

Hunger

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Hunger

by [SyltherSara](#)

Summary

(The Archer, Re-write)

Adaline Swan is a 22-year-old mother fated to kings of the vampire world with an odd connection to time. Only time seemed to be against her as of late and it all began when her cousin's vampire friend Alice dragged her and her children across the world to save her suicidal brother.

Fated to three Kings, one with enough rage to tear a rip in time, another with psycho tendencies to wish for a pause, and another where all Adaline wanted, was to go back and fix all the wrong.

But the twins who call her mother have enough power to cause a rippling effect through every single vampire leaving them all in a spell.

Chapter 1

A clock above the mantelpiece in a cozy three-bedroom house ticked quietly. There were two toddlers of raven ravenous curly hair playing with wooden blocks. They were quiet as they stacked them over and over again before the boy would blow hard to attempt to knock it over causing the little girl to giggle and start blowing with him.

Their mother sat tucked in on a corner of the sofa with a steaming mug of coffee in her hand, watching them occasionally between the paragraphs of her latest Time magazine.

"Lele..." The little girl sighed. "You have to go big. One big huff."

"Like the wolf?" The little boy asked.

"Duh!" The girl raised both her hands as if it were obvious.

"I HUFF AND I PUFF!" The boy started-- "And I'll blow your house in!" Their grandpa exclaimed, grabbing the boy around the waist and blowing on his neck making him squeal and giggle with his sister.

"Pop-pop!" They exclaimed.

Big brown eyes were shining with mirth at his niece who was watching them. "Be careful little ones... I am still in my work uniform."

"Hi, dad." The young woman grinned.

"Addie," He ruffled the twin's hair and took a seat beside his eldest daughter. "Did Bells come down yet?"

Adaline snorted her coffee and side-eyed her father. He sighed and rolled his eyes, crossing his arms. "I guess that was a stupid question."

"You think?" She nodded, widening her eyes. He knocked her shoulder. "I just made a pot, would you like me to make you a cup?"

"Nah... I got it. What's for dinner? Something smells good." He got up and she followed after him, her bare feet smacking the wooden floor so softly it was hardly heard.

"Shepherds pie," She said pulling the milk out of the fridge for him. He thanked her and poured a bit into his mug. She took it back and put it in the fridge.

"Hmm... Oh... You baked again, I see. What is that!" He looked excitedly at the red pastry flaky pie that sat on the counter in the cake dish.

"Rhubarb and strawberry pie," Adaline sat down on one of the chairs closest to the living room so she could keep an eye on her two troublemakers.

"Have I ever told you how thankful I am that you moved in with me?" He asked.

"Ha!" Adaline snorted again. "All the time!"

He grinned at her. "And it's not just because you spoil your old pa or anything."

"Dad..." She gave him a pointed look. "I know. But I think it helps that you're not dependent on TV dinners. Even if you do go to the Diner every Friday for Steak."

He scratched his jaw, his nails making that little sound on his stubble that was growing back. "I was doing alright... Still kicking."

"Mmm hmm," She hummed. He looked at her offended.

"I can cook--"

"No, you can't," A new voice added to the conversation. The two Swans looked to see that the zombie rose from her hidey hole at last.

"Bel--"

"Shh... She's like a baby deer. You'll spook her.." Adaline shushed their dad.

Bella opened her mouth and snapped it shut and rolled her eyes before grabbing the coffee pot.

"I think you two need to have some faith in your ole dad," Charlie scrunched his nose up as he took a sip of his coffee and spat it clear across the table. "Artie!"

"Wat pop-pop!" Artemis came into the kitchen with her brother following close behind.

"How many times do I have to tell you to stop switching the sugar out for salt?"

Bella was right about to add the sugar to her cup and paused. She looked down at the spoonful and looked back grinning at her sister. The two sisters chuckled as Artemis stuck her nose up.

"It wasn't me. I swear!" She said.

"Oh really? Then who else?" Charlie asked, trying to look stern but amusement was dancing in his eyes.

"Mommy did it," Artemis said simply.

"Uh, mommy did not," Adaline looked at her daughter trying to stop laughing.

Artemis pursed her lips. "I swear. I didn't!"

"Yes, you did," Achilles said, poking her in the cheek.

"Snitches get stitches!" Artemis snapped. "Bitches land--"

"Hey hey!" All three adults started together. "How many times have I told you that was a bad word," Adaline scolded. "Nasty word!"

"I know... I sorry, momma..." she looked down at her toes, wiggling them.

"It is okay, Artie. But no more bad words, okay?" Adaline crouched before her daughter and kissed her cheek. The little girl nodded her head. "Go play with your bubby."

Achilles held his hand out to his sister and they went back to play with their blocks. Adaline turned to her dad, glaring at him.

"What?" He asked.

"I told you that little brat next door was a bad influence on her!"

"Kids are like sponges, they repeat everything they hear. How do you know it came from the Millers' son?" He asked.

Bella sat down beside her sister starting to look a little bummed out again. "It was definitely their son, Charlie," She said. Charlie looked at her expectedly. "He was paying Artemis to curse. I told his mom and she told me to screw off."

"I doubt she said, screw," Adaline grumbled.

"That would be correct," Bella drank her coffee. "Blah... It wasn't just the sugar dish she got."

Adaline moaned loudly and went to go check the sugar bag. "Good god she switched the bags. That girl is so much like her father..."

Charlie grunted. "Heaven help us..."

Adaline laughed loudly.

The Swans ate dinner and after switching the sugar and salt jars back around and their bags, Adaline got her kids in the bath and then tucked them away for the night. She came back downstairs with her laptop and her journal where she started her going through her emails and job applications. Charlie and Bella were sitting on the sofa watching the Fresh Prince of Bell-Air.

Will was doing the Carlton dance much to Carl's dismay as his little sister played the drums.

"Have you heard back from Killian?" Charlie asked when commercials came on. Adaline looked at him from where she was sitting at the kitchen table.

"What?"

"Have you heard from Killian?" He asked again, turning the Tv. Down. Bella shifted on the sofa to look at her sister.

"No, and I doubt he will call me," Adaline grouched. "He's probably too busy rubbing bodies with that skanky bleach-blonde bimbo."

Bella's eyes widened. Charlie whistled. "I still stand my offer. Do you want me to shoot him?"

Adaline smiled softly at him. "He is still their father. And he is a good dad, even if he is a crappy husband."

"More than crappy," Bella muttered.

"He was sleeping with your best friend, Addie." Charlie frowned at her. "I agree with Bells. That was more than crappy. He is downright dishonorable."

Adaline lifted her hands and shrugged. "I don't care. They can have each other. If he wants mentally unstable, good for him. If she wants unfaithful, then good for her."

"Yeah but what about the kids?" Bella spoke up. "Is he going to forgo his rights to them? I mean... You're here in Forks instead of Salt Lake."

Adaline huffed, blowing hair from her face. "I don't know. He hasn't even called to talk to the kids. They miss him and Achilles keeps asking when we're going home."

"You mean to tell me he hasn't called in two months? Not once, to say good night?" Charlie asked incredulously.

"Nope."

"Then he is a shit father too."

"Dad..." Adaline frowned at him.

"No! I am tired of you excusing that man. No, not a man. Scumbag. Let's go with that. He's a scumbag. Tell me, Addie. Has he even sent you money to help with the babies?" She shook her head. "Didn't think so. See my point? Say the words, I will help you pay for a lawyer and we will take him to court."

"I don't want to put my children through what I had to go through," Adaline said.

Charlie frowned at her even more.

"This is different, Addie. Killian hasn't called you in two months to even speak to his children. He hasn't helped you pay for his children's things or medical bills in over two years. He can be all talk but it is more than a snuggle or a laugh to be a parent. He needs to take responsibility, physically and financially. "

"Shh..." Bella said. "I think Lele is spying on us."

Adaline got up and looked to the staircase where sure enough a five-year-old little boy was sitting on the top steps clutching his stuffed dragon. She sighed and held her arms out and he

made his way down and let his mom pick him up from the bottom step. She grunted a little.

"You're starting to get too big for mommy to carry you around, little warrior," She said.

"You were talking about daddy..." Achilles sighed solemnly. "Daddy doesn't want us anymore does he?"

"No!" Adaline said quickly. "Your daddy loves you very much!"

"Don't lie mommy..." He looked so defeated.

It broke Adaline's heart. She looked to her dad for some help. He looked apologetic. He mouthed an apology to her. Charlie knew very well that Adaline didn't want the kids to hear anything bad about their dad. She had a rule no one bad-mouths him in front of little ears.

"Did you have a bad dream?" She asked, desperate for a topic change. Talking about Killian was still hard for her even if she plays it off as no big deal. She was so in love with him. They had been married since she was a naive sixteen-year-old girl. Seven years might not be a long time for others but in reality, it is. They literally grew together and at some point, he didn't love her the way she never stopped loving him.

Achilles nodded his head.

"Was it the red eyes again?" Adaline asked wearily.

"She was tapping on the window again..." He sniffled. "Scary, momma."

"Shh... It was just a bad dream," She soothed as she kissed his temple. Adaline wondered if she was seeing things in the way Bella stiffened.

Charlie frowned at the little boy and shared a concerned look with her. She just shook her head lightly at him. Achilles had nightmares since he was just a baby. He always had them and she didn't like the way the medication the doctors had her giving him was doing to him. He was like a walking emotionless zombie who couldn't feel anything. He was always tired, much more than when he was waking from the nightmares. It was a lot of hard thought and discussions on her part to decide to pull him off the meds.

"Artie was mumbling in her sleep again too..." He said sadly. "She kept kicking me."

"Mommy will be in bed soon and I'll buffer the kicks. Alright?" He nodded his head. "Do you want to stay with me down here?" he nodded again and snuggled into her. "Alright..." she kissed his head again.

"I got a book to read for school..." Bella stood up. "Night."

"Night!" They replied.

"Night, auntie Bells," Achilles mumbled. Bella stooped to kiss his curls and he wiggled in his mother's arms who shifted on the sofa.

It wasn't long before he had fallen asleep and was snoring softly, a tiny puddle of drool was collecting on Adaline's chest. She mindlessly ran her fingers through his curls and watched the colors on the Tv, lost in thought. Charlie coughed and muted the tv, pulling her from her thoughts. She looked at him.

"Are you still against him taking his medication?" He asked, looking at Achilles. Adaline lifted an eyebrow.

"Dad, you have no idea what that stuff does to him. He's worse on the pills. I am not putting him through that again and his nightmares are worse on them.

"A child needs proper sleep, Addie."

"I know." She furrowed her brows.

"Then you need to find another solution."

She opened her mouth feeling miffed. Glaring at him she snarled, annoyed. "I am doing the best I can. *For, my son. Mine. I have done everything.* I am not brushing it off. Why do you think I make all those medical calls? Why do you think I have all those medical books upstairs? *I am trying.* I just don't want my baby to be an emotionless walking statue. He becomes so numb, he can not even tell when he is hurting. That's what those pills do to him. They trap him in his nightmares and he can not wake from them."



For the weeks that followed, Adaline worked tirelessly from home for her finance job, on top of that researching solutions for her son's nightmares. She was just grateful that Bella finally opened herself up to the idea of friends again. That was one less person to worry about.

When Charlie opened his doors to her and her children, Adaline found a cationic sister in a zombie state. She had to literally drag her into the shower and shove food down her throat. It was horrible but it did help her process how she ended up on her adoptive father's doorstep. One moment she had kissed her husband bye before going to the park with their children and the next she was returning home to find her best friend and husband in a compromising position.

Weeks had passed and still not a word from Killian. It's been officially five months and nothing. The kids stopped asking about their daddy and Adaline wasn't sure how to feel about that.

