

Chapter 254 - My Professor Is My Alpha Mate

Lila's POV

I curled up in bed, keeping my head down, and tried to keep the fear I felt from consuming me. If Jazzy really did conjure darkness and was responsible for everyone becoming powerless, that meant we were in so much danger. It was still unclear as to what she wanted though and how she escaped without anyone noticing. Enzo was questioning Xander and trying to get that information. They had to have been working together. It was because of Xander that Val has been in hibernation; it was the wolfbane he poisoned me with that caused her to fall asleep for as long as she has. Xander was the reason for a lot of the things that have happened to me and I don't understand why. What had I done to make him do these things to me? I felt tears stinging the back of my eyes. Was I the reason everyone at the school became powerless? Was I main the target of that attack? I bit onto my bottom lip to keep from sobbing at the very thought. My heart was aching knowing that I could be the cause for all of this. I buried my face in my lap and let out a small sob, just as the bedroom door swung open. Enzo stood before me with a worried frown. He didn't say anything, he just stared at me for a moment, and I stared back through my tear-filled eyes. He sighed and walked into the room, shutting the door behind him as he came closer to me. He sat beside me and wrapped his arms around my shivering body. "I'm sorry our date night got messed up," he murmured against me as he kissed the top of my head. "It wasn't my intention." I couldn't help but chuckle through my tears. "I think we have bigger things to worry about," I said, peering up at him. He bent down and kissed my forehead. I closed my eyes, leaning into his touch and loving the feeling of his lips against me. "You are my main concern," he whispered. "I will not worry about things like this. You deserved a lot more today." "Our date was perfect; even if it was cut short," I told him fondly. "We were supposed to go to the beach and watch the stars together," he said, and even though I wasn't looking at him, I knew he was pouting adorably. I laughed as I buried my face in his chest. "It's cold out," I reminded him. "We weren't going swimming," he said, and I heard the huskiness in his tone, making my cheeks grow warm. I peered up at him through my wet lashes and I couldn't help the small smile that appeared on my lips. "We were only going to watch the stars?" I asked, hearing the huskiness in my own tone. Val would have been proud that I was flirting with our mate; goddess, I missed her so much. I saw the desires twinkling in his eyes. "Amongst other things," he said with a smirk. He leaned closer to me and brushed his lips against mine. With all that has happened today, I almost forgot how amazing he tasted. He was sweet and made my lips tingle with joy and love. He reached his up to the nape of my neck and caressed it gently, leaving electric chills to course through my body. I breathed in his every scent as he cupped the back of my head with his strong hands, keeping me in place. He soon broke the kiss from my lips and trailed them down the side of my face and down my neck until he reached the sweet spot that he claimed and marked as his

own. I giggled as he nibbled and sucked on his mark. My heart was pounding so quickly against my chest that I thought it was going to escape from my body. With everything that's been going on lately, I needed this more than anything. The one and only thing that could make me forget about all the stress and fears that have consumed me was the love of my mate. His hands went down the sides of my body until he reached the bottom of my sundress. I had already taken off the cardigan I wore when I climbed into bed, but I still wore the sundress. At least I did up until a second ago when I felt him lifting it over my body. Once it reached the upper half of my body, I helped him by shimmying myself out of the dress. I wasn't wearing a bra because Rachel had always told me that wearing a bra with my dresses was tacky and that I needed to let the girls breathe once in a while. At that moment, I was glad for her advice because it made things a lot easier. At first, Enzo took me in with his eyes; I saw the lust and love lingering in his gaze as he looked me over. I only wore the silky white panties that I had brought during one of my shopping sprees with Brianna; it had a little pink bow on the front of it that Enzo seemed drawn to. I couldn't help the laugh that escaped my mouth as he played with the bow with his fingers just before sliding the panties down the length of my legs until they reached my ankles. He didn't take them fully off though, and I didn't kick them off. Instead, he lifted my legs and placed himself in the middle of them, so that each leg rested on his shoulders and the panties acted as a cuff that kept them in place. It had gotten to a point in our relationship that I stopped feeling self-conscious about having Enzo look at my naked body, but now I only wiggled with anticipation as he hovered over me, taking me in. "You smell so good," he said in a whisper. He leaned closer to me and I closed my eyes, feeling his tongue teasing my clit. I gasped at the incredible sensation of his soft and warm tongue, pleasing and tasting every ounce of me. My body was flaring with heat, and I felt my juices running down my legs as he licked every ounce of me. I moaned deeply, digging my nails into the bed sheets. I arched my back and pressed my head further into the pillow that lay beneath me. "Oh, Enzo..." I whimpered. I wanted him; I wanted so much more of him. I wanted to feel him inside of me. But he continued to tease me with his tongue and taste me. A low moan escaped from the back of his throat and when I looked into his gorgeous eyes, I saw them glowing as his wolf fought to take control. My only thought at the moment was, "Val would have loved this." I felt a bit sad knowing that she wasn't with me right now and that she was missing out on something incredible, but the thought soon vanished when he began to run his kisses up my torso until he reached my breasts. He tugged on my nipples with his teeth sending a wave of warmth through my body. Goosebumps formed on my flesh, and I moaned in pleasure, running my fingers through his thick and soft hair, massaging his scalp. "Enzo..." I whimpered. "Please..." My body was in agony, wanting even more of him. I saw a smile tugging at his lips as he met my eyes. I saw his wolf, pushing through and fighting even more fiercely to take control. I almost wanted him to take control. I wanted him to have his way with my body and claim me as his own over and over again. He removed himself from between my legs, taking my panties with him and leaving me gasping and wanting more. I watched eagerly as he removed his clothes and then climbed back on top of me. I ran my fingers down his incredible washboard body, feeling every ab and muscle that occupied his body. I ran my fingers down his happy trail, and he closed his eyes, leaning into my touch and breathing against me as our lips met. He conquered my mouth, biting my bottom lip fiercely and bringing it into his mouth, and sucking on it like it was candy. I felt his manhood pressing against my core, begging for entrance which I gladly granted him. I gasped as he pressed himself into me. I threw my head back and whimpered in delight as he deepened himself into me. He kissed every ounce of my body, nibbling and licking, sending warmth and electric chills to course my body

and make the hairs on my arms stand tall. His every touch and kiss was perfection. He thrust his hips against me and I moved in the same rhythm, wrapping my legs around him as he ravished my body and claimed me as his own. A simple yet effective position. I felt a climax creeping around the corner, intensifying the sensation my body felt. I released my hold on his body and dug my nails into the bed as I squeezed my eyes shut. My orgasm came quickly, allowing me to come undone around him. After a couple more thrusts, he removed himself and released his incredible seed onto my stomach, gasping for breath and dripping in sweat. He collapsed onto the bed beside me, and we both fought to catch our breaths. After a few moments, he pulled me into his arms, and I buried my face in the side of his warm body. "I love you," he whispered against me, kissing the top of my head gently. Just as I was about to respond to him, a voice roamed into my head, making me sit up abruptly.

