

Chapter 81 - The Vampire's Servant

[Victor]

I watched Grayson leave and wanted to go with him. When Master Marius disappeared with Echo, I fell to my knees. There was a piercing pain in my chest. If it were in my nature to cry, I would have. One of my greatest fears was right in front of me.

It was worse that he caught me in a bout of anger. I'd never felt anything like that. Even in my human life, I wasn't explosively angry. I realized I didn't know what I would've done if I had gotten my hands on Echo. That terrified me.

Just last night, the curse only had a weak hold on me, now I was changing. I wished Grayson hadn't pushed back on taking her to the pack lands, but he was right. She would worry, I would fall into a dark hole without her.

Echo was the only light in my life. Even having a territory again paled in comparison to having my sweet little Echo near me. When I woke up and she was snuggled next to me, I felt more alive than I had ever felt.

More impressive to me was the fact that she had fought with her sister and brother about me. She stood up for herself and for our relationship. I wanted to do so much more to keep her safe. If this curse made me hurt her.... I didn't think I could live with myself.

Grayson was right. I was stronger with Echo near me. I thought more clearly. I would keep her with me until it was clear that she wasn't safe. Talia would help me keep my temper. Now she knew the curse was affecting me, she wouldn't expect me to act like myself.

I opened one of the journals stacked on my desk. It was from the months before Grigori met the sun. There was little that delved into the personal side of his life.

He noted the weather, date, state of his territory, and simple sentences about his progress in his negotiations. Nothing more than 'first meeting with F.A.' or 'meeting with W.P. went well'. One sentence that struck me, though, was two months before he met the sun. Grigori noted, 'Found a beautiful flower today. I will investigate it further and see if I can acquire it for my home.' No other mention of the flower followed. I wondered at it.

It was possible that it was a code for something, or he merely felt like noting the presence of an interesting flower. I made note of it. I would try to talk to Lila and some of the vampires in the area to see if they had any clues.

About an hour later, I got up from my desk. I went to the kitchen to get some blood. After I finished my drink, I climbed the stairs and went to Echo's room. She was wrapped in Gray's arms.

I stood near her bed. She didn't look peaceful. Her brow was furrowed even in sleep. I could see tears in the corner of her eyes. I reached down and wiped the tears away. I hadn't meant to wake her, but she opened her eyes slightly.

"Victor?" She whispered.

"I'm here, princess." I replied softly.

"Please forgive me. I just got scared and I needed help to deal with my new ability. I didn't mean to make you afraid that he would take me away." Echo murmured.

"I will forgive you if you will forgive me. I was angry and upset. I didn't mean to imply that I wouldn't be able to forgive you. I love you and I always want you with me." I said.

"Let's not fight again. I don't like how it feels. I'll be better and talk to you instead of acting out. I just didn't like how you were talking to me. Sometimes, it bothers me when you act like a father to me. You're not my father. I know you're older, but you're my Solus Amor. I don't want you to treat me like a child." She explained.

"I understand. We should explore your new abilities more. I wonder what you could use that for. Sharing images and sensations is rare." I told her.

"Marius is going to come and train me after dinner every night. He says that's how his ability to show someone their death works. It's why I was gone for a while. He was seeing if I could do the same thing he could." Echo said.

"Well, go back to sleep. It sounds like your day got even longer. You need your rest." I smiled and leaned down, kissing her on the forehead.

She snuggled into Grayson's arms and started drifting off again. I watched over them for a little while. It made me miss the nights when she was healing and I would lay with them while they slept. It was hard to believe it was only a few nights ago. My Echo had blossomed nicely as she healed.

I returned to my office feeling better. Echo was going to be fine. She was powerful and had gained one of the more fearsome abilities of her sire. Once she was properly trained and could fight, it would make her a force to be reckoned with. I could imagine that, in a hundred years or so, she would lose just enough of her innocent demeanor to actually make people fear her.

Maybe she would end up like Talia. Someone who looked unthreatening, but was skilled and deadly. I liked that idea better. Echo being her sweet innocent self until someone crossed her.

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Returning to reading the journals and noting the progression of the talks, I felt at peace. I knew I would figure this out. Everything would be alright. Echo would grow, Grayson would mature, I would live, and our life together would even out.

About an hour later, I heard the buzzing of the front gate. Talia called out that she would get it. I wondered who it could be at this hour. If Silence or Talon had figured anything out, they would have called or texted, same for Trent.

My curiosity got the better of me and I went to see who it could be. I arrived in the entryway just as Talia opened the door. I walked toward her, but froze when I heard what she said next.

“Welcome, Finn. Please come in.” She smiled.

“Thank you, mistress. I’m glad you called. I’m thrilled to come help Vic out.” He said, walking in my door and picking her up into a hug.

Finnick was the youngest of my brood. He also waffled between being Talia’s favorite and being a thorn in her side. He never tried for a territory. I think that was one of the things they bonded over. No real ties keeping them in one spot.

He was different. He kept sinking into the human world and forsaking ours. Finn was annoying and pig headed. Something about his attitude always grated on me.

“There’s the man!” Finn grinned.

After setting Talia down, he strode over with his hand out. Finn was a few inches taller than my six feet. He was broader as well, having been a Danish warrior. His hair was golden blond and he had a scar that ran over his cheek bone just under his right eye. Even that seemed to enhance his attractiveness.

Women had always thrown themselves at him and he wasn’t in the habit of saying no to their offers. I was surprised there weren’t more dhampyrs and hybrids out there with his blood. He had no qualms about sleeping with women, or men, no matter their species.

“What on earth is that scent?” He moaned half way across the entry.

I closed the distance and took his hand. “I appreciate you coming out here, but I don’t need your help, Finnick.”

“When mistress calls, you come. She said you do need my help. Goddess, I’m starving. Where is that smell coming from?” Finn asked.

“I have bags of blood in the kitchen. Come with me and I’ll get you some.” I told him.

“I think I’ll have whatever you’re hiding upstairs.” He pulled his hand from mine. “It smells delicious.”

Finn started for the stairs and I rushed to get in front of him. I grabbed him by the arm and spun him into the wall. He started laughing.

“I see how it is. Keeping the good stuff for yourself, huh? I’m your brother, you should share with family.” Finn grinned.

“Stay downstairs. I will not warn you again. I am Master of this territory and I have not given you permission to feed on anything other than bagged blood. If you want to have live donors, I suggest you do as I say.” I warned.

“Come on, just a little nip. It’s only polite for you to take care of your guests. You have a tasty little bloodwhore up there.”

I grabbed him by the throat and lifted him against the wall. I was ready to rip his throat out. It wouldn’t kill him, but it would make him think twice about disobeying me again.

“Never call her that, or I’ll rip out your tongue and shove it back down your throat!” I growled.

“Victor?” Echo said softly from the top of the stairs.

I looked up at her. She was wearing her fuzzy pajama pants and a tank top. Her hair was a little mussed and she looked scared.

Grayson came around the corner and stepped in front of her. “Sorry, she was faster than me. Do you need help, Victor?”

“Get Echo back in her room and lock the door.” I ordered.

Finn managed to slip my grasp and started up the stairs. “Hello, pretty girl. I’m Finn. Come here and let me have a taste of you.” He purred.

Echo squealed and disappeared. Finn froze. He looked around, confused.

“Never had that reaction.”

A moment later, Bellamy entered from the other side of the hallway. “What the hell is going on? I’m trying to fucking sleep.”

“Oh, a powerful wolf. Your house is just full of tasty little snacks. I should’ve come to visit you much sooner.” Finn chuckled.

“Talia. He’s going to make her angry.” I warned.

“Then he’ll get what he deserves.”

“You’re such a gorgeous little wolf. Let me have a little nip of you.” Finn said flirtatiously.

“Gray, go to my bedroom. Your mate is there. She told me there’s a vampire here making trouble for Victor.” Bellamy ordered.

Grayson nodded and rushed past her. I had Finn by the back of his shirt as he strained forward. Bellamy moved to the top of the stairs. She didn’t seem amused.

Finn climbed the stairs, proclaiming how amazing and beautiful Bellamy was as if she were a trapped animal. She raised an eyebrow. I let him go. If he was going to be a fool, I wasn’t going to be attached to him.

“I wouldn’t do that, if I were you, Finnick. Victor warned you to stay downstairs.” Talia warned as he held out his hand like he was going to pet Bellamy.

“She’s not as skittish as the other one.” He chuckled, stepping on to the landing at the top of the stairs.

Bellamy lashed out, kicking him between his legs hard and punching him in the nose when he bent over. He fell backward and tumbled down the stairs past me. I smirked as he crashed into the wall at the bottom and Bellamy leapt down.

She quickly turned him around and twisted his arm behind his back, then dislocated it before doing the same to the other. Talia snickered as she watched. I couldn’t believe she was just going to sit back and watch as he tried to feed on Echo.

“Victor is the Master of this territory. It doesn’t matter who you are or who invited you. You will respect that. If he says you eat from bags, you eat from a fucking bag. If he says you don’t go upstairs, you do not go up the fucking stairs.” She growled. “Dilly, Claude, I want you to guard Echo. Keep this man away from her.”

“Thank you for your assistance, Queen Bellamy.” I said with a bow, and helped her off the body of my broodmate.

“Of course, Master Nightshade. We’ll take care of your Solus Amor while you deal with this... person.” Bellamy replied and headed up the stairs. “If he tries to come in my room while I sleep, or into Echo’s I’m going to stake him. I don’t care if he’s your childe, Talia. He needs some manners.”

“While you are here, Finnick, you will protect Echo as if your life depends on it. You will not feed on her. No matter the situation, unless she offers you her blood. The girl you scared off is Victor’s Solus Amor. If you bite her, you may well start a war you are unprepared to fight. She is also the child of Marius. If you do not fear Victor, you know you should fear Marius.” Talia told him coolly.

“Got it. Don’t bite the tasty treat.” He groaned.

“Do not call my wife a ‘tasty treat’.” I growled and kicked him.

Finn yipped. “Right, sorry. No nibbles on Lady Nightshade.”

“Why did you invite him, Talia? I have only a few vampires I’m permitting in the house because I want to avoid issues like this. He has no self-control! I’ve had younger vampires in this house who didn’t behave like this!” I told her.

“You need his ability. He’s the only one of our line who has the ability to find anything. You need answers. He can find them.” Talia explained.

“I may not be to your taste, big brother, but I am useful. I certainly don’t want you to die.” Finn scoffed.

“Die?” Echo squeaked from upstairs.

“What are you doing there?” I asked.

“You’re going to die, Victor?” Her voice quivered.

“We were trying to get her back to her room while he was incapacitated. Sorry.” Dillon explained.

Echo clasped over her heart and ran off toward her room. Grayson chased after her and they were followed by Dillon and Jean-Claude. I kicked Finn one more time.

“Idiot. I didn’t want her to know about the curse.” I growled.

“That doesn’t seem like a very open and honest relationship, Victor.” He chuckled.

“I’m going to dislocate your jaw next time you open your fucking mouth.” Bellamy told him sternly. “Victor, you have to go talk to her. She’s going to be freaking out about this.”

“Talia, please make sure Finnick gets fed and stays on the first floor.” I told her, turning toward the stairs. “Queen Bellamy, would you assist her. In case he gets any ideas.”

“No problem, Victor. Go on.” She smiled.

I ran up the stairs. I could feel Echo crying from the moment she’d turned and run away. My heart felt heavy. I wished Bellamy had broken his jaw.

Dillon and Jean-Claude let me past them, into Echo’s room. She sat on her bed. Grayson had his arm around her and was holding her.

Kneeling in front of her, I cupped her cheek in my hand and wiped away her tears. Echo launched herself at me, knocking me backward as she clung to me. I laid on the floor with Echo gripping me tightly and sobbing into my shoulder.

“Hush, princess. I’m trying to fix it. I swear. I love you and I’m trying to stay alive.” I murmured.

“Y-you c-can’t die, Victor! I j-just found you!” She sobbed.

“I’m working on it, Echo. There’s a spell on this territory. Whoever claims the title of Master, is doomed to die or disappear. I’m trying to break it, I promise.” I said softly, stroking her back and hair.

“Let me help. Please. I want to help save you. I can’t just do nothing, Victor.” Echo begged.