Adaline shuddered off another skin-crawling sensation as she looked out the window. She just felt off today. It was a feeling she was quite used to when she was fully aware her world was about to flip on its axis. Charlie and his friend Harry Clearwater were sitting at the

kitchen table sorting through their fishing supplies while her kids sat on the floor before her, leaning over their coloring books.

She wondered where the hell Bella was. She was supposed to have been home over an hour ago. She was sure Jacob had something to do with it since she was quite aware of their motorbike-building schemes.

"Addie," Charlie called. She turned around to look at him.

"Yeah?"

"Harry asked if you wanted to go to his house for dinner tomorrow night. Sue and her niece Emily are having a cookout."

Adaline perked up at that. She missed being social. She missed being around people her age... "That sounds awesome. I am sure the kids will like running around the beach."

"Emily will have her niece Claire with her," Harry piped up as he started packing his things away.

"How is Emily?" Adaline asked. "You know..." She motioned to the side of her face.

Adaline will never forget when she came in for a visit last year and found herself sitting in the hospital room holding Sue's hand. Charlie had begged her to come get Sue and take her home after the Bear accident. Poor Sue had been drenched in her niece's blood and pale as the moon. She was just glad Billy had been fine with taking her twins that night.

Harry grimaced.

"Not good then?" Adaline frowned.

"The scars can't be fixed," Harry said. "She is strong and seeing a friendly face for once that won't pity her might be good for her self-worth."

"Of course, she is strong!" Adaline puffed up. "She took on a full-grown bear! She has balls of steel. I don't think I could punch a bear."

Harry snorted and smiled at her. "I am sure you could. You're a Swan."

Charlie shook his head and nudged his friend. "Get out of my house. Before you blow up her ego."

"My ego is perfectly leveled, thank you very much." Adaline brushed off invisible dust on her shoulder and winked at Harry.

"What are balls of steel, momma?" Artemis asked.

Adaline lost her smile and looked down at her children who were blinking up at her. The two grown men weren't even trying to hide the chuckles.

Chapter 2

The Swan family arrived at the Clearwater family's home, excluding one very important member- Bella. She preferred to see a movie with Jacob and her other friends from school. Instead of spending time with her father. Adaline tried not to let her sister's attitude towards Charlie get her. Bella was always rather strange when it came to her dad.

Billy Black chuckled as he as Sam Uley helped him out of the pickup truck and back into his wheelchair that a teenage boy opened up for him. "Stop frowning, Addie!" He called to her. "It will get stuck that way!"

Adaline stuck her tongue out at him regardless of how immature it was for a young woman and mother to do so. She is just worried for Charlie. Bella was always an oddball with the absence of coordination or even manners half the time. Adaline blamed all that on Bella's mother, Renee. She walked out the door on Charlie with a little Bella in the middle of the night and only got custody because the courts are set up against the fathers.

The eldest Swan girl was in reality Charlie's niece. Charlie and his brother Henry were civil with one another but were not very close. Grandpa and Grandma Swan got ill and the brothers had found some common ground when Renee left Charlie with his daughter. Henry could understand that pain because his wife had just done the very same thing with Adaline. Only Henry had the money to pull his weight and get his daughter back. A payoff, if you will.

Kelly nee Lane Swan took a payoff, one big chunk of 20,000 dollars, and his mustang. Henry would have paid even more to keep his daughter.

Charlie was there for it all, he was like a second father to Adaline. She had taken to calling him dad and her biological father was 'father' he was always so strict but his love was true. He moved them back to Forks to help take care of his ill grandparents with his brother and to get some help raising a four-year-old daughter.

Adaline grew up in Forks. Adaline had a better relationship with Charlie than even Bella. She suspected that Bella had always held some sort of hostility for her despite them calling each other sisters. Though Adaline is four years older than Bella, they were very close at one point. Charlie would bring Adaline along with him whenever he would fly out to Arizona to visit Bella.

But it stopped when Henry died in a car crash when she was thirteen. Charlie adopted her officially as his daughter... Renee was not happy about it. Like, at all.

So, Adaline stayed with the Black family for the Summers and that was how she met Killian... He was Sam Uley's little brother.

She met Sam's gaze and he nodded to her. It was very awkward to be around Sam. Not that he had done anything wrong but because Killian didn't want anything to do with Sam. The

hulking native did try to have a relationship with Killian over the years. Adaline had tried to help Sam out quite a bit but her husband was so hardcore against it.

"Hello..." Adaline rocked on her heels as she greeted her brother-in-law. He smiled at her though it didn't reach his eyes.

"Addie," He greeted before his gaze drifted to the children. "They look like you." He said. She smiled softly.

"Do you want to meet them?" She asked. Knowing Killian would be super pissed.

"Can I?" He asked looking extremely hopeful.

It pained Adaline that he had been kept from their lives. He was a good guy and he loved his family. It must have come from his father's side because Killian's mother was a raving bitch. Thank god they were half-brothers...

"I think it's time," Adaline placed her hand on his wrist, furrowing her brows at how bizarrely warm he was. "Maybe not... Jesus... Sam? Are you sick?" She immediately felt his forehead having to reach on the tops of her toes.

Sam laughed "I just run hot."

"This is like an oven... But... If you are fine? Are you sure you don't feel even a little sick?" She checked him again. He rapped his knuckles to her forehead.

"Healthy as a horse."

"I have met some pretty sickly horses before..." She muttered. "But alright. Achilles hardly speaks so don't take it personally."



Adaline plated up two small plates of french toast. Franklin the Turtle and The Land Before Time Spike and Ducky stared up at her from the empty bowls. She stared back at them before covering their faces with scrambled eggs and ham. "Giving me those looks..." She scoffed.

Dropping washed fruit and wrapped turkey sandwiches into the cooler with the ice packs and drinks, she might have done it with a bit more attitude than necessary. She looked up to see Bella shuffling in front of the living room windows, having just called Jacob for the hundredth time that week.

"Give a rest, Bella!" She said sitting down the plates and bowls on the table. Bella whipped around and glared at her. "He will call you back when he is ready. You did friendzone him."

Not to mention your obbesssion with age. I am twenty-two years old and you call yourself a grandma!"

Adaline couldn't say she was pleased by Bella's choice of friends. Though Jacob was Charlie's best friend's son, he was a sixteen-year-old grade-A jackass. Adaline struggled to get on with him whenever they were near one another. She had a closer relationship with Rachel and Rebecca, his twin sisters and it helped they were the same age.

Charlie patted her shoulder. "Don't agonize her on, Adaline."

Adaline let out a huff and turned to the staircase, calling for her littles to come to get their breakfast before it got cold.

She grabbed the fresh pot of coffee and poured three cups for her, Charlie, and Harry.

"Thank you," Harry gave her a warm smile that she returned. Charlie grunted in apperception of the warm beverage.

"No salt..." He sighed happily. Harry gave him an odd look.

Charlie had a gift for being awkward, he was the King in Silence and normally only ever spoke unless he had a strong opinion. This was one of those moments, he was gloriously happy that his granddaughter hadn't figured out the child-proof lock he installed last week. It was really only a matter of time until she did, however.

Though he loved his family a lot and was loyal down to the core, it was extremely satisfying to up one on Artemis.

"I give it a few days, dad. She will figure it out," Adaline snickered.

"And I shall enjoy these days where I am not putting salt in my coffee."

Harry snorted. "So that's who switched my sugar and salt in the house! Leah gave Seth a black eye..."

Adaline tried to look sympathetic but she ultimately failed by laughing loudly with Charlie as little Cain and Abel came down the staircase whispering to one another and grunted huffed as they climbed up on the chairs. They bowed their heads and said their thanks before they began to eat.

"Momma," Achilles said. Adaline hummed as she dug into her own bowl of eggs and ham. "Do you think Daddy will come visit us?"

Adaline paused the fork close to her mouth and sat it back in her bowl. She fidgeted uncomfortably. "Maybe, you know Daddy is busy..." She said. Hating herself all the more for it. Her babies didn't deserve to be lied to but they were too young to understand.

"I hate daddy!" Artemis hissed, slamming her fist on the table and glaring at her food. It was so silent a pin could drop and be heard.

"No, baby! You do not hate your daddy," Adaline immediately tried to cuddle her daughter only for the little five-year-old to send her a menacing glare.

"Daddy don't love us no more!" She screamed. "Daddy never calls! No more hugs and kisses! Where is he, mommy? Where!"

Adaline felt her heart twist painfully like a knife had been stabbed into her. Her strength cracked and she began to cry silently and rose from her chair and grabbed her babies and held them close as her children burst into loud choking sobs.

Adaline never thought the day would come when her love for Killian would die.

That day was today.

Adaline wanted him to suffer. She wanted him to hurt just as much, if not more for making their children fill heartbreak and loss so early into their lives.

Harry and Charlie left with pats on her breaks, giving her privacy. She didn't see Bella leaving the house not long after them nor had the mindset to check on her long after she had put her children down for a nap that they desperately need after crying too hard.

Adaline sat on the sofa and dialed Killian for the hundredth time that month. She tried and tried, and he never answered.

Just as she was sure he wouldn't answer her, the phone line clicked.

"Hello?"

"Killian?" Adaline growled. "Why have you been ignoring my phone calls?"

"Why did you take my children?" He countered causing Adaline to gape at her surroundings, indigently.

"You told me to take them to my dad's!" She snapped.

"You mean your uncle?"

"He is my dad!" Adaline was furious. "And I don't give a flying fuck how you feel right now. Why haven't you answered me? Why haven't you called me to at least speak to our children?"

Killian chuckled. This only making Adaline even more angry. The wind in the house began to hum. Her fingers tingled as she tried to push the anger down. To take deep breaths.

"You're a freak, Addie," Killian finally spoke. "You are a freak and you infected our children with it. You've made them freaks."

Adaline frowned, her anger was squashed and replaced with a deep sadness. Killian knew how she felt about her weird trait. She called it her 'pocket watch'. For every time she was upset the clocks around her froze and the air felt like hummed. As if she were affecting

magnetic fields. Killian knew how much she hated that part of herself. He knew how much it hurt her to know she was a freak.

But to call their children freaks as well... It broke her heart.

They were not freaks. They were so good and kind and filled with love and so much joy. They never asked for it either.

Adaline hung up the phone.

She looked down at her wedding band and pulled it off. Went upstairs and to her closet pulled down an old and extremely dusty little suitcase that was meant for Hats that belonged to Grandma Swan once upon a time, and immediately discarded the gold band into the stack of love notes and little trinkets from when she was young and in madly in love with Killian as a teenager.

She shut the closet door and turned her back on it. Finding two pairs of bright green eyes blinking sleepily at her.

Adaline held them close and vowed to never let Killian near them ever again.

Close to dinner time when Charlie and Harry returned with their fresh catch, it had been cleaned and put in the icebox and some of it cooked for the night. Neither man commented on the missing wedding band on Adaline's finger. Nor did they comment on finding a printed copy of the request for separation that she went to the courthouse for, already filled out and signed, on the kitchen counter.

Right as Adaline pulled out the fish from the oven, Bella came bursting through the door in fright. Charlie and Harry were cleaning up their weapons as they prepared for a hunting trip with some of their buddies.

"Bella?" Adaline took her by the shoulders as she was shaking badly. "What's wrong?"

Her eyes were wide in fright, much paler than she normally was. It was unsettling. Charlie came up to them instantly. "What's wrong, Bells?" he asked her, forcing her down into the chair he was occupying before.

"They're not bears! They're huge! Like huge wolves!" She exclaimed, the shaking worsening. Adaline crouched down and placed her hands on Bella's thighs.

"Bells, breathe." She shushed her gently.

"Were you in the woods?" Charlie demanded. He looked at her like she was mental. "What the hell were you doing in the woods, Bella!"

"I--"

Adaline stood up and put her hands on her hips. "Don't yell at her, dad. She's in shock."

