

The Beast And The Blessed by Ashley Breanne

The Beast And The Blessed by Ashley Breanne Chapter 48 - 60

Forty-Eight: Natalie

Natalie's P.O.V.

The room spiraled into chaos as Joselin, Killian, and Charlie all began to talk over

each other. I tried to keep up, but I was so amused by the fact that it was the first time

I had seen Killian in this kind of situation. It was like they were kids again, and he was fighting with his siblings.

And he was. But even Joselin was loud and vocal about this mysterious woman...

Talia.

A flash of unwarranted jealousy had spiked through me, and I pushed it down. My

head shook as I tried to clear the thought from my brain. I heard one female name,

and my mind jumped to the worst-case scenario. It was unreasonable and only

encouraged me to want the mark even more. I wanted to know that he was mine and

only mine, and I wanted to be only his.

"She was ready to tear the fucking castle down when she left!"

Charlie shouted as

Joselin jumped to her feet until all three of the 'siblings' were leaning in close to yell

over the other. I sat back in Killian's chair as I watched them fight across the desk.

"If anyone is going to be drawing blood, it will be me. I still want to skin that bitch!" My

eyes widened as Joselin slammed her palm down on the desk, her hair flying away

from her face, and the black lines along her body vibrated rapidly. “She was bitter and angry at the time, but I’m sure when she gets here, she will have moved past everything. It’s been almost a decade!” Killian insisted, the tip of his large index finger pressing down on the desk where my hips had previously been. My eyes stayed locked on the digit against the hardwood as he tapped the surface again. Maybe it was because of how badly I wanted my mark, to officially be Killian’s mate. But I resented that he spoke with a fondness that hinted at an emotional connection to this mysterious woman. “She was vindictive!” Joselin snapped before turning and walking to the open area of the room behind the chairs to pace back and forth. The three of them fell silent as they all stood up straight, the two siblings turning to watch the witch. “If anyone turned against us, it would be her.” Killian’s shoulders dropped, and I stood from his seat and placed my hand on his back. “We need a plan. Some way to test their loyalty without letting on that we are suspicious of them. The last thing we need is a group of angry witches running free through the castle.” Killian moved until his chest was pressed against my back, and he wrapped his arms around my waist as he rested his chin on my head. “I have an idea, but I would need to make a few renovations to the entryway. I have never tried it this way before, but I have read about it.” Joselin

paused as she let her head fall back in contemplation. “We don’t know if we can trust anyone. I was considering this for those that had been infected, but I would need to do more research.” ‘Can you be any more cryptic? Out with it already.’ Charlie muttered as she slouched down into one of the visitor’s chairs. “I want to use a trapping rune in the foyer. I will have to make some adjustments to the casting, so it applies to the living and not just demons. We can use it to trap anyone who has been working with the other side.” Joselin muttered, and I could see the wheels spinning in her head. “And the council won’t take personal offense because it will apply to everyone and won’t target them specifically.” Charlie agreed before her eyebrows squeezed together. “Can you make the necessary adjustments and have it ready before the council arrives?” ‘It’s going to take some time to figure it out. I’m not even positive it is possible just yet. I need to do some research.’ Joselin said before flickering out of the room. Charlie stood up, letting out a deep breath, seeming more relaxed with the council coming for their visit. As she began to walk away, Killian’s voice rang out, making her freeze. ‘The next time you have a problem with how I am running my kingdom, you can talk to me in private. I have put up with your public displays of disrespect long enough. It

ends now.” Killian’s low and threatening growl had Charlie’s eyes widening slightly

before anger took over, and she glared at her older brother.

The woman turned on her heels, storming toward the door when Killian spoke again.

“Oh, and Charlie? You have a lot to say about stupid decisions, but don’t think I am

blind to the bear shifter that has been hiding in the forest just outside of the city.

You’ve done a piss poor job of masking his scent on you.”

Charlotte didn’t turn this time, but her hand did visibly tighten around the door handle.

I could feel the mortification coming from her. Her posture was rigid and

uncomfortable as she yanked the door open and let it slam shut behind her.

I bit my tongue as he sat back in his chair, pulling me with him.

We sat in comfortable

silence as I gave him time to decompress. His hand slid up and down the side of my

thigh, sending a shiver of pleasure down my spine.

“Who is Talia?” I took it as a bad sign that the sound of her name made him relax.

Yes, there was definitely a history with them.

“She was my parent’s right hand, just like Josie is to me. She was practically family

until I chose Joselin over her as my advisor. She was livid and acted as if I had

betrayed her by replacing her. I had intended to keep her around, but she went a little

mad after everything that happened with my parents. I didn’t think she was in the right

mindset to continue in her current role.” His hand stopped moving, and I reached for

it, squeezing it gently before pulling it up to my chest and holding

it close.

“Charlie told me about what happened with your parents. I am so sorry you had to be a part of that.” His eyes closed at my words, and I could see the pain flash over his face. “You are, smart, strong, and loving. I am proud of the man that you became despite what you had to witness. I don’t want you to ever think for a moment that you have to hold yourself back from me. Our relationship will never be like theirs was.”

He shook his head, and I picked his hand up, placing a kiss against his fingers.

“It won’t be. We will be great together. I didn’t know it before, but I do know it now.” He

said as his fiery eyes met mine. The mixture of green, blue, and yellow in his hazel

eyes swirled with emotion. “I was chasing you.” “You were chasing me?” I repeated,

knowing he wasn’t talking about the beginning of our relationship or him escorting me to the infirmary.

“You told me to think about it, but I didn’t need to. Before I heard you saying you were

going to visit Heath and Nolan, I was planning on throwing you over my shoulder and

taking you right back to our bedroom where I was going to make love to you before

placing my mark, right here.” Our joined hands moved up as he ran the tip of his index

finger when my neck met my collar.

“Yeah?” I moaned before blushing deeply and clearing my throat.

Killian looked

amused, watching me while I took in a deep and shaky breath.

“Yes, my mate.” “You can mark me here...now.” My statement

made his eyes flash red before he shook his head. His hand didn't seem to listen to his mind as his thumb rubbed small circles on my inner thigh, teasing me. "I will mark you. But I will not do it here. Not in a chair or bent over my desk. You deserve to be treated as a queen, and I will take you in our bed when I mark you." My eyes closed as I savored his words, thinking about all the ways that he could take me in our bedroom. We had covered most positions during my night of heat, but I was positive that there were things we hadn't done yet, things that only he could teach me. "Let's go now then. Turn in early for the evening." I slid off his lap, feeling accomplished and excited when I saw his hard member under his dress pants. His eyes raked over me, making me feel hot and unsteady. I wouldn't have minded bending over his desk again, or climbing on top of him in his chair. If he wanted, we could do it on the floor or up against the wall. "You're too good to me, my mate." He growled, rising to his feet as his eyes turned black. It was only a brief moment, but I knew our time together had come to an end. He was getting called away, and there was nothing I could do about it. His people needed him. My orgasm and marking would have to wait until tonight. Excitement filled me as ideas flooded my mind, different outfits I could wear or positions I could be waiting in for him when he turned in for the night.

But his smile fell, and his hands curled into fists as his eyes returned to normal. "I am so sorry, Little One."

I sent him a sad smile before pushing up on my tippy toes and kissing the side of his jaw. "Don't worry. I am not going anywhere. I'll be here." "I can't get a fucking break."

He didn't say it outright, but I heard it clearly in his tone. What he was indirectly trying to say was, 'I'm exhausted.'

He leaned in, stealing a kiss as his hands curled into my hair before pulling away and placing his forehead against mine. "I will see you soon, my mate." As he made his way to the door, I could help but chuckle as I heard him muttering about bears fighting with wolves

Forty-Nine: Natalie

Natalie's P.O.V.

I was killing time, completely restless. I had already planned a celebration dinner to be ready for when Heath and Nolan were released. It was important to me that the pack see that they are alive and well. But since they were going to still be restrained for the next few days and then under personal guard, I figured it would be best to wait until they were fully back among the people in two weeks.

They were a symbol that we would persevere. Those blood suckers would not take us down without a fight.

Reading had held my interest for a very short while until I came to the conclusion that

I had absolutely no retention of the information and that I would have to reread it all

again later. My mind was trapped, stuck on one thing and one thing only. My mate.

For a moment, I had considered destroying our bedroom just so I would have

something to clean to keep my mind and body occupied. Our staff did an incredible

job though, and I would have felt guilty for messing it up when they worked so hard

day after day to keep every room neat and organized.

I had showered, shaved my legs, and trimmed the already short hairs on my pussy. I

applied lotion to every part of my body that I could reach. Then, I pulled on my best

black lace panties and bra. The lack of padding told me that whoever picked this out

when they went clothes shopping for me upon my arrival, had not intended it to be for

regular day wear.

Not with the fact that the anticipation of what was to come had my nipples hard and

tight, visibly poking out of the fabric. It would be wildly inappropriate for me to wear it

when being among the people and letting them all get a good look at my nipples

through my shirt. Any time I was around Killian, I seemed to react instantly. So there

was no doubt in my mind that everyone would get an eyeful of me.

No, this was lingerie at its finest, and I was positive it cost a few hundred dollars at the

least. The expensive fabric wasn't rough like the cheap pair of lace I had as a

teenager. This was delicate and soft. It felt like I was pulling on silk, silk that could rip

at the slightest amount of resistance.