“You can go with me to find my great great-grandfather’s journals. You’re good at cleaning and organizing. This is the perfect way to use your skills.” Grayson offered.

“Yes. That would help me a great deal. He was the Alpha when the curse was cast. Would you go help Grayson, princess?” I asked.

“I will. Thank you, Victor. Thank you for letting me help. We’re going to save you. I know we are.” She sniffled and kissed my cheek.

“I love you, Echo. We’ve been working hard. I have everyone getting me all of the information they can find on it. I need you to promise, though, that you won’t try to leave the Northwest until the curse is broken.” I told her.

“Why not?”

“If what I’ve found so far is true, you could get hurt if you tried to leave. Promise you’ll stay here until it’s broken.” I insisted.

“I’ll stay here forever if I have to. Just stay alive for me.” She whispered.

“Of course, my Echo. I need to go tend to my guest. I promise he won’t try and feed off you again.” I said.

“If he does, I’m telling Marius. I won’t be food for any vampire who wants me anymore, Victor. You’re the only one allowed to drink my blood.” Echo replied softly.

I squeezed her to me. I loved that she was willing to let me feed on her. I wouldn’t bite her until I knew she was open to me marking her. The urge would be too strong. I wouldn’t be able to resist her.

Echo sat up on me and traced her fingers over my lips. She was gentle. I closed my eyes and soaked in the feeling of my little love treating me so softly. I loved the feeling of her sweet, tender, touches on my skin.

“I need to go, princess. You get some sleep. I’ll be here when you wake.” I promised.

She nodded and got off me. I stood, dusted myself off, and said my goodbyes. I needed to go deal with my broodmate. With luck, he’d found his manners.

Partnerships

Chapter 82 - The Vampire's Servant

Finn was sitting in the kitchen with Talia when I went back downstairs. Bellamy went upstairs as soon as she saw me. I had relieved Dillon and Jean-Claude so they would be rested for their training in the morning. They were doubtful, but no vampire could disobey their sire.

I sat at the table with Talia and Finn. It appeared that he’d healed from his tumble with Bellamy. He was wincing a little as he lifted the glass of blood to his lips.

“So, you’ve brought him to help with the curse. I appreciate any assistance, but I wish you’d talked to me first.” I told Talia.

“Victor, you know you’re one of my favorite children. I couldn’t just let you take on this curse alone if there was even the possibility of someone else who could help. I’m glad you didn’t toss him out on sight, even though his behavior was quite bad.” She replied.

“Now Echo knows about the curse.” I sighed.

“Sorry. I didn’t realize you were keeping it a secret. Why wouldn’t you tell your Solus Amor you were in danger? Yeah, I can understand the worrying, but she would want to keep you alive. She would be extra cuddly and amorous with your potential death hanging over the two of you.” Finn winked.

“I want Echo to be with me because she wants to, not because she’s scared any moment could be our last. I don’t need fear to make my wife more amorous. She’s already quite amorous.” I told him.

“Nice. Sorry about earlier. It started off as teasing, but I wasn’t prepared for a dhampyr. Talia told me what she was while you were up there. I never met a living one before. You’re pretty lucky. You found your Solus Amor before she died, you can still have kids with her.” He said.

“I’m lucky to have found her at all. Everything else is a bonus. Now, how can you help me?” I asked.

Finn smiled and finished off his glass of blood before leaning forward. “I can find anything. No matter how concealed, lost, or long has passed. If there's something that can help you, I can find it. I just need to know what I’m looking for.”

“How much do you need to know about what you’re looking for?”

“I need to know pretty much exactly what I’m looking for. The less vague, the easier it is to find. I need as much information about it as possible. Talia says, as my power grows, I’ll eventually be able to find things easily no matter how vague the information is.” He explained.

“If I told you to find me someone who can speak to me about the curse... how long could that take?” I pressed.

“A few months, depending on where they are and if they even exist. And, if they can speak about it, how much they can speak about it. You might try ‘find someone who can tell me almost everything about the curse’. It won’t be quick, but it’ll get you someone who can tell you almost everything.”

“Finn, find someone who can tell me almost everything about the curse. Please.” I said.

“No problem, big brother. I’ll start looking immediately. As soon as you asked I got the feeling they exist. I’ll be looking every night until I find them.” Finn vowed.

“Thank you.” I sighed.

“So when do I officially meet my sister-in-law? She sure was cute. You think I might get a hug for helping?” He asked.

I scowled at him. “She’s mine. No other vampire may touch her.”

“Victor. That’s not like you. I think the curse has made you a little more possessive of Echo. You almost sounded like a mated werewolf.” Talia chuckled.

I looked away. I’d noticed a slight possessive streak, but I thought it was the influence of having Grayson involved in my relationship. In fact, once I accepted Grayson, it was as if my mind included him in my ownership of Echo.

Thinking about if Grayson was taken from us made me angry. It was strange. In all my years, I hadn’t been interested in men. Some vampires lost their inhibitions about such things after only a couple hundred years, I never did. I’d have to think on that in the future, for now, I was just happy to have him with me and Echo. Maybe in a hundred or so years, Echo’s little fantasy might come true.

“That’s something to think about.” I murmured. “For now, Finn, you may stay in the house. If I catch you trying to drink from my Echo, you’ll be sent to live in the vampire boarding house one of my supports runs. You stay away from the wing where my bedroom is. I will have you in the guest room next to Talia.”

“Understandable. If I had a cute little Solus Amor, I wouldn’t want anyone else around her either.”

I stood and excused myself to my office. I had a lot of work to do still. I needed to take care of some issues in my territory. For the most part, it was all settled. Even more vampires had gotten in line when they saw how I hunted for Echo.

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The night passed quickly as I made phone calls and did paperwork. Soon, my alarm went off signaling that I needed to get changed and move into Echo’s bed. It was a little amusing to me. She had a similar alarm on her phone. We were finding ways to still have time and make each other comfortable.

After changing, I went into Echo’s room. She was curled around Grayson again. I slipped into her bed and scooted close to them. I put my hand on Echo’s hip. She sighed and rolled over to wrap her arms around me. Grayson moved closer and threw his arm over both of us.

This felt right, like I had never belonged anywhere as much as I belonged here in the grasp of these two amazing young people. The heat of their bodies warmed me. I closed my eyes and pretended I could sleep like they did.

“Victor.” Grayson whispered some time later.

“Yes, Grayson?” I asked.

“Don’t tell Echo I was holding you. Goddess only knows what she’ll imagine.”

“It can be our secret.” I chuckled.

“Who’s that guy downstairs?”

“My other broodmate. Finnick... Finn. He’s younger than me. Talia likes him more. He’s more her type physically. They were together for a hundred years or so after he got his memory back.” I told him.

“Ew. Are all vampires freaks like that?” He asked.

“Childe is only a title. We aren’t permitted relationships until our memories come back. Talia likes tall blond men and short dark women. I wouldn’t be surprised if they rekindled their acquaintance while they’re here.”

“I thought she said something about having a Solus Amor. Why would she cheat?” Grayson pressed.

“It’s not cheating. Most vampires have open relationships with their spouses and mates. When you have a long life, your eye tends to wander.” I said.

“Are you going to do that to Echo?” He growled.

“I’m a little different from most vampires. Like Finn, I embrace and reject some things. He doesn’t like the political side of vampirism and has never sought power or property. He lives to experience everything new that humans create and see everything there is to see. I like power, but I was never one to engage in the relationships most vampires forge. I would create equal alliances. I never owed anything to anyone. I never created a marriage bond and I only slept with women when my need was overwhelming. I’m considered a prude among vampires.” I explained with a chuckle. “I will never stray from Echo’s side.”

“Good. I don’t want to have to kick your ass.” Grayson whispered.

“And I don’t want to have to explain to Echo why you’re having to heal a half dozen broken bones.” I replied.

“Can’t you two go one day without fighting?” Echo groaned.

She started kissing down my chest and wiggled her way lower. Grayson gasped as I saw the blankets moving. She must have brushed against him as she moved lower. Her hands slipped into my pants and she grasped me firmly.

“What are you doing, princess?” I asked.

“I missed you last night. Don’t ever get mad at me like that again. Never leave me alone at bedtime, Victor. I couldn’t stand it.” Echo answered softly as her hands slid up and down my shaft.

“I was here at bedtime.” Grayson pouted. “You were too tired to do anything.”

“I’m not tired now.” She purred.

Grayson threw aside the blankets and got into a kneeling position, pulling Echo from laying on her side, to her knees. He pulled her hair back. I watched intently, wondering what he was planning.

“Pull Victor out of his pants and go down on him, Echo. He’s been through a lot. Don’t you think he deserves to feel your mouth on him?” Grayson asked.

“Yes, Gray.” She murmured as she did what he said.

The first smooth slide into Echo's mouth was different from the last time she fellated me. Her body was to the side instead of right in front of me. Her tongue caressed me differently. I loved it.

Grayson pulled down Echo's fuzzy pants and tore her panties away. She yelped in surprise, which vibrated down my length. I moaned at the feeling.

He fumbled with his pants. From my position, it almost looked as if he was sliding himself into her, but then I saw his member between her legs. He kept positioning her until her legs were together, squeezing him as he rubbed her from the outside.

His free hand then gripped her hip and he started moving her body, sliding it forward and back, which moved her mouth up and down my shaft. Once she picked up the motion, he moved his hand behind her. I could see him working his finger in and out of her.

"Oh, goddess, I want to be inside you so bad, Echo. Ever since yesterday afternoon, I've craved the feeling of you on my dick. Just being this close is almost unbearable. Just one little slip, one wild thrust, and I'd finally get what I've been craving." He groaned.

"Would you like that, princess? Would you like Grayson to take you from behind while you pleasure me. Having two men inside you at once, filling you and making you scream with pleasure." I asked.

Echo pulled back. "If you two keep talking like that, I'm going to finish. Gray, what's gotten into you? You never talk when we do this, you only growl."

"I'm working past my block. Let me be in control of this one. I'm learning. I know how much you like it when Victor talks. I'm trying to be better." Grayson panted.

"By all means, you take control, Grayson." I sighed happily and relaxed.

"Yes, Gray. Anything you want to do." Echo whispered in a strained voice, before returning her attentions to her previous task.

He grinned brightly and started moving his hand faster. After a while, he moved his hand again and there was a deep moan from Echo.

"You like that, angel? Two fingers fit so well in you. You're so hot and wet for me. You look so beautiful when you suck cock." Grayson murmured.

I looked down at her. He was right. There was a delicate blush across her cheeks and her dark lashes fluttered as her precious pink lips slid up and down my shaft. She was a work of art come to life.

My end came nearer as I watched Grayson mimic taking Echo from behind, while using his fingers on her. I tried to hang on, as much as I could, but an orgasm hit Echo and she moaned. It pushed me over the edge and I released into her mouth.

Echo pulled back as she swallowed. I maneuvered myself so my head was under hers, and I started kissing her. She moaned against my lips, making them vibrate pleasantly.

Suddenly, she squealed. "OH! Gray! It's too much!"

"Just relax, angel. I know you can take three. Just keep on kissing Victor and relax your body. You can do it." He replied.

Soon, her whimpers turned to lusty groans as her body grew used to having three of Grayson's fingers inside of her. She was amazing. Echo was absolute perfection. Eager, willing, and responsive. After years of sleeping with women who had done it all so often they were bored by the prospect of sex half the time, I was finally with someone who was interested and excited for it. And I couldn't wait to teach her everything I knew.

As Echo reached her peak, Grayson ordered me to move, then turned her around and pressed himself into her mouth. Echo sucked eagerly, probably trying to make him feel as good as he made her feel. My little Echo was fond of reciprocation.

"Victor, you want to clean her up while she does this?" Grayson asked.

I grinned and positioned myself with my mouth behind Echo. The taste of her orgasm was delightful. The way she sighed and moaned as I diligently licked every inch of her, was enticing.

"Oh, fuck, I'm going to cum, Echo." He groaned.

Quickly, I ran my tongue around the rim of Echo's sweet pucker. She squealed and Grayson came at that moment. I chuckled as I sat back on my heels.

Once Echo had finished with Grayson, she turned to me with a shocked look and a deep red blush on her cheeks. She looked like she had been caught doing something she shouldn't and I was betting it was enjoying what I did to her. She was so innocent, she probably had never even considered all of the things we could do to her which she would enjoy.