Bella clung to Adaline and nodded her head, trying to calm her breathing. Adaline began rubbing her back.

"Wolves?" Charlie repeated a lot calmer. "Alright... Harry, you like hunting?"

Adaline looked to Harry who had gone pale as snow. His eyebrows were furrowed and his hands shook slightly. Adaline found it strange that he would be scared. After all, his tribe was known for loving wolves very ferociously. Maybe he was just worried about the lives of the wolves. She couldn't blame him. Humans had been pushing into the animal's habits for so long, destroying their ecosystem, it was really only a matter of time before they start coming into towns to look for food.

Harry met Adaline's gaze and it dropped down to Achilles. Him and his sister making their presence known that they had been eavesdropping.

"No! Pop-pop! Wolves pretty!" Artemis cried.

"Pop-pop, don't kill puppies! Pleassee!" Achilles cried with her.

Adaline was quick to grab his little hands from getting too close to the table where the guns were. Putting her leg out to stop Artemis, making them release little grunts.

"Gather a hunting party?" Charlie asked. Harry nodded his head and gathered his things up before leaving the house as fast as he could.

Charlie quickly grabbed his guns and Adaline released her kids. They put their heads down when she pointed to sit down and they conceded with a 'yes, ma'am

"What happened?" Adaline demanded.

"I can't tell you..." She mumbled, wiping at her eyes. Adalind grasped her chin a little too harshly. Giving her the same look she gives her children when they are misbehaving. Bella swallowed hard.

"You've been hiding something, Bella. You may think you have Charlie fooled but he knows too, we've talked about it. So, either you tell me or we can have a very nose heart-to-heart with both Charlie and Renee to get to the bottom of it."

"Addie..." Bella groaned. "You can't-- why can't you mind your own business?"

"I never ask what you are doing. I never pull the older sister rank--"

"You are NOT my sister!" Bella hissed, jerking away and sending a metaphorical knife into Adaline's chest.

That hurt. *A lot.*

Bella stood up, towering over Adaline. The latter being barely 5 foot 3. The glare that Adaline was sending didn't make her intimidating so it was useless trying to give her the scary momma glare. She was trying to cover up the hurt Bella caused her.

"Just stay out of my business!" Bella snapped before storming upstairs.

Artemis took this time to meow and hiss.

"Stop it Arty," Achilles said. "Momma is sad."

"Auntie Bells is being a bitch--"

"What did I tell you!" Adaline twisted around to wag a finger at her.

"Bad word... Sorry, momma."

Chapter 3

Adaline stood outside the decent size lodge home that Sam gave her directions to. It was quaint and had a nice large porch overflowing with flowers. The homely vibe was enough to have her relax a bit compared to how she had been as of late. The spat with Bella only soured as the days went by. Adaline wanted to work it out with her but Bella didn't want to, apparently.

"Mommy?" Achilles tugged on her hand. She glanced down at him.

"Yes, baby?"

"Is Uncle Sam living here?"

"Does Uncle Sam live here?" She corrected him. "And yes, he said this was his address."

Artemis huffed. "Momma, you said we were going to Uncle Billy's house! Ray ray promised to play dollies with me!"

"For the last time, Arty," Adaline pinched the bridge of her nose. "I said after we see your Uncle Sam. After."

"But Daddy says we can't--"

"Daddy isn't here!" Achilles snapped at her. "Daddy doesn't love us no more!"

Adaline sighed heavily. She keeps trying so hard to tell them both that is simply not true but no matter how much she tells them, Achilles doesn't believe her, and Artemis was always a daddy's little girl. This has been causing the two of them to fight quite often as of late. It was so hard being a single mother. Even harder due to the confusion this has caused her babies.

"*Enough!*" Adaline hissed, jerking their arms a smidgen to cause them to quiet their tones and go silent. She didn't hurt them but she was stern. She swears that their terrible two's and terrifying three's were no match for the furious five's. She was really having a rough time with it.

"Sorry," They mumbled sheepishly to her before hugging and kissing each other's cheeks to show their mother they made up.

Adaline kneeled and brought them into her embrace, kissing the top of their heads. "Be on your best behavior, please. Your Uncle Sam loves you both and he wants you to meet Emily. She is a really lovely woman. You will both like her."

The cookout at the Clearwater's home all those weeks ago may have had Sam present, and the two boys Paul and Jared but Emily was not there. Between her and Leah, there was no love at the moment. Emily didn't come because she didn't want to hurt Leah. In a way,

Adaline thought Emily was a bit of bitch for coming between Leah and Sam but she liked Emily. Adaline was sure there was more to it but it was really none of her business and by it being none of her business, she refused to pass judgment on Emily. Adaline was set on being the supportive sister-in-law to Sam and that meant blinding her eyes to the whole triangle.

Adaline had her two littles walk in front of her up the staircase and she knocked on the door despite being clearly able to see in the house due to the screen door being the only thing blocking the entry. There was a heavy footstep on the staircase inside the house followed by creaking floorboards. Sam came into view, grinning when he saw them

"Uncle Sammy!" Achilles screamed. Artemis rolled her eyes and Adaline nudged her.

"Stop that, missy."

"Little pup!" Sam laughed opening the door and picking up Achilles in his arms acting as if he weighed a ton. "Oof! You are getting too big to lug around!"

Achilles giggled, making Adaline incredibly happy to see him come out of his shell for Sam. It was such a good sign.

"Artemis," Sam ruffled her hair. The little boss smack his hand away and glared at him.

"Momma worked hard on my braids you big oaf!"

"Artemis!" Adaline gasped. "Don't name call."

"He touched my hair!" She exclaimed, throwing her hands in the air. Sam made eye contact with Adaline who rolled her eyes.

"Jesus, give me strength," Adaline pinched her nose.

"Alright. Noted, no touching the hair," Sam tried to smile at Artemis but she stuck her nose in the air and marched past him into the house.

"Oh, shit!"

Adaline eyes shot open and whipped her head up at the sound of Artemis cursing.

"What happened to your face!"

Sam stiffened.

"I am so... So sorry!" Adaline covered her face with her hands. Sam patted her shoulder.

"It's alright," He said to her quietly. "Must be hard having a daughter that is half Killian."

"You have no idea." She grumbled.

Sam led into the house where Emily stood looking down at Artemis with a forced smile. The three gruesome claw marks going down one side of her face had a bit of hair pinned to hide

most of it. Even after these two years, it still took a lot of willpower from Adaline not to grimace at the sight of it.

"Missy!" Adaline pulled out the 'momma means business' tone causing her little body to be as taut as a bowstring. "You apologize right *now*!"

"It was just a question!"

"Apologize!"

"Momm-aaaa!"

"*Artemis Marie Uley!*"

"*Fine!*" Artemis stomped her foot and whipped around to look up at Emily. "I am sorry, Aunt Emily."

Emily looked surprised for a moment at the use of 'aunt' but she quickly smiled. "It is alright, Artemis. All is forgiven. But if you must know, I was attacked by a bear."

The poor woman's russet skin was turning a ruddy color. Adaline felt so damn embarrassed. Honest to god, she just wished Artemis would stop cursing! She never cursed until they moved to Forks. Adaline is starting to think it was more than just the next-door teenage neighbor being a crude little tart. She was considering her once sweet but mischievous princess was acting out because she was hurt.

"Wooooowww," The twins muttered.

Emily plucked a bowl of brownies off a table and held it out to them. "I made brownies, would you like one?"

The twins looked up at their mother for permission. Once she nodded her head they grinned and thanked Emily before taking a brownie each.

Emily didn't appear offended by Artemis's brazen question but it was clear she was a little self-conscious as she covered her face a bit more with her hair. "How are you?" Adaline asked her once she put the children at the table to eat and not make a mess.

"I am alright," Emily smiled at her. Adaline placed her hand on her arm.

"Do not hide them, Emily," Adaline said softly. Emily's cheeks reddened. "You are a survivor. They do not diminish your beauty. They heighten your strength."

"Thank you," Emily stopped fiddling with her hair after that and tucked her hair behind her ear. Bearing her scars fully to the room. Sam was looking at her with so much adoration. He glanced at Adaline and tucked her under his arm in a brotherly headlock, ruffling her hair.

"*No!*" Adaline snorted before laughing loudly. Emily chuckled and moved around them to talk to the children.

"You little honey cake!" Sam gave her a good nature noogie that had Adaline squealing to get him to let go.

"I'll bite you!" She threatened.

He let her go immediately.

"That is what I thought!" She tried to fix her hair, grinning up at him.

"We'll be four soon!" Achilles grinned with a mouth full of food. "Oh, wow! These are so good!"

Emily blushed, grinning down at him. "Thank you, Achilles!"

He happily ate his muffin where Artemis frowned at hers, eating anyways. Emily noticed. "It's okay Artemis, you didn't hurt my feelings."

"I didn't?" Artemis asked in a small voice. Emily shook her head. This made Artemis smile like her brother. She looked at her mother, happily. Adaline pecked her cheek.



There was a weird cracking noise being made that caused Adaline to wake up. She blurry-eyed sat up with terrible bedhead, squinting in the dark and listening for the noises.

She jerked when she heard a few thumps and immediately shot up out of bed and checked on her children to see if she didn't wake them before scrambling on her tiptoes out of the room and silently shutting the door behind her before tilting her head down the hall.

There was another thump coming from Bella's bedroom.

What the fuck? Adaline felt horrible about it but she put her ear near the door.

"Jake..."

Adaline eyebrows shot up to her hairline. What was Jacob doing in Bella's room this late at night?

After that horrible fight, they had to? Adaline was upset seeing how distraught Bella was when she came home this evening soaking wet and hysterically crying. Whatever was going on between them was puzzling but considering how those two personalities were, perhaps it

was their mating ritual. Like puffer fish... Going around in circles... Over and over and over again...

Maybe I should give her the talk... You know just to make sure they are taking precautions... Pursing her lips, Adaline snorted and shook her head in amusement before going back to her bedroom.

Not my business.

Once she was laying back down, her little tucked against her side once more. Achilles held his green dinosaur, Spike from Land before time, close to his heart while Artemis held Flower with both arms tight around the stuffed skunk. The sight was so precious that Adaline quickly fell back asleep with a full heart.

When she next woke up, it was to Charlie knocking on her door and rushing into the room all decked out in his uniform looking haggard. The sun wasn't even up yet.

"S'happen?" She groggily asked. The twins moaned in their sleep, Achilles whimpering at being disturbed. She quickly rubbed his back making him sigh.

"They found a body outside of town," He said quietly. "I got to go."

"A what?" She blinked in surprise.

Murder in Forks?

"Was it an animal attack?" She asked. Charlie looked sadly at her.

"I sure hope so. Alright, I have no idea when I will be back. Just, go to Billy's today. I don't want you here alone in the house. So--" He ushered her to hop to it.

"Am I to wake Bella?" She groaned, already sliding out of the bed and making her children groan. They were going to be spitfires today!

"No," He shook his head. "I already woke her. She's getting dressed and going over to a friend's house."

Adaline hummed. Figures Bella wouldn't even want to be with her family with the potential of Forks having some axe-welding psycho on the loose.

"Alright, love you. Be safe." She said. Charlie kissed her head and glanced down at his grandbabies with a slight pout before leaving her room.

Sighing heavily, Adaline raked her fingers through her hair.

Well, fuck me.



Adaline had two grumping tots following behind her as they went down the staircase. Artemis was rubbing sleep from her eyes looking dazed and clinging to Flower. Achilles dragged his stuffed dino behind him with a grumpy face.

As they stepped into the kitchen Adaline sat Artemis on the counter while she began grabbing things from the cabinets. Achilles buried his face between her knees with a groan, refusing to let her go despite her moving around.