It was see-through as well, something that I paused in front of the mirror to enjoy. My body had become more toned as I continued my training. When I looked at myself, for the first time, I wasn't embarrassed and tearing myself down by picking out my flaws. I was enjoying myself as I scanned over the woman standing in the mirror and made an effort to find features that I thought Killian would like. I knew he would love the panties. Being able to see through them was erotic. He loved being between my legs, whether it was his cock, his face, or his hand. On multiple occasions, I felt ready to cum just by the look in his eyes when he moved between my legs and took in a deep breath, licking his lips when he saw my wetness coating my pussy, on the verge of dripping down my thighs. But it was the dainty way my waist pulled in and my newly toned thighs that I imagined him spending time on. His large and rough hands would grab and rub the areas, gripping me tightly as he pulled me closer to him or nibbled and licked as he made his way down my body. My breasts were tight and round as goosebumps from my arousal had them perking up, ready for him to take one in his hot mouth and suck and bite on them until I was wiggling beneath him begging for release, begging for him to fuck me. Then again, he had made it clear in the office that morning. We wouldn't be fucking at all. He would be making love to me. But he wasn't here, so I resisted the urge to cup my own breasts

and pinch my nipples. I resisted sliding my hand down between my legs, even though I knew just how to work myself to cum within seconds. There was no doubt that if I reached down, I would find myself slick and wet. It would be so easy to get myself off instantly with how worked up I was just thinking about him. No, the only person who would be bringing me to orgasm tonight would be my mate. Then he would mark me, and I would be his. At first, I was leaning against the closed balcony doors while I waited. I had bent one leg with my heel against the wall, and my hands gently resting on my body with my fingers flat against my warm skin. One was on my hip, and the other was on my collarbone with my pinky gently pulling at the lace bra. When I felt utterly ridiculous after a few minutes, I gave up on that and turned the armchair that looked out over the balcony until it was fully facing the entrance to our room. I sat on it with my legs spread, up on the balls of my feet as I had seen in magazines. Although, those women weren't wearing such little clothing. My arms were holding the edge of the seat between my legs, and my chest was pushed forward as I tried to gaze seductively at the door, waiting for his entrance. Unfortunately, I only held the position for about fifteen minutes before I felt absolutely embarrassed and changed my mind again. My eyes flickered up to the clock on the wall, and I let out a sigh when I realized it was way past the normal time for Killian to be home.

He could be here any moment, and my attempts at seducing him were already failing.

It was the excitement and anticipation that was driving me wild. I knew that as soon as

he walked in, he would be able to smell my desire.

The giddy feeling that flooded my chest and stomach, had my body responding

accordingly, and I was thoroughly wet for him before he even got here.

It was incredible how much power the man had over me.

As a last-ditch effort, and getting tired of waiting as the clock ticked on and the moon

rose higher, I stretched out across the middle of the bed

horizontally. My feet hung

over the edge, and I held myself up on my elbows so my chest would be pronounced

and visible when he found me.

My fingers moved up to my neck, and I smiled as I pictured what it would feel like in a

few short hours to have his mark on me. Would he be able to feel it when I touched

him?

Joselin had said that I would be able to feel it if he were being unfaithful, and that

opened up a world of possibilities. What exactly would I feel?

What would he feel?

If he got in the shower and grabbed his cock, would I know?

Would it act as a beacon,

calling me to him? Would I get to enjoy the pleasure that he was experiencing?

The idea of walking into the bathroom while he was under the warm spray of the

water, watching as his large calloused hand slid up and down his shaft, had me

feeling even hotter and more bothered. I would love to see if he

made the same expressions when he was alone as he did when he was inside me. Would his head drop back and his eyes close? I wondered if he would just pump himself or if he would rock his hips forward into his hand too like he did when it was my mouth around him. Did the same gruff and guttural moans leave his perfect lips? I let my arms fall, folded under my head as I closed my eyes and pictured it. My body burned even hotter as I continued to daydream about the man that had ruined even masturbation for me. No one would be able to get me off the way Killian did, not even me. My self-reached orgasms seemed so pathetic compared to the way he would make me scream his name as black dots lined my vision. If I hadn't known any better, I would think that it was time for my next heat, but that was still several days away. Several days before we had a marathon of fucking and driving each other wild. I was excited... more than excited. Oh, the shower was a wonderful place, and I smiled to myself as I lay stretched out in bed. The next time he was in the shower, preferably in the morning before he went to work, I was going to walk in. I would strip myself of all my clothes while he watched me through the fogged-up glass. Then I would join him, dropping to my knees and taking him as deep into my mouth as I could. My legs moved as I clenched my thighs together, crossing and then uncrossing my

ankles as I tried to get some relief without giving in and sliding my hand between my legs.

Fuck! I needed him, but if he didn't show up soon, I would be taking care of myself.

Fifty: Killian

Killian's P.O.V.

The man grunted loudly as I gripped him by the neck, slamming his back against the trunk of the large pine tree. Before tonight, I had nothing against his kind. The bear shifters kept to themselves in the forest. They didn't bother building cities or living in them. They preferred to be in the wild. They had cabins and huts. Some even lived in caves. 1

I wanted to scoff at that, but it was their choice.

Bears were known to be more instinctual and animalistic. They were also naturally more violent.

But tonight, I was ready to declare war against them if he caused any more delay in me getting back to my mate.

"Put him down!" Charlie screeched as she burst through the tree line, baring her teeth at me.

My head tilted to the side in my Lycan form as I watched her rush toward me. She stood at his side but made no move to forcefully remove my claw from the man. She knew if she did, I would just rip his throat out and be done with it. But what pissed me off, even more, was that he didn't fight back. I was itching for a fight. For every second I was kept from my mate, I was getting

more on edge.

“He attacked one of my men, Charlotte. You know the rules.” The snarl behind my

words made her eyes widen in fear, terrified for the fate of the man who carried her scent. Their intimacy was the only thing holding me back from ending his life.

“It was self-defense.” His statement was void of emotion, but I could see the anger burning in his eyes. He wasn’t submitting, but his animal was also not at the surface.

He had an incredible amount of control. It would take a strong shifter to contain their beast when their life was being threatened. ‘ He attacked me first as I was minding my own, turning in for the night.”

I narrowed my eyes as I scanned his face, but there was no sign of deceit. Blood was thick in the air, and I smelled it as soon as I reached the edge of the city. My hand loosened from around his neck as I held his stare.

“Charlie, get away from that beast. He is spouting nothing but lies and is a threat to

our people.” The familiar voice of one of my guards only reinforced my suspicion that the bear was speaking the truth. Xander was bleeding far more than the man before me, and I knew without a doubt that his involvement was not innocent.

Xander had been after my sister for years, determined to be the one to lock down the princess and get all the benefits that come with the title. Only he seemed to be

oblivious to the fact that she could not stand him. Nor did he accept that I would rather

kill him before letting him mate my little sister. His whole family was on a fucking power trip. His father was a commander in my guard, one of my head warriors. But he fucking earned it. He was allowed to demand respect from those below him because they were below him. He had worked hard to become their commander, and even I respected him. It was his son, Xander, and his daughter, Lindsey, who were always pushing for more power. I had been stupid to ever let Lindsey into my bed, and I still needed to deal with her for her treatment of my mate at Charlie's welcome home ball. But Xander was a spoilt man with a short temper and a cocky attitude. He had gone on a few dates with Charlie, trying to hide what a despicable weasel he truly was, so he could attempt to worm his way into her bed. I was happy that he failed. It had been my goal to let Charlie make her own mistakes and learn for herself. I knew she wouldn't listen to me if I told her that she could not see him anymore. That would have only pushed her closer to him. Instead, I let him court her, keeping a close eye on the man so I could make sure to stop it before it went too far. But she was smart, as smart as I had hoped, and she saw right through him, calling it off before anything could happen. If he had succeeded in marking her, I would have ripped his throat out, freeing my sister from the poisonous man, but losing her in the process. Even if she didn't die,

she would have pulled away from me.

I was lucky she came home every now and then as it currently stands, but if I had killed her chosen mate, it would have been the last time I saw her. But I still would have done it.

He was stubborn, closed-minded, and fucking obnoxious. The pretentious prick. She deserved better than him, and I would stand by that opinion for the rest of my life.

“Shut the fuck up!” Charlie snapped, taking a step forward but stopping when the bear pressed further into my claw so he could reach her hand and keep her at his side. My gaze narrowed as their fingers intertwined in an intimate hold. I watched him further. His black eyes, a common trait among bear shifters, held no concern for his own safety. He didn’t care that I still had the upper hand and could end him before he could blink. He didn’t want Charlie to go near the man who he claimed just attacked him.

His action made me relax further, and I let my arm drop. Charlie looked at me

suddenly as I took a step back, surprise coloring her features.

“Get your hands off her!” Xander yelled, stepping forward but stopping when I turned to him, placing my back to the bear and my sister.

“Who are you to disobey an order from the Princess?” My eyes burned, and I heard

the overlapping in my voice of my beast and human, both present and angry.

The sound of a wolf barreling through the trees made Xander’s eyes widen, but I

refused to turn and look as I had already known who it was.

His father, Braxton, slid to a stop by his son, shifting back to his

skin and dropping his head in submission.

“Please, Your Majesty! Have mercy on him. He is just a young and ignorant boy!”