"Why did you do that, Victor?" She asked.

"Because I wanted to and I thought you might enjoy it. Did you enjoy it, my princess? You don't have to be ashamed if you did." I smiled.

She looked down and managed to somehow turn completely red, as she nodded shyly. I don't think anyone could understand how much that made my heart soar. It was so precious and adorable. I was thrilled to be here to see Echo awaken sexually. I would hold all of these memories close to my heart for the rest of my life.

“Then, you want me to do that more often?” I questioned.

A half smile quirked up Grayson’s lips. I knew he would love the charming way she acted so shyly. It was one of the things we had bonded over. Our love for all of Echo’s little quirks.

Echo nodded.

“You want me to do other things to make you feel good?” I pressed.

She nodded again.

“What about me, Echo? Do you want me to make you feel good too?” Grayson asked.

Echo bit her lips together and nodded a third time.

“Then I shall make certain Grayson is aware of all the ways to pleasure you, Echo. Together, we’ll take you to heights you never dreamed of. And we’ll do that forever.” I promised.

“You’re not going to die and leave me?” She asked.

“Never, my perfect princess. We’ll beat this curse and everything will be fine.” I said, pulling her into a hug. “Grayson will become your human servant, I will break the curse, and we will all live happily ever after. I promise.”

“We better, or I’ll be very upset with you.” Echo whispered.

“I never want that, my love. Now, come cuddle with me while Grayson goes to do his morning training.” I said, tugging her to lay down again.

Grayson grumbled about it not being fair that we got to cuddle while he had to go train. I grinned at him as I pulled the blanket over us and felt Echo curl around me. Part of me may see Grayson as belonging to me, but I really loved irking him.

/A Fae Issue

Chapter 83 - The Vampire's Servant

[Echo]

During first period, I went to Mr. Moxon’s office. There was another man there who he introduced as Lincoln McChesney. He left me with Mr. McChesney, who insisted I call him

Link. I told him my story. Beginning to end. He listened and wrote notes. It took nearly the entire period for the abridged version and answer some of his questions.

Link was a nice man. He was tall and thick with salt and pepper hair and a full beard. He looked like someone who would've frightened me before, but I trusted people from Gray's pack. Link told me to practice the exercises Mr. Moxon gave me until we could meet again next week.

I didn't have the same problem I did in history class, and I was able to turn in a lot of my work. I still had a pile to finish, but I was confident I would manage it in the next few days. I'd asked Amy if I could hold off on training so I could get my work done. She agreed. Now I was set to do homework until dinner, then train with Marius and do more homework until bedtime.

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“Remember to say ‘I appreciate it’ not ‘thank you’. If they ask for your name, tell them they may not have your name, but they may call you Echo. We need to be very polite and respectful. I know I don’t need to tell you that, it’s mostly to remind myself. Insulting a fae in their own territory is dangerous.” Gray warned before getting out of the truck and running around to help me out.

I straightened out my skirt and grabbed the letters which were laying on the seat of the truck. We walked up the stone path.

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“And you?” She said to Gray.

“I’m Grayson Padua. My brother is Alpha Trent Padua of the Hallowed Moon Pack.” He replied.

“I am Maeve. Please come in.” She said opening her door.

“Th—” I started and Gray put his hand over my mouth.

“We appreciate it.” He said with a smile.

“Oh. Those of us who have chosen to live among humans have long learned that thanking is not meant as an insult or a recognition of debt. Those who choose to live apart from humans are still functioning on old beliefs and rules. You can eat food offered here, thank people, and give your name to us if we ask to have it without fearing any repercussions.” Maeve assured us.

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“How on earth did that happen? And you’re all full siblings? You obviously have plant magic. Could it be a witch with a wandering eye? Are these older or younger children? What’s your age difference?” She asked.

“We’re triplets. Our father was a werewolf, our mother was a witch.” I explained.

“A supernatural triad.” Maeve gasped.

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“Amazing. A triad like this has never existed, simply because of the general dislike everyone has of vampires.” She said.

“I’m aware of the dislike. It’s why we’re here.” I told her. “There have been some mean notes left in my locker by some of the fae kids at school.”

“Do you have them?”

I handed her the stack of notes. She looked at each of them with a stern and serious look on her face. When she was done she set them aside.

“I see. I can find the children who did this and tell them to leave you alone. First, I need to test something.” Maeve stated, pulling a folding knife from her pocket.

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“I’m sorry about him. He’s my mate. They get overprotective.” I said.

“Werewolves are like that about their females. I understand.” She replied and sliced a little cut in her hand.

The blood swelled up out of her skin. I reached into my pocket and pulled out a pack of tissues. I had been crying a lot and had decided to carry some with me.

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“You healed me? I was testing to see if you were as drawn to fae blood as vampires. Instead, you did something you weren’t supposed to be able to do. You don’t just have plant magic. You have fae magic. No other magic works on us. At least, not well.” She murmured.

“Do you know anything about the curse on this territory? Does it work on you?” I asked.

“Yes, I was the leader of the fae when it happened. It does affect my people. We were once able to hide. Fenton Aimes accused us of hiding instead of helping him against the werewolves and vampires. We can only use our glamour for about eight hours a day. Then it fades. When the spell was cast, we lost the ability to use it altogether. Then the Master of the territory sent me a letter. I still have it. Give me a moment.” Maeve said, standing.

She left the room and Gray helped me back to the couch. I leaned against him briefly. I didn’t know why I was so tired.

“How did you know to heal her like that?” He asked.

“I didn’t. I just wanted the blood to stop and, when I touched her, she felt like a plant. So I tried to heal her like I did the flower you stepped on.” I replied.

“Have you always been able to heal plants?”

“I can talk to them, too. That was how I convinced the flowers we planted to bloom on the first night, even though they were still shocked from being moved.” I smiled.

“You’re finding new ways to surprise me every day.” He chuckled.

“Here it is.” Maeve said as she reentered the room.

The paper was old and a little frayed. I opened it and read the careful lettering on it.

Mistress Maeve,

I know we have not met, but I have heard that you were affected by Fenton’s spell. I have heard from a reliable source that it has not cemented. There is still hope for all our peoples.

In the morning, I intend to meet the sun. With luck, that will break the spell and your people will once again be ‘the hidden ones’.

Please accept my sincerest apologies for causing this issue. Your people did not deserve to be pulled into the dispute between Fenton and I.

I ask only one favor. Please find my flower, if she still exists, let her know that I died loving her and I would do it again for the chance to have those precious two months with her once more.

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I could feel the tears in my eyes. His flower, like Victor called me his princess. Someone had loved him before he died. It reminded me that Victor could die. I managed to hold myself together.

“Did you ever find her?” I asked.

“No. We couldn’t find her, not even some of our best trackers could find her. He gave his life to try and free us all from Fenton’s curse. It was the least we could do.” She replied.

“What was her name?” Gray asked.

“That was the thing, the reason we didn’t get involved. It was Grace Aimes. She was his— Oh!” Maeve grasped her chest in pain. “I’ve said too much. The pain really is spectacular. I won’t say more, but I will let you have the letter. We have ears everywhere. We know the new Master is trying to break the curse. And we know that his name is Nightshade. I assume you’re connected with him. Let us know how we can help. I’ll take care of these children. You are not a vampire and don’t deserve this treatment.”

“Thank you very much. We’re going to do our best to take care of this, I promise. I know Victor would like to negotiate a peace with you. The fae here shouldn’t have to worry about vampires.” I said.

“Tell Master Nightshade, that you have gained our favor and we will agree to a peaceful alliance if he can break this curse. We will give all we can to your efforts. Until the curse is broken and

the alliance secured, we will only speak with you, Echo. The name of a nymph, the magic of a fae, and the innocence of a child. You are unique and I would like to get to know you better.” She smiled.

“We’ll be going now. Echo has a lot of work to do and Victor will be up soon. We’ll tell him everything. Thank you.” Gray said as he stood and helped me up.

/A Fae Issue

Chapter 84 - The Vampire's Servant

[Echo]

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/A Fae Issue

Chapter 85 - The Vampire's Servant

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He got a look on his face, followed by a strange smile. "I figured out something better. These are all from fae students. We can go talk to their leader. If she meets you, she'll know what a nice girl you are. They would be ordered not to harass you again."

"Shouldn't I talk to them first?" I asked.

"They wouldn't listen. Unfortunately, I know a few of these kids. It's in their nature to be assholes. Literally part of what they are. Those were the ones who wrote the meanest things. I can maneuver talking to the fae, but you can't and an adult fae would be more lenient with the tricky aspects." He told me. "Come on, let's go eat lunch."

Gray guided me to the cafeteria. We went to sit at the table with Harmony and Val. When we got there, Gray showed the notes to my sister and brother before anyone else got to the table.

Harmony sniffed the notes, like Gray had, and then sniffed the air. She turned and looked at a table of kids that was near us. There were at least ten of them.

Harmony got up from the table and went to theirs. She leaned over the table and spoke quietly. Whatever she said made a couple girls turn pale. There were about four of them who looked really happy with whatever was going on. She turned and came back to us.

“Eat your food, Echo. You’re still healing. Victor will be mad if you don’t eat.” Harmony said and took a bite of her lunch.

I smiled a little. Victor would be mad if I wasn’t eating. He wanted me to be healthy. A big part of me was thrilled that Harmony was actually thinking of him.

“What did you say to them?” I asked as I picked through my food.

“Just that the juniors who were hoping to take over once we left would have a hard time being popular with the things I was planning to spread about them if they didn’t back off.” She shrugged.

“That must be why the big ones are smiling. They don’t care about popularity and are amused it was the worst thing you could think of for revenge. This won’t stop them. I just got a text from Trent with the information for the leader of the fae in the area. We’re going to see her after school.” Gray said.

I focused on eating. I needed to get through this day. Soon, I’d be back home and safe again. I was starting to really not like the world outside of my house. It made me think that going to school was a bad idea. I should have worked harder to get Victor to let me stay home.

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The rest of the day went pretty smoothly, but there were more notes in my locker at the end of the day telling me to keep my lapdog on a shorter leash and calling Harmony my werebitch. Gray made sure Harmony didn’t see them. The peace between the fae and the werewolves wasn’t set in stone.

Gray took me from the school to his truck. I could tell he was angry. I rubbed his arm when he got in the truck, after closing my door. He gave me a tight smile.

We drove out to a neighborhood that was surrounded by trees. It was like its own little world, cut off from everything else by the dense forest and small two lane road, which seemed barely big enough for Gray’s truck. I had never seen anything like it before.

Gray pulled over and looked at his phone for a while. He set it aside and drove forward. I wasn’t used to quiet Gray. It always made me nervous when he stopped talking.

“Are you sure we should do this?” I asked.

“More than sure. It’s better we try this ourselves. I don’t know that the leader of the fae would want to listen to a full vampire. Victor would be pissed about these notes. Let’s take care of it, and you can tell Victor later. I bet he’ll be proud of you for resolving it so well.” Gray said with a smile.

We drove until we reached a house that was covered in ivy. The forest seemed to be right up next to the back of the house. It was a nice traditional looking house. Wild flowers grew in the yard. I noticed that most of the yards in the neighborhood were the same, covered in wild flowers. Some had water features. It was beautiful.

“Remember to say ‘I appreciate it’ not ‘thank you’. If they ask for your name, tell them they may not have your name, but they may call you Echo. We need to be very polite and respectful. I know I don’t need to tell you that, it’s mostly to remind myself. Insulting a fae in their own territory is dangerous.” Gray warned before getting out of the truck and running around to help me out.

I straightened out my skirt and grabbed the letters which were laying on the seat of the truck. We walked up the stone path.

As Gray walked past, he stepped on the stem of a flower that was growing over the path. I stopped and looked down at the, now broken, flower. Kneeling down, I gently picked it up.

It almost felt like pain radiated from the flower. I’d always loved flowers and plants. Val and I spent most weekends in the gardens at home. I’d even made the garden at Victor’s house so I could spend time with flowers.

“Shh. You’re going to be okay.” I whispered.

I learned this trick a long time ago. Gently I stroked the stem and thought of it being whole and healthy. Stronger than it had been before. I kept murmuring gentle assurances to the flower. The stem started filling out and, soon, it sprang up. I smiled and stood.