"Goddess, that was amazing."

Chapter 255 Val's Return

Chapter 255 - My Professor Is My Alpha Mate

Lila's POV

"Val!!" I said eagerly to my wolf. "When did you wake up?"

"I woke up nicely while we were..." She stopped talking for a moment and I heard her chuckling, making me smile. "Well, I don't have to tell you what we were doing. I see things have been going nicely while I was sleeping."

"You have no idea how much I missed you," I said through my tears. "I was beginning to think you were never coming back."

"I'll always return to you, Lila," she breathed. "I'm still feeling a little weak, but I'm glad to be back as well."

"You should rest some more," I told her. "I'll be okay until you are feeling better. I've gotten used to not having my abilities."

"That's because you don't need the abilities to be amazing," she breathed. "You are strong enough without them. I'm so proud of you, my girl."

I met Enzo's eyes and I saw that he was smiling at me. "You knew she was back, didn't you?" I asked; he didn't look surprised by my reaction, he just stared at me with such love that it made

my heart skip a beat. “I saw her in your eyes when we made love,” he admitted. “I’m really glad she’s back.” “Me too,” I said, biting my bottom lip to keep from sobbing. I buried myself into his body and allowed him to enclose me in his warm arms. “Let’s get some sleep; I’m sure she’s still weak and you need rest too,” he whispered against me I nodded, closing my eyes. He was right; I was very exhausted. It didn’t take long for me to fall asleep and once I did, I was pleased to find it dreamless and peaceful.

....

I woke up to the delicious scent of bacon and eggs. My mouth was practically watering before I even opened my eyes. But once I did, I was pleased to see that Enzo was seated at the end of the bed with a small table, and on the table was a plate of food and coffee. I sat up groggily but starving. “Good morning,” he said with a fond smile. “Dee made breakfast and I figured I’d bring it to you in bed.” “Breakfast in bed?” I asked, raising my brows at him. “You are such a romantic,” I teased. He poked me on the nose, grinning at me. “We have a long day today. We have to take Hazel back to my mother’s village and then head back to campus before curfew tonight.” I was excited to be able to see my mother; I’ve been worried about her since we left her in that rogue village. However, she stayed there by choice to keep a protective shield around the village and protect them while Hazel was in the hospital. “Eat up,” he said, kissing me gently before sliding out of bed and grabbing a clean pair of clothes from his closet. I looked down and realized I was still naked from last night. I felt my face growing warm as I grabbed the blanket and covered myself, making him laugh. “Nothing I haven’t seen before,” he said, winking at me. “I’m going to take a shower.” I rolled my eyes at his remark, but I laughed along with him. I grabbed my dress off the ground and slipped it over my head so I could at least be covered while I ate my breakfast. Per usual, Dee made the perfect-tasting food. The flavors bounced off my tongue and danced in my mouth. I closed my eyes, taking in every flavor that occupied my taste buds. The bacon and eggs were cooked to perfection, and she added the right amount of salt and pepper to the eggs. She knows I don’t like my eggs runny as well so those were also perfect. I sipped on the coffee, feeling satisfied and energized as it filled my stomach. By the time I was finished, Enzo was done getting dressed and joined me in the bedroom. I grabbed a fresh pair of clothing from one of his drawers; I learned to keep some clothing here just in case and I was glad that I did because we didn’t pack before returning here for the night. I kissed him before going into the bathroom to get dressed. I showered and then put on a sweatshirt and a pair of jeans. I then threw my hair up into a messy bun before joining Enzo downstairs. I found him in the kitchen where Dee and some other packhouse workers were cleaning dishes from this morning’s breakfast. “Oh, hello, Lila,” she said, giving me a fond smile. “I baked some extra cookies last night. How about you take some back to school with you? I’ll grab you a Tupperware.” She went across the kitchen to grab a small Tupperware container. Dee made the best chocolate chip cookies, and I was eager to take some back with me. I saw them sitting on a plate on the counter and watched as she piled them into the Tupperware. “Thank you,” I breathed. “Have a safe trip back,” she said, hugging me before handing me the Tupperware. “I’ll make sure she gets back safely,” Enzo assured her, also hugging her. Before we left, I paused at the door and looked up at Enzo. “Is Beta Ethan here? I’d like to say bye to him as well,” I said. Enzo shook his head. “He went with Gamma Jack and the other warriors to search for Jazzy,” he explained. “If Hazel can feel her magic, it means she’s close by. I’m not taking any chances.” I shivered at the thought, but I understood. Together, Enzo and I went back to the hospital where Hazel was already out of

bed and packing for her trip home. She looked relieved and pleased to see us as we entered her room. She was looking much better than she did yesterday even though she looked fine yesterday too. But she looked more well-rested and less distraught. I couldn't blame her for being tired and worried though; especially considering she could feel dark magic at work. with "Almost ready to go?" Enzo asked, leaning against the door frame. "Almost," she confirmed. "Just a few more things to pack." "I'm going to speak with the doctor before we leave," Enzo told her before turning to face me. "Stay here, I'll be right back." I nodded, kissing him as he left the room. I walked further into the room and watched as Hazle ran around the room, packing the rest of her stuff. "I bet you're eager to get home," I said, sitting in one of the empty seats. "Very much so," she said, glancing at me. "Especially considering Jazzy has conjured darkness. I fear not even my shield will be able to protect them from what she has planned." "What does she have planned?" I asked, biting my bottom lip nervously. "I wish I knew, but it can't be good if she needs to use Zagreus to accomplish it." I was silent, unsure of what to say to that. I stared down at my hands and tugged at my fingers nervously. "Do you think it has to do with me?" I finally asked the question that's been weighing on my mind. I felt Val moving with tension within my mind and I assured her that I would catch her up on everything that's happened later. But I could feel her nervousness as I asked Hazel that question. Hazel stopped what she was doing to look at me; I could tell she was trying to figure out how to answer. "I think it has to do with Volana's," she answered honestly. "Whatever she is planning, I fear this is only the beginning and we all need to be prepared for the worst. Once it starts, there is no stopping it." I felt a tight knot forming in the pit of my stomach at her words, but I said nothing more. She finished packing and Enzo returned moments later. "Ready now?" He asked. "Yes; let's go," she said, rushing toward the door. Enzo grabbed a hold of my hand and kept me close to him as we made our way through the hospital and into the parking lot. "It feels so good to feel the outdoor air," Hazel breathed staring lovingly up at the sky. I could only imagine; she'd been in the hospital for weeks. I'm sure the air and the sun felt nice on her skin. It didn't take us long to get to Diana's village and once we did, we were instantly greeted by Diana's village of Volana wolves. They rushed to the car, recognized it right away, and helped Hazel get out. They hugged her lovingly and praised her for a safe and quick recovery. Diana and my mother greeted us as well. "Lila bean!" My mother said, wrapping me in her motherly embrace. "I've missed you so much." "I've missed you, Mom," I breathed into her as I hugged her tighter. Hazel and Enzo soon joined us and I saw the look on Hazel's face; it was filled with such worry and concern that it was hard to mistake. Both my mother and Diana looked at one another, frowning, knowing right away that something was seriously wrong. "What has happened?" Diana asked her. "Can we go somewhere and talk?" Hazel asked, keeping her tone low. "Of course," Diana said, motioning for us to follow her. We walked several yards until we reached Diana's small bungalow of a home. I was pleased to see that the village was almost completely repaired. I'm sure my mother had a lot to do with that. We sat in the small kitchen; I stayed close to my mother's side. "Would you like some tea?" Diana asked us. "I'd love some," Hazel said with a nod. Diana quickly made tea and gave us each a cup before sitting at the table herself and peering at Hazel with a worried expression. "Tell us what happened, Hazel." Hazel glanced up at Enzo and then at me before looking at Diana. We both gave her an encouraging nod. "It's my sister, Jazzy," Hazel began. "She has conjured darkness and I fear we are all in danger."