"Where is auntie Bell going, momma?" Artemis asked while Achilles shot Bella a dirty look when she came into the kitchen and grabbed an apple and juice from the fridge. She didn't even say bye to them before she left with the front door slamming shut behind her.

Honestly, Adaline was digging this whole grungy teen rebellion bullshit. The least she could do is say bye to her fucking niece and nephew!

"To a friend, baby," Adaline rubbed her nose to hers making her giggle.

"I don't like her," Achilles pouted.

"Why not?" Adaline looked down at him confused. He loves Bella! He gave her a withering glare.

"She's mean, mommy. She hurt your feelings."

"Oh no, my little warrior," Adaline kneeled down to be at eye level with him. She took his tiny hands in hers, holding them before pressing a kiss to each palm. "Mommy doesn't want you to make opinions solely based on how someone just hurt my feelings. Auntie Bells is sad right now, she doesn't have a mom to help her as you and your sister do. She is prone to be angry and that is okay. I don't hold it against her and neither should you."

"But--"

"No buts," She poked his nose lightly. "She only hurt my feelings once, okay? It will be better soon. We will work it out. You are still little and you shouldn't worry about us adults."

"I am not little! I a big boy!" He puffed his chest out. "I take care of you and sissy!"

Adaline smiled fondly at him.

"Yes... You are a big boy. I am so proud of you and your sister. You two are the light to my world."

Once the twins were in the coats and rain boots, Adaline looked down at their boots. She sometimes couldn't understand why they insisted on sharing their boots with one another. A purple boot with rainbows for both of them and a blue boot with white stars. It was adorable but still made her wonder why they did it. She quickly filled their sippy cups with water and grabbed their packs off the sofa. Taking her car keys off the hook she ushered them out the door.

The journey to La Push was quiet save for the slight Fidelio's soundtrack coming through the speakers.

"Now, Sweetheart!" Achilles wagged his finger. *"At last we are alone, Let us have now a quiet chat!"*

"It cannot be all that important, I must go on with my work!" Artemis gave him the hand. Adaline glanced up in her rearview mirror, smiling.

"One word, you obstinate girl!" Achilles fumbled on the obstinate sounding more like obstunit. It was adorable.

"Go on then," Artemis huffed, lifting her nose in the air and rolling her eyes. *"I'm listening to you."*

Flicking on her turn signal, and making sure the road was clear before turning down the road that lead to the Black residence. Adaline turned the music off and then parked the car. It was pouring down rain. There was a light on in the shabby rundown cabin letting her know someone was up and awake.

Getting the kids out of the car and grabbing their things they trudged through the muddy puddles and knocked on the door. Jacob opened the door and let them in. Adaline was surprised to see he chopped his hair off and got a tattoo... Well really the tattoo wasn't all that surprising it seemed to be that most teen boys in La Push were getting their tribal tattoo. It was really only a matter of time.

"Hey, Jacob. Thanks for letting us in," she said. He yawned and nodded his head.

"S'fine... I gotta go, anyway. You can put the little squirts on my bed. Dad put a spare bedroll in there too. It's not much..." He ruffled the twin's curls to their annoyance before leaving.

She stared after at his retreating form running out into the pouring rain and to the forest edge. Shirtless... In cut-off shorts... And tennis shoes.

That kid is weird.

Chapter 4

The whole murder loose in Forks was chalked down to a freak accident. A freak accident that couldn't be explained. The victim had no blood in their bodies. Charlie said Dr. Cullen told them it was an animal when she happened last year but what kind of animal sucks a person dry of blood?

Adaline wrinkled her nose as she watched the tv in Emily's kitchen. She sipped her warm cup of tea while the twins helped Emily bake muffins. "So we have vampires in Forks," She said nonchalantly.

Emily flipped over a bag of flour in her haste to look at Adaline. "What!" She squeaked.

Adaline pointed at the tv. "They claimed it was an animal. The only animal I could think of is a vampire bat but they can't consume a whole person. Unless it was a whole group of them and even then... Bats rarely bite humans. And this isn't central or South America..."

Emily gave an awkward laugh. Adaline narrowed her eyes at her. "You know something," She said. Emily tried to act like she didn't hear anything.

Adaline began assisting in taking the overly large muffins out of the oven when there was some kind of yapping howl being made outside. The twins stood up straighter, hiding behind their mother when the door swung open and Jared came in. They relaxed as he waved at them.

"Hey Ads," He greeted her, swiping a muffin from her hands and sitting down.

"Whose this?" Emily asked.

Adaline glanced at the door to see Bella standing there awkwardly as always.

"Bella Swan, who else?" Jared scoffed looking at Bella with disdain.

"Ah... So you're the vampire girl," Emily began to smile when she realized what she said.

Adaline leaned against the counter, cocking her head at her.

"And you're the wolf girl?" Bella replied.

Vampires? Wolves?

Adaline made eye contact with the boys. They looked away from her but the wheels were already turning. Adaline looked at her sis-cousin. "Vampires Bella? Really?" She taunted, feigning that knew.

Bella was dumb enough to fall for it too. She glared at Adaline. "Who told you about Jacob and the others being werewolves? And about the Cullens being vampires?"

Adaline wanted to scream. It took all their self-control to keep her face smooth.

"We didn't..." Embry muttered.

"*You did.*" Jared glared at Bella.

Bella stepped back, her eyes going wide. Adaline clicked her tongue. "A sane person wouldn't believe it but I know stranger things happen... So that explains a lot of twitching from you lot and the unexplained cancellations and traversing the forest at night."

Paul came in, snatched a muffin up, winked at Bella, and said sorry. Sorry for what she didn't know. But her eyes were also trained on his naked torso. Paul noticed and sent her a flirty smile that Adaline blushed from.

"Not her," Sam whacked him behind the head as he made his way to kiss Emily. Bella shot off out of the house with Jacob. Why on earth... Jacob didn't like Sammy.

"So werewolves?" Adaline said slowly causing Sam to look at her in alarm. Paul glared at Embry. The young teen threw his hands up.

"It was Bella! Not me!" He defended.

"Those animal attacks were vampires, weren't they?" She asked Sam. He nodded his head looking really tired. "What happened with Bella?"

"Bitch is crazy," Artemis sniffed.

Adaline didn't even bother saying anything when the boys all howled in laughter. She just thumped her head on the counter. Sam patted her back.

"Jacob told her. Gave her the clues and she added it up," He said.

"So thats why he was in her bedroom the other night!" Adaline snorted.

"He was what?" Jared smirked.

"*Details!*" Embry sassed. "We need the details!"



The Swan girls did not speak to each other since that late morning at Sam and Emily's. Bella was never home unless she was sleeping, spending all her time with Jacob, or at La Push Beach because of the protection detail put on her.

Adaline took her children and they stayed at Emily's most of the time or at the Clearwaters house. Charlie was glad to see her being social and it did him good to know she wasn't alone. Emily got a part-time job helping her with the council's paperwork. It was small but it kept her busy, especially when Artemis told Adaline that a woman with red eyes was looking through their window again.

Victoria... Bella called her. Was watching her and the little ones too. Bella wasn't the only one with a protection detail. The wolves spent a lot of time playing with the child apart from Jacob who kept his sniffer shoved up Bella's ass.

Bella's problems led to a bigger strain being wedged between the Swan chicks. Adaline wasn't happy with the danger her children were placed i because of her. Sam and Emily have done their best to ease Adaline's fears but it was pretty much a lost cause.

It was nice though when she was at Emily's. The twins had her niece Claire to play with. Jared's girlfriend Kim was a meek and shy young girl that was obviously very lonely. Adaline saw herself in her sometimes. How she kind of closed herself in and seemed a little skittish. But as the days went by they spent together, she opened up like a flower and was really sweet. It made Adaline miss the days when she and Bella were more like sisters than enemies.

The one day Adaline didn't go to Emily's house, Embry came over to keep watch on them. It was better than Paul who had taken to flirting with Adaline so much that her cheeks permanently stayed red or how he was always making subtle comments in taking a tumble together. Adaline would admit she had thought about it. Just to fulfill the urge and her own needs but she was three years older than him. He may be 19 but she wasn't about to run down that road.

Embry was lounging on the sofa, watching big bear in the big blue house with the twins when he suddenly popped up and rushed out of the house without any explanation to what happened until Adaline got the phone call from Charlie.

Harry Clearwater had a heart attack in front of Leah in the home. He was at the hospital with Sue. She asked if Sue wanted her to go to her house for Leah and Seth, and the answer was no.

Adaline hung up the phone and wept into her hands, mourning the loss of Harry who had been like an Uncle to her ever since Charlie adopted her. Artemis and Achilles ran into the kitchen and hugged their mother's legs until she slid onto the floor and held them tightly to her.

"Hugs make the blues all better," Artemis said.

"Mommy, don't be sad. We love you," Achilles kissed her cheek only to make Adaline hold them a little tighter.

For the first time in weeks, Adaline tried to call Bella. The girl wouldn't answer until it eventually went straight to voicemail. Jacob said she was supposed to be at Emily's but when she called Emily, and she said she hadn't seen Bella all day. Leaving Adaline to now officially

worry her ass off over her whereabouts and unable to do a single thing about it because she refused to drag her kids out into the cold to look for her.

Adaline didn't want to worry Charlie even more, especially today, so she didn't call. Her nerves were shot and she couldn't stop pacing the house. So she took a furious shower where she scrubbed her body until it was red and raw. Gave her children their bedtime baths and decided to be lenient with their tv time just for the night.

While holding their hands as they went back down the staircase, Adaline let go of Achilles for just a split moment to turn the light on that was strangely off.

"HOLY SH-" she was cut off by a small hand covering her mouth, golden eyes peering at her in shock.

The twins screamed at the top of their lungs, jumping behind their mother and running back up the stairs.

Adaline froze in fear at how cold she was, the pale skin, the unnatural eye color.

"Where's Bella!" The girl demanded.

Adaline opened her mouth, a strangled sound left her.

"Where is she!" The girl yelled.

Adaline snapped back, her eyes narrowing into slits when she realized this must be a Cullen. The reason for Sam being a wolf, the reason why Bella was almost killed last year, the reason for Bella hurting Charlie, the reason for Bella disappearing, the reason for Bella's manic depression, and the reason why a bitch berry bloodsucker was haunting them.

"*I'm sorry?*" Adaline snapped at the nerve of this girl. She broke into her house. Not the other way around. "Who the *fuck* are you?"

"I'm Alice. Who are you?" She eyed the upstairs, making her heart spike. Adaline knew it was fruitless but still moved in her line of sight as if she could defend the staircase.

"Alice?" Adalins repeated slowly.

"Alice Cullen."

"*Well, Alice...*" She began. "Bella isn't home right now. I'm going to need you to leave now --"

"Where is she? I saw her jump off a cliff!"

"I said I don't-- Wait what?" Adaline spluttered.

"She jumped off a cliff. I never saw her come back up. I'm very worried. Have you called her?"

Adaline blinked at her and then let out a muffled scream in her hands. “That suicidal leach-loving bitch!”

Alice looked at her in alarm when Adaline grabbed her upper arm and attempted to drag her through the house. “GET OUT!” Adaline screamed at her. “And go find that disappointment of a daughter and take her into your unnatural family! I have had enough of Vampires to last a lifetime! THANK YOU!”

Alice was too stunned to do so much as fight back. She was rudely being pushed through the front door just as Bella was coming up the porch steps.

"Alice!" Bella exclaimed.

Adaline blandly stared at her cousin and then slammed the door in both of their faces. This was such a classic Bella situation. Gets everyone worried and turns out to be perfectly fine.

She stormed back up the staircase to check on her littles. They were hiding under the bed, their feet sticking out. She heard them breathing hard as she rounded the bed and dropped to her knees. As soon as she pulled back the covers they were screaming again until they realized it was their mother.