“Who are you?” A tall, thin woman stood at the end of the path watching us.

“I’m Echo Nightshade.” I replied, automatically.

“You speak the language of plants and you hold the magic of my people. Come closer.” She commanded.

Carefully, we walked forward. She wrinkled her nose when I got close to her.

“Vampire. That’s not possible. Vampires can’t hold plant magic.” The woman said.

“I’m not a vampire. I’m a dhampyr. My brother is a witch. He has plant magic.” I explained.

“And you?” She said to Gray.

“I’m Grayson Padua. My brother is Alpha Trent Padua of the Hallowed Moon Pack.” He replied.

“I am Maeve. Please come in.” She said opening her door.

“Th—” I started and Gray put his hand over my mouth.

“We appreciate it.” He said with a smile.

“Oh. Those of us who have chosen to live among humans have long learned that thanking is not meant as an insult or a recognition of debt. Those who choose to live apart from humans are still functioning on old beliefs and rules. You can eat food offered here, thank people, and give your name to us if we ask to have it without fearing any repercussions.” Maeve assured us.

She led us into her home and asked us to have a seat. Maeve sat across from us. She was really beautiful. Her hair looked like it was a very dark green and her skin was the color of pale wood. She was like a human and a tree combined.

“You said you have a brother with plant magic? That means you have some fae blood. That’s so strange. Fae usually stay away from vampires. We don’t exactly have the best history with them. I don’t know how a dhampyr and a witch came from the same line.” She said.

“And a werewolf. My sister is a werewolf.” I replied.

“How on earth did that happen? And you’re all full siblings? You obviously have plant magic. Could it be a witch with a wandering eye? Are these older or younger children? What’s your age difference?” She asked.

“We’re triplets. Our father was a werewolf, our mother was a witch.” I explained.

“A supernatural triad.” Maeve gasped.

“Yes.” I answered.

“Amazing. A triad like this has never existed, simply because of the general dislike everyone has of vampires.” She said.

“I’m aware of the dislike. It’s why we’re here.” I told her. “There have been some mean notes left in my locker by some of the fae kids at school.”

“Do you have them?”

I handed her the stack of notes. She looked at each of them with a stern and serious look on her face. When she was done she set them aside.

“I see. I can find the children who did this and tell them to leave you alone. First, I need to test something.” Maeve stated, pulling a folding knife from her pocket.

Gray stood quickly in front of me and growled. She looked mildly amused. I tugged him down onto the couch. I didn't feel like she was threatening me.

"I'm sorry about him. He's my mate. They get overprotective." I said.

"Werewolves are like that about their females. I understand." She replied and sliced a little cut in her hand.

The blood swelled up out of her skin. I reached into my pocket and pulled out a pack of tissues. I had been crying a lot and had decided to carry some with me.

I pulled out a tissue and knelt on the floor, taking her hand and applying pressure. Her blood soaked through the tissue and felt like chlorophyll from a plant when it touched my skin. I stroked the skin beside the cut, like I had the plant earlier. The wound stitched back together like the broken stem had healed.

When I looked up at her, Maeve actually appeared shocked. She touched the skin where the wound had been. And looked back at me.

"You healed me? I was testing to see if you were as drawn to fae blood as vampires. Instead, you did something you weren't supposed to be able to do. You don't just have plant magic. You have fae magic. No other magic works on us. At least, not well." She murmured.

"Do you know anything about the curse on this territory? Does it work on you?" I asked.

"Yes, I was the leader of the fae when it happened. It does affect my people. We were once able to hide. Fenton Aimes accused us of hiding instead of helping him against the werewolves and vampires. We can only use our glamour for about eight hours a day. Then it fades. When the spell was cast, we lost the ability to use it altogether. Then the Master of the territory sent me a letter. I still have it. Give me a moment." Maeve said, standing.

She left the room and Gray helped me back to the couch. I leaned against him briefly. I didn't know why I was so tired.

"How did you know to heal her like that?" He asked.

"I didn't. I just wanted the blood to stop and, when I touched her, she felt like a plant. So I tried to heal her like I did the flower you stepped on." I replied.

"Have you always been able to heal plants?"

"I can talk to them, too. That was how I convinced the flowers we planted to bloom on the first night, even though they were still shocked from being moved." I smiled.

"You're finding new ways to surprise me every day." He chuckled.

“Here it is.” Maeve said as she reentered the room.

The paper was old and a little frayed. I opened it and read the careful lettering on it.

Mistress Maeve,

I know we have not met, but I have heard that you were affected by Fenton’s spell. I have heard from a reliable source that it has not cemented. There is still hope for all our peoples.

In the morning, I intend to meet the sun. With luck, that will break the spell and your people will once again be ‘the hidden ones’.

Please accept my sincerest apologies for causing this issue. Your people did not deserve to be pulled into the dispute between Fenton and I.

I ask only one favor. Please find my flower, if she still exists, let her know that I died loving her and I would do it again for the chance to have those precious two months with her once more.

Sincerely, Master Grigori Drozdov

I could feel the tears in my eyes. His flower, like Victor called me his princess. Someone had loved him before he died. It reminded me that Victor could die. I managed to hold myself together.

“Did you ever find her?” I asked.

“No. We couldn’t find her, not even some of our best trackers could find her. He gave his life to try and free us all from Fenton’s curse. It was the least we could do.” She replied.

“What was her name?” Gray asked.

“That was the thing, the reason we didn’t get involved. It was Grace Aimes. She was his— Oh!” Maeve grasped her chest in pain. “I’ve said too much. The pain really is spectacular. I won’t say more, but I will let you have the letter. We have ears everywhere. We know the new Master is trying to break the curse. And we know that his name is Nightshade. I assume you’re connected with him. Let us know how we can help. I’ll take care of these children. You are not a vampire and don’t deserve this treatment.”

“Thank you very much. We’re going to do our best to take care of this, I promise. I know Victor would like to negotiate a peace with you. The fae here shouldn’t have to worry about vampires.” I said.

“Tell Master Nightshade, that you have gained our favor and we will agree to a peaceful alliance if he can break this curse. We will give all we can to your efforts. Until the curse is broken and the alliance secured, we will only speak with you, Echo. The name of a nymph, the magic of a

fae, and the innocence of a child. You are unique and I would like to get to know you better.” She smiled.

“We’ll be going now. Echo has a lot of work to do and Victor will be up soon. We’ll tell him everything. Thank you.” Gray said as he stood and helped me up.

A Promising Lead

Chapter 86 - The Vampire's Servant

We headed out to Gray’s truck. He walked more carefully, so he didn’t step on any flowers. He helped me up into the seat and ran around to his side. Soon, we were on the way home.

“Do you think she was going to say Grace was his Solus Amor?” I asked.

“What makes you think that?”

“The fae wouldn’t get involved. The werewolves sided with the vampires. He called her his flower. Like Victor calls me his princess. What if Grace Aimes was Grigori’s Solus Amor? All supernaturals seem to have a mate bond of some sort.” I speculated.

“Except witches. They’re like humans. They find their loves like humans do.” Gray said.

“It makes sense, but how could he tell? Victor couldn’t tell with me, but you could. So I don’t know what the difference is that he couldn’t tell. He said he thought I might be his Solus Amor, but he would have to test it and the only way to be sure would kill me.” I told him.

“It sounds like we need a vampire. It’s a good thing Talia rarely sleeps. She should be up when we get home. We can ask her. This might be the break we need, Echo! We should have had you on the curse team to start. We would’ve already had this solved.” Gray laughed.

“I doubt that. We had good luck. I guess some fae live a very long time. We might get even more from the journals. We’re going to save Victor, right, Gray?” I asked.

“Of course we are, angel. He’s going to be very excited about this. I can’t wait until he gets up and we can tell him.” He grinned.

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When we pulled up to the gate, Gray looked behind us. “That’s weird. Someone pulled in behind us. You stay here, Echo. I’m going to see who it is and what they want.”

“Be careful, Gray.” I said softly.

“I will. Lock the doors and don’t unlock them until I come back.” He told me and got out of the truck.

I locked the doors and turned to watch him approach the dark SUV behind us. He started talking to the man driving. I watched carefully and had my phone out to call Amy if there was trouble.

Gray shook hands with the man in the car and turned back to the truck. He jogged over and I unlocked the door. Gray climbed in and punched in the code.

“It’s Amy’s mate. She asked him to come out this week and help with the curse. He seems like a nice guy and I heard a lot about him. He’s a powerful Alpha, like she is.” He explained.

I nodded. I wanted to meet the man who Amy was mated to. She didn’t talk about her home life much. Dillon told me it was because she was feeling homesick and it made her miss her family.

We pulled up in Gray’s normal spot, grabbed our backpacks, and got out of the truck. Amy’s mate was taking a duffle bag out of the backseat of his SUV. Gray pulled me over to him.

“This is my mate, Echo Nightshade.” He said proudly.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mistress Nightshade.” Amy’s mate said, taking my hand and kissing it. “I am Alpha Lucien Deveraux.”

I blushed. “Thank you, Alpha. You can call me Echo.”

“Please, call me Lucien. Shall we go in the house? As much as I would like to get to know you two better, I miss my mate.” Lucien said.

We walked into the house. Amy suddenly appeared at the walkway above the stairs. A smile spread across her face. Lucien dropped his bag onto the floor and she launched herself over the banister.

He caught her easily and they started kissing like they hadn’t seen each other in months. I couldn’t help but giggle at it. I remembered missing Victor and Gray while I was kidnapped. I hadn’t accepted Gray yet, but I realized I loved him during that time.

My phone alarm went off and I handed my backpack to Gray. I was truly happy to be home. This familiar feeling and pattern with Gray and Victor made me happier than I had ever been before.

“You want to get our stuff set up in Victor’s office? I’ll go warm him up. Does anyone know where he put the vampire who came last night?” I asked.

“I’ll take care of him, cookie. You just deal with Victor. Hey, Luci.” Dillon chuckled.

Lucien growled a little, but kept on kissing Amy. They were really cute together. I wondered how they kissed for so long without getting out of breath.

I went upstairs and into Victor's room. He was sprawled out in his bed. I turned on the blanket and climbed into his bed. This was becoming our ritual. I wanted to always be in his bed when he woke up. Just like I always wanted him in my bed when I woke up.

This was often the longest part of my day, though. Waiting for Victor to wake up took forever if I wasn't napping with him. I leaned my head against his chest and listened to the painfully slow beat of his heart.

My mind drifted. I started thinking of Gray. He was so happy today. I loved when he was happy. I wondered what it would be like when he made love to me.

Would it hurt like when he put three fingers in me last night? That hadn't hurt for long, then it felt so good. I wanted to know everything. I wanted to feel everything.

I started imagining what it would be like to be in bed with only Gray, how he would kiss me, how he would lick and nibble and touch me. I bit my lips together as I thought of him kissing me softly as he pressed into me. I could almost feel that little bit of pain and pressure as he slid into me.

A slight moan escaped me and I slid my hand between my legs. It was very wet as I slipped my fingers into myself. The door flew open and I yelped.

"Damn it, Echo. What are you trying to do to me?" Gray growled.

I whimpered a little. I wanted him so bad. I moved my fingers in and out as I looked at Gray and started feeling him being drawn into my fantasy world.

"No. Don't do that." He murmured as he crossed the room and climbed into the bed beside me.

His lips crashed against mine as his fingers slid down my arm and pulled my hand out of me. Gray's fingers entered me. Just two, but I craved more.

After a while of him kissing me and thrusting with his hand, I felt the pressure of him pushing a third finger in. I almost screamed with happiness. His kisses trailed down my throat.

There was a shift in the bed. I opened my eyes a little and glanced over. Victor had woken up and was laying on his side, watching us. He smiled.

"Quite a scene to wake up to. May I join or am I only to watch?" Victor asked.

"Rub her clit, Victor. She was a naughty girl again. I was talking to Claude when she started imagining having sex with me. I started getting hard and had to excuse myself." Gray said.

“I... oh... I didn’t mean to, Gray.” I breathed.

“That’s why you’re not being punished. At least, not entirely. I’m not going to make love to you until you’ve met my family. I want time to prepare and make it perfect. And you need to get used to having a lot inside you, or it’s going to be painful.” He replied.