Chapter 256 - My Professor Is My Alpha Mate

Lila's POV

“Zagreus?!” My mother gasped, furrowing her brows together as she stared at Hazel. The disbelief on her face made it obvious that she knew this was very bad. “You know who he is?” I asked, eyeing her carefully. She was quiet for a moment as she processed this information. “I know of him,” she answered. “As does your father. Does he know that Zagreus has surfaced?” “I haven’t seen him,” I answered. “So... no.” “Have you met him before?” Enzo asked, also eyeing my mother. “We’ve only heard rumors of him in the past,” she answered. “We know she has summoned him in the past and the two of them have caused havoc.” “How was he defeated?” I asked. “He wasn’t,” Hazel was the one who answered this time. “He helped Jazzy take over an entire coven and she no longer needed him. She let him go back to wherever he came from.” “I don’t understand...” Diana breathed. “Why would she summon such a demon again?” My mother’s eyes found mine and held them momentarily before responding. “She’s after something,” my mother said, gravely. “And I fear it has to do with our kind.” “It’s likely,” Hazel agreed. “She doesn’t like Volana wolves.” “Why now?” Diana asked, furrowing her brows together. “Why is she taking action now? After all these years?” “Something must have happened,” my mother said, shaking her head. “I’m not sure what that could have been though. But it can’t be good...” “We shouldn’t be here,” Enzo finally spoke after what felt like a long while. “If she’s after Volana’s then this village is no longer safe. A shield is not going to keep darkness away.” “If that is what she truly wants, there’s nowhere we can hide that darkness can’t find us,” Hazel said, a grim look falling over her expression as she looked around the table. A tight knot had formed long ago in my stomach, and it was only getting tighter. I looked up at Enzo who sat beside me; he met my eyes. “What more can we do?” I finally asked, looking at Hazel. She was quiet with uncertainty. “How about a protection ceremony?” Diana suggested, looking at everyone with a timid frown. “We can do a protection ceremony. Keep our village surrounded by light. Darkness doesn’t like the light; it can’t survive in it.” “That could work,” Hazel said, nodding her head. “But if she really is going to cast a dark curse using the darkness she conjured, I don’t know if my magic alone is enough to keep our village protected from it.” “Maybe not yours alone, but together, the protection spell will be even stronger,” my mother said, giving her a nod of encouragement. “Me too,” I said without even thinking about it. “I just got my wolf back this morning, and I can already feel my powers recharging. I’ll stay and help.” “We have to get you back to school before curfew,” Enzo reminded me. “I think this is more important than a curfew,” I said in return, narrowing my eyes at him. “I can’t just sit around and do nothing. We have to protect your mother and the rest of her village.” Enzo’s eyes found Diana’s and they held eye contact for a long while before he sighed and then eventually nodded in agreement. “Okay,” he finally. “We will stick around to do this spell; but right after I’m taking you back to school.” I smiled up at him and kissed his cheek gently. “I love you,” I said to him gently. He smiled in return and kissed me back. I turned to Hazel, feeling determination surfacing in my body. “So, what do we need to do?” I asked. “I will grab my spell book from my

home; just give me a few minutes,” Hazel said, jumping to her feet. She quickly left the house, while the rest of us looked after her. “Do you think it’ll work?” I asked, glancing at my mother. She met my eyes. “I think it has to,” she responded, reaching over to me and grasping my hand firmly. “How about I make us some dinner,” Diana suggested, standing to her feet. “Do we like Shepard pie?” “That sounds delicious, Mom,” Enzo said. “I’ll help you.” He stood as well and went toward her fridge. As frightened and nervous as I was, my stomach growled with anticipation for food. “Want to go for a walk while they prepare dinner?” My mother asked. I smiled and nodded at her. Together we went outside into the cold autumn air. I took a deep breath of the brisk breeze and stared up at the sky. The sun was close to setting and an unsettled feeling fell over me. “Have you ever seen Zagreus in person?” I asked, peering at her as we walked down the narrow streets of the rogue village. “No,” she answered. “I only heard rumors of him. He was summoned long before I was born. But I heard it was a very trying time. My father remembered it as the Dark Ages. There was danger lurking in every corner.” “Grandpa James?” I asked, raising my brows. She nodded gravely. “He told me about it a couple of years before he passed away,” she explained. “I had heard about it before that, but he was the one who told me of his experience with darkness. He told me he looked darkness in its snake-like eyes, and it fled from him.” “Grampa James faced Zagreus?” I asked, amazed. She nodded her head once. “They were running from it,” my mother explained. “My father and mother. But my mother tripped and just as Zagreus was going to attack her, my mother jumped in the way. He saved her life despite risking his own.” “Why didn’t Zagreus attack them?” My mother was quiet for a moment. “I don’t think he ever knew the answer to that question. He was the one who told me that darkness can’t survive in the light and that the greatest form of light is love. I think his love for my mother was enough light to chase Zagreus away.” I thought that was beautiful and yet so terrifying. My mother stopped walking so she could face me. She took hold of my arm, stopping me as well and making me look up at her. “Now that you have your abilities back, I need you to use them to your advantage,” she told me solemnly. “Keep a shield around you and keep yourself surrounded with light. I know you haven’t practiced with your powers much, but you have the ability to summon light.” “How do I do that?” I asked. “It’s all about your brain and the level of control you have. Just imagine yourself surrounded by a ball of light; imagine that source of light and pull it toward you. Just as you would with a shield,” she explained. I nodded. “I can do that,” I said, giving her a confident smile. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. I stretched out my hands so I could feel the breeze wrapping around every ounce of my body including my fingertips. I imagined the warmth of light hitting my features and forming around me like a cocoon of power and radiance. I imagined the streetlights shining down on me and hitting me with their glorious light. The light covers me and the shells around me, only to glow brighter and become more powerful. The light detaches from the streetlamps and becomes one with my body. Though my eyes were closed, I imagined myself glowing and becoming one with that light. I felt my mother taking a step away; I felt her pride and admiration as she looked at me. When I opened my eyes, I could see the excitement in her eyes. I looked down at my body and realized I was glowing. I had taken the light from the nearby streetlamp and made it my own. I was the ball of light and the streetlamp was now turned off completely. “Amazing,” my mother breathed with the fondest smile on her lips. “Now return the light to the lamp.” I nodded and stared up at the streetlight; I imagined the light draining from my body, slithering around the ground and uncovering my feet. The cold of the autumn air returned to my flesh, and I shivered at the sensation. The glowing cocoon that was wrapped around me began to dim and just as the last of the light left my body, the streetlamp began to glow again. “You did amazing, Lila Bean,”