“*Mommy!*” They sobbed. Crawling out and lunging into her arms.

Adaline soothed their cries until they only hiccuped. “Shh... Mommy’s here.”



When Adaline and the children went back downstairs, that was when Jacob had the audacity to just storm into the place like his name was on the bills.

"You wolf out and put my children in danger Jacob Black and I will kill you," she said lowly making the Vampire, the klutz, and the shapeshifter gawk at her. "Take it the fuck outside," She growled.

Bella dragged Jacob to the kitchen and Alice looked expected at me. “*What?*” Adaline demanded.

Alice just smiled and flounced out of the house. Artemis gave her an unimpressed look.

“Momma, that girl is a--”

“Twinkie,” Achilles finished.

Adaline snorted.

“Yeah!” Artemis sassed. “Plain, vanilla, and unimpressed.”

"You two need to stop watching tv with Uncle Jared," Adaline bit her lip to not laugh but it was kind of difficult when five years old repeat things like that.

Adaline jolted at Bella screaming at Jacob in a very whiny voice then Alice was there in front of her cousin about Edward wanting to die...

What in the actual Shakespearean plot is this? Two suicidal ninnies? Good fucking grief.

Adaline rolled her eyes at how dramatic Bella and Edward were. How dramatic Alice and Jacob were! What is this, Degrassi?!

"I need you to come to Italy with me."

Adaline blinked at Alice. "Excuse me?"

"I need you and your children to come with me and Bella."

"No." Adaline firmly responded. She looked at her cousin. "Have fun, sweetie."

Adaline went to pick up her children but Alice was there first and then her twins were no longer in her sight.

"NO!" Adaline screamed running out the door to where Alice was already strapping them in the car. "THAT IS KIDNAPPING!"

"I need you to trust me," Alice said as if Adaline was really slow.

Adaline's whole body shook in rage. Her nerves went from shock to shot in three seconds. Her ears rang and the wind whipped her hair. She glared daggers at Alice and then looked at her cousin. Bella was looking at her like she was the problem.

"Just get in! We don't have time for this!" Bella hissed.

Jacob didn't even intervene. He was too busy begging Bella. Alice vanished and before Adaline could try and get them back out of the car, Alice returned with two packs and passports. Shoving them in Adaline's hands and into the car before she could protest.

"Please stay, Bella," Jacob begged.

"Hey! Wolfie! Get us out!" Adaline yelled at him, banging on the glass and struggling to open the door but they had been childproofed. Adalinw began to sob hysterically.

"No! *No! Alice!* Open these doors!"

Alice ignored her. Jacob ignored her. Bella ignored her.

"No! No! Please! No! *Not again! Not again!*"

Her hysteria bled onto the children who began to scream and cry because she was losing it. Adaline lay down, intending to kick the window with her foot when Alice hit the gas pedal,

shooting off and making Adaline hit her head hard enough to make her see stars.

She blinked several times, looking dazed at her children.

“*Mommy!*” They screamed.

Her ears went all fuzzy and she blacked out.

“Why are we bringing them?” Bella asked, yanking at her hair. Alice smirked.

“The Volturi Kings will want to meet her. She’s our bargaining chip for Edward.”

Bella looked at her niece and nephew. She never wanted this...

Chapter 5

"Important encounters are long planned by the soul long before the bodies see each other."

— *Paulo Coelho*

"*Such a waste,*" Aro stated, clicking his tongue in disappointment as he watched Edward leave the room with an angry expression etched on his inhumanly beautiful face.

For a vampire like Aro, being re-born with a gift was to be coveted. It was special, and to see it be thrown aside as if it were *nothing* irritated him greatly. He had a gift of his own, much like Edward Cullen. It was a mental gift and it was useful even if it was more invasive than a passing thought. Aro found himself with a fleeting bit of envy.

It would be nice not to touch someone for once and not have the entirety of their life hopes, dreams, and... *Sexual activities* or daydreams thrown at him.

It was he who had made it mandatory for any guards on duty to wear gloves. He was their King, their master, and a bit of a father to most of them as they were his children. He really didn't want to witness his sons and daughters having relations in cupboards. With that thought, his gaze slid to Alec who had a nasty inclination, even for a 13-year-old boy to take on human teenage boys with overindulgent curiosity before ripping their throats out like a rabid animal while in the throws of it. The humans were too busy being numbed by his gift and feeling... *Eh...* He had to suppress a shudder.

Alec *was* one of the reasons why gloves were so important.

Aro wasn't a prude by any means. He just never could look past seeing the 13-year-old boy who really shouldn't be with other *children*. Because they were in the end *children* and it made him feel all sorts of itchy uncomfortable feelings.

It was the same with Demetri, he may not have been the one to change him but he was still a part of his family, and knowing that Greek boy liked to **play** with his food in such a sadistic way involved a lot of suffering for those poor souls.

Maybe, perhaps Aro was *a little more* than just a touch of envy.

Finally, the doors closed behind Edward Cullen.

Marcus, the younger of the three kings simply just stared at the door. The feeling he had for the last 22 years reared up again inside him. It made his fingers clench against the armrests of his throne. He didn't acknowledge Aro's comments, too busy focusing on his own gift.

Desperately searching for the line, the little golden line... So pale in color, trembling and flickering with bursts of light before dying out again.

It had never done that before...

He moved slightly in his chair, just enough to draw Aro's attention as Caius ordered Demetri to find out where Isabella Swan was. Demetri bowed his head and disappeared through the side door.

Then a rather sharp jab made a presence in his chest. It didn't hurt but it was uncomfortable. Uncomfortable enough that even Aro and Caius winced when that slender golden twine that had wrapped them altogether since that rainy little Beltane day, twenty-two years ago appeared had suddenly burst to life with such a burnt hue like never before. He looked to find his brothers looking at him, looking for answers.

Answers that they had already clawed out of him when the bond formed. Or more so, Aro had snatched his hand up when he was in the middle of feeding... Sneaky, but effective. Aro was like that. He liked to tether the precipice of his own curiosity and power for knowledge even if that meant doing what was an unspoken law for all of their kind, *not to do*.

He interrupted a feeding. He almost lost his head for it too.

Any and sorts of control, even the slithers of humanity they were able to grasp in tight knuckles and the tip of their teeth in the re-birth — vanishes when the monster, the beast, the demon within rears its head for blood. For a kill... For a hunger that never truly leaves them.

"*What is it?*" Caius drawled out.

Marcus, for all he tries to do to keep his thoughts for himself... And maintain a semblance of privacy in just an invasive environment he calls home, he only knew one thing and the three of them had long waited for the bond that surpassed just friendship and brotherhood... The connector and the sole piece to the puzzle that made them. Marcus held his hand out towards Aro who happily took it.

It was a gift when Marcus so freely gave his hand that he coveted from him like a dragon does a hoard of gold. Aro immediately zoned out, searching for the information he was chomping at the bit for, and when it appeared... The quirky King let a little gleeful jump slip from his loss of composure.

"Our mate will be making her presence known to us, *at last*."

Then Aro found something else there that caused baffling confusion. There were white lines... Something he knew connected a parent and a child, or siblings. It was a familial bond. Most of the Volturi had chains of white lines linking them all. They were a family, a coven that protected and cherished one another. But... These lines were bulky thick links like a chain, like the one that chains Prometheus to Mount Caucasos. Bounding her to her fate... forged by Hephaistos, a craft so beautiful and unbreakable like no other.

He was not aware of these bonds. They were not the same white in color as the familial bond they once shared. He could see it, just under these chains that blended so beautifully like a masterpiece with the gold twine as if the gold were a silky ribbon threaded through. It looked new but had already taken root as if they had been forged against their very souls by Hephaistos himself. To destroy it, would be their demise.

Before he could let a question even form on the tip of his tongue, Caius was standing next to the two of them. A look upon his face, that said it all, he wanted answers. He wanted them now. He was the only one not gifted out of the three of them, and he loathes being left in the dark, out of the loop.

It appeared, that after five years, Marcus would have to admit his most cherished secret. The one thing, second to what he held so close to his heart for the last twenty-two years. The day he felt the chains grasping his heart and wrapping him up in a way could never escape and would be thankful for it, he had been the happiest he had ever been.

Marcus sighed almost dreamily.

"Our *Regina Prezios* has children."

Caius's face twisted up in confusion the way Aro's had when searching Marcus's mind.

Aro had once again, lost his composer and jumped. Even clapped his hands like a naughty little child who had just stolen a drachma from his mother's coin purse in pursuit of some fried sweet dough covered in fig syrup.

"*Afton*!" Aro shouted, a lilt to his voice that could make anyone join him in the clouds.

Afton appeared immediately with his head bowed. "Master?"

"Have the room prepared next to our quarters. Then, you and our darling Chelsea and Heidi will go to town and get a few things for our guest and her children. You'll need to go where the sun is not currently out. I've been informed it is rather cloudy with rain in Malta today."

Chelsea could be seen shuffling near Marcus with excitement. She immediately ceased the movements and straightened her spine when Caius shot her a dirty look for what he called "vexatious incessant wriggling". He often snarled and snapped at Aro for it.

Afton bowed his head once more before leaving the room.

"I presume she's still mortal, then," Caius spoke. His face still twisted in disgust. His voice was cold as ever, gravely with venom whenever he got worked up.

Out of everyone, Caius loathed humans. He did not find them fascinating nor saw any reason to be humored by them. They were his food and nothing else. That's why he never went looking for their mate when Aro told him why they had all been oddly nauseated during Beltane over twenty years ago. The line was so faint, it was barely nonexistent meaning:

1. She was not near.
2. She was Mortal.
3. She was newly just brought into the world, as in an infant.

Caius did not fancy raising his mate. That defeats the purpose of having a mate. He had many unappealing qualities and some so fetishly distributing to even Demetri who loved the dark paths... One was definitely not into child play. It made him want to hurl just even thinking about playing "Daddy" to the woman who was supposed to be made for him. He would have never been able to find anything enjoyable with his mate if he had to change her nappies and burp her just to be spit upon.

Aro shot Caius a dirty look over his comment before settling back down on his throne — the one placed in the middle. "Who cares, she will be one of us, brother."

And she would be. Caius would make sure of it. He did not want some fragile creature in his arms that could leak fluids from her nose, and eyes, or even bleed on him. Even if he liked to bathe in the blood of his playthings, his mate should not be breakable under his touch. He didn't want a little bird. He wanted a dragon. Someone who could let him tear from the inside out, again and again, while he claimed her. Relishing as he broke her over and over for the pain while in throws of pleasure.

Athenodora let him do as he pleased for she was wicked like him but she was not his mate. She was not the one made for him... Mind, body, or soul. She was just a companion, his best friend who was just as lonely as he and pent up with a lot of rage that she didn't know what to do with. He loved her dearly and always will even if a part of him was annoyed that she was excited to leave once his soulmate appeared.

She was never meant for a gilded cage, even if that gilded cage made her precious to him. Athenodora was *the little bird* to him. She was a horned owl. Majestic and dangerous and ready to go for the kill. She only stayed in that cage for his sake. Without her to reel him in and take his frustrations out, the Volturi would not have lasted so long.

Caius was **always** thirsty for war. He thrived upon it. He had once been a great Trojan General in his human life. He had been an advisor to a king. He had fought beside great warriors and people who made history. *He had made history*, even if the humans had thought him dead. Caius brought that thirst for war, for blood even to his next life as a vampire. Making him glorious. He had always craved power and to be envied beyond imaginable and he had all of it now. Something he would forever be grateful to Aro for.

Aro was, after all, his sire.

He saw him upon the battlefield of Troy. As the city burned all around him and instead of letting him die, Aro changed him. The raven-haired devil that he was swore he fell in love with Caius just a little that day and was loathed to see such a great man become merely a legend. They have been together ever since. Aro may look younger, but he was older by far and he had always treated Caius like a brother rather than a child.