“Good, you should be her first, Grayson. It’s special for werewolves to share your first time. There are plenty of firsts for you and I to have. I was your first willing kiss. It’s enough for now.” His hand slid down around my entrance, tracing his finger around it.

I felt his hand slide past Gray’s. I didn’t realize what he doing until he was running his finger between the cheeks of my butt. He swirled his damp finger around where he licked last night and I moaned.

“Here is where I next plan to be first, princess.” Victor said, as he applied pressure.

“Yes.” I whispered.

I felt his finger slide into me there and tensed. It hurt.

“Shh. Relax your body, like Grayson told you last night. I won’t do more than one right now.” He promised.

The soothing sound of his voice, the caring in it, the knowledge that his promises meant something, made me relax. He started moving his finger and it began feeling good. I couldn’t believe it could actually feel good.

I arched as I reached a climax. Then Victor’s other hand started working on the tender spot that ached for touch. It threw me into another climax. I loved the feeling of both of them touching me.

“I love how you scream, angel. One more, then we’ll go do our homework.” Gray chuckled.

I didn’t want only one more. I wanted a million more. I wanted to always be with them like this. The rest of the world didn’t even matter.

Though I tried to hold back and keep the heavenly encounter going, I was building up even more. Gray reached under my shirt and started manipulating my breast. His fingers slipped into my bra and traced around my nipple. It was a little bit more sensation that dragged me over the edge of another climax.

As I lay panting on the bed, both men removed their fingers from me. Gray licked his fingers clean while Victor went into the bathroom to clean up. Gray gently put my panties back into place and arranged my skirt before he laid next to me and kissed me deeply. I liked how it tasted and held him to me more tightly.

When we pulled away, Victor was back in the bed and he pulled me into another kiss. I wrapped my arms around him and pressed my body against his. He pushed back, pinning me to the bed.

“Come on, you two. Echo and I still have a few classes to catch up on.” Gray chuckled.

Victor gave me one last firm kiss on my lips before he got up. I sighed and crawled out of the bed, before straightening it up. My body felt a mix of light and heavy. Now I understood why we were mostly doing that at night. I wanted to sleep.

Gray held out his arm for me and I took it, gratefully. I was relieved to have him to lean on. We made our way down to the office. When we got there, Victor sat behind his desk and we sat on the couch to do our work.

“What’s this?” Victor asked picking up a piece of paper from his desk.

“That’s the letter we got from the leader of the fae today. She got it from the first master.” Gray said.

Victor opened it and scanned over it. “I knew flower was a code for something. Did she know who it was?”

“Grace Aimes.” I told him. “I think she was his Solus Amor.”

“What makes you think that?” He asked.

“It was the only reason I could think of for a fight between supernaturals. Werewolves and vampires cherish their mates. Witches don’t have the same thing. If his Solus Amor was the daughter of the leader of the witches, maybe that started the fight.” I suggested.

“Something he refused to give.... It makes sense. He arranged a marriage for his daughter. It’s traditional for witches to arrange marriages for children who have two or more affinities. If she was Grigori’s Solus Amor, that means he would have fought for her.” Victor said excitedly.

He sprang from behind his desk and ran out of the room. I looked at Gray. He shrugged and opened his math book to do his homework for tonight.

We worked quietly for a while, Victor returned with Amy, Lucien, Talia, and the vampire who came last night. I felt nervous. I didn’t really want to be near him.

“Echo got this letter from the head of the fae.” Victor said and handed the letter to Talia.

She read it and passed it along. Once everyone had read it, they looked at him expectantly.

“Grace Aimes was his flower.” He grinned. “Echo thinks that Grace was Grigori’s Solus Amor.”

“That’s possible. Normally, we can sense our Solus Amor when they’re alive. It’s different with dhampyr/vampire relationships. Because of the two life situation for higher level dhampyrs, vampires will not sense that a dhampyr is their Solus Amor until the dhampyr passes. No dhampyr has ever sensed a vampire mate.” Talia explained. “We need Lila.”

“We should move to the kitchen for our schoolwork.” I said. “It’s going to be too loud in here to focus.”

“I’ll call you in if we need you, princess. Thank you for your hard work. But... why were you meeting with the leader of the fae today?” Victor asked.

I picked up my books and my bag. Gray did so as well and looked at me expectantly. I didn’t want Victor to get upset in front of so many people, but I didn’t think he’d let me leave if I didn’t tell him.

“I...um... was being bullied by some fae students.” I admitted.

“I’ll kill them.” He growled, just like Gray had.

“I took care of it. Maeve said she would deal with them. She even said she’ll ally with you if you break the curse. I need to get my work done.” I told him.

“Go, but you will tell me everything that happened today.” Victor replied tightly.

“Yes, Master.” I said with a wink and walked out.

Gray laughed as he followed me out to the kitchen. Dillon and Jean-Claude were working on dinner. I realized we had two more people and still no dining table. I groaned in frustration.

“We need a dining room table.”

“Cookie, just give me Victor’s credit card. Claude and I will go buy one while you’re at school tomorrow. It’s okay to ask for help, you know.” Dillon said.

“Thank you. I’ll make sure Victor knows.” I told him.

We sat down to get some work done. I was happy that Victor was excited, but this wasn’t the answer about how to break the curse. I doubted a man would cast a curse like this just to stop his daughter from being with a vampire. It didn’t make sense.

I wouldn’t tell him that, though. The little wins were making him happy. I loved seeing Victor happy even more than I loved seeing Gray happy.

Only Forever

Chapter 87 - The Vampire's Servant

Wednesday, the fae kids mostly left me alone. Some of the bigger ones glared at me. Gray told me they were trolls. Like real trolls and they tended to be jerks as part of their nature. They probably didn't like that we went over their heads to Maeve.

The fae girl from the bus approached me at lunch and apologized. She said she hadn't written any of the notes, but the others found out about me from her and she felt badly. I explained to her what a dhampyr was and that I was no threat to them. Like them I was born the way I was born. She seemed really nice and accepted my invitation to sit with us.

On Thursday, I turned in a bunch of my late work and met with Mr. Moxon. I had been having small flashbacks on Wednesday, but I was using his techniques to help get me grounded so I wouldn't panic again. It was helping me to get back to normal after them.

I was riding the bus home with Sean Friday afternoon. He was talking to me about our plans for Saturday. He seemed really excited. I was excited, too. I had played golf on my game systems before, but Sean said this was different.

"So, we'll meet up at the place for lunch. Then we can start playing. There's an arcade inside where they have the restaurant. Maybe we can play some video games after." He suggested.

"That sounds like fun!" I grinned.

"How are things going with you and Gray?" Sean asked.

"Good, I guess. We work on our homework together and get to see each other at school. He wants to take me out bowling after you and I finish playing. I've never been bowling before." I said.

"I wish I could go, too."

"He invited a few of his friends and their girlfriends. It's like a couples thing. Maybe we can get a group together some other time." I offered.

"That sounds good. Maybe you, me, Gray, Terry, Elle, Harmony, Val, and Cam."

"I love that idea! I'll tell Gray when I talk to him tonight. We could all have so much fun together." I smiled.

There were so few times where I got to just have fun anymore. It felt like my whole life was taken up by lessons. I started getting up with Gray to train. It was actually a great way to get

moving in the morning. I'd go to school, do homework after, then dinner, and lessons with Marius that went until my bedtime.

I was learning more about boundaries with Gray and Victor too. Victor told me he had only meant to guide me and didn't realize it was coming off as him acting like a parent. I apologized again for acting up.

We all acknowledged that I was still trying to figure a lot out. I worked to reign in my bratty behavior. It was hard, but they were patient with me. Sometimes I would play with my imagination while they were getting ready for bed. It led to some really intense encounters after.

Gray was talking a lot more in the bedroom. He said really dirty things. Just thinking about it would make me press my thighs together to quell the desire that overcame me. I couldn't wait to finally have him the way I'd been imagining.

I said goodbye to Sean when he got up at his stop. He smiled and said that he couldn't wait for tomorrow. I couldn't either. A whole day where I just got to play sounded nice.

Gray met me at the bus stop and walked me back to where his truck was parked.

"Are you excited for tomorrow?" He asked.

"So excited! There's an arcade there, Sean says we can play video games. And I can't wait to spend some more time with your friends. They seem really nice at lunch." I replied.

"That's only two of them. My other friend, Mike, goes to the pack school with his mate. They got a little carried away a few months ago and marked each other, so they had to transfer." Gray told me.

"When will you mark me?" I asked.

"The day after graduation. The night of graduation. As soon as I don't have to worry about you getting questioned about your mark."

"Will it hurt?"

"I'll do everything I can to make sure it doesn't. I'll do it while we're making love. Right as you orgasm. I've talked to a few people, they said it makes it hurt much less. I don't want to hurt you at all, but I want you marked as mine." He said.

"I want that, too." I answered quietly.

He parked in his usual spot, unbuckled my seatbelt, and pulled me into his lap. I wrapped my arms around his shoulders and kissed him softly on his cheeks, chin, and lips. His hand went up my skirt and rested on my hip. I sighed contentedly at the feeling of his warm hand on my bare skin.

“I love you, Echo Nightshade. I can’t wait until you’re finally mine forever.” Gray murmured.

“I love you, too, Grayson Padua. I promise to love you forever.” I whispered.

“Good. I’ll only accept forever love. When did you want to start having kids, by the way? Most wolves start right away. I’ll wait as long as you want.”

I thought about it. I wanted my first baby to be with Victor. He lost so much and I wanted to give him the family he missed out on having. I didn’t know when I would be ready for that. Certainly not within the next year. I had a lot of learning to do before I tried to start a family.

“A couple years, at least. Would you be mad at me if I said I wanted my first baby to be with Victor?” I asked.

“That depends. Why do you want your first baby with Victor? Is it because you still love him more than me?”

“No. Victor had a family before he was turned. He lost them all before he died. I want him to have a baby to love. I know he would love your babies too, but having a baby with him is something I really want.” I admitted.

“I wouldn’t get mad. I can’t imagine what it must have been like losing everyone he loved. We’ll raise our family all together. Our kids will be sisters and brothers. How many babies do you want?” He asked.

I giggled. “Is it really time to be talking about this? Shouldn’t we wait for Victor before we talk about how we grow our family?”

“I want to marry you. I want to sleep next to you every night knowing I’m your husband in the eyes of human law. I want to take care of you while you grow our babies and see you experience everything for the first time. I want to take you to see the ocean, take you camping, take you to a big city where we can go to a fancy restaurant and see a play or something. One of those grown up style dates like they have in movies. I can’t wait for school to be over because then I get to really start my life with you.” Gray said with a big smile.

His unexpected speech made me so happy. Tears started forming in my eyes. I wanted all of that. I hugged him tight and nodded.

“That sounds wonderful. When did you want to get married?” I asked.

“Ideally, tonight. Realistically, maybe June. We can get married in the gardens in the pack lands. We’ll do it at night, so Victor and Marius can be there. My mom and grandmas can make your dress. They love things like that and it will be something we can pass down to our daughters when they get married.” He told me.

I didn't exactly know what went into a wedding, but having over a month to plan it should be enough time. Gray reached over and opened the glovebox. He pulled out a little, fuzzy box.

"I got this on my way home from seeing my great-grandparents. It's not much, because I couldn't afford much. I couldn't get you a diamond. I wanted to. Instead, I got your birthstone. March is aquamarine." He said, opening the box. "It has a white gold band. I thought it would be better than yellow gold, and I couldn't pick silver, because it could burn me."

In the box was a ring with a small, pale blue gem seated in it. Gray pulled it out and slipped it on one of my fingers on my left hand. It was so pretty and sparkly. I couldn't stop staring at it.

"This is how humans mark their mates. I'm marking you as mine, Echo. I want you to wear this as often as possible. Sleep with it on, go to school with it on, only take it off to bathe and train. Do you understand?" Gray asked.

I nodded. "I understand. Does that make you feel better about me going out with Sean? I've heard you and Victor talking about it as it gets closer. Are you both really worried that he wants to date me? He knows you and I are together."

"There are some guys out there who will pretend to be your friend just so they can try to get you to break up with your boyfriend. I don't want Sean to be one of those guys, but something about him doesn't sit right with me. I don't know what it is." He sighed.