my mother said, wrapping me in her arms. “Whenever you feel frightened and the air has gone too dark, just do that. No matter where you are, you can always summon light to you and it will always scare darkness away.” I hugged her tightly, feeling my body relax. “Do you think this spell is going to work?” I asked. “Do you think it’ll keep the darkness away from the village?” “I think it’s worth a try,” she said gently. Before I could say anything more, Hazel approached us from nearby. I hadn’t even known she was there, but in her hands, she held a thick purple book that I knew was her spell book. “I think I found a spell that will work,” Hazel said, stepping toward my mother. My mother glanced at the book intently and read, “Calling the earth guardians to keep away all paranormal harm and evil.” “Earth guardians?” I asked, raising my brows. Hazel nodded and my mother had a pleased look on her face. “Yes, why didn’t I think of that,” my mother said thoughtfully. “Earth guardians are meant to keep certain areas safe if they are summoned. They are meant to protect the earth from all evil. They can stretch out for as long as our powers allow it.” “It calls for a lot of power though,” Hazel continued. “I don’t have enough to protect this entire nation. But I should have enough to protect the village; and possibly even the Calypso pack and other nearby packs.” “Do you think it will keep darkness away?” I asked, my tone becoming worried. “The guardians are made up of all five elements,” Hazel explained. “Earth, water, air, fire, and spirit. Those elements combined form a light so strong that it can ward off darkness.” She paused and glanced at my mother with a look of anticipation. “With our powers combined, I think we can do this.”

Chapter 257 Protection Spell

Chapter 257 - My Professor Is My Alpha Mate

Lila’s POV

“So, what do we need for this spell to work?” I asked as my mother and Hazel who were both reading the spell book intently. “Elemental candles, which I have back at home,” Hazel said as she continued reading. I also need a bowl of rose petals, which I can get from the gardens.” “I’ll pick the roses,” my mother offered. “Should we have the ritual in the village center at sundown?” Hazel nodded. “That sounds great,” she agreed. “What should I do?” I asked. They both paused and looked at me. “Return to Diana’s house and help them with dinner,” my mother said gently. “Make sure they are ready to cast a spell tonight. We need them mentally ready because this spell is big and it’s going to take all of us.” “Including Enzo and his mother?” I asked. Diana and my mother exchanged looks before turning back to me. “For this spell to work, we are going to need all of us,” Diana said, giving me a small smile. “Your mother is right, they need to be mentally alert and prepared for tonight. It could be draining for all of us.” “Okay. I’ll let them know,” I told them. I hugged my mother tightly before heading back to Diana’s house. I paused at the door when I heard the low rumble of music sounding from her small kitchen. It sounded similar to the music that Dee listened to while cooking as well. I walked through the living room

and stepped into the kitchen, freezing at the doorway. I couldn't help the grin on my face as I watched Diana and Enzo dancing and singing while they were cooking alongside one another. The entire kitchen smelled delicious, and my mouth started watering. Enzo was working on the mashed potatoes while Diana worked on browning the beef and sautéing the veggies. It was nice seeing Enzo so carefree and thriving with his mother, a rare sight indeed. I walked further into the kitchen and without saying anything, I began to dance as well. I didn't recognize the song, but it was the same style of rock that Dee often listened to. I don't need to know the song to dance to the rhythm. It only took a couple of minutes before Enzo noticed me. At first, I thought he was going to stop dancing. I found myself laughing at his dumbfounded expression. But then he smirked and strolled over to me, taking me in his arms and twirling me around the kitchen as his mother chuckled. "Did Hazel find a spell?" Diana then asked over the music. "Yes. She said she's going to need all of us in order for it to work though. So, we all have to be mentally prepared," I answered. "Do you know what kind of spell?" "Something about the guardians of the earth," I said, shrugging. Diana froze and snapped a look at me. "The guardians are the protectors of our earth. She's going to summon them?" "According to Hazel, we are all going to summon them," I answered, looking at her in return. "Why? Is that a problem?" Enzo asked, looking at his mother curiously and yet worriedly. "They use a lot of power," Diana said, looking up at her son. "We might not be strong enough to keep them here." "But they are the protectors of the earth. Wouldn't they want to help us?" I asked. "They are busy protecting the earth, yes," Diana agreed. "Which means they aren't going to want to protect us unless we have enough powers to feed them." "They feed off our powers?" I asked, raising my brows. "The guardians survive off the power of the elements. The earth holds each of those elements. When we summon them, we are taking them from the earth where they can't feed. So, whoever summons them will need to keep them fed. If we aren't powerful enough to feed them, they won't stick around long." "Hazel seems to think we could be strong enough," I said, shrugging. "What would happen if they drain us?" Enzo was the one to ask. "Would it kill us?" "No, the guardians would never kill. It would weaken us if we weren't strong enough. If they sense we aren't strong enough right off the bat, then they most likely will leave and return to the earth without giving us the time of day," Diana explained, shaking her head sadly. "They will only survive based on the energy we give it." "So, we just have to wait and see if we have enough power to feed them," I said, I sounded more hopeful than I felt. "My mother and I don't have powers," Enzo reminded me. "Maybe not physically; but she's still a Volana wolf and you have Volana blood. That has to count for something," I said, touching his arm gently. "Hazel thinks this can work. We have to have faith in her or else it won't work at all. She needs us to be mentally prepared, which means we need to have faith." "She's right," Diana said, nodding her head. "We will have faith that Hazel knows what she's doing. If she says this will work, then I believe her." Diana still looked uncertain though, which made me feel uneasy. She turned back to the stove and continued to cook. I looked up at Enzo and saw that he was thinking intently about something; he was suddenly very quiet. I grabbed hold of his hand and pressed my body against his in a loving manner. "You have faith, don't you?" I asked. He looked down at me and I saw the uncertainty in his eyes, but it was soon replaced with love and passion as he bent down and kissed the bridge of my nose gently. "I have faith in you and if you believe this will work, then I believe it too," he said against me. It made me smile and my heartbeat rapidly against my chest. I hugged him just before releasing him and letting him return to his mashed potatoes. Dinner was ready within 30 minutes and by the time I finished setting the table, my mother and Hazel were returning to the kitchen. "The food smells delicious," my mother said as she took a seat. "I'm so hungry; I can't