It was because of Aro, Caius was even a vampire. It was because of Aro, Athenodora was a vampire. He had changed his childhood friend, his only piece to his human life into one of them. Aro had done so much for him... So he stamped down his rage that flared up from being disrespected.

Aro had the audacity to roll his eyes at him. He was the only person in Caius' life who could do that to him without losing their head.

Jane and Alec smirked at the ground. Looking at each other for a brief moment before composing their blank stares once more. They had been begging their father for a mother for centuries. It was agreeable for them that their only yearning was finally coming to fruition.



Bella twisted around in her seat to look at her cousin when Adaline finally sat up from the floorboard with a strangled groan. Blurry eyes blinking in confusion. Alice was speeding through an interstate like they were in *The Fast and The Furious* movie and she was Don or Brian. Adaline threw her hand out against the door to keep from banging her head against the seat again.

"Momma?" Artemis said quietly.

"You okay?" Achilles finished for her.

Alice whipped the car making Adaline let out a cry from being scared shitless as she threw her hands against her twin's chests, hoping to keep them in their car seats. They didn't even clap or giggle and they love fast rides. Adaline figured they were worried about her.

'This vampire was going to get us all killed!' She thought.

"Mommy's okay," She breathed, kissing each of their hands as she climbed off the floorboard and into the seat between them. "Why are we going to Italy?" She asked, her voice wavering.

Bella grimaced. Her body getting all twitchy. It was rather cringy if Adaline was honest. Bella was naturally awkward but add on the whole *Romeo and Juliet* factor with a lot more cringy tragic passion and it becomes... *This...* She was literally yanking her hair out from tugging on it so hard while — *She really hated to say it* — but it looked like she was having withdrawal from heroin.

She looked like a dying cockroach.

"We're going to Italy. When need to save Edward," Alice said then proceeded to give a sharp turn that made Adaline almost break her pinky from trying to catch herself from flying across Achilles carseat.

She gasped, biting back her tears when she felt something pop in her first knuckle.

"Yes, but **WHY** did you kidnap us?" Adaline hissed through the pain.

Artemis grabbed her mother's hand, green eyes taking on a silver glow.

The pain slowly disappeared to be more than just an annoying twinge.

Something was wrong with their genetics. Adaline was sure of it. *No human* should be able to do things supernatural.

Alice held a little smirk that made Adaline's blood boil. "You need to give support to Bella. As her sister, it's your duty."

"No, it's *not*!" Adaline snarled.

Bella twisted around again to look at her. "Alice is harmless, Addie. You'll be safe. I'm glad you're coming."

She didn't look glad. If anything, she looked annoyed. Adaline just gave her an unimpressed glare before turning her head to look out the window. She was human. Just a human who made the air feel suffocating or made clocks act weird when she was angry or upset. The clock in the dashboard was proof of that. It was twitching in and out and the radio began making some static noise that made Alice immediately turn off.

Adaline held her children's hands. What could she do to fight off a vampire? Nothing. She could do nothing. She was weak.

A horrible feeling made a home in her stomach that this was much more than just support for Bella. She felt like everything was about to change.

She had a terrible feeling she was never going to see Charlie again.

And it was all because of Bella...

But, why Italy?

What's so damn important that I needed to be there?

Chapter 6

Nothing made sense.

Not a damn lick of it.

How was any of this possible?

How in the ever-loving *fuck* did Alice get them through the airport and pass the guards?

Adaline knew she couldn't do anything as a human but she did know how to cause a scene. So what did she do when they got to the airport?

She screamed loudly. Very loudly. Shouting...

"HELP! HELP! I'M BEING OPPRESSED! STRANGER DANGER!"

And... It took a smile from Alice and an awkward grimace from Bella to say I was "a little touched in the head" to make everyone go about their business.

Apparently, Alice's smiles were hard to believe she could be a kidnapper, and given that I was obviously older than both girls, I had to be unwell.

And the flight attendant lady told Alice very loudly, I was a danger to the children for *my unruly behavior*.

No wonder, why so many people are able to be kidnapped by the cartel in America and sold into the sex trade or whatever else.

Nobody listens! They turn their ears off and blind themselves!

When someone yells "*Stranger Danger!*"

That's a key code to **KIDNAPPING!**

Adaline **hated** vampires.

As soon as she gets her fucking hands on a lighter... That bitchy leech is going up in flames.

Burn... Baby... Burn...

From where Adaline was standing, Alice and Bella were the flints, and she herself was the spark that was going to be their demise if she had any say about it.

She vowed to herself as she sat on the plane, being caged in by the window by Alice, her children thankfully beside her, she was going to kill her before she died.

She hurt her. She hurt her children. She put them all in danger. She was going to get them killed.

She was taking them to a coven of vampires in Volterra, Italy who came to be royalty. Or *is... Royalty*.

They were all most likely going to be drained of their blood. Her children would never have the chance to grow up and love and be loved and have children of their own. They were never going to become something marvelous because Alice stole that option and that *right* from them.

She stole their futures and nailed their lives shut into a proverbial coffin.

If Alice was digging their graves... Adaline was digging two more.

She was taking them with her.



Alice stole a Porsche.

Out of ***ALL*** the child-friendly grand theft auto options, there was to choose from. She chose the pretty *not child-friendly* vehicle.

Artemis had to be held in her mother's lap while she squished her son against the window on top of a carry-on while the large bag and backpacks were cramped under her legs with Bella's and Alice's bags. Adaline had long since lost all feeling to her lower half from having to keep them propped up for so long.

The Pixie vampire (Adaline really had no room to use the term "pixie" given how short she herself was.) sped through the Tuscany countryside, making Adaline even more amazed that she was even there.

Again, Alice somehow got them all tickets on the first flight to Pisa International from Munich, Germany. From there, they've been speeding in a stolen car. How they haven't wrecked or at the very least caused an accident was beyond her.

"Watch it!" Adaline snapped at Alice as she barely missed crashing into a little Fiat.

Bella was in the front seat again gripping the dashboard so hard and panting in a way that Adaline was pretty sure she was two seconds from throat punching her to shut up all the mouth breathing.

"*How much time?*" Bella whimpered.

"He's waiting till noon when the sun's at its highest," Alice pressed harder on the gas.

Adaline's heart was in her throat.

Achilles' eyes were blown wide. Dark circles heavily underneath like his sisters. They severely needed sleep. All this "*excitement*" has kept them up for 16 or so hours now. Artemis, for once, has kept her sassy mouth closed.

The little girl really didn't want to test her mother's patience. It was a game for her to rile her mother up by misbehaving sometimes and wearing her little sassy britches. It was all in good fun but she had the feeling her mommy might not be so lenient if she started acting up. Achilles, her favorite person in the whole world, her bubby, was quiet. He's always been quiet. He never "throws a fit" as their mommy likes to say.

He was about to.

Artemis knows her bubby better than anyone, even their mommy. She could feel it in her veins. Achilles' quiet nature was about to burst like fireworks. His palms, they were becoming a bit *sparky*.

Bella kept glancing at her watch, Adaline grew tired of it and smacked her pretty hard on the back of the head, making her squawk and glare at her.

"*There's Volterra!*" Alice said suddenly.

Whatever Bella was thinking was forgotten and her hair-pulling and nail-biting commenced once more.

Honestly... Adaline was convinced Bella was a cockroach in her past life. She does the whole act thing *so well*.

Speeding through the small and narrow streets, Adaline was left feeling confused by all the red cloaks. "Why are they all in red?" She asked.

"San Marcos Day festival. It's the perfect setting. Large crowds. The Volturi won't let him get far enough to reveal himself to the humans."

Wow... Expose the vampire race because you think your danger magnet of a twitchy cockroach girlfriend died.

Sounds fun, can't wait.

"Five minutes *Alice!*" Bella moaned.

"*Oh my god, Bella.* Shut the hell up!" Adaline snapped.

For the first time in many long hours, the twins giggled. It was nice to their mother's ears. She was worried about them so much — More than just their physical health but their mental health too.

Then Alice slammed on the brakes and Adaline's quick thinking of shoving Artemis on top of her brother and her on top of them from being flung forward had saved them from injuries.

Adaline wasn't so lucky.

Not only was her swollen pinky more than likely fractured... She hurt her right shoulder by pushing the ligament out of its socket. Her silvery eyes widened. Tears welled in them as she bit her bottom lip hard enough to draw blood to keep from shouting in pain.

Alice inhaled deeply. Her eyes went black instantly. Bella eyed Alice but the pixie vamp was waving her off — to get going.

Bella opened the car door and ran up the path away from the car.

Adaline didn't even care. She was too busy easing herself back down and grasping at her limp arm. Artemis was reaching for her but with a quick shake of her head from her mother, the little girl dropped her hand back to her lap that her brother took and held.

Adaline's gaze flew over her littles, looking for any injury that they might have but she knew they were fine. The only one who had been injured on this "adventure" was herself.

Alice pulled the stolen car into the first available parking space she could find. There were cracks in the stirring column when she moved her hands. Her golden eyes were still absent when she turned her head to look at Adaline.

"I can easily fix that." Those were the only words she said. No apology. No guilty look or even useless gestures. Her gaze turned to the rooftops around them. As if she saw something Adaline could not. Perhaps she did. "We need to go."

Adaline once again, knew that being human was useless and pointless when going up against a vampire. Especially this one. The one who kidnapped her children and abducted her and dragged them halfway across the world all for the sake of her brother Edward and his emo angst bullshit.

"What?" Adaline blinked away the tears. "Now?"

"Yes."

And before Adaline could say anything, Alice already had her children out and their bags in her hand.

"But my- my arm?" Adaline stammered.

Alice grimaced. "I'll fix it soon." then she thrust a backpack at her and a bag in hand that Adaline slung across her shoulder and bag awkwardly being held as she gripped her loosely hanging arm from just flapping about like a wacky wave-able.

Alice picked up the twins and held the other two bags somehow. Cold seeped into Adaline's blouse, it stung almost as if she was touching dry ice. With just a blink, it suddenly felt like they were flying with her hair whipping harshly with the wind. In another blink, she was no longer by the car but around a sea of scarlet flags, dresses, jackets, and red-cloaked people watching a parade.

Adaline's stomach churned ever so slightly. The pain from her pinky and her arm had been aggravated by the swift move and motion sickness was added to it, It was so bad that she was feeling fuzzy and had to take deep breaths in hopes she didn't pass out. She did not even bother stopping her tears this time. They slid silently down her pallid cheeks.

She did look rather ill, Alice noted. She had hoped some color would return to her cheeks before she was taken into the Volturi. The clock tower stated it was a few minutes past noon. Maybe Bella made it.

"Quickly inside," Alice led them over to the clock tower. She didn't have time to wait for Adaline to get her bearings. She needed to see if Edward and Bella were alright then she could fix the human's arm. The lock outside was easy to break and stepped inside.

Adaline ordered her children to quietly and tightly hold on to her shirt. They did so without question after pulling on their backpacks. Adaline was able to get the other strap onto her injured shoulder and the weight pulling on it was enough to make her tremble, sweat building on her neck and forehead. She pushed through though. She had to.

Taking one deep breath, Adaline moved into the tower.

She did not like this one damn bit.

Why should she go inside?

Why should she put her children in even more danger because Bella couldn't mind her business?

Why must her family, little it may be, have to pay her price as well?

Adaline kept them perfectly behind her so she shoved them back into the courtyard if needed. Without leaving the sunlight, Adaline moved just enough so her eyes could focus on the long stretch before her. There not far from her were two figures wearing hooded overcoats. Probably around their 20's and both stunningly handsome. One was huge and bulky, very tall and the other was slender with a flair of elegance to him. Both with *burgundy-red eyes*.