"Well, if he tells me that he likes me, I'll just tell him I'm already in love with someone else and I intend to marry you." I told him.

Gray kissed my cheek. "And what if he says he likes Harmony?"

"Then I'll tell him that Harmony is deeply in love with Cam and I can't help him." I responded.

"What if he tells you he's in love with Val?" He chuckled.

"Then I will tell him Val has only ever dated girls, but I'll talk to him about it." I said, thoughtfully.

"Really?"

"Yes. Dillon told me that he only likes men, but there are people who like both men and women. I wouldn't know until I asked. Do you only like women, Gray?" I asked.

"Yes. That's why your little fantasy about me and Victor kissing upsets me. I like Victor, but I'm not interested in kissing him." Gray replied seriously.

"I don't know. You might rethink that. We have a very very long life ahead of us." I giggled.

"Maybe he just needs a girlfriend." Gray said, changing the subject.

“Hmm. What about Rosario? The fae girl who’s been sitting with us the last few days.” I suggested. “He likes fairies and elves and stuff.”

Gray laughed. “There’s a difference between playing them in a game and dating them in real life. You’ve only seen Rose in her glamour. In real life, she might be really hideous by human standards.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Remember when we first saw Maeve? She had black hair and light brown skin. Once we were in her house, she dropped her glamour and her hair turned green while her skin turned a less natural shade of brown. She was only using a light glamour. I’ll show you. Victor got some books delivered. I bet he’ll have something on other supernaturals. Come on.” He said.

Gray moved me out of his lap and got out of the truck before helping me down and grabbing our bags. I took our bags into the office while Gray went to find a book. I only had a few things left to do over the weekend to get completely caught up. I was looking forward to having more time in the afternoons.

As I finished setting out my book and computer, Gray returned. He carried a thick, old book. Carefully, he set it down the title was ‘Fae of the World’.

He opened it up to the first page. “This is the table of contents with each type of fae’s name and page number. Those boys who were harassing you, were trolls. Here’s their page.”

Gray opened the book to the page for trolls. There was a drawn figure on the page. It had large tusks, a thick protruding nose, and clawed hands. Next to it, was a picture of a man. The troll seemed to tower over him.

“Trolls will grow to over seven feet tall. The ones in our school are actually very young. Most trolls don’t reach adulthood until they’re fifty years old. Those boys would outlive me if you didn’t help me live longer. Their natural life span is three hundred years.” Gray explained.

“Oh. I didn’t realize that.”

“Plus, fae have a true mate that they usually find in adulthood. If Sean did date Rose, that would mean she would leave him when she found her true mate. He’ll find his stride in college. I just want to be sure he isn’t after you.” He said.

“I’ll make sure he knows we’re only friends and I won’t accept anything else. Does that make you happy, Gray?”

“Yes. Thank you for giving in on this. I’m sorry I’m acting so insecure all the time. I was never like this before you. I always want to be the one you love. I always want to be enough for you.” Gray whispered, leaning against me.

“You are enough. You are the only werewolf I love.” I promised.

“I guess that’s the best I’ll get for a while. Let’s get our homework done. We don’t have long before Victor is up.” He told me, setting aside the fae book.

I decided to return the book when I went to warm up Victor’s bed. I didn’t want him to be upset that we borrowed the book without permission. Having most of a week without a problem would be the best thing I could imagine.

An Early Morning

Chapter 88 - The Vampire's Servant

The next morning, I woke up before Gray’s alarm went off. I had a weird dream that my father, Thom Gale, came into the house and started yelling at me about not being allowed to be there. He dragged me out of the house and no one was able to stop him.

When Victor tried to stop him, my father held out his hand and Victor fell to his knees. The same happened whenever someone tried to stop him. I begged for him to let me go and he slapped me. He pulled me out of the house and threw me into a car where Sean was waiting.

“You only marry who I say you marry. You’re my daughter and I own you.” He growled.

“It’s okay, Echo. I’m going to take care of you and make you so happy.” Sean murmured, grasping my hand tightly.

I cried as we drove away from the house. I didn’t want to be with Sean, I wanted Victor and Gray. I woke up with tears in my eyes.

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“Echo. Princess, are you okay? I couldn’t wake you.” Victor whispered.

I clung to him tightly. I never wanted to let him go. Victor rubbed my back and murmured to me telling me I was safe and no one would ever harm me.

With a stuttering voice, I told him about the dream. Victor assured me that Thom was actually dead. I couldn’t get the angry hiss of his voice out of my head, though.

“I’m going to go get a glass of water. I need to move. It was like I couldn’t fight back at all. I was so much weaker than him. It didn’t feel right.” I told him.

“Do you want me to go with you, princess?” He asked.

“No. I’ll be back in a few minutes. Just be ready to give me lots of cuddles when I come back.” I said.

“I can do that. Did you want me to get Gray up?”

“Let him sleep until his alarm goes off. He needs his rest.” I replied, climbing over Victor and getting out of bed.

I was wearing my longer nightgown and threw a robe on before heading out to the kitchen. I didn’t like the gnawing fear in my stomach and hoped water would be enough to help with it. This made me want to go out with Sean even less today.

In the kitchen, I got a glass and poured some water from the pitcher in the fridge. When I closed the door, I almost dropped my glass. Finn was standing in the kitchen looking at me.

“You’re supposed to stay away from me.” I told him.

“I’m supposed to stay out of the wing where you sleep. I’m supposed to keep my fangs to myself. I just came in for a glass of blood.” He replied motioning to the fridge.

I walked around to the other side of the kitchen island, drinking my water. He poured some blood into a mug and went to heat it in the microwave. While he was waiting, Finn turned to look at me.

“Look, I’m sorry about the first night you met me. Vic’s been keeping me from you so I wasn’t able to tell you I’m sorry. I was just messing with him, but then you smelled so good.... It’s no excuse. Please forgive me. I’m really not a bad guy.” Finn smiled a little.

“I’ll forgive you. Just don’t try to bite me.” I said.

“Talia told me about what happened to you. It explained why you were so afraid. I didn’t mean to scare you, tiny. If I knew your sire was Marius, I wouldn’t have even teased. I was lucky he never heard about it. Thanks for not telling on me.” He laughed.

“I never even thought of that.” I murmured and sipped my water.

“I’m only here until we figure out this curse. I disagreed with Vic keeping it from you. You’re his mate. He should trust you with this stuff.”

“Victor just didn’t want me to worry. I had just gotten over the same fear of losing Gray. It makes sense if you actually know us.” I replied.

“Don’t tell me you’re just as stuck up as Vic. You seemed like such a sweet little cutie. We could have so much fun. I could say things that make you blush and smell even sweeter.” Finn chuckled as he pulled his mug out of the microwave and stirred it with a spoon.

“I don’t like it when you talk like that.” I said, with a blush.

“Mmm. That’s the stuff. Just the right seasoning to make this palatable.”

I finished my water and put my glass in the sink. I didn’t want to stay around him anymore. I turned and started heading for the stairs.

“Glad I helped get you out of that sad, scared scent. You should only smell like the blooming flower you are.” He whispered.

If not for my hearing being more sensitive, I might not have heard him. I smiled and went upstairs. He was trying to distract me from what was upsetting me. It worked too.

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When I got back to my room, I climbed in Victor’s lap and kissed him. He smiled as I pulled away.

“That glass of water seemed to help.” He chuckled.

“Finn was there getting some blood. He pulled me out of my head.” I told him.

“He didn’t try anything, did he?” Victor growled.

“No. He just talked to me and apologized for scaring me earlier.” I murmured and kissed down his jaw to his neck.

I licked the place where my mark was. I wanted Victor. I wanted to feel him in me. I moved to straddle him, grinding my body against his while I sucked on his mark.

Victor’s hands found their way to my hips and he started moving me more firmly against him. His mouth found my neck and he started sucking and nibbling. I moaned at the feeling.

“May I taste your blood, princess? I won’t bite you, only give you a little scratch that you’ll barely feel. I want you so badly.” He whispered.

“Yes.” I breathed.

One of his hands moved up to my neck and I felt a little pressure and warmth as the blood came out. Victor’s mouth latched over the wound. When he drew blood in, it was like his mouth was between my legs. I whimpered and felt my body respond with heat and wetness.

I dug my nails into his chest as he sucked on my neck. Victor groaned and the vibration mixed with the sweet feeling of him feeding on me. After a few minutes, he sealed the wound and leaned back against the headboard. I leaned in and licked the blood trails and scratches I'd given him.

When I was finished, I looked into his eyes and imagined us making love in his bed. Every touch and kiss, every stroke and quiver felt so real. I stopped just before he climaxed and slid down his body, pulling him from his pants and sliding him into my mouth.

Victor's hands twined in my hair as I sucked and licked his hard length. It didn't take long before I felt him filling my mouth with his release. I swallowed everything and licked him clean.

"Now, that is a perfect use of your ability, princess." Victor murmured.

I smiled as I put him away carefully. Licking my lips, I slid to the side and laid my head on his chest. Victor stroked my back and I started drifting to sleep again.

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The next time I woke up it was time to get ready for training. I put my ring in the drawer of my nightstand after I dressed for training. I met everyone outside for the run and my form training.

Lucien had started joining us for training. I would watch everyone spar. Lucien and Bellamy always looked so happy after they fought each other. They always fought until they were both on the ground.

It surprised me that they were really hitting and kicking each other hard. I didn't think I could ever hit Gray seriously. I didn't know if he could hit me either. The idea of it scared me a little.

After we were done, we cleaned up for the day and would meet in the kitchen. There was a rotation for who would be in charge of meals. Since I wasn't going to be home for lunch or dinner, I was one of the people cooking breakfast.

I dressed in black capri pants and a pink t-shirt. I would wear my sneakers, but I didn't like wearing shoes, so my feet were only in socks. I'd put on shoes when it was closer to time to leave.

Gray was helping with breakfast that morning. We worked well together. Preparing a meal for five werewolves was time consuming. I made the sausage in the oven, because I could fit a lot in the pans and it freed up room on the stove. Gray made the bacon while I mixed batter for the waffles.

Last night, I had cut up the fruit for the morning. I was getting used to cooking for a lot of people. Bellamy had even made me some recipe cards with different blood foods and a few different mixtures for drinks. It was nice to be able to make food for Victor.

Once the waffles were made, I pulled out the pudding dishes for me, Talia, Finn, and Victor. I dished out chocolate pudding with blood, then topped it with whipped cream.

Dillon and Jean-Claude set the table in the dining room while Gray and I put the food into serving dishes. He started carrying things in while I got a start on the dishes. Once everything was settled, Victor came into the kitchen and led me to the dining room.

The table they picked was perfect. It seated twelve, so there was plenty of room for everyone. Victor sat at the head of the table and he had Amy seated at the other end. I sat between Victor and Gray. Talia sat on Victor's other side and Finn sat next to her.

It was as if everyone had naturally started sitting with their people. Gray was the only werewolf on the vampire end of the table. Lucien was sitting two chairs down from him. As far from the vampires as he could get.

Talia told me that Lucien had been kidnapped a year ago and forced to feed four vampires every night for three days. I could imagine what it felt like. I actually used that in one of my training practices with Marius. He hugged me for a long time after that.

We all talked about our plans for the day. Gray was going to go to the pack lands to see his parents and let them know I'd definitely be at the family dinner. Lucien and Amy were going to go check out some of the shops downtown. They seemed really excited about it. Jean-Claude and Dillon were going to play my video games and Talia was going to try to read a few more books before she had to sleep.

After breakfast was done, Amy and Lucien were in charge of cleaning up. It was nice to share the chores with other people. Amy seemed to really understand how I organized my kitchen.

I went into the office and worked on finishing my leftover schoolwork. I managed to get my last page done before Gray came in to get me for the drive out to the amusement center where I was meeting Sean. I bounced up and hugged him.

"Are you ready to go, angel?" Gray asked, dancing me around a little. "You have such a big day ahead of you."

It made me laugh and I followed his steps around the room. "I'm really excited. Harmony used to go out for whole days with her friends. I always wondered what it was like."

"Promise me you'll be safe." He whispered.

"I'll make sure no one sneaks up on me. I can pop back home if anything goes wrong. No one can take me away again. Marius and I have worked on my traveling. I can go anywhere I've been before. I can even take someone with me now." I grinned up at him.