Braxton begged, knowing my intolerance for disobedience.

Xander stood up straighter, seeming to take offense to his father’s statement of being

a stupid boy even though he was an adult.

The memory of the last time someone begged for me to show mercy, brought my

mind back to my mate, and I grew angrier that I was not with her at the moment,

knowing she was waiting for me.

“Your children have been overstepping lately, Braxton. Your daughter publically

disrespected and insulted my mate, and now your son has attacked one of my people

without cause or orders to do so.” The man glared over at his son who dipped his

head but turned back to me quickly as I spoke again. “Both need to be dealt with. I

have shown mercy thus far because of your hard work and loyalty, Brax, but this has gone on long enough.”

The man shook as he heard the threat in my words. “Please, don’t take my kids from me!”

I had known the man since I was a child myself. He was strong, loyal, and smart. He

had earned my mercy, but his children had not. His mate had died, and he fought

tooth and nail not to give into the darkness that came with the loss of his mate. It

drove him harder during battle and made him an unstoppable force.

But raising his children alone hadn't been easy, and it was unfortunate to admit that his children had turned into spoiled and ignorant assholes. But he didn't deserve to suffer. Not after how hard he fought to survive.

Not after how hard he worked for my father, for me, and for our people.

I jerked my head toward Xander, and several of my men moved in, grabbing his arms.

He kicked and struggled, trying to get free as he yelled. 'No! No! Get off of me!'

I quickly called out through the pack link to a few of my guards to collect Lindsey. I

would deal with them both right now and be done with it.

'Take them to the dungeon. They can spend the next two weeks there.' My men

nodded, dragging the flailing and loud prisoner away as Braxton let out a sigh of relief.

"This will be their only warning, Brax. When they get out, you might want to have a talk with them because I won't be so merciful in the future. If your daughter

approaches my mate again, I will cut her tongue out. If your son attacks another under

my rule without reason, I will be the one he will fight."

I turned, eyeing the bear shifter who held my sister's hand and had moved to stand a

step forward as if to shield her from an oncoming attack. Charlie's eyes were

expressive, begging for me to understand.

I didn't.

But this was either one of those mistakes she needed to make for herself, or it was

something that the fates had in place for her. Either way, I would be keeping tabs on

him.

I met his black eyes, my beast unusually calm as I nodded once before taking off through the trees to get to my woman, my mate... my queen. Tonight she would be mine

Fifty-One: Natalie

Natalie's P.O.V.

My sleep was disrupted by warm hands sliding over the back of my bare thighs. The air hitting my skin as the heat of his touch left it and sent goosebumps to the surface. I bit back a moan as I smiled with my eyes closed. Sparks erupted along every surface that he connected with, and I let out a low sleepy moan as his hot mouth placed a kiss just above the back of my knee. His hands continued their travels up and onto my ass. It was the gentle way that he rubbed his hands in circles, unintentionally spreading my cheeks a little each time that had me wiggling in his grip and waking up further. He pressed down, squeezing my ass as he kissed his way up the back of my thighs, taking an extra moment to suck on the sensitive skin at the top of my thigh, and I knew I would have a hickey there later. I didn't need to worry about it. It would be under my clothes. "You're late," I grumbled sleepily as I enjoyed his rough hands sliding up my back. "Yes, my mate," Killian responded, not bothering to apologize as we both knew he was dealing with work. Whatever Charlie had going on with the bear shifter, I was

positive it was just another thing Killian had been keeping bottled up and adding to his stress. I would get him to tell me about it later.

“Is everything okay now?” His tongue met the base of my spine, and I arched my back with my stomach pressed into the mattress and my chest up as he ran it a few inches up my flesh.

“Yes, my mate.”

I blinked slowly, opening my eyes to the dark room and glancing up at the clock. It took a moment before the blurriness went away, and I was able to read the damn thing. It was just after midnight.

“Are you going to mate with me now? Mark me?” The hope in my voice should have embarrassed me, but there was something about being with Killian that made it hard to be embarrassed. He knew every part of me, inside and out. He had seen me at my best and at my worst.

“Yes, my mate.” The low growl with this answer had me purring in pleasure as he covered me with his warm body and leaned down to lick the side of my neck.

He pushed himself up onto his hands as I rolled beneath him before settling back down on me with minimal weight.

His hazel eyes were dark and heated as he watched me. I lifted my hands and placed them on his chest, rubbing up and down before beginning to roam.

“I know you enjoy it when I fuck you, little one. But tonight, I want to make love to you.” Butterflies filled my stomach at his words, and my toes

curled as I spread my legs and let him settle his hips against mine. "You look sensational."

He captured my lips in a kiss that sucked the air right out of my lungs and sent warmth between my legs. I panted with need as my eyes closed. Killian kissed my jaw before moving down my neck, smiling against my skin as I let out a loud moan when he reached the spot where his mark would lay. It was sensitive, and each time his lips or tongue would touch the area, I found myself growing wetter and more desperate for his touch in other places.

"Mh," I whined as he moved down before gasping as he bit my nipple gently over the lace fabric of my bra. He was thorough as his hot tongue covered the hardened peak before pulling the fabric down with his teeth until it was below my breasts and letting it push my chest up further.

He seemed to enjoy what he was seeing as he abandoned the nipple he had been paying attention to and covered it with his warm palm before focusing his mouth on my other breast. Jolts of pleasure between my legs from his assault on my sensitive peaks had me moving my hips up involuntarily.

The wet fabric of my black lace panties rubbed against his lower stomach as he continued to slide down my body, leaving a trail of kisses and bite marks in his wake.

He paused when he reached the waistband, taking in a deep breath as he eyed my pussy through the material. "Fuck, baby. I like these." His finger moved under the

fabric over my hip before he pulled it away from me and let it snap back into place.

“We are going to have to get more just like them. ■

I nodded silently, my eyes widening as he ripped the fabric in half, tearing it straight

from my body. “You could have just taken them off.”

Killian ignored me as he continued to stare longingly at my pussy.

“You are so fucking

wet for me, my mate. I love the way you taste.”

My eyes rolled to the back of my head as his mouth closed down onto my pussy, his

tongue finding my clit instantly, rubbing and flicking it until I was ready to cum on his

chin. My pelvis was trembling as I gripped the sheets in my fists, pulling them up from

the bed a few inches as my back arched. Killian growled against me, the familiar noise

always got to me.

With the addition of the small vibration on his tongue, I found my hands releasing the

sheets and gripping his hair firmly as I held him to me, my hips rocking back and forth

against his mouth as I moaned his name for the world to hear.

Killian groaned,

encouraged by my newfound handhold, and continued to suck and flick my clit more

firmly than before.

My body twitched as I pulled on his hair, trying to get him away from the sensitive nub.

But as I looked down the valley of my breast at the dark brown-haired man between

my legs, his red eyes flashed at me, telling me that Killian was no longer the one in

complete control. His beast wanted me just as badly, and that had me growing even

more excited.

“Good girl,” He said, the underlying rumble that slightly layered his voice had me

ready to beg for him to forget about the plan to make love and to just climb on top of

me and fuck me senseless.

Killian tore his gaze away from me, looking down between my legs with amazement.

“Look at you. So perfect. So wet for me. You’re dripping.”

I gasped as he ran his fingers down my slit, slipping over my overstimulated clit and

down passed my entrance to my puckered hole before lifting it back up. The smooth

way he slid along my body told me that he was enjoying my wetness, and I arched my

back as he shoved two fingers into my pussy.

“Yes!” I moaned as I kept my head up and watched him slowly pump his fingers in and

out of me, his eyes locked on his fingers each time he pulled them out.

“So fucking beautiful.” He muttered before pulling his fingers back out and placing

them on his tongue, licking them clean before shoving them right back inside me. I

gasped, my head falling back as he crawled up my body, his hot cock rubbing against

my leg and driving me crazy with need. “When I came home tonight and saw you in

our bed, I was tempted to slide those fucking panties to the side and wake you up by

sinking deep into you. I could smell how fucking turned on you had been. I knew if I

touched you the way I wanted to, you would be wet and ready for me still.”

I pictured waking up to Killian pressing his large cock into me, and

I wiggled my hips against his hand harder. Yes, he could do that to me anytime he wanted to. Even better, he could wake me up with his head between my legs anytime he wanted to.

“Please, Killian! I need you!” I moaned out, my hands falling from his hair and landing on his shoulders before I slid them under his arms and to his back. He didn’t seem to notice as I pulled him down onto me, desperate to feel his cock where his fingers were.

He gave in after a few moments, pulling his hand free and immediately placing his tip at my entrance. Our eyes were locked on each other as he pushed into me at a torturously slow pace. “That’s it, baby. You take me so fucking good.”

My feet planted on the mattress as I slammed my hips up, moaning loudly as his shaft fully entered me.

Killian wasted no time, spurred on by my desperate need for him, and began thrusting into me slowly and deeply, hitting as far into me as possible. My knees lifted up until they were up by his shoulders, and he bent forward to take my lips with his.

Each breath we let out mixed as we moaned and panted into the other’s mouth. Each stroke of his tongue had me growing wetter and closer to reaching my second orgasm of the night. We kissed feverishly, becoming more and more desperate for the other as we reached our peak.

Killian pulled his face away, looking me in the eyes one last time,

before shoving his face into my neck and licking my skin. I turned my head on instinct, giving him more room as his hips tilted just right to have his body rubbing my clit while he made love to me.