Adaline had never come face to face with red eyes herself. It was the first time she had seen them and found herself feeling a touch puzzled about why everyone thought they were so unnerving or vicious-looking. She hadn't thought they were, all she felt was oddly *safe*.

As soon as her body was no longer rigidly twitching from fear, the twins behind her loosened up. It was their understanding that if their mother wasn't scared, then they shouldn't be either.

"We should take this conversation to a more appropriate venue," The slender, elegant blonde stated. His burgundy-red eyes zoned in on Bella, it hadn't even flickered to the human that leaned a little to her right and who smelt of injuries if the smell of blood and sweat coming from her was anything to go by. She had two little toddlers behind her, clinging to her trousers.

It didn't take a genius to guess who she was.

"Bella, why don't you stay and enjoy the festival?" Edward nudged her towards the door. He looked at the human his sister foolishly dragged here. It was enough to make everyone look at her now.

She swallowed thickly. As if being looked at made her uncomfortable. In fact, Edward knew it to be so. Her mind wasn't like Bella's. It was even a little more guarded than Charlie whose mind felt like a statically old radio struggling for a frequency wave for a clear channel. But one thing was clear in the mess.

Adaline Swan had social anxiety. She was injured and scared for her children.

Edward wanted to scream at Alice. He wanted to shake her and demand why she would damn a mother and her children to this life all for him. She should have known better! She shouldn't have done this for him... He was always so worried about Bella's soul but to see Bella's cousin and her innocent children be brought to, to this life of hell and purgatory made all his morals cry out. It made his cold long long-dead heart cry for Adaline.

No mother should have to watch her children die.

And that's what was going to happen. The Volturi would kill them and the Kings were going to strip Adaline of her humanity and lock her up like they did Sulpulics and Athenadora. They were going to ruin her and all the good and innocent she had.

Adaline didn't like the pitiful look Edward shot her way. It made her feel like she was about to die. She was already trying not to think of it... So seeing it on his face was kind of like being spit on.

"The girl comes with us," The bulkier one hissed.

"Come on guys, *it's a festival*. Wouldn't want to make a scene?" Alice smiles sweetly.

She quickly stands beside Bella leaving Adaline and her children vulnerable.

Adaline tightened her lips in a firm line. She would personally love to make a scene.

"There won't be a scene, besides we would still win," The big one grunted out cockily.

"Not easily," Edward muttered.

Adaline thoughts must have been pretty loud at that given to how Edward flinched. The slender blonde vampire looked at her with interest but all he got was a dead inside gaze she was giving Edward.

She didn't like the Cullens. Edward could say it was all Alice's fault but he had a feeling he was to blame as well. The one thought that came blasting through was hoping she could be the one to burn them all after *the big one* ripped him apart.

The big brute who could probably put a gladiator to shame shifted his gaze to look at her too. He flickered his line of sight to her children before making eye contact with her. Adaline for all she was worth, willed every single atom in her body to maintain some dignity and not

show fear. It was all in vain, however. Her heart was pounding too fast for calmness. She looked like she was about to keel over and faint at any moment. The dampness to her face was getting worse and her hair was going moist from it. Dry lips and silver eyes that were going out of focus.

A tiny young girl no older than thirteen or fifteen appeared. She was like the other two who were wearing a dark overcoat and she looked like an angel of death. It felt like Adaline was looking upon a painting of Botticelli or Antonio da Correggio that had come to life. The girl was entirely too hauntingly beautiful it made Adaline have the strange urge to wrap herself around her and shield her from the eyes of the unworthy.

No mortal should ever look upon such beauty! *It was **Balsphmeyer** of the highest order!*

And then Adaline had to remind herself that despite how angel-like the girl looked, she was a vampire that drank the blood of humans.

"*Enough!*" She hissed. Silbilating the vampires in the room. "Master Aro sent me to see what was *taking* so long."

All of them stepped a little away from her apart from Bella who looked just as confused as Adaline felt.

"Jane," Edward greeted lowly. Even going as far as to lower his gaze from hers even if he didn't stand a foot and a half over her. It would have been amusing if Adaline didn't have to swallow back the bile that was building in her throat.

The pain was getting worse.

Jane — the angelic vampire looked directly at Adaline and then down at her children. "Why did you bring a mother and her small children?" She directed her gaze to Alice with disgust. "The Masters will **not** be pleased with this. You should have known better, Cullen. *Children aren't allowed here.*"

And Adaline for all she tried... Promptly twisted to her left and proceeded to vomit into some poor corner.

It just came up, again and again. The bag in hand slipped from her grip with a loud bang. Her children stepped a little away from her. Adaline tried to stand back up straight, her knees knocking like rickey poles in the wind. Her vision went in and out, as she licked her lips, wishing for toothpaste and water with a desperate fever.

As if it couldn't get worse, Adaline straightened and turned around to look at them all. Made eye contact with Demetri and her eyes promptly rolled in the back of her head and her body went limp.

Demetri was immediately beside her, catching her and removing the backpack from her limp body. He gazed down at her face, tilting his head to the side as he took notice of her cut bottom lip. A darkening bruise the size of a baseball against her temple and then her right

arm that hung limply and the injured pinky of her left hand. With gentleness, he lifted her into his arms.

The children. They were frozen. Emerald eyes burning with a silver glow. So intense and full of anger... In unison, they turned on Alice and the Cullen girl suddenly went down with a yelp as a fracture appeared on her neck and ran up her chin. She was rocked backward before catching herself.

"**AHHHHHH!!!!**" The children screamed so piercingly loud.

Alice tittered into Edward. Her cheek now with a fracture as well.

Everyone was looking at the children with astonishment. They could see their hands at the tips of their fingers creating a little spark that was rather odd for humans. Their hair was pulled out as if they were full of static and then it appeared as if any energy left in their tiny little bodies drained away and took all their anger with it. Their shoulders sagged and tears began spilling over their rosey round cheeks.

"*Mommy!*" They wailed. "**MOMMY!!!**"

It had been centuries since any of them had witnessed a tantrum. It had been centuries since any of them actually stayed in the presence of a child longer than a few seconds.

Felix went taut as a bowstring. He and Demetri were both awkwardly unsure of what to do. Before the human, Bella or one of the Cullens could do anything. Jane was suddenly crouched in front of the kids. Her head canted, eyes soft, and a little smile on her pouty lips.

"Such little angels like you shouldn't cry..." She whispered to them. Pale icy hands took one of each of theirs in hers. "Your mother is going to be taken such good care of. I promise. And you two and I are going to be such great friends. I have a twin too. Alec and he's going to love you, just as I already do."

The children gave loud snuffles as Bella gave Edward and Alice an incredulous look. Edward went still as Alice was rubbing at her neck and cheek, not even bothered.

"So why don't you cease your crying and smile? I don't think Mother would like you crying... I certainly don't."

It didn't escape anyone's notice of the way Jane worded that.

She stood, turned on her toe, holding her hands out. "Children! Come!" she demanded.

The two little angels sniffled one last time and took Jane's hands. Artemis was the one with a mouth that had a ferocious bluntness that got her in trouble a lot, but Achilles was shy. A timid little thing that was terrified of strangers.

Bella didn't understand. She kept opening and closing her mouth, floundering as Edward put on the robe Felix tossed at him. She looked at the blonde Vampire who was still looking at her sister curiously as if he was trying to understand something. He held her so preciously in

his arms. His lips curled back with his teeth on display, a hiss fell between them when Alice dared get too near them.

"Stay back!" Felix snarled.

Before she blinked, Felix had the bags in his hands and stayed super close to his companion's back. Blazing red eyes met hers. Bella whipped her head back around and let Edward lead her after Jane... And her niece and nephew.

They stopped in front of a blank wall, and then Jane picked up the children and jumped down into a hole. Edward went next, then Alice. Bella looked at the other two red eyes and her sister before jumping down. Felix came down behind her and then the other one who still held her sister like she was the most precious thing in the entire world... Still passed out.

Bella pitied her sister. Knowing Adaline was going to be mortified that she vomited not once but three times in front of all of them then she promptly fainted. She still couldn't wrap her head around what happened afterward though. She eyed the twins... Wondering what in the actual hell *did* happen.

If she thought about it, she was able to understand so much now. All the weirdness about them and even Adaline made a lot more sense. The way she acted sometimes, the way she pulled excuses out of thin air and disappeared whenever the twins got upset. How she was able to play it off as just having anxiety. Or that the twins needed a nap.

It all made sense now.

The twins had... Abilities.

They were to put it frankly, *supernatural*.

Chapter 7

Of course, when Adaline did come back to the world and found herself being cradled like she was a damsel in distress by Blondie here, she was very mortified. Even more so when she remembered what caused her to be in such a position in the first place.

*Oh my god... I did **not** vomit and faint in front of a bunch of vampires.*

*I did **not** leave my children **defenseless**...*

*I am a **HORRIBLE** mother.*

*The **worst** there ever was.*

"I'm Demetri and this is Felix," the man whose arms held her to his chest spoke up. Adaline realized now she had probably the worst breath known to man and he had to suffer with her vomit breath going all over him.

She glanced up at him timidly only to feel worse when the dude actually winked at her in a Casanova way. Felix (honest to god, Felix is a hard name to put to his face. He looks more like a Brutus or a Marcellus. Even Titus looked like it belonged to his face and mountain body) at least that was her line of thought until said mountain sent her a boyishly beautiful smile that made her head go all blank while trying to connect a soft look to a menacing figure like himself.

Nevermind... Felix is a perfect name for him. HE WAS A HUGE TEDDY BEAR!

Adaline instantly felt so much better when she came to that conclusion. She really couldn't even fathom why she was so scared of any of them now having come to the conclusions she had. Her arm tightened around Demetri's neck. He was charming in all the right ways even without speaking and by right ways, she meant it was nice that it didn't feel like they were trying to "snag her up" unlike Paul Lahote who was a rouge charmer who used his body and was very keen, *too keen* if she was honest, to have sex with her.

Demetri and Felix just came off with really good manners.

Adaline looked away, blushing only to see Jane holding her children's hands as they talked to her too quietly for her to hear what was being said but whatever it was, Adaline was blinded by the pretty smile Jane had. And whatever she said had them giggling so sweetly as if they weren't surrounded by a bunch of monsters.

They got into an elevator, playing opera music. Artemis inhaled excitedly. Twisting around and looking through the gaps at her mother — *Proceeding to shout*, "Momma! **Momma!** I love this song!" She began in singing the Italian words with poor annunciation and swaying making what Adaline assumed were chuckles coming from the Volturi Vampires. Demetri barely even jostled her as he did, something Adaline was confused about. Whenever she laughed, her shoulders shook.

"Artie, it's no Andrea Bocelli but I do see the potential," Achilles stated with a posh little voice that was still a touch timid.

Adaline's heart gave two extra beats. It was filled with so much love for them.

The doors opened to an elegantly decorated space. It held an ancient Greek type of style mixed with moderate sleekness. It really was breathtaking. A woman stood up from her desk and smiled at them. "Buon pomeriggio."

"Buon Pomeriggio, Signora," Adaline politely said when Demetri sat her down by a bench. He was very careful about her injuries.

Jane stopped and turned towards them, looking at Adaline. "You and your children will wait here with Demetri. Gianna will get you whatever you need while we wait for the masters to call upon you." She looked at the woman at the desk. "Go and fetch them something to drink and eat...."

She seemed to be thinking about something before adding. "A toothbrush and toothpaste first, I think."

Adaline was left feeling mortified.

Demetri snickered only for Felix to whack the back of his head in good humor. It was odd to see them act so... Normal... So... Human.

Felix took the children's hands from Jane and lifted them on the bench beside their mother. He sent her a smile before following Jane making sure Bella, Alice, and Edward went in front of him. Bella had craned her head to look at Adaline. If she was hoping for something she was greatly mistaken.