"Where did you learn to dance?" Gray chuckled.

“I’m just following you. I can feel the way your body wants to move, and I let mine go with you.” I told him.

“Have I told you how much I love you today?” He asked.

“Mmmm... maybe. Couldn’t hurt to say it again.” I giggled.

“I love you more than the sun and the moon. You are my sun and my moon.” Gray said as he dipped me backward.

Our lips met in a tender kiss, as Gray held me over the floor. He stood me up and spun me in circles before pulling me back to his chest. I rested my ear over his heart and listened to it beating. That was one of my favorite sounds. The heartbeats of the men I loved.

“I love you, Gray. I love your heart. I love your lips. I love your love and all the little ways you make me feel like a whole person.” I said.

“Let’s get you out to Sean. The sooner we get that part of the day over with, the better.”

“Gray.” I scolded. “Don’t be mean about this.”

“I just want you back with me as soon as possible, angel. I hate any time when I’m not with you.” He explained.

“That better be it. Let’s go!” I said, tugging him out of the room.

Soon, we were on the road. I was feeling a lot better than I had been when I first woke up with that nightmare. Sean wasn’t going to take me away from Victor and Gray. He was my friend and I was excited to spend time with him.

Playing with Sean

Chapter 89 - The Vampire's Servant

When we arrived at the amusement center, Gray insisted on walking me in. He didn’t want something to happen to me between the parking lot and the restaurant. I was a little embarrassed. I worried he was going to want to stay with us or was going to threaten Sean.

The entertainment center had all sorts of rides inside of it. I stopped to watch some spinny thing. Everyone looked like they were having fun. I wanted to try it.

Gray guided me to the restaurant, promising we would come again and I could ride all of the rides they had. I was giddy with excitement. I had never seen anything like this.

Sean was standing near a wall. He was wearing jeans and a gray t-shirt with a dragon on it. I waved at him and he smiled for a moment before looking a little nervous.

We walked over and Gray put his hand out to shake Sean's. Sean looked at it and accepted the outstretched hand. They shook hands briefly with smiles.

"I want you to keep a close eye on my girl today. Do you have my cell number?" Gray asked.

"Um... no... no, I don't." Sean said.

"Here. I'm going to give it to you and I want you to text me so I have your number." Gray told him before telling Sean his number.

I watched the people around us and tried to see what games were in the arcade side of the center. When I wandered too far away, Gray would reach out and drag me back. They talked for a bit longer, then Gray gave me a kiss before he left.

Sean guided me into the restaurant. We were seated by the hostess and handed menus. She went to get our waters.

"I was thinking we could either split a pizza, or we could get burgers. It's mostly just simple comfort food stuff. I wouldn't trust the fancier stuff on the menu." He said.

"I don't think I could eat half a pizza." I replied.

"Burgers it is." Sean laughed.

I grinned. We went back to looking at the menu. I picked a cheeseburger with mushrooms on it. I liked mushrooms.

While we were waiting on our food, we talked about school.

"Did you finish your missing work?" He asked.

"Just finished the last of it this morning. I'm all caught up again. Thank goodness." I said.

"I'm glad. Did Gray help you with it?"

"Yeah. He's in a higher level of math, like you are, so he was able to help me with the things that were harder."

"Gray's actually in my math class. He's really good. You wouldn't expect it. He seems like he would be one of those people who would get by on his looks." Sean chuckled.

“He does tend to go back and forth between being really smart and being a little stupid. I think it’s cute, but I used to think it was annoying.” I admitted.

“You told me before he wasn’t your boyfriend and it didn’t seem like you liked him too much. Like, enough to hang out with him, but I didn’t figure you’d come back from being sick and be dating him.” He said.

I blushed and sipped my water. I didn’t know how I was going to explain that. Victor and Gray had been telling me all week that it was important not to tell humans what we were. Even though they knew, it was like they didn’t want to know.

They warned me more about not knowing who was and wasn’t a hunter. They said that even teens could be hunters. Families of hunters would raise their kids to be hunters as well. I didn’t think Sean could be one, but I was going to be careful until I knew for sure.

“He and I talked a lot. I realized that I wasn’t giving him a chance. When I did, it was like we were meant to be.” I said, toying with the ring on my finger.

“That’s new. Did he give it to you?” Sean asked.

“Yeah. Yesterday, after school.”

“You didn’t have it on when I last saw you.” He said.

“He gave it to me after I got off the bus.” I admitted.

“Why didn’t you just ride home with him? If your boyfriend has a car, you ride to and from school with him. It’s like a rule.” Sean told me.

“I like riding the bus with you. I told him that.”

“No wonder he’s been acting like he doesn’t trust me. You made him think that we might be a thing.” He sighed.

“I didn’t mean to. I don’t always get these things right.” I replied quietly. “I just like having time without classes and other people taking my attention from you. You’re my first school friend who wasn’t related to me and didn’t want something from me.”

“You need to explain that to him. You can even tell him that I’m not interested in you like that. You’re not my type.” Sean said.

Our food was delivered right as he said that. The waitress gave me a pained look, like she was sympathizing with me. I blushed again. I wasn’t interested in Sean like that either, but it looked to her like I just got rejected.

After she left, we picked at our food a little. Sean seemed to be as uncomfortable as I was. He kept starting to say something, then stopped.

“I’m sorry. I hope I didn’t hurt your feelings with that, or something.” He said.

“You didn’t. I’m sorry I put you in a position where you thought you needed to clarify that. I never thought you were interested in me. Gray is just... a little possessive.” I told him.

“I can see that.” Sean sighed.

We ate our food quietly. I really hoped this didn’t taint the whole day. I really wanted to have fun.

Sean started laughing. I looked at him questioningly. That seemed to make him laugh harder. I waited for him to stop laughing.

“Sorry, you wiggle when you eat and it reminded me of my dog and the way he wags his tail when we feed him. It just made it worse when you cocked your head to the side. He does that too.” He snickered.

“Are you calling me a dog?” I asked.

“More like a puppy.” Sean chuckled.

I remembered calling Gray that once. It didn’t really feel like an insult though. It felt like a fun observation. Sean was smiling and that meant we could have fun again.

“You never laughed before.” I said.

“I’ve only sat near you, not next to you or across from you. It’s cute, though, seriously. I never meet people like you. I didn’t even know they existed. You’re my age, but you seem like you’re just discovering the world.”

Harmony told me what to answer if people said something like this. I was prepared.

“I had a very sheltered childhood. I kind of am discovering everything for the first time.” I answered.

“What changed? Why are you suddenly unsheltered?” He asked.

“My parents died. I live with a man who wants me to experience the world. It’s why I’m in public school, why I really choose to ride the bus, and why I don’t know things other kids do.” I admitted.

“I’ll help you.” He picked up the spoon on his napkin. “This is a spoon. It’s for eating with.”

“Haha. You’re so funny.” I rolled my eyes.

“Thank you.” Sean winked.

We finished our meal and paid. Sean took me out to the arcade first. We stopped to look at all the games. He explained how you could win tickets on some of them and take those tickets up for prizes. He even took me over near the prize desk so I could see what they had.

After that, we went to the desk for the rest of the place. There were bracelets you could buy that would let you ride all of the rides and play laser tag and mini golf all you wanted. We just bought tickets for the golf course.

Sean took my hand and pulled me to the gates where the golf course began. I was distracted by people in little cars on one side and people in boats on the other. I wanted to try everything.

“Okay. This is the first hole. Watch what I do. This is how you play.” Sean instructed.

He put his ball down and readied himself, then pulled back a bit and hit the ball. It rolled into the big fake tree and out the other side, stopping a little way from the hole in the ground. Sean smiled at me.

“Your turn.” He said.

I put my ball on the same dot where he put his and readied myself, taking a deep breath before I pulled back and hit the ball. It hit the roots of the tree and rolled back. I stomped my foot in frustration. He made it look so easy, but I couldn’t manage it.

“Calm down, Echo. You were turned a little from where you needed to be. I’ll go get your ball and you can try again. I’ll help.” Sean told me patiently.

Sean got the ball and put it back on the dot. He moved me to the right spot and showed me how to grip the club so it wouldn’t slip or rotate. I hit the ball again. This time, it went into the tree and came out like Sean’s did. I cheered and hugged him.

“I’ve never seen someone so emotionally invested in mini golf.” He chuckled.

“It’s my first time. I want to be good at it, but I know that’s not possible. It’s frustrating because it seems easy for you, but I needed all sorts of instruction. That made getting it right even better.” I explained.

“You’re a weird girl, Echo Nightshade. I think I like it.” Sean said, pulling me to the other side of the tree.

He showed me how to knock the ball gently into the hole and I got it right the first time. I jumped around and cheered. Sean seemed amused.

We played through a few other holes. Each one got progressively more difficult. Even Sean was having some trouble on the sixth one. While we played, we talked about more stuff. Favorite teachers and subjects, Terry and Elle's weird relationship, Cam and Harmony's clinginess.

Soon, we were at the last hole. The opening moved around in a circle. Sean tried to hit and it took him four tries before he got it into the obstacle and it came out the other side. I looked at it and watched the way the thing moved.

"Come on, Echo." Sean said impatiently.

"If I get it in on the first shot, will you tell me who you have a crush on?" I asked.

He turned red and looked away. I moved so I could see his face. Sean looked worried.

"I don't talk about stuff like that. I've known Elle and Terry since elementary, and they don't even know." He admitted.

"Come on. I'm your friend. You should be able to tell me this stuff." I goaded.

"No one makes this on the first shot. Fine. You can try and I'll tell you if you get it. You just have to make me two promises."

"What are they?"

"First, promise that you won't tell anyone ever. Second, that you won't stop being friends with me. I'm always afraid of losing friends." He said softly.

"Agreed." I grinned.

Sean stepped off to the side and I put my ball down. I'd been watching carefully when he was up. I watched where the hole was when he hit his ball and timed the rotation. It might have been cheating, I don't really know, but I was going to come out of this day closer to Sean than before.

I took a deep breath and hit my ball. For a moment, I thought I'd gone too soon. The ball hit the edge of the hole as it slid in. I jumped and cheered.

"Oh, god." Sean groaned.

"Yes! You have to tell me who you have a crush on now!" I squealed.

"Damn it. I really didn't think you'd make that." He sighed.

"Out with it. Who do you have a crush on, Sean?" I asked.

He twisted his hands around the handle of the club and looked around, like he was checking that no one would hear us. I looked around too, then stepped closer. Sean leaned in and paused for a while.

“Gray.” Sean whispered.

I looked at him with wide eyes. “I’m sorry. Gray doesn’t like boys like that, Sean.”

“I know. You aren’t mad that I have a crush on your boyfriend?” He asked.

I fidgeted with the ring on my finger. There was no part of me that really felt bothered by it. Gray was my mate, not just a boyfriend. He loved me and he didn’t like boys. There was no way that Sean could steal him. I would feel bad that my friend had to see me being happy with my boyfriend. Maybe I could find him a boyfriend. That would be best.

“Did you have a crush on him before he became my boyfriend?” I asked.

“Yes. I’ve had a crush on him since tenth grade.” Sean blushed.

“Then I’m the one who stepped in your way. Just don’t try to make him leave me.” I said.

“You never stepped in my way. It’s what happens when a gay boy falls for a straight boy. There were plenty of girls before he ever saw you. I’m not the one you have to worry about trying to break you up. Some of his exes are pretty jealous.” He chuckled.

“I didn’t realize he’d dated before.” I murmured as I walked past him to where our balls had settled.

“Of course he did. Gray is a hot guy. Lots of girls have been after him. A few even caught him. They all ended up breaking up with him though.” Sean said.

“Not him breaking up with them?” I asked.

“No. I guess he kept changing the subject when the girls started talking about their futures. I heard this like third hand. Gray told his last girlfriend that there was never going to be an ‘after college’ for them. He told her she wasn’t his forever, just his right now.” He told me.

“Gray says I’m his happy ever after.” I confessed.

“Then you’ve got him. He wants to keep you. I’ll be cheering for you. He never gave anyone a ring.”

“It’s my birthstone.” I smiled at the ring.

“Let’s finish this and go get some ice cream. It’s a really warm day out.” Sean said.