“Ah! Yes! Killian!” I cried out as I clenched down on his cock and came around him.

He growled loudly, and I gasped in pleasure as his teeth sank down into my neck. The

pain only lasted a moment before I was met with pleasure so great that I found myself seeing black spots even with my eyes closed and came for the third time.

“Fuck!” Killian exclaimed as he released his teeth from my neck and pulled out of me.

His warm cum hit my clit as soon as he had left my body. He didn't wait before laying back down on me, holding up just enough weight that we were both comfortable as he

licked the tender mark he had just left on my neck.

The constant rumbling of his satisfied beast managed to instantly get to me, and I

wiggled against him again as he slid his cock up and down our combined wetness on

my clit. I was ready for round two. Round two as his mate and as his queen.

Killian's red eyes met mine, and my breathing faltered as I saw the small amount of

blood on his lips. My blood. His tongue flicked out, cleaning himself of the crimson

mark as he growled out in victory. Mine.”

Fifty-Two: Natalie

Natalie's P.O.V.

I couldn't fight the smile on my face. Every time I tried, it would sneak back up on me.

One burning look from Killian, and he was right back on me. Touching, kissing, licking, and biting.

He stayed true to his word and made love to me repeatedly, almost putting the night of my heat to shame. If we had more time, he would have easily done it. I had never known sex could be so good.

But it was more than sex. Every touch and kiss had me feeling things for him that I hadn't been prepared for, even before he marked me. It was incredible and terrifying at the same time.

I knew he had a history that would prevent him from being open with his feelings or prevent him from feeling them at all. But every time his eyes met mine and he gave me a slow and loving kiss, my chest felt warm, and I could feel myself falling deeper.

That was how I ended up sitting naked in the cold bathtub with my knees pulled up to my chest and my arms around my legs at four in the morning. My cheek rested on my forearms, as I stared over the lip of the giant standalone tub toward the closed bathroom door.

I took a deep breath, fearful that he would hear my heart thumping away and realize I wasn't in the bed with him anymore.

I needed a minute to think, and I couldn't do that with his arms and scent around me.

He was intoxicating.

When he had held me to his large and naked body, I felt myself settling into a state of

bliss that I had never known before. It worried me to fall too far for a man that was resistant to be there to catch me at the bottom. Yet, even the thought of him made me feel calm and relaxed. My fear was outweighed by my excitement. But it was more than just that. While he was fast asleep with a content smile on his face, I was lying wide awake, excited for our future. I couldn't wait for it to be announced that I was officially his mate in every way and that I was his queen. More than that, was that one day I would carry his children. It was when that thought crossed my mind that my happiness faded. It faded because the people that I wanted there wouldn't be. My parents had been disappointed in me for not shifting, and ever after what my mother said about me when she was trying to provoke Killian to kill her, I knew they still loved me. Just as I still loved them. But they wouldn't be here. Killian would have his sister and childhood best friend, he could even visit his mother whenever he wanted, but I had no one of my own. It wasn't that I felt alone, but that I missed my people. My parents. I missed them more than words could say, but I never had the chance to grieve them. Having this rush of happiness when I was pushing down so much sadness made me feel guilty. But now Killian was my person. I just hoped that he would reciprocate my feelings for him one day. Otherwise, I was in for a long and heartbreaking journey.

My head shot up as I heard a hesitant knock on the bathroom door.

“Are you alright?” Killian waited a second before he turned the handle, finding it unlocked, and peaked around the corner. “You’re distressed.” I lifted my head, the sight of him making me softly smile as my worries melted to the back of my mind. I stretched my arms before pushing myself up to my feet. “I’m fine.”

“You are sitting in an empty bathtub alone, my mate, and don’t forget that I can now feel your emotions. Something has upset you.” He held out a hand in all of his naked glory, and I placed my palm over his as I climbed out of the tub. Killian placed his other hand on my hip as I stepped out before him. My nipples were hard from the cold and rubbed against his chest. He let out a low growl as he looked down at me with desire. I couldn’t even remember why I had pulled away from him and had gotten out of bed to begin with. Because I was worried that I felt more for him than he did for me?

I felt ridiculous just thinking about it with the way he was looking at me. He had opened up to me more than I had expected, and I just needed to be patient. I wore his mark. He was stuck with me, and maybe one day he would grow to love me too.

I felt my mind go still, and all the thoughts settled as I came to terms with it. I loved him. I was in love with him. It wasn’t because of the mark. I had been feeling it before we had mated tonight.

I loved Killian Amery.

“I just needed a minute,” I whispered, lost in his touch. “I’m okay now, I promise.”

I blinked away the moisture from my eyes as he brushed his fingertips over my cheekbone, pushing my hair back behind my ear. I couldn’t imagine what he was thinking at the moment. One glance over his shoulder showed my hair was in

complete disarray from our several hours of love-making.

“Did I hurt you?” His soft voice was filled with regret as he then wiped the wet trail

from my cheek. I knew that he at least cared for me, and the gesture pulled at my heartstrings.

“You didn’t hurt me. Everything is okay.”

He didn’t seem to trust my word, and I wondered how the bond worked and how

strongly he could feel my emotions. Killian pulled me into his chest, letting our naked bodies press against each other.

“Then why are you so sad?”

I leaned my head back, looking him in the eyes before nuzzling the side of my face

back against his chest. “I was just missing my parents, but they are together and in a better place now.”

I didn’t bother to tell him the part where I realized that I was in love with him and was freaking out about the potential of him never being able to love me back.

The fact that he was here right now and didn’t roll over and go back to sleep told me

that he did care for me and could love me one day. His action spoke louder than

words, and I needed to make sure I didn’t pressure him.

“They would be proud of you,” he whispered against the top of my head before pressing a kiss to it. I nodded in agreement, although I wasn’t quite sure I did agree. I hadn’t shifted and that was the one thing my parents had been hoping and pushing for. But maybe if they had seen me become the queen or a good mother, maybe then they would be proud of me. Human or not. “What else is bothering you?”

I closed my eyes, tightening my arms around his waist. ‘I’m just uneasy. I feel like everything is too good to be true and that something bad is going to happen really soon, and I don’t know what else to do to prepare for it.”

Killian stilled beneath me, and I knew without asking that he was thinking about the council and the war. “The worst is yet to come, my mate, but we are in this together.”

Fifty-Three: Killian Killian’s P.O.V.

For once in my life, I felt at peace. The world around me was on fire, and I could see the sinkhole opening in the distance, ready to take us all down with it.

But I was happy.

Even more so because I could feel her happiness. I knew I had work to do, but thinking about being stuck behind my desk all day had me feeling claustrophobic.

Naturally, I loved being outside in the freedom, but today I desperately needed it. I felt like an over-excited puppy locked in a cage.

After checking in on the training field on the castle grounds for the

royal guards, I made my way down to the city. Several personal guards were nearby, following me discretely. Yet, even that didn't bother me. I normally had one or two, but the excess was due to the recent vampire attacks. I could handle myself, but I knew the head of my guard detail was just being cautious. It was better to be safe than sorry. Even on the brink of war, the bright and colorful vines and plants surrounding and climbing up the buildings were thriving. I adored my people and my kingdom, and while I knew they were happy with me as their king, I knew they would be even happier with Natalie as their queen. Just as I was. The familiar curly light brown hair of my little sister made my smile fall, and I internally groaned as our eyes met. I was not prepared to have this conversation just yet. But she approached me anyway, forcing a smile on her face. I growled when I saw a lack of guards with her. "Brother, you look well!" She exclaimed as she came to a stop a short distance away, her fingers fidgeting with the end of her top. I was unamused, but she didn't seem bothered by it. She did seem uncomfortable, but that made two of us. "Where are your guards?" She stared at me with incredulity, as if I had offended her. "I do not need them. I can handle myself just fine." "We have had attacks inside the walls, Charlie. Don't be stubborn." I argued, but she rolled her eyes before falling silent and looking away from me to

the ground.

She was nervous, not submitting, but either way, I knew whatever she had to say was

going to frustrate me... as it always seemed to do. I loved her more than anything in

the world, besides Natalie, and I would never trade my sister for the world. But she

had a way of getting on my nerves as any sister did. 2

I was positive that I got on her nerves too. It's probably why she came home so little. I

would love to see her more. But whenever she did come back, it was always under

dangerous or bad circumstances.

Thank you... for last night. It really means a lot to me that you gave your blessing."

Charlie said as her cheeks turned pink. My eyes narrowed as I thought back to last

night. I had done no such thing.

That bear was on my shit list.

"And when did you see me give my blessing? Was it when I had my hand around his

throat or when I deemed him not to be a worthy threat and chose to return back to my

mate instead of eliminating him?" The bitter and clipped way I spoke made her flinch,

but I held no remorse.

She wanted me to give my blessing to that bear shifter? To a man who failed to treat

my sister with respect and honor?

It was laughable. If he were a man, he would have given her shelter, taken her in the

privacy of said shelter. Instead, he acted every bit the way I expected. He didn't even

show her the kindness to rent a room at one of the inns in my city.

I was already offended by his dismissal of me as not only her only

surviving family member, her guardian, but as the king. She was a princess and deserved to be treated as such.