wait to eat.” “We made plenty of food,” Diana said with a smile as she served us each a plate of shepherd's pie. Enzo sat beside me and his mother sat in front of him, my mother sat in front of me and Hazel sat beside her. “We have everything prepared for tonight’s ritual in the village center,” Hazel began as we ate. “It will begin at sundown.” “Which is in about 30 minutes,” my mother continued for her. “Did Lila explain the ritual to you yet?” “We are summoning the guardians,” Diana said, staring at Hazel who met her eyes in return. “Are we able to do this?” “I truly believe we can,” she said, nodding. “I can sense as a group we have a lot of power. I’m not entirely sure where the power is coming from, but I can feel it. We are strong and it might be strong enough to satisfy the guardians.” “I trust you, friend,” Diana said with a fond smile. “This food is delicious,” I said, taking a large bite. “I agree,” Enzo said, smiling at his mother. “I’m glad you like it,” she beamed. We talked a bit more as we ate and once, we were finished, I helped Diana clear the table and clean the dishes. The sun was starting to set over the horizon, and I knew that meant it was almost time for the ritual. I hoped I didn’t look as nervous as I felt. Hazel and my mother had already gone to finish setting up in the village center. When we finished cleaning, the rest of us joined them. In the Village center, I was amazed to see that Hazel and my mother set up a little campfire. Hazel held a stone bowl in her hands and within the bowl lay rose petals. I also smelled something like lavender, and it was such a calming scent, I instantly found myself relaxing. There was a small table on the other side of the fire where candles sat and something that looked like a grill lighter. I noticed that each candle on the table was a different color. Red, yellow, blue, green, and purple. They were tall with gold stems for holding. “Oh, good. You’ve arrived. We are all going to form a large circle around this fire pit,” Hazel instructed as she rushed toward the table of candles. She grabbed the yellow candle and handed it to my mother. “Luna Selene, as discussed, you’ll represent the element air.” My mother took the candle and nodded, walking to her spot to start the formation of the circle. She grabbed the red candle and walked over to Enzo. “Enzo, you will represent the element fire. Stand right over there,” she said, motioning for a spot further away from my mother and across the fire. He took the candle and glanced in my direction. I gave him a reassuring smile and he returned it before going to his place in the circle. Hazel went back to the table and grabbed two more candles; she walked over to Diana and handed her the blue candle. “You will represent the element water,” she said, handing Diana the blue candle. She took Diana’s arm and guided her to a place in the circle to stand. Then, she walked over to me, holding the green candle. “Earth?” I asked. She smiled fondly and nodded. “You will represent the element earth,” she said in agreement, handing me the candle. “Stand right over here,” she said, guiding me to a spot. She went back to the table and grabbed the last candle, the purple one. She also grabbed the stone bowl that was filled with rose petals and something that smelled like lavender before she went to walk over to the center of the circle, standing beside the fire. “I know some of you aren’t used to spell work like this but follow my lead and we will get through this,” Hazel said to us all. “I will walk to each of you. I will recite the spell out loud so you can know it. You will state the element you represent and light a rose petal on fire and then you’ll toss it into the fire pit.” “Can we have an example?” Enzo asked. “Of course,” she answered, beaming at him. “For example, you will say the lines ‘Wise guardians of the earth. With the element fire, I summon thee to bless and protect my home from darkness this night and bring forth your elemental powers and light.’ Then using your candle, you will light a rose petal on fire and toss it into the fire that sits before you.” After a pause, she looked around at all our faces. “Do you think we can handle this?” She asked. “Yes,” I was the first to answer. “Let’s do this. Let’s summon the guardian of the earth!”

Chapter 258 - My Professor Is My Alpha Mate

Lila's POV

Hazel grabbed the lighter and lit the purple candle. I was amazed by how large and vibrant the flame was. It glistened in the night air and the yellow orange of the flame brought out the purple of the wax and the gold of the hand-holder. "I will start with air," she said, stepping in front of my mother. Hazel held the vibrant purple candle with one hand and the stone bowl with the other. My mother straightened her body and held the yellow candle firmly in her hands. Hazel at first, spoke the lines in a low whisper for her ears alone and then when Hazel nodded, my mother spoke the lines given to her. "Wise guardians of the earth. With the element air, I summon thee to bless and protect my home from darkness this night and bring forth your elemental powers and light." Once those words were spoken, Hazel spoke next. "Using the element of spirit, I light your candle and ask for air to join our circle and grace us with your breeze," Hazel said in a powerful tone. She lit the yellow candle, held by my mother, with the purple candle and a large flame sparked to life, making the yellow wax glow fiercely. My mother reached into the stone bowl and pulled out a red rose petal; the petal was glistening in moisture and when she brought it to the yellow candle flame, it instantly caught on fire, making me gasp audibly. "With this petal, I summon thee," my mother said firmly as she tossed the petal into the fire. I stifled the urge to step back as the fire roared to life and grew larger and fiercer. It was glowing yellow just as a heavy breeze washed through us, giving me a chill as I struggled to stand in my place. Hazel then went to Enzo; he towered over her and gave her a kind smile, to which she returned. Without her prompt, he began to recite his lines. "Wise guardians of the earth. With the element fire, I summon thee to bless and protect my home from darkness this night and bring forth your elemental powers and light." She then lit the red candle with her purple candle and repeated her lines. "Using the element of spirit, I light your candle and ask for fire to join our circle and grace us with your heat." The flame of the red candle was large and powerful, like a roaring fire. Like my mother, Enzo grabbed a petal from the stone bowl and lit it on fire using his candle. "With this petal, I summon thee," he said firmly, tossing the petal into the fire pit. The fire pit grew large and red with anger; I felt the sharp heat of the fire tickling my features and making it difficult to breathe. I almost forgot that we were standing outside on the cold autumn night with how hot it had gotten. Hazel made her way to Diana and stood in front of her oldest and best friend. They smiled at one another as Hazel nodded her approval for Diana to begin. Diana cleared her throat before speaking, making me share a look with Enzo, both of us grinning. "Wise guardians of the earth. With the element water, I summon thee to bless and protect my home from darkness this night and bring forth your elemental powers and light." Hazel lit the blue candle with her purple candle, reciting her lines. "With the element of spirit, I light your candle and ask for water to join our circle and grace us with your moisture!" The blue candle was