We finished up. Sean technically won, but we didn't care about winners or losers. This was a lot of fun and I really enjoyed spending time with him.

While we had our ice cream, Sean told me about how his crush on Gray had grown, starting with a minor attraction to Gray when he first showed up in Sean's tenth grade home room and growing stronger as they were partnered in science. They had several classes together in that year. He had worried Gray would transfer out when a bunch of other kids did, but he stayed.

"I thought it was the best luck I could've had, but maybe it was meant to be for you and him. If he had transferred, you might not have ended up with him." Sean admitted.

"Maybe it was for both of us. If he had transferred, you wouldn't have had the chance to become friends with him. If you want, I can see if he'll do a picture with you at the prom. I can tell him it's so you can prove you were friends with a popular boy, if you want." I offered.

Sean laughed. "I don't think I'm that desperate. I'm really surprised you're so cool about this. You don't have anything against gay people?"

"No. Two people I know are gay. They love each other very much. I hope you find that too. I want all my friends to be happy." I told him.

"Thanks, Echo. You're a good friend." He smiled. "Hurry and finish that ice cream. I want to play video games. We only have another hour before Gray comes to get you."

I hurried as much as I safely could. I wanted to win some prizes for Victor and Gray. It would be the perfect end to my afternoon with Sean.

Bowling Blues

Chapter 90 - The Vampire's Servant

When Gray arrived to pick me up he did one of those handshake/hug things with Sean. My poor friend didn't seem to know what to do. I stood to the side and bit my lips together. I would never tell Gray what a thrill he just gave Sean.

Gray took me to his truck and helped me up. I put on my seatbelt and settled the plastic bag with my prizes on the seat next to me. Gray got in and smiled.

"I won you something." I said.

"Oh, really? What did you win for me, angel?" He asked.

I reached in and dug around in the bag until I found it. I pulled it out and let it dangle. It was a keychain with a little plastic wolf, I thought looked like Rex, on it.

“That’s cute.” Gray said, taking it from me and putting it on his keys. “What did you get for Victor?”

Reaching in the bag, I found the pen I got for Victor. It had a plastic rose on the end that looked like it was made from glass. I thought it was very pretty.

“Oh, that’s really nice. I bet he’ll like it. What else did you win?”

I pulled out a fat stuffed cat with black paws and a white body and hugged it to me.

“This is Boots and I love him.” I replied softly, cuddling my cat.

“That’s one of the prizes they hang up. I bet you didn’t have a lot of tickets after you bought that.” He chuckled.

“I had to take him home, Gray. There was a grubby kid covered in chocolate eyeing him. His fur would be ruined.” I told him defensively.

“Sounds like you saved him.” Gray said with a nod.

“I did. He’ll be safe in my room.” I smiled. “I haven’t had a stuffed animal since I started living in the basement. I can keep him, right?”

“Of course you can, angel. I’ll even go look for friends for him so he won’t be lonely.” He winked before turning on the truck and pulling out of the spot.

It wasn’t too far to the bowling alley. I watched the landscape go past as I held my stuffed animal. I’d felt guilty about not spending as much on Gray and Victor as I spent on myself, but I really wanted the cat as soon as I saw him.

After we arrived at the bowling alley, I put my cat in the bag and set it on the floor of the truck. I didn’t want anyone to break in and steal him. Gray helped me down and we went in.

There were some neon signs and vending machines. The noise of the people bowling was pretty loud. There were a lot of people there.

Gray waved to a group of teens. Three boys and three girls. Two of the girls had brown hair and one had orange hair. They looked nice. They were talking to each other with big smiles. The boys had their arms around their mates.

“This is Alan and Renee, Tony and Erin, and Ryan and Amber. Everyone, this is my mate, Echo Nightshade.” Gray said when we approached them.

Amber scrunched up her nose. “What smells like vampires?”

“I’m a dhampyr, Gray and I live with the Master of the territory. A vampire.” I explained.

“What’s a dhampyr?” She asked.

“I’m part vampire and part human.” I told her.

“Ew.... I mean.... Wow. That’s so interesting.” Amber smiled.

I didn’t think she meant to be friendly. I really didn’t like how she said ‘ew’. Then she started mindlinking the other girls. I could see them all getting that distant look before they laughed.

Involuntarily, I took a step back. Gray put his arm around my shoulders and held me close. I wanted to hide behind him.

“That wasn’t very nice, Amber. No mindlinking on this date. I want Echo to get to know all of you. Try to behave, please.” Gray said.

“You could have at least warned us. I can’t go home smelling like vampire. My dad with shit himself.” Renee huffed.

“I’ll make sure you smell like werewolf before I take you home, baby.” Alan purred.

“Guys, I want Echo to feel comfortable with my friends. Please. Don’t be jerks.” Gray asked.

“The girls will be on their best behavior. Right?” Ryan growled.

The other boys looked at their girlfriends. The girls looked at each other and nodded. This wasn’t exactly going well.

Gray took my arm and led me to the café. We let everyone else go first. They were all ordering big burgers, extra fries, and large milkshakes. I didn’t know if I could eat that much. I ordered a grilled cheese sandwich and a medium lemon-lime soda.

Even though they were a fair distance away, I could hear the girls talking. They were criticizing my clothes, my hair, and my food order. This was not as much fun as my time with Sean had been. But I didn’t want to disappoint Gray, so I didn’t say anything.

We sat at the biggest table there and everyone ate. I felt like I was being judged at every turn. Everything got a comment.

“Look at her little bird bites. That must be how you stay so thin. Werewolf metabolism does it for us. We can eat as much as we want and never gain weight.” Erin smiled.

“I just had a large breakfast and lunch. I don’t normally eat very much at dinner.” I told her.

That was mostly true. At dinner I was usually eating blood foods, and vampire sized portions were actually quite small compared to how much I watched all the werewolves eating. I didn't know how my stomach would handle not having very much blood, but I was hoping it wouldn't be too bad.

"So, Echo, you're Harmony and Val's sister, right?" Alan asked.

"Yes. I am." I smiled.

"That's so weird. What went wrong with you? How did your parents manage a vampire, a werewolf, and a witch? I can understand a werewolf and a witch, but how do you get a vampire?" Amber laughed.

"She's not a vampire." Gray growled.

"Fine, a dhampyr. Same thing." She huffed.

"We don't know yet." I told her.

She just hummed and went back to eating. I didn't talk much. A lot of the conversation was about pack things Gray had missed because he wasn't living on the pack lands anymore. I felt badly that he was missing out on so much.

He excitedly talked about the training we were doing with Amy. The guys were really interested, but the girls didn't seem to care much. I wished I had something to talk to them about, but it seemed like they shut down anything I tried.

"So you're hanging out with rogues and vampires now? Wow. I wouldn't have thought it from you, Gray." Amber said. "You always said you hated them. I guess things change when you get a mate who's not a werewolf."

"Amy is the Queen of the Eaten Heart Collective and a member of the Werewolf Association. It's a good connection to make. I've also met and trained with her mate, Alpha Lucien of Lune Rouge. I know two vampires in the High Council, too. Because of Echo, we have an alliance with the vampires that will be really useful for our pack. I don't think there's anything wrong with having a mate who isn't a wolf." Gray told her.

"She can't run with you, can't hunt with you, and doesn't understand the same things. How could the moon goddess have paired you with someone so wrong for you?" Renee asked. "You always talked about wanting a wolf mate and not a human one."

I looked at Gray. He took my hand. He wanted a wolf mate, but he didn't reject me. I wondered why.

"Gray?" I whispered.

“I did want a wolf mate, when I was younger and didn’t know just how much I could love someone without a wolf. I love you. That’s not going to change just because of what you are or are not.” He replied.

“Why didn’t you just reject me in the beginning, before you got attached?” I asked.

“Because he wouldn’t get a second chance if he did. If you get a second chance, it’s only if you were the rejected person. You would have had to have rejected him.” Amber explained like I was an idiot.

I stared down at my hands. Gray said he wanted me from the moment he saw me. He never tried to give me up and he never tried to get me to give him up. He could have told me how to reject him at any point before I was kidnapped and I would have done it.

“We can’t just stand aside and say nothing. If you were going to have someone without a wolf, then you could have had Christie. She at least understands what it’s like to live with us. You could have rejected this and taken Christie as a chosen mate.” Erin insisted.

“Christie is my ex-girlfriend. She’s a human who was raised in the pack after her mother married a member.” Gray explained. “And I don’t want a chosen mate. I want my mate.”

“What’s going to happen when your grandfather meets her? Alpha Martin hates vampires. He will probably tell Alpha Trent to kick you out of the pack.” Amber said.

“Then, I’ll leave the pack. This was a bad idea. I thought you guys would be happy that I found my mate. I thought you could act like the good people I know you are. Instead, you’re being a bunch of assholes.” Gray growled.

“The girls are just worried about you. You’ve barely been on the pack lands. You spend all your time with her. You’re living with vampires. It’s not healthy.” Ryan said.

“You spend all your free time with your mate. I live with my mate. I’m gonna take Echo to bowl now. You can come if you stop trying to convince me that you know what’s best for me and if you stop trying to make Echo feel bad for what she is.” Gray told them standing and pulling me to stand with him.

He towed me with him out to the bowling alley and over to a tall counter. Gray asked for my shoe size and got me shoes. When I questioned it, he explained that you have to rent special shoes for the lanes. He bought three games and we went to the lane the boy behind the counter directed us to.

I sat on the chairs and worked on changing my shoes. Gray still looked angry. I went over and sat in his lap, giving him a kiss on the cheek before I rested my head on his shoulder.

“I’m sorry, Echo. I shouldn’t have done that. I should have just brought you here with Cam and Harmony. I thought the girls might be a little catty, but I didn’t think they would attack you like that.” Gray whispered.

“They’re worried about you and about the choices you made. They’re trying to be good friends, even if they did it in a bad way.” I told him.

“You’re not mad?” He asked.

“I wish they had liked me. I’m disappointed, but I have you. I know that you love me and have loved me from the moment you saw me. I’m not afraid they’ll change your mind about loving me. If Victor, your brother, Cam, your parents, Val, and I couldn’t change your mind, I know they can’t.” I said, kissing him again.

Gray chuckled. “You’re right. I’m a very stubborn man.”

“Thank the goddess.” I murmured, repeating something I’d heard all the wolves saying.

“You don’t even believe in the goddess.” He laughed.

“I’m getting there. Apparently she was right, I do need a puppy.” I giggled.

Gray started tickling me and I squirmed and squealed in his lap. He kissed my cheek and held me tight.

“Come on, angel. Let’s pick out a ball for you to use.” Gray said, moving me off his lap.

He helped me find a ball I could grip easily and that wasn’t too heavy. When we returned to our spot, two of the couples were there. Amber and Erin stood with their mates.

“Renee couldn’t get over it. She and Alan left. We’ll try. It’s really hard, because an alliance with vampires doesn’t immediately make everyone cool with them. Renee’s not even allowed to go to the all species club in town because vampires go there.” Amber explained.

“You didn’t like me immediately because of what I was. If you think I’ll forgive that, you’re right. If you think I’ll ever forget it, you’re wrong. I spent most of my life being hated for what I am. I finally have people who see me as special for it instead of evil. Werewolves never hurt me before today. If it made you feel powerful, then I think you need to take a close look at yourselves, because that is pretty pathetic.” I told them. “You can stay, but I refuse to be hurt, harassed, or bothered by you anymore. Your fun is over. I no longer care about what you do or say.”

I turned back to the lane and looked around. I put my ball on the machine where I saw other people putting theirs. Gray put his ball down next to mine and hugged me.

“You’re so amazing. I thought they would hurt your feelings.” He whispered.

“Only people I care about can hurt my feelings face to face. The notes from the fae kids hurt because I didn’t know who didn’t like me or why. These girls are right in front of me and they don’t matter. You only listen to your heart and no one else. You won’t be affected by them.” I smiled.

“Let’s get our game set up and then I’ll show you how to roll the ball.” Gray said.

I nodded and followed him to the computer. The rest of the evening was a lot more fun. None of his friends bothered me with anything else. The first time I actually managed to hit the pins they all cheered. I ended up having a lot of fun.

Though the night turned into a fun one, it let me know that tomorrow could be difficult. I would be ready for whatever came at me. At least I knew Gray would stay with me no matter what.