“But, I thought...” She stammered before collecting herself and raising her chin. But I was not blind to the water lining her eyes. “I ask then that you reconsider. He is not going anywhere, and if he does... I will be going with him, Killian.” The stabbing pain in my chest made me bite back an angry and emotional response.

She had never chosen me over anyone, even when I was the only one looking out for her and putting her best interests first. She walked out of my life as easily as our father had taken himself out.

Only she was worse because I would get excited every time I would hear of her return. Every time, I would think it was the time I would get a family member back.

Then she would tell me how disappointed she was in how I was leading our people for one reason or another and would constantly find something to bitch about. She made it clear that she hated being home with me. Then she would be gone, and I would be wondering what it was I had done to deserve her treatment.

The constant abandonment in my life was something I had become used to but no matter how hard I worked, she never saw it as good enough. I could always be doing more or doing things a different way...her way.

“If he wants to be with you, he can grow a pair and enter our wall. He can meet me, instead of hiding in the shadows and keeping whatever you think

is going on between you two a secret. He can treat you like a woman and not a mistress!" The low growl made her flinch, but I saw the determination in her eyes. "Fine, then he will be joining us for dinner."

Fifty-Five: Killian

Killian's P.O.V.

Natalie walked quickly, her damp workout clothes stuck to her body, drawing me in.

What had started out as the best day of my life had been soured by my little sister. It

put me in such a bad mood that even my guards put more distance between us. I was

half tempted to say fuck it to all the work I had to do today and go deal with the bear

now.

There was no need to wait for dinner. It would only ruin the meal when I would

inevitably spill his blood.

The only thing stopping me was that I knew Natalie would be livid when she heard

about it. The damn woman was my heart and in turn, seemed to have become my

conscious. I loved and hated it at the same time.

Before her, I would have no qualms about ending a life. Now, I was second- guessing

everything. I had two of my people locked up in the dungeons when I previously would

have killed them, or at the very least, ripped out their tongues, and a bear wandering

around the outside of my city.

The longer I thought about it, the angrier it made me. My skin itched, and I felt

uncomfortable as I was consumed by the need to draw blood.

So, I returned to the castle before I gave into temptation and slaughtered and skinned the beast that had tarnished my sister's reputation. But as soon as I saw the Goddess walking away from me, my mind was silenced. I trailed after her like a lost puppy, enjoying the rhythmic way her body swayed as she strode purposefully to our room. My mate. My Natalie. Never before had I craved anything more than blood when I was in one of these moods, but seeing her had my mouth watering for something else. I forgot about everything that didn't involve me sinking deep into her and claiming her as mine. I stormed after her, a man on a mission, catching her in the hallway that led to our room. My guards dispersed as soon as we had reached the castle, and her guards dipped their heads and moved back the way we had come to guard her from the entryway at the end of the hallway. Natalie let out a squeal of surprise as I grabbed her hips and spun her around until her back was against the wall. A smile fell over her perfect fucking lips, teasing me, taunting me as her tongue came out to wet them. "Hello/ she giggled, and I felt my chest puff in happiness that I had caused that sound to leave her. "Did you have a good day?" My nose found her neck, and I groaned as it skimmed over my mark on her skin. Her soft, delicate skin. 'Interestingly enough, now that I have you in my arms, I don't remember anything about my day.'" My tongue ran over her mark, and her hips pushed off the wall

until they were pressed against me as she moaned. "What do you remember?" Her soft voice asked teasingly as the smell of her desire welcomed me to press closer to her. My teeth nipped at her ear lobe, and her hands grabbed my white dress shirt in response. Her small fists were sure to leave wrinkles in the fabric, but I had no plans to keep this shirt on any longer than I had to. "I remember how good you taste." She gasped as I dropped my mouth back down and nibbled on the sensitive and raw mark on her neck. The raised pink skin was still healing from the several times I sank my teeth in last night. But that wouldn't stop me from doing it again. Natalie had thoroughly enjoyed it, cumming each time I placed my mark on her. The instant orgasm drove me wild. I had used my tongue, my cock, and my mark to bring her to the point of tears last night as she came for me. And then...she would ask for more. I would give her everything that I had. I pressed my cock against her stomach, rubbing it against her shamelessly. There was no one around us to witness my crude actions. But even then, I had the feeling from the way Natalie's eyes would occasionally trail down the hall that it excited her to potentially be caught. While I knew for a fact that she was the most gorgeous woman on this planet, I didn't want anyone to see her naked but me. It was hard enough having my people witness her in her skin-tight yoga pants and tank tops as she worked out.

She was a walking wet dream, one that I had several times. I knew they thought about her and pictured her. They were respectful, but their eyes would trail after her and over her everywhere she went. Even a few of the women would be caught admiring her. It only fed my ego and pride that she was mine. One of my dreams would never come true though. I understood why and decided never to bring it up to Natalie. But if she would let me, during the next mating mixer, I would take her to the center of the room and claim her for all to see. They would have no question that she was mine as they watched me fuck her senselessly before sinking my teeth into her mark and get to witness the glory of her unraveling for me. They would all worship her, just as I did, but wouldn't be able to touch her. I knew my people wouldn't mind. Fucking in public wasn't taboo, but she wasn't ready for that, and I didn't want to make her uncomfortable. The idea excited me as much as it angered me. I wanted to claim her in front of everyone. I wanted to show off how fucking responsive and submissive she was to me. But I knew right after, I would want to kill everyone around us for laying their eyes on my woman. It really was better for my mental sanity and their want to live for me to keep Natalie to myself. So, I settled with making her scream loud enough in private that the entire pack could

hear her. And she did not disappoint.

“I remember how good you feel against me,” My finger ran down her collar, over her rapidly rising chest to the top of her tank top. Her eyes were locked on me as my nail elongated, and the black, beastly claw sliced easily through the fabric from her breasts down to her belly button.

Her top and sports bra fell to the sides, exposing her breasts and pebbled nipples.

Goosebumps covered her chest even though she still had beads of sweat forming and ready to fall from her workout. Her hands released my shirt, grabbing the torn fabric and holding it up so only I could see her exposed skin, and I pulled back, bending down with my hands on her hips to grab a nipple in my mouth. Fuck, she tasted sweet.

“Killian,” She moaned, and I glanced up as I gently nibbled on her nipple, watching with satisfaction as her cheeks turned red. “Bedroom.”

The gasp she let out as my thumbs dipped into the front of her pants had my already hard cock twitching, wanting more.

“I think I like watching you squirm,” I whispered against her chest as I moved over to the other breast. The fabric fell from her hands as her fingers laced into my hair, her head falling back against the wall.

“Someone might see us.” She said breathlessly, pushing her chest up and closer to me.

“Does that bother you?” My hand slid across her stomach, dropping down beneath her pants and cupping her warm pussy before spreading her lips

with my middle
finger. Her slick entrance made me groan with excitement,
knowing that she was
ready for me. "From how wet you are, I think you like it. I think that
you want someone
to catch us. Would you enjoy that, my mate? Do you want
someone to watch as I fuck
you?"

Natalie seemed to be mulling it over in her head as I slipped my
finger inside her,
pumping slowly. Her knees buckled beneath her, and I pressed
her harder into the
wall. The thought of her being open to trying new things, even if it
wasn't something as
extreme as that, made me happy.

Her shaking fingers moved to my slacks, quickly freeing me as
our mouths connected
in a desperate kiss.

The feeling of her small hand around my pulsing cock was
euphoric, and I moved my
finger in time with her rhythm. The small gasps and moans
coming from her hand me
ready to unload, but I wouldn't let that happen until I had been
inside her.

Natalie paused as I pulled away, grabbing her pants and yanking
them and her thong
to her feet in one swift movement. She stepped out quickly, lifting
one of her legs up
and smiling victoriously at me as I grabbed her ass and allowed
her to wrap her legs
around me.

I wasted no time sliding into her, feeling her walls pulse and
tighten around me. Home.

Her nails dug into my shoulders as I slammed into her, only feet
away from our door.

She felt hotter, wetter, and more enthusiastic as I grabbed her wrists in one hand and lifted them above her head, pinning her to the wall. Her head dropped back, and I felt my slacks falling further down with each thrust into her.

“Ah....yes...” She whimpered, her walls tightening around me, squeezing me in a

death grip that had me fighting not to cum just yet.

“Ian, I think I found...AAAHHH!” Joselin screamed as she appeared next to us. Her

eyes were wide with horror as Natalie moaned loudly, cumming on my cock.

Natalie licked her lips, staring heatedly at me as her body trembled before realizing

we were not alone and turning to face our intruder with wide and terrified eyes.

‘What the fuck? In the hallway?!’

Fifty-Six: Natalie

Natalie’s P.O.V.

I was mortified.

Killian laughed it off, but I could see that even he was uneasy with what had just

happened. Having him talk about someone catching us had been a huge turn-on...

until it actually happened. Then, I just wanted the ground to swallow me up whole and

never let me see the light of day again.

Joselin was gone in the blink of an eye, and Killian and I rushed to our room to get

ready for dinner. I couldn’t look him in the eye and rudely blocked him from entering

the bathroom and showering with me.

My plan to talk to him about Charlie and Damien went right out

the window as we got dressed and walked down to the private dining room. I knew that we were still okay.

Killian let the back of his hand rub against mine while we walked to meet the others for our meal, but I was too embarrassed to face him and didn't know how to respond.

We were the first ones to arrive.