brought to life and the flame looked blue, which I found to be so amazing. Diana took a rose petal and lit it on fire using her candle. "With this petal, I summon thee," she said, tossing the petal into the fire pit. The fire, once again, roared to life, and the flames, just like the candle, glowed blue. I soon felt the wetness of the water that was summoned, and I smelled the saltiness of the ocean. It soothed away the heat of the fire. I couldn't help but smile at this element. Then, it was my turn. My heart was pounding with anticipation and nerves as Hazel stepped in front of me. She gave me a reassuring smile and whispered, "You got this." She could sense my nervousness. I gave her a small smile in return and took a deep breath. I didn't need her to tell me the lines; I remembered them. I spoke in a loud and firm voice, "Wise guardians of the earth. With the element fire, I summon thee to bless and protect my home from darkness this night and bring forth your elemental powers and light." Hazel lit my green candle with the purple candle, and I watched in amazement as it came to life. The green wax sparkled with delight, and I felt an overwhelming sense of ease and comfort. "With the element of spirit, I light your candle and ask for the earth to join our circle and grace us with your essence and protection." Automatically, I took a petal from the stone bowl and realized I was right about it being wet. It was covered in some kind of lavender lighter fluid. Using my candle, I lit the petal on fire. "With this petal, I summon thee," I said firmly as I tossed the petal into the fire. Soon, I was surrounded by the glorious scent of freshly cut grass and I felt an overwhelming sense of protection and warmth. Hazel stepped back into the center of the circle and took a petal out of the bowl as she placed the bowl and her candle on the table near the fire pit. "With this petal, I summon the spirit of the guardian to the circle," her voice boomed through the air as she lit the petal on fire and tossed it into the fire pit. I was expecting the fire to glow purple as it roared to life, but it didn't. It bloomed all the colors of each element all at once, cascading us in a circle of light and warmth. The fire grew larger than it had before, and I took a deep breath as each element danced around us. We were each connected by a string of light, making the circle come to life. The light grew so bright I had to squint to see properly, but it was huge, and the fire only intensified. As it grew stronger, I had to look away and close my eyes, as did everyone else, including Hazel. When the heat of the fire died down and I felt the elements simmer around me, like they were wading in the air, I opened my eyes slightly. The light had calmed down enough for me to open them all the way. Hazel had already opened her eyes, as did my mother. Enzo opened his after mine and then his mother opened hers. Though the string of light still connected us, we were no longer blinded, but we were breathing heavily with pounding heartbeats. I stared at Hazel, trying to figure out what had happened and if the spell worked. But she wasn't looking at any of us; her eyes were fixed on something else. She was staring up at the night sky with large eyes and her mouth hung open in shock. My mother was the first to follow her gaze and then her mouth dropped open as well. I soon followed both their gazes and saw exactly what they were looking at. There was a strange dark circle in the sky, darker than the typical night sky. Within that circle, was a small light; not like a sun, but a little dimmer and easier to look at. It was also completely white. I squinted to see what the ball of light was, but I soon realized it wasn't a ball of light at all. It was just too far away for me to see it fully, but as it came toward us, I realized the light was taking the form of a woman. The light that surrounded this woman started to form and shape until I realized that it was her white and flowing hair that drifted through the wind and wrapped around her thin and perfectly shaped figure. She was a small woman with a short white dress and porcelain skin. Her beauty was indescribable, but she was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. Her skin was so fair that it glistened under the moonlight and then came to life with the fire that shined upon her. On her skin, I realized there were small orbs of light that seemed to be

making some sort of giggling sound. It was like they were talking to her, but it also sounded like children giggling in her ear. She continued to near us until she reached the center of the circle; though she still hovered over us, it was clear that she was significantly smaller than the rest of us. Her size was child-like, however her features and her ocean blue eyes held some much wisdom. Though she looked ageless, it was clear she was wise beyond her years. The orbs of light that seemed attached to her, the ones that seemed to be giggling and whispering, descended from her and danced around her, still keeping their circular forms. We all stared at her with our mouths hanging open, clearly dumbfounded and unsure of what to say. I don't think any of us were breathing while she stared around our small group. Then her eyes landed on Hazel. "Hello, my darling," the woman began to say in a voice that seemed almost musical. "I am Aura... the Guardian of this Earth."

Chapter 259 A Powerful Creature

Chapter 259 - My Professor Is My Alpha Mate

Lila's POV

Hazel instantly knelt to the ground and bowed her head low in respect to the guardian. The rest of us did the same. The guardian, Aura, scanned us with her beautiful blue eyes with an expression unreadable, yet filled with serenity. She was beautiful and fierce at the same time; it was almost intimidating and difficult to look at her for an extended period of time. "Guardian of Earth, thank you for coming," Hazel said, speaking in a tone that was low and direct. "You have summoned, we have come," Aura said, looking down at Hazel. "Tell me, daughter. Why have you summoned—" Her voice broke off and she looked off in the distance at nothing particular, as if something had just called for her. She breathed in deeply, closing her eyes while she floated to the ground until she was kneeling beside Hazel. She pressed the palms of her delicate pearly white hands to the hard mass of the ground and took in another deep breath. It seemed like she was smelling something, or maybe she was just taking it in. But what she was taking in, I wasn't sure. We all remained silent, not daring to speak while she intoned herself with the earth and felt the ground with her hands. Then her eyes opened, and she let out a gasp before floating back into the air and resuming her spot just above Hazel's head. "Darkness..." she whispered. This time when she looked at us, I saw that her eyes were glistening with sadness and remorse. If she wasn't already porcelain white, I would have thought she had gotten whiter, but that couldn't have been possible. A single, sparkling, tear escaped from her left eye and washed over her cheek. It didn't drip from her though, it disappeared once it reached her chin. "The earth weeps with pain and agony," she spoke in a tone so low I had to strain to hear her. "Darkness had touched down and it hurts the earth in its core." We all remained silent, Hazel bowed her head lower and the rest of us did the same. Aura looked down at Hazel, nearing closer. "How did this happen?" Aura asked, her tone, though still musical and light, was firm and filled with power.

