat.

“One hundred and forty years old, give or take.” He replied.

“Why didn’t you ever talk to me before?” I asked.

“Because Fen asked me not to. He asked me to leave the family alone after he died. I was gonna go back to the farm and live there. I figured there would be enough rodents and other tasty things to hunt.” The Old Man said.

“Were you his familiar?”

The Old Man laughed. “Witches don’t have familiars, boy. That’s just human superstition. I have a question for you two, though.”

“What is it?”

“Why does the girl look and sound so much like my daughter?” He asked.

I looked at Echo. That didn’t make sense. No. It made perfect sense.

“The bugs in the code. Damn it. You’re Fenton Aimes. You’re supposed to be dead. You’re the anti-virus. You’re what keeps the curse sentient enough to defend itself!” I exclaimed.

“Fenton? You’re really Fenton Aimes?” Echo asked.

“I was. I’m just The Old Man now.” He scoffed. “Someone’s coming. We can continue this later.”

A couple orderlies came in the door with a wheeled bed. They worked quickly and efficiently, double checking that Uncle Fenton was really dead, then loading him on the bed and wheeling him out of the room. My dad and Uncle Fenton had already arranged everything. I knew exactly where he was heading.

We stood up solemnly and I picked up the cat carrier. Echo locked the door for me and we headed to the elevator. When we got to the lobby, Desi, Cindy, and Remi came over to tell me

how sorry they were for my loss. I told them my parents would arrange getting his things and that I needed to go. Each woman gave me a hug before we left.

I unlocked Rosario's car and put Fenton in the back, using the seatbelt to secure the carrier in place. I got in the driver's seat and started the car. We really had Fenton Aimes Sr. in the car. I couldn't believe it.

"To answer your question, I'm Echo Nightshade, Mr. Aimes. I'm Grace's great granddaughter. Now you can help us get rid of the curse. I'm so happy." Echo grinned.

"Why would I do that? I cast that curse for a reason. Everyone will suffer."

"Why? You got what you wanted. Grace married the witch. The vampire died. Generations of supernaturals have suffered already. When will it be enough?" I questioned.

"I got what I wanted? How do you even know what I wanted? My child did what she was supposed to do. That vampire was killed by his subordinates. More generations will suffer." He scoffed.

"What did you want then? What was this all for? Just to make others suffer? How is that worth anything to an old man trapped in the body of an old cat?" I shouted.

"Don't take that tone with me, boy. I'm your elder. You need to respect your elders." Fenton growled.

"Fuck you! I know you teamed up with that asshole Hollis Adair. You're a piece of shit just like he is! I only respect people who are worthy of respecting and that doesn't include you or the damned king of the fae." I snarled.

"Sean, calm down and focus on the road. I don't want to start my second life before I've had time to enjoy my first." Echo reprimanded me.

I grumbled, but did as she said. The last thing I needed was to die in a car accident as soon as I became fae.... Would I die? I shook my head. I didn't want to test it.