Killian pulled out my seat, placing a gentle kiss on my temple before sitting at the

head of the table to my right. The ice water in front of me was quickly downed as I nervously waited for the tense dinner to come.

This would be the perfect time to talk to him about Damien before they got here, and I

glanced around the room, confirming there were no servants or guards inside before opening my mouth to speak.

"Killian..." My jaw snapped shut as the door to the dining room was pushed open, and

the witch walked in. I instantly felt my cheeks burn from the intensity of my blush, and

she slowed with a pained look on her face. I hadn't been expecting her. I had just

assumed that it would be a family dinner. Although they had all grown up together, so I

should have known better.

It was like there was a silent agreement between the three of us not to speak, not

even about what had just happened, but at all.

Joseline made her way to the table and pulled out the chair to my side, leaving the

two chairs across from us open for Charlie and Damien.

I kept my eyes down, painfully aware of my inability to blink as I tried to think of a way

to escape this dinner or maybe even the castle itself. I could rent a room at one of the inns or I could sleep in one of the cars. Anything to get me away from here right now.

Joselin cleared her throat, and I felt myself tense even more. My legs moved to be angled toward Killian, putting more space between Joselin and me.

When no one responded, she exhaled loudly. "Everyone has sex. Most of the time it's hot, and I'll stop to watch if they seem to be into it, but I didn't. I left. There is no reason to act so bothered by it. If anyone should be traumatized, it's me!"

My head snapped up at the same time Killian's did, disbelief on our faces.

Killian beat me to responding as he gaped at her. "You? Are you kidding me? Maybe you'll at least learn not to just pop in on people!"

Joselin scoffed, leaning in closer as she scowled at Killian. "You were in the hallway, not a private room. And having sex is different than walking in on the two of you going at it! That was awful."

"What's that supposed to mean?" I pursed my lips in irritation as Killian snapped back, placing a defensive hand on my knee as if he could shield me from her words. But I was just as annoyed as he was.

Oddly enough, I was offended. I didn't want her to enjoy what she saw. If she saw

other people having sex in public places and they wanted her to watch, then that was

on them, and she was free to do as she pleased. But I knew Killian and I had

amazing, mind-blowing sex. To hear anyone say it was anything less than that was annoying. Joselin looked at me with her eyebrows raised and her lips curled in disgust before turning back to Killian.

“Have you ever walked in on Charlie having sex?” Her question had my head snapping back in shock, and I turned to look at Killian who looked green. The idea of seeing his little sister having sex made all the blood drain from his face.

“No! Of course not! That’s disgusting!” He said, clearly taken aback by her question.

“That is exactly my point, Ian! It was disgusting. You’re like my brother. I mean, Nat looked good. Great ‘0 face’, by the way. But having you there ruined it.” Joselin said, grabbing her glass of water and taking a sip. The single eyebrow that she raised toward me as she drank her water made me suddenly feel very flattered and also frozen with discomfort. Vocalizing that she had been looking at me... looking at me while I came was horrible.

A small part of my brain told me that she was just trying to rile Killian up, and I knew she was. It was a good thing too because he needed to be back to his normal self before Charlie and her mate showed up. But my mortification must have been obvious as Killian let out a low and deep growl, grabbing the arm of my chair and pulling it closer to him.

“Mine!”

Joselin laughed, leaning back in her seat as she turned her head

to see a disgusted Charlie standing in the doorway with a giant behind her. "Just in time, Charlie!"

Princess Charlotte looked stunning in a pale-yellow knee-length summer dress, her curls perfectly styled with only a small section from each side twisted and pinned back.

The man behind her wore a pair of jeans with a black button-up shirt that didn't fit him quite right and appeared to be brand new by the creases in it. His shoulders were almost twice as wide as Charlotte's. His pitch-black hair matched his eyes.

They were different than the vampire from the road. While the vampire's eyes were completely black, on Damien I could still see the whites of his eyes very clearly.

The bear shifter's hand reached up to scratch his cheek as he shifted with discomfort, stopping before looking down at his hand and letting it drop quickly as if he had forgotten that he was clean-shaved.

"What the hell are you guys talking about?" Charlie muttered with horror etched on her face before stepping into the room, pulling Damien behind her by the hand.

"Nothing." Killian snapped at the same time that Joselin spoke up. "I accidentally popped in on the two of them doing it, and now they don't want to talk to me," She said, not bothering to look at Charlie as the new couple walked forward.

Instead, Joselin's empty white eyes were on me." Calm down, Your Majesty. I have no interest in either of you and never will. I'll try to never let it happen

again.”

“You better ensure that it never does,” Killian growled before standing as Charlie approached, giving her older brother a kiss on the cheek. I stood with him, accepting a hug from her as her mate stood silently behind her.

I needed to find a way to warn her that I didn’t tell Killian about Damien being her mate. If I had shifted, this wouldn’t have been a problem. I could have just used the pack link.

I subtly shook my head at Charlie, but she narrowed her eyes at me. Whether she took that as my way of saying that I didn’t have a chance to talk to Killian about it, or as me saying he didn’t react well, I wouldn’t know. But she would find out for herself soon enough that he was still in the dark.

Damien stood behind Charlie, his eyes on me, and I lifted my chin higher to hide my discomfort. I had enough people analyzing and examining me today. I didn’t need to look at Killian to know that Damien’s lack of respect toward him as the king would only make things worse.

It was when he dropped into a bow toward me, with his head tilted in submission that I felt my lungs stop pulling in air.

I had people bow or curtsy to me. I’ve even had people submit. But something about this was different. He didn’t even look at or acknowledge Killian yet, something that he should have done. It was custom to acknowledge the sovereign first.

“Your Majesty,” He muttered in a low but deep voice.

I looked to Charlie, who looked equally as confused by her mate before turning my head to see Killian's calculated stare on Damien.

Charlie cleared her throat. "Killian, brother, this is Damien, my mate."

The growl that ripped through the room made the bear stand from his bow. He swiftly pulled Charlie behind him, ready to attack if needed.

Fifty-Seven: Killian

Killian's P.O.V.

It was one thing to sleep with someone for fun. Some people like hiding in the trees, or going behind a building. Some even like having sex in front of others. It was natural

to enjoy sex and instinct to want to claim one's mate. Humans were normally more conservative and ashamed, but our beasts didn't care about modesty or privacy.

I had thought that whatever this was with Charlie and the bear shifter was a passing fling. I had hoped that she would find someone who would love and cherish her.

Someone who would care enough to at least rent a room or stay in one of our guest rooms. I had hoped that person would respect her enough to put aside their pride to give her a roof over her head and a warm place to sleep.

She didn't need to be sleeping in the forest right now. Not when there were vampire sightings right outside and now in the city.

My glare scanned over her neck, and I saw her smile fall when I failed to respond.

She bore no mark, which meant there was still time to make her see reason. She

could reject him and find someone else to mark her, a man who would put her and her safety first.

“It is an honor to meet you, Your Majesty,” Damien said with a bow. I let out a deep exhale through my nose as I noticed he did not bow as deeply for me as he did for my mate. He waited for me to acknowledge him so he could rise, but I remained silent.

Charlie cleared her throat loudly, and I turned to her. Her bright green eyes somehow managed to make my mother’s look dull, an impossible task if I had not seen both pairs of eyes for myself in my lifetime. The anger in them was growing with every passing second, but I kept my emotions masked. “Let’s sit, shall we?”

The bear stood, his eyes finding Natalie instantly, and I watched curiously as he waited for her to place her hand on the back of her chair before he moved. His hands stayed at his side as Charlie looped her arm through the crook of his elbow and pulled him to the empty seats on the other side of the table.

I stood, watching as he pulled out Charlie’s chair next to mine before taking his own seat. Joselin and Natalie joined them, leaving me standing on my own at the head of the table.

The feeling of my human mate’s small foot nudging the toe of my shoes made me look at her. She was so beautiful but so disappointed. Her mouth was curved downward, and her eyes had lost their shine as she expressed her dissatisfaction with

me wordlessly.

I wanted to make her happy, but more so, I wanted to kill him.

His actions toward my sister had already proven that he is unworthy of her, but the

way he kept eyeing my mate was pushing my last nerve.

“It is the duty of a mate to protect and honor their partner.” My words carried across

the table, but my gaze was on the stranger sitting at my table. His black eyes glanced

from me to Charlie before he settled back on me. I could see his arm tensing,

informing me that he was clenching his fist under the table.

I dare you. Take a swing.

“It is the duty of any man to protect and honor their woman, mate or not.” His words

made Charlie tense, and she looked down at her plate.

The servants were prompt and tapped on the door twice before entering the room

silently and placing the first course in front of each of us. I glanced down at the bowl of

soup, knowing they had made it for Charlie, as it was her favorite.

I hadn't ever favored it, and I was positive by the way Natalie wrinkled her nose that

she didn't either. Seeing her unhappy with her meal made my mood darken even

more.

Natalie cleared her throat softly as she picked up her spoon to take a bite.’ Damien,

we are happy to have you here. I have heard wonderful things about you from

Charlie.”

My head snapped over to her, and for a moment I felt like a little kid pouting that she

wasn't on my side. But Natalie held my glare head on until

I looked away. She was the only person that I would ever submit

to, and she knew it.

That woman had a hold on me so strongly that it was almost immoral.