“What has happened to my earth, daughter.” “I’m so sorry, Guardian...” Hazel said in a tone that shook with each breath she took. I thought she now sounded weak and frightened, but this guardian didn’t bring me the same level of fear and I was confused by Hazel’s reaction toward her. She did this spell with such confidence, and now she appeared so frightened. “It was my sister... she had turned from light a long time ago and is now allied with darkness. She had summoned him to your earth and he is here to do harm.” “Zagreus...” Aura breathed, taking a deep breath once again. She didn’t say his name like a question; it was more like she was facing him directly and she was greeting him. But he wasn’t there; it was only us, and Hazel answered her anyway. “Yes, Guardian...” “Your sister Jasmine was the one who summoned him?” Aura asked, though she didn’t sound surprised, more like she was disheartened. “I’m afraid so...” Hazel said sadly. “I am so sorry...” “It is not your fault, daughter. You did not summon him to my earth. You did right by summoning us though,” she said simply. “However, I cannot defeat darkness. My job is to not fight but protect.” “Guardian, we summoned you today to protect us from this darkness. We don’t know what Zagreus and my sister are planning. We are frightened and we need protection. We don’t know what more to do,” Hazel said, looking up at the guardian. Aura looked amongst us for a moment and then to my utter surprise, her gaze fell upon me. My breathing got caught in my throat and we stared at one another for what felt like a long time. She held my gaze, and something flashed in her eyes. “What is your name child?” She asked, lowering herself so she was at eye level with me. I swallowed the lump that had formed in my throat before answering. “Lila...” I answered, but my voice came out weak and soft like a little girl. I was instantly embarrassed. “Yes, of course,” she whispered as if she should have already known my name. She stared around my face like I was some kind of science project that she needed to study. She reached her hand out toward me and I remained frozen, staring at her with wide eyes. Her fingertips grazed the top of my cheekbone and her touch left a cooling sensation in its place. I saw, from the corner of my eye, Enzo tensing, unsure of what was happening and who was touching his mate. “Your wolf, what is her name?” “Valentina,” I answered, my voice coming out stronger this time. She tilted her head with such curiosity, that she almost looked child-like. “Valentina...” she repeated in a low whisper like she was testing the name out on her tongue. “Bring her forth.” I found myself furrowing my brows together, confused by her request. But before I could ask her what she meant, I felt my body shifting and morphing into my wolf. Val had taken control and took on her full form. Soon, she was standing tall and proud in front of the guardian of the earth. I heard my mouth gasping from a distance as she watched what was happening. Everyone else was staring at us with wide eyes, unmoving. Aura just looked pleased as she stared around the face of my wolf. She reached her hand out and stroked Val’s pure white fur. Aura’s fingertips grazed Val’s shoulders and down her narrow and long body. “You are quite a beautiful creature,” Aura breathed in wonder. “Thank you, guardian,” Val said with a voice so strong I couldn’t help but be proud of her. At first, I didn’t think Aura would be able to hear her because wolves only spoke in one mind, but Aura smiled as Val spoke to her. “Your powers are quite impressive,” Aura continued as she stared into Val’s eyes. “You are very powerful.” “I am a Volana,” Val explained proudly. “Yes, indeed. But you are different. Your powers range a lot larger than a typical Volana. I never sensed powers as strong as yours before. It’s incredible.” “What does it mean?” Val asked, curiosity clear in her tone. “It means you could be powerful enough to defeat darkness,” Aura said simply. “You are what this world needs.” Val had so many more questions but wasn’t sure how to answer them. “In due time, all your questions will be answered, daughter,” Aura said, as if she could read our minds. “But for right now, it is protection that you seek, so protection I will give you.” I heard

Hazel sighing in relief and the others relaxing just as Aura withdrew her hand from Val's fur. Without Aura instructing her, Val gave me full control and I shifted back into my human form. I thought for sure I was going to be completely naked when I shifted back, and I was bracing myself for the embarrassment I was about to feel. But to my complete amazement, when I shifted back, I was still in my clothes, unripped. I stared down at my clothing with my mouth hanging open. "You have enough power to feed my children," Aura continued, and this time she was speaking to everyone because her eyes traced over the circle. "The energy is incredible; it is as if we never left the earth grounds. They will be very happy here. I will leave them to protect you, however, I must protect the earth grounds because, without my protection, it will surely fall." "I'm sorry, Guardian, but your children?" It was my mother that asked. Aura looked at my mother with a thoughtful expression and a small smile dancing on her lips. "You are the mother of this powerful wolf," Aura said smoothly; she didn't phrase it as a question, but my mother still answered. "Yes; I am Luna Selene. Lila's mother." "You are powerful too, but she is a bit more than you. You, however, have strong genes," Aura said kindly. "Yes, daughter. My children." She motioned for the orbs of light that danced around her and they continued to giggle. "They help me protect the earth and now I appoint them to protect you and your people," she explained, they began to glow brightly as they danced around her features, lighting her up in rays of light and color. "I have 4 children to represent 4 of the elements. They can each protect up to a city line. But only one territory for each of my children." "We can choose 4 territories?" Hazel asked, looking amongst the rest of us with a frown. "Yes; they can protect every pack within their given city or town," Aura confirmed. "How long will we have your protection for?" Diana finally spoke, turning Aura's attention to her. "We are attached to the strongest power and will only survive if that power is still thriving," Aura answered and then she turned to face me. "As long as Valentina is able, we will be able to protect the areas you appoint us to, Lila. Indefinitely." "What?" I gasped, wide-eyed. "Me?" Then, Aura smiled. "It is your wolf that keeps us here and makes it possible for us to protect you. Valentina is our main source of power."

Chapter 260 Ritual Complete

Chapter 260 - My Professor Is My Alpha Mate

Lila's POV

I was completely frozen and dumbstruck over this news. I was powerful enough to allow these strange orbs of light to protect us? They can feed off my powers alone? Will that drain me? Make me weak? Will I be able to continue feeding them for long? I had just gotten my abilities back; what did she mean that I was the strongest in this group? I wasn't stronger than my mother. I was just Lila. I wasn't any different than a normal Volana; there had to have been a mistake. She couldn't be serious. "So, as long as my daughter's wolf is okay, you'll be able to protect us?" My mother asked, looking up at the guardian with hopeful eyes. "Yes, that is correct," Aura said,