'Thank you, Your Majesty.' He dipped his head toward Natalie before taking a bite of the soup. The corner of his lips curled up as he placed the utensil back down and smiled at my little sister with a knowing smirk.

'Tell me, Damien, do you feel you have upheld your duty to Charlie?' I raised one eyebrow at him, challenging him to argue what I already knew, but he remained silent.

'From where I am standing, we have had several sightings of vampires on the border of town and now in town, and yet you are having the princess sleep in the elements, exposed to the danger of war.'

'Killian!' Charlie scolded loudly, and I turned my glare on her.

'That is my choice! It is not on him.'

'No!' I agreed. 'It's on both of you. We have plenty of empty rooms in the castle and several in the inns around town. Yet, you both stupidly chose to expose yourself and risk your life... 'he' is choosing to risk your life than put out a few coins to stay in the city!'

'I think what Killian is trying to say is that you've been home for a bit now, and it would have been nice to meet or at least know about Damien a bit sooner,' Natalie said softly, but Joselin snorted beside her.

'I think what he is trying to say is that he doesn't like you fucking his sister.' Joselin

laughed as she stared Damien down across the table from her,

jumping as my fist
crashed down loudly against the table.

“Silence!” I ordered, my voice echoing through the room. Joselin hid her smile behind her hand, and Natalie glared at me as I stood up. I could feel her anger pulsing through our bond. The need to apologize to her was strong, but my anger was driving me.

I didn’t want Charlie to be mated to the bear, but I didn’t have a say in it. She had already made her choice, and by the look of it, he had chosen her too.

“Killian, I am safe with him. I promise.” Charlie leaned forward, placing her hand atop mine, and I felt myself relax. “If it would put you at ease, we can stay here tonight.”

It did make me feel better. I needed to know she was safe.

“Fine.” I snapped, ignoring the victorious look on her face as she took a spoonful of soup and swallowed it with a smile. I would fight her on staying longer tomorrow.

The servants knocked once, moving cautiously like gazelle being led into a lion’s den.

The tension was still thick in the air as they removed the mostly untouched bowls of soup and placed down our main entrees.

I wanted to dive into the stuffed chicken breast but turned to Natalie first. Her lips were pursed together, and she refused to make eye contact with me as she picked up her utensils and began to cut the meat.

From the corner of my eye, I watched as the bear waited for Natalie to take her first bite before he dug into his food. My own plate sat untouched, but

Joselin and Charlie

shrugged before throwing customs to the wind and enjoying their meal.

There was no doubt about it that I was in trouble for snapping at my mate in front of

others, and I had to figure out a way to fix it as soon as possible.

Joselin glanced up from her plate to me, raising an eyebrow as if to ask why I wasn't

eating. I turned to glare at the bear, who caught onto the silent conversation before

looking back to my best friend.

She turned to him with a smirk, and I was tempted to throw my fork at her when she

opened her mouth, knowing nothing good would come of it." Don't mind him, really.

He's just pissed because he didn't get to finish earlier when I interrupted them going at it."

Fifty-Eight: Natalie

Natalie's P.O.V.

Damien was great.

I firmly believed that he was a good fit for Charlie, and after he seemed to warm up to

me, he ended up being really funny. At the beginning of dinner, it was all one-word

answers after Killian snapped at the couple, but as I asked him more questions, he

began to open up.

Killian just grunted or growled each time Damien made the rest of us laugh. Charlie

was happy that Joselin and I were getting along with her mate, but I didn't miss the

glare she would send her brother every so often.

She wanted him to like Damien too, or to at least put in an effort.

“How long are you going to ignore me?” Killian asked, dropping his head down on his pillow as we got into bed. “I’m sorry I snapped at you.” I rolled onto my back, turning my head to face him. “I was only irritated that you snapped at me, Killian. I was over that within a few seconds. I am angry at how you handled tonight.”

He shook his head with a groan, “I am allowed to handle it how I see fit. She is my sister!”

“And she has found her soulmate and is happy!” I said, sitting up and letting the blanket fall to my hips, taking it down a few inches on his chest as I did so. “Do you think maybe the reason they were keeping it a secret might be because they knew you wouldn’t be accepting? All she wanted you to do was be civil and maybe get to know the man she loves.”

”I was civil! Isn’t that what you asked of me, civility? I could very easily have killed him and been done with it since she didn’t wear a mark. Charlotte would have survived. I held myself back for you!” Killian lifted his hand in exasperation as he grumbled his annoyance. 2

My heart fluttered in my chest at his admission. He wanted to be a better man for me, a just man. I had seen him kill without blinking, and now he was...changing.

When I had asked for civility, I had meant his treatment toward me. But seeing that he had heard me made all my anger melt away.

“I appreciate it. Maybe one day, the two of you will get along. He seemed to make

Charlie very happy. Plus, he was chosen for her by the Goddess, it wasn't like it was an ill-thought-out one-night stand. They are in a relationship. They are soul mates." I smiled with excitement as I placed my hand on his stomach, feeling the warmth of his skin through the sheet. "We'll see." He grumbled before wrapping his arm around my waist and pulling me back down until my back was against his chest. The grumble of defeat and annoyance made me smile brighter as I knew I won. He would end up giving Damien a chance, and I had the feeling once he did, he would really like him. "He will need to show me the respect I have earned though."

I rolled my eyes, knowing his speech of 'I'm the big bad wolf, and everyone bows to me' was coming. "He seemed very respectful tonight." "Toward you," Killian mumbled as sleep grew thick in his voice. I thought back to the evening, but I didn't pick up on anything out of the ordinary. The way he was treating us tonight was the same as the rest of the kingdom. I couldn't remember any blatant disrespect from anyone beyond me eating before Killian out of spite for him snapping at me.

"I don't..."

He shushed me softly, nuzzling his nose into my neck. "Don't worry about it. We have bigger things to focus on tomorrow with your coronation in a couple days. The bear can wait."

Butterflies filled my stomach as I thought about the ceremony that thousands of people would watch. I had no doubt by the mad rush through the

castle today that it was going to be bigger than I ever could have imagined. "Do you think your people will be okay with me by your side?" My whisper was met by his slow and even breathing. It was something that I would have to talk to him about tomorrow if there was time.

'They went sparring! Can you believe that?' The loud bang of the bedroom door being thrown open made me jump. My hand swung to Killian's side of the bed, seeking protection, but the sheets were cold. I groaned as the blanket was pulled back, letting in the sunlight and cold morning air as Charlie climbed beneath the bedding, leaning back against the headboard. "Good Morning," I mumbled as I let out a yawn and tried to find the exact position I was in before, putting my back to her. "How could he think that this is what I wanted when I asked him to give Damien a chance?" The dramatics were too much for me so early, and I blocked it out as I let my eyes close and sleep pull me back under. "You would think they would grab a drink, play a game, maybe work out... but no. They were both happy with sparring." I cracked one eye open, cringing at the offensive sunlight before closing it again. "So, go watch them and make sure they don't kill each other." Charlie's hand slapped back down on the bedding, "I tried. The guards wouldn't let me in. They said Killian ordered the training room to be closed off to everyone."

I bit back my groan as I rolled onto my back and blinked several times until I was used to the light, knowing I wasn't going to get the peace and late morning that I had hoped for. The clock on the wall said it was only seven. Since I had to stay up past midnight for the ceremony tomorrow, I had wanted to sleep in each morning to make it easier on my body.

"I'm sorry that I didn't get a chance to talk to him before dinner," I said as Charlie let out a stressed sigh.

"It's okay. It wasn't fair for me to ask you to talk to him for me. I should have done it myself." Charlie said, patting my arm from on top of the blanket.

"Killian really has grown a lot since he met you. He acts like a completely different person, but in a good way. I'm glad he found you."

I bit my lip as I smiled, remembering who he was when I first met him. The way he had lifted me by my backpack and thrown me over his shoulder like a sack of flour. It

was uncomfortable then, and admittedly, a little painful. I had been terrified when he

had brought me to his bedroom that he would be violent and rough, but he had

wanted to put even more space between us than I did.

Now he holds me every night and listens to me. He cherishes me and treats me better

than I ever thought possible.

"Thanks, Charlie. I'm glad you found Damien too. You deserve to be happy."

Her cheeks turned red, and I laughed as the fierce mercenary princess looked away.

She cleared her throat after a moment, and I looked up at the ceiling as I debated leaving the warm blankets to go relieve myself. “Have you decided what you are going to wear to the ceremony tomorrow night?”

It was as if her words held magic, and a knock on the door had her calling out for our guests to come in despite my glare. I was not dressed for guests, and I hadn’t even brushed my teeth or hair.

Yet, the group that came in smiled widely as they wheeled racks of clothes and several binders and books that had my caffeine-deprived mind shutting down. I wasn’t ready to do any work today, not until I had a shower at the very least.

But it ended up being fun. We spent hours combing through each binder, selecting a few last-minute arrangements for the ceremony. They had been prepared for years, just updating and adding to the original plan from Queen Lillian’s coronation as the Queen Consort. When I was brought home, they made sure to have everything on hand at all times for when I was marked.

They seemed to be more excited about it than I was. I was nervous.

They were talking about how it would be televised for everyone to see, and going over every detail from the floral arrangements to the color of my toenails. There was nothing they had left out. Not wanting to cause a fuss and add more work, I let them go with what they already had prepared.

There was no reason to make changes to the plans they already

had in place.

The dresses were another story. Every dress they brought forward had been worn by a queen before. They had offered to have one made for me as others had done in the past, but it didn't seem realistic with the time constraint. Even if the full moon wasn't so close, with the war looming over us, I knew this would have to happen sooner rather than later.

It would have been rushed either way.

But it also felt weird doing this without Killian. Was there anything that he had wanted for the ceremony that wasn't in the books? Did he prefer one color goblet to the other that I would present him before our bonding ceremony to be used during the coronation?

Charlie seemed to catch on to my emotions and asked for the room to be cleared as politely as she could before she reached over and grabbed my hand. "What is it?"

"I am a human. What if the people revolt because they don't want a human on the throne? Shifters hate humans. Hell, even the fae hate humans." I said as I turned to face her as she began to laugh loudly.

"Please! You smell every bit a wolf, and even more so now that you wear my brother's mark. You are not human. You just haven't shifted yet." Charlie walked back toward the rack of dresses, and I narrowed my eyes at all of the white see-through lace designs. Being naked on television was not on my bucket list, but it seemed I would

have to find a way to get on board with it as everyone would be seeing me through the fabric anyway. "I think this one is the prettiest."

It was a medium-length dress, falling just below my knees, and the extra layer of lace

from the breasts to my thighs made it harder to see everything through it. The three-quarter sleeves started around the biceps and would

leave my shoulders void of fabric.

I bit my lip as I stared at it. It was beautiful, and apparently, it had been used in a

mating ceremony among the Lycan Queens centuries ago, long before humans knew

they existed.

Charlie held it out to me, and I smiled as I rushed to the bathroom, pulled off my clothes, and slid the lace over my body.

When I walked out, Charlie's jaw dropped, and my heart stopped as Killian came

through the door. Blood was dried on his chin, and I could see a red line under his ear

where his skin had already started the mend. Their sparring seemed to have been

more than what would normally be done in training, and I just hoped Damien was also on his feet and recovering.

"You look incredible." Killian's low voice sent a shiver down my spine, and I smiled at

him with embarrassment coloring my cheeks. "Please tell me you are wearing that tomorrow night."

I nodded once before biting my lip. "As long as it's not bad luck for you to see me in it right now."

"Nothing about mating with you could ever bring us bad luck. You

are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. I am honored I get to call you my queen.” The moment was ruined as Charlie let out an emotional ‘aw’ before apologizing for disturbing us as she rushed out of the room, mumbling about checking on her man. I looked back to Killian, seeing that the anger and frustration from last night were gone and that he was happier. His shoulders looked lighter, and the smile on his face was softer than ever as he approached me, running his finger down my cheek and over my exposed collarbone to the tops of my breasts. Part of me expected him to want more, and I would have been willing to give him more. It didn’t matter that I had my team of designers waiting in the hallway. I would have given this man anything that he wanted from me at that moment. Instead, his hand stopped as he placed his palm over my chest, his eyes closing as he felt my heartbeat. I wanted him to be able to hear it, to hear the words running through my mind. But I didn’t want to push him before he was ready. Yet, with every beat of my heart, I could hear them clearly, like a chant trying to be loud enough to break out of my chest and reach him. I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you...

Fifty-Nine: Natalie

Natalie’s P.O.V.

I was alone, mostly naked, and terrified.

My team had given me a run-through of what to expect and what

was expected of me over the past two days. But the moment was finally here, and I felt in no way prepared for what was about to happen.

They had turned me into an entirely different woman. I had an idea of what I walking into from the loud sounds of the crowd breaking through the walls into my small room, but I had yet to see it for myself. From the sound of it, there had to be thousands present.

Before I had been ushered into my dressing room, there had been creatures of all kinds running around. They wanted to be witnesses to the ceremony and were helping to set it up. I was positive that I had even caught a glimpse of a sprite for a moment, dipping itself into someone's water bottle before it disappeared, no doubt ready to wreak havoc on an unsuspecting victim.

I just hoped it wasn't me.

There were humans running soundboards and cameras, looking terrified whenever another species got too close. The Lycans had been standing guard, and it helped to keep anyone from seeing me as I was discretely taken to my staging area. But they were also on high alert. With so many people in one place, it was the prime opportunity for a big attack from the vampires and witches. It took hours for my team to prepare me and decide I was ready. When they left me, the lights in the room dimmed, and I was left to my thoughts as I waited by the double door, preparing for my first worldwide debut.

Anyone who wanted to was about to witness my very intimate bonding ceremony, which would then be followed by my coronation as the Queen Consort.

I wasn't a fan of the public showcasing of my bonding ceremony. Primarily because I knew that when Killian bit my mark, it would take everything in me not to cum in front of the entire world. If I thought Joselin popping in on us was bad, I had a feeling this would kill me.

My eyes were glued to the large metal doors with my hands wringing the stem of the golden chalice that I was to present to my mate for my coronation. I remained still as

Joselin popped in next to me just as the crowd fell silent.

'It's time. You ready?' Her question was met with a sudden, short, and panicked laugh

that escaped me before I could stop it. I stopped and pressed my lips together, and

she stared at me for a moment before nodding and disappearing again.

No acknowledgment or words of reassurance? No good luck or break a leg?

I shouldn't have been surprised, but I was. Even more so when the doors were slowly

pulled open, and the sound of the soft instrumental music from a live orchestra

reached my ears. The ground before me was dirt, and as my bare feet stepped onto it

for the first time, it reminded me of powdered sugar.

With my first step out of my chamber, the loud sound of our people rising to their feet

made my heart stop momentarily.

White candles lit the walkway, with a field of flowers on either

side. I could barely see the large stadium audience in the moonlight, but it felt as if they all held their breath at the same time, matching my own. He stood at the end of the walkway, waiting in the center of the arena in a tux. Even though I couldn't see it, I knew his eyes were locked on me. Was this how humans felt when they got married? I had heard of other mates doing the bonding ceremony in private under the moon, but it was an old tradition that seemed to be dying out. For the royal family, the tradition would live on. Killian's feet were shoulder-width apart, one hand locked on the opposing wrist in front of him. Staring at him and seeing him waiting for me at the end of the aisle made me forget about my insecurities at being exposed. It didn't matter that the world was currently seeing parts of me that only a mate should. I could see him, and only him. Each step forward felt like I was being pulled by an invisible force. I couldn't turn away if I wanted to. My eyes began to adjust to the night. The candles mixed with the moon, gave just enough illumination for me to see the bright smile on his face and warmed my heart as he held his hand out to me. "You look devastatingly beautiful, my mate," Killian said softly, but the crowd hummed and awed in response before they took their seats. I smiled as I whispered a low, "Thank you." I had wanted to say more, but Killian squeezed my hand, looking up to the moon

before walking me the last few steps to the altar. I lifted the chalice as I had been instructed, holding it out in front of me as I bowed before my king. His warm hand brushed against mine as he accepted my offering, his voice projecting through the stands, and I knew there had to have been a microphone somewhere to pick up the audio clearly for the cameras. The metal chalice was placed at the center of the altar behind a terrifying- looking dagger, but I did my best to avoid looking at it.

Our hands connected as he turned to me again, and he glanced up, watching as a small cloud moved past the moon until it was completely exposed to witness our bonding.

'I, Killian Amery, have been blessed to have you, Natalie Matthews, as my mate. You have made me a better man and leader. I would be nothing without you and your beautiful soul. I vow before our people and our Goddess to love and honor you every day for the rest of my life.' His lips were pulled up at the corners as he stared down at me. His hazel eyes burned deep into my soul.

I felt my heart pump rapidly as the word love passed his lips. It was the most beautiful sound I have ever heard. It was the closest he had come to actually telling me that he loved me. Even though it was a part of the formal mating bond ceremony, I would cherish this moment forever.

My chest tightened as I swallowed hard. Killian's hold on my hands tightened as I began to shake. "I, Natalie Matthews, have been blessed to have

you, Killian Amery,
as my mate. You have brought joy and light to my life that I had
not known was
possible. Nothing has made me happier than having you by my
side. I vow before our
people and Goddess that I will love and honor you every day for
the rest of my life.”

Killian leaned forward, pressing a soft kiss to my forehead as he
smiled widely down
at me, flashing me his perfect teeth. I held still as he walked
around me, letting his
hand run over the thin lace on my hip, burning a line into my skin
where he touched
until his chest was against my back.

Goosebumps covered my skin as his fingers slid over my neck,
pulling my hair away
from my mark. He placed a gentle kiss on the spot, and I closed
my eyes instinctively,
shaking in anticipation.

’I accept our bond.” He whispered, his noes gently brushing my
ear.

’I accept our bond.” My words came out sure and strong even
though I was a
quivering mess on the inside. Killian let his forehead lean against
the back of my head
for a moment, and I could feel him smiling before he bit down on
his claim.

My knees went weak, and he wrapped his arm around my front,
holding me to him. I

let out a loud whimper of pleasure, biting back the moan of his
name that was
threatening to come out. It took all of my willpower not to unravel
before our people,
but having them there was enough of a distraction to prevent me
from making a fool of

myself.

Killian retracted his teeth, licking the skin once before placing a small kiss on the sensitive area. The ecstasy pumping through my body made everything seem brighter as I opened my eyes. The thousands of faces staring back at me cheered in excitement, making the ground shake from their stomping and yelling. "Mine." Killian whispered.