still keeping her eyes on me. "It is her power that will keep my children satisfied while they are not cocooned in Mother Earth." There was a long pause before Aura added, "Tell me, Lila. Where shall I send my children?" My eyes widened even more as I looked from Aura to my mother, and then to Hazel. "I have to choose?" I asked, my voice becoming less confident. "It is you they feed from," Hazel said, giving me a head nod. "You must choose 4 cities or towns for them to protect." "This was a lot of pressure; I didn't want to make decisions like this. "Can't we protect the entire world or nation?" I asked, sounding disappointed by this choice. "It does not work like that," Aura said, a frown appearing on her lips. "Protecting the earth, which is what we normally do, does not protect your people. We can only protect the earth by preventing darkness from harming it any further than it already has. When darkness was conjured, it cracked the earth. I must spend time nurturing her and putting her back together. I must breathe life back into her. I can protect her from further damage, but that won't protect your people; darkness can still get to you. I am extending my children and allowing them the freedom to protect those who reside on the earth, but they can only protect so much at once. They can each protect an area, but you can't expect them to protect much more than the city lines. Asking one of my children to protect more than one city at a time, is asking too much." "Butt they can protect more than one pack?" I asked for clarity. "If these packs are within the same city or town, then yes," Aura confirmed. "So, tell me, Lila, where shall I send my children?" The orbs of light that danced around her glowed even brighter and their giggling grew louder, making Aura smile up at them. She whispered to them, and they seemed to be whispering back in a tone that I found difficult to hear. Come to think of it, I don't think they were speaking English. "My children had told me your powers are quite delicious; they will be very happy here for as long as you need them," Aura said, a twinkle of love in her eyes. "They've already fed from me?" I asked, my face warming. "They didn't come near me though hand I didn't feel anything." "They don't need to be near you to feed from you; your powers are strong enough to extend to them from a great distance," she explained. After a moment of pause she added, "You need to not fear them. Your powers will recharge from the moonlight. My children feeding from you won't be noticed by you. We respect you very much, Lila. We wouldn't aim to harm you. You can trust us." I didn't know her, but for some reason, I did trust her. "I trust you," I said, bowing my head to her. She smiled, which caused her to glow even brighter. "Where shall I send my children?" She asked again. I looked at my mother and we locked eyes for a moment before I looked back up at Aura. "Elysium," I said firmly and proudly. "I want one of them to protect the town of Elysium. It is where my father's pack is and I want them, along with all the other 5 packs in Elysium protected." Aura nodded her head once and turned to one of the glowing orbs. She whispered something to the orb and then to my utter amazement, she kissed it. As her lips made contact, the orb, her child, grew even brighter and then it flew into the air. We all watched as it swirled around the night sky and disappeared. "You have 3 more," Aura said, fixing her eyes on me again. I looked at Enzo and my heart skipped a beat when I saw the love and compassion in his eyes. "The Calypso pack is in the town of Rostling. It is the home of my mate's pack. There are two other packs in this town as well; I'd like them all protected." Aura turned to another one of her orbs and whispered something to it; like before, she kissed the orb and then it flew into the sky, brighter than ever, reminding me of a star. Then, it flew off into the distance like a shooting star and disappeared before our eyes. "You have 2 more," Aura said with a fond smile as she looked back at me. I swallowed the lump in my throat. "The city of Higala," I said firmly. "That's where my school is and there are 3 packs that reside in that city. Including Alpha Jonathan's pack. I might not like or trust him, but I would like his pack protected along with the

others and that school.” Aura turned to her second-to-last orb and whispered something to it; she kissed it gently and watched as it flew into the sky and twirled with excitement before disappearing. “You have one more; I suggest you think carefully and use my last child wisely,” Aura said, eyeing me carefully. I didn’t need to think about it; it was obvious to me as to where this last orb should go and protect. I looked at Diana who was staring back at me, unmoving. She was the main reason we were here in the first place, to protect her and her village. Her witch was the one who cast this summoning spell. I already knew what I had to do. I looked up at Aura and smiled. “Here,” I said, motioning for the village. “Protect this village.” Aura raised her brows and glanced around the small village we knelt in. “A rogue territory?” Aura asked, clearly confused by my statement. “Not just any rogue territory. This rogue territory,” I said firmly. “This is the village of my mate's mother. It’s being protected by a shield formed by Hazel. But it needs to be protected by any darkness that seeks it. With Jazzy being the one to summon this darkness, I fear this village is in grave danger. So, yes. I’d like your last child to protect this village.” Aura was quiet for a moment, but then she smiled the most radiant smile I had ever seen and spoke to her last orb. Instead of kissing the orb, the orb danced happily around her with a parade of giggles, making Aura giggle as well. As it danced, sparks of light flew from it, cascading around us like rain. Then it finally slowed its movements and rested in front of Aura; she finally kissed the orb of light and it flew into the sky, brighter and bigger than ever. Instead of twirling around the sky, or shooting off like a star, it appeared to be a firework that umbrella over us and fell around the village, lighting up the grounds and covering us in the most protective and warmest shield I had ever seen and experienced. The brightness soon dimmed, but I could still feel the protective shield at play. It was just bright enough to keep darkness away, but not bright enough to keep darkness away, but not too bright where we couldn’t see. “Wow,” I said under my breath as I stared around the nicely lit village. I looked up at Aura who was smiling down at us. “The 4 places you have chosen are being protected. Darkness won’t be able to get through them so easily. But they will not be able to ward it off forever. It must be defeated,” Aura said, glancing down at me. How did she expect me to defeat this darkness? I don’t even know who Zagreus is; she claims that this powerful creature is, but I didn’t feel powerful. I felt the opposite. “Thank you, Guardian. Your protection is appreciated,” Hazel said, bowing her head low in respect. “I leave my children to you,” Aura said, her tone continuing to be musical and firm; so much power and elegance reined from her. “But I must return to the earth and nurture it back to health.” “We understand,” Hazel said in return, keeping her head low. “We shall release you now.” On that note, Hazel stood to her feet and walked over to the table, and picked up her purple candle. “I release you back to the earth and I bid farewell to the element spirit,” she said in a powerful voice and then she blew out the candle. Aura bowed her head and then looked at me. I knelt still, frozen, and I looked at Hazel who gave me a head nod and motioned for my candle. I cleared my throat and shakily stood to my feet. “I release you back to the earth and I bid farewell to the element earth,” I said and then I blew out my candle. Then she looked at Diana who stood to her feet. “I release you back to the earth and I bid farewell to the element water,” Diana said just before blowing out her own candle. Then we looked at Enzo who stood tall and strong. “I release you back to the earth and I bid farewell to the element fire,” Enzo said fiercely, and then with a big breath of air he blew out his candle. Then we all looked at my mother who was already standing with her candle firmly in her hand. “I release you back to the earth and I bid farewell to the element of air,” my mother said, blowing out her candle. Before our eyes, the sky formed that dark circle once again and I knew it was opening to allow Aura to enter. Aura looked up at it with a fond smile before glancing down at Hazel who had a bucket of

water that I had just noticed. She stood over the fire pit and watched the flames dancing before her eyes. “Thank you, elements, for your surface and your protection. Go to the children of the guardian and strengthen them. Help them and protect them just as they protect us. You are their elements, and they thrive better with you by their sides. As I put out this fire, know my appreciation and love. We are eternally grateful for your service,” Hazel spoke loudly and firmly as Aura rose to the sky and toward the opening created just for her. I couldn’t take my eyes away from her figure which seemed to be morphing into a ball of light much like her children. She grew further away with every passing moment. I heard the sizzle of the fire, bringing my attention back to Hazel who was now pouring water over the firepit. The fire thrashed and cried until it became weak and lessened. “I bid this ritual complete,” Hazel announced just as the last ember was put out completely.