Adaline just glared at her.

It was her fault after all that that had been dragged against their will to Italy, to begin with. They were in danger because of her. Even if Adaline wasn't afraid of Felix, Demetri, or Jane, she still wasn't naive to think that they were safe.

Gianna appeared in her line of sight with a purple toothbrush in its sealed pack with a small tube of Colgate. She had an overly forced smile on her face.

"As requested!" She pepped.

"Thanks..." Adaline said.

"There is a small washroom around the corner."

Demetri led her himself to the washroom, telling Gianna if a single hair was out of place on the children's heads she would become a meal.

Adaline didn't hear it. But Achilles did.

"Sissy! I think they are *vampires*!" He hissed.

"Lele..." Artemis rolled her eyes. "You are *just now* realizing this?"

Achilles' apple cheeks went pink.



As the grand doors creaked open, a sense of anticipation filled the air. The Kings were each staring at them as Jane gracefully entered the room, accompanied by the rest of her companions. Her gaze fixed upon Aro and with a sense of purpose, she extended her palm towards him. It was a gesture filled with respect and servitude that she had always given him from the moment she awoke in this life. Aro, in turn, delicately clasped her hand, his eyes shimmering with a profound intensity that hinted at the depth of his perception.

For a fleeting moment, Aro appeared lost in thought, seemingly transported to another realm. As he gradually regained full awareness, a slight nod and appreciation escaped his lips, acknowledging Jane's presence and her unwavering loyalty. Grateful for her unwavering commitment, he uttered those simple yet powerful words, "Thank you, Jane."

Deeply moved by her master's recognition, Jane humbly inclined her head, displaying a profound reverence for his authority. She promptly assumed her rightful place by her brother's side, their camaraderie evident in the tender exchange of affectionate gestures. Alec, her dear sibling, couldn't resist expressing his admiration for Jane's triumphant return, teasing her about her resourcefulness in securing not one but two and a half individuals. With a gentle peck on her cheek, he playfully praised her as a clever and resourceful girl.

Meanwhile, Aro, with his usual charisma, took a step forward, as if crossing the boundaries of mere pleasantries to establish a genuine connection with the Cullen children. Their arrival was met with an air of familiarity, as though they were long-lost acquaintances rather than newfound allies. Aro approached Edward with an air of congeniality, extending his hand in a gesture of friendship and goodwill. Ever the perceptive leader, Aro seized the opportunity to delve into Edward's thoughts, silently extracting the depths of his emotions, hopes, and fears.

In this pivotal exchange, one could sense the intertwining threads of power and curiosity as Aro meticulously read Edward's mind "What a happy surprise! Bella is alive, after all... Isn't that wonderful." He said, smiling widely as if it brought him true happiness to see Edward's little cantanta sanguigna alive.

Caius did not look thrilled, nor moved by their reunion. He had a pinched face full of sourness and the only thought in his head was how tragic to see a perfectly good delicately was going to waste.

Marcus as usual was focused on something entirely different. His gift was in constant use from the moment young Edward Cullen left. Their soul mate bond thread was glowing, or as better put, luminous with life and strumming as it pulled taut. It stretched towards the carved wooden doors and went right through them. He knew their mate and her children were close. He could almost taste it on his tongue. His eyes drifted to Jane who was looking directly at him. She craned her neck subtly towards the doors with a nod. Marcus's lips lifted ever so slightly.

Finally, he thought.

He just wished he could hear her. The soundproofing of the chambers was relatively new. He had originally liked it but now he despised it because it kept him from hearing his mate's heartbeat.

"Her blood appeals to you so much it makes me thirsty." Aro licked his lips glancing at Bella. "How can you stand to be so close to her?"

"It's not without difficulty." Edward gritted out. "Now you know. So get on with it."

Aro chuckled, "Yes, I can see that."

Bella made a confused face between them. Edward looked down at her. "One touch and Aro can see every thought I've ever had in my life," He explains.

"You're quite the telepath yourself, Edward. Though... you can't read Bella's thoughts. *Fascinating*." Aro released Edward's hand and turned to Bella. "I would love to see if you are an exception to my gifts, as well."

He reached for Bella's hand but she hesitated. She didn't want him to touch her. She didn't want any of them to touch her. Aro started to laugh as he proceeded to move his hand towards her, his eyes flaring as he dared her to deny him. If she wanted to run with vampires, she was going to show him the respect he was due.

Bella looked to Edward and he nodded his head slightly. She finally takes it. It only took a second for confusion to sweep over Aro. "*Interesting*." He released her hand, and moved back to his chair, deep in thought. "I wonder if--"

"**No!**" Edward snarled.



Demetri was *talkative*.

Adaline was happy for the mouth refresher she had gotten but the moment she returned to her children with his presence... It has been *nonstop*.

"Do you prefer Penguins over Otters? I think penguins are better but when you take in the facts, otters are sweet and gentle so it would make them better. But then you look at the penguins..."

On and on it went.

"Have you been to Greece?"

"Have you traveled outside America before?"

"What happened to the children's father?"

Adaline had promptly choked and spat her glass of lemon water all down her shirt and across his face. She felt bad about that for only a split second before giving him the evil eye because you know... Boundaries.

She was pretty glad that whatever ever was going on behind those elegant closed doors was loud, vicious sounding and it made Demetri shut his pie hole.

Gianna giggled and waved it all off like it was normal to hear such things from that room. Adaline didn't know why the woman was trying to reassure her. She had hoped Edward or Alice was getting their asses handed to them. Edward simply for the fact he had hurt Bella which had hurt Charlie and if it weren't for his emo angst none of them would be here.

Earlier, while Gianna went to bring them their promised food and drinks, Demetri tried to play doctor and fix her limp arm. He seemed very unsure of trying to assist her in popping it back into place because in his words she;

“was like a sunflower made of glass.”

Adaline was in excruciating pain and told him he couldn't do anything to help until the swelling went down. He ended up using his cold ass hands to reduce the swelling in her shoulder because let's face it, it was so much better than using an ice pack. Once it went down, she talked him through how to carefully pop it back into place. She too was initially scared of his strength, but she soon realized he was actually a gentle creature while he used precise movements as he helped her.

After Demetri successfully pops Adaline's shoulder back into place, he wraps it in a bandage to provide support and prevent further injury. Adeline is grateful for his help and expresses her thanks with a timid smile. Demetri reassures her that she will be just fine and advises her to avoid any strenuous activity for a few days to allow her shoulder to heal properly.

There was a sort of warm exchange that happened between them setting the stage for a potentially deeper connection in the future. Neither one would truly understand it until much later. Though on Demetri's part, she reminded him of a girl when he was once human. His human memories were fuzzy at best but he could recall the girl with clarity. He had adored her more than anything. He had loved her fiercely. He had tried to find her after Amun changed him but all he could find was whispers. This was long before he could control his tracking gift. And she was surely dead by the time he could control his gift the way he needed to, to find her.

All he knew was... He had lost his sister.

Gianna had brought Adaline and her children the promised food and drinks but it wasn't food that Achilles or Artemis was particularly finding appealing. Again... They were only five and no five year old child wanted to eat Sardinian-style paella. Adaline certainly didn't want to eat that seafood mess. Not to mention they were allergic... Like highly allergic to shellfish.

"Is the food not to your liking?"

"Ah..." Adaline didn't want to be rude. The woman did go through the trouble of getting them food. "It's just... *Well...*"

"If I eat that I'm going to swell up and die," Achilles bluntly said.

"Being allergic to seafood is a real *shell* of a problem," Artemis hummed.

"Sounds like a *shrimple* problem," Demetri said seriously.

Adaline snorted, loudly. Sadly, she had the kind of laugh that some people thought was cute and charming and others thought she sounded like a dying weird hybrid of donkey and pig.

It was that one line from the vampire that made her feel immediately fond of him. She loved puns. It's where Artemis got her love of puns from.

The children were then given simple olive oil-covered pasta and parmesan, Adaline would have eaten it but the banging down the hall was getting worse and put her too much out of ease. Gianna then acquired a throw blanket out of who knows where. She was still trying to wrap her head around how the woman was obtaining food as fast as she was. It was as if it appeared out of thin air.

This meant there was another vampire around here flashing around and depositing the items where their human secretary could retrieve them. With printer paper and a bunch of glittery pens, Achilles and Artemis began drawing. Or Artemis was drawing... Achilles laid his little head down on his mother's lap and clonked out. From the looks of it, Artemis was not long behind. She kept rubbing her eyes with small yawns leaving her.

"Come here, baby," Adaline softly said.

Artemis gave a very tired nod to her head and curled up on her mother's other side. Adaline immediately began soothing her curls, rubbing her scalp gently as she did so.

"Once, there was a way

To get back homeward

Once, there was a way

To get back home

Sleep, pretty darling, do not cry

And I will sing a lullaby

Golden slumbers fill your eyes

Smiles awake you when you rise

Sleep, pretty darling, do not cry

And I will sing a lullaby

Once, there was a way

To get back homeward

Once, there was a way

To get back home

Sleep, pretty darling, do not cry

And I will sing a lullaby..."

Adaline sang sweetly to them, staring down at them with teary eyes. She wondered if perhaps this was the last time she would ever sing them a lullaby. Would get to hold them while they slept, or even just watch them breathe while they clung to her. It was enough to make anguish rear its head again inside her chest.

Her children *deserved* to live. They *deserved* to be allowed to grow up and make mistakes and learn from them and become something. She knew in her heart they would be marvelous.

She just wished she *had more time...*

A bang louder than before rattled the doors to the chamber down the corridor. A beastly growl and a cut scream made Adaline jolt, disturbing her little's sleep. A strangled cry of her own almost made it from her throat when she felt an ice block touch her back only to clamp it down when she realized it was just Demetri.

He looked a little apologetic for scaring her.

"Are you alright?" He asked, red eyes flying from one point of her face to the next, trying to determine if she was going to lie to him.

"I'm f-fine," Adaline stammered. Her heart beating rapidly in her chest. She looked away to stare at the door that had cracks now echoing from it and rattling as if there was some sort of demolition that was going on through it.

Snarls, and pounding only increased. The doors jarred making Adaline flinch and hold on to her children even tighter.

They mumbled in their sleep, their faces scrunching up and Adaline closed her eyes tight, a sigh leaving her when the corridor was no longer filled with just sounds from the other room but her children who were now screaming with cries as a tantrum of the motherload came to be acknowledged.

Demetri covered his ears, eyes blown wide open and flinching. Adaline tried to shush them, singing softly another lullaby.

"Come stop your crying

It will be alright

Just take my hand

And hold it tight

I will protect you

From all around you

I will be here

Don't you cry..."

The door even seemed to stop jarring and all the sounds from the other side ceased. Adaline was unaware that they had opened as she gathered her children in each arm letting them wrap their little fingers in her hair, holding tight as they nuzzled her neck, still crying and screaming.

*"For one so small,
You seem so strong
My arms will hold you,
Keep you safe and warm
This bond between us
Can't be broken
I will be here
Don't you cry..."*

Artemis was now calming down but Achilles was getting worse. He was shaking, trembling from head to toe, his body becoming taut.

*"Cause you'll be in my heart
Yes, you'll be in my heart
From this day on
Now and forever more
You'll be in my heart
No matter what they say
You'll be here in my heart
Always..."*

He was starting to panic.

Artemis hugged her brother as Adaline wrapped herself around them like a shield. A barrier that kept them from the rest of the world.

*"Why can't they understand the way we feel
They just don't trust what they can't explain
I know we're different, but deep inside us
We're not that different at all*

*And you'll be in my heart
Yes you'll be in my heart
From this day on
Now and forever more*

*Don't listen to them
'Cause what do they know
We need each other, to have, to hold
They'll see in time, I know*

*When destiny calls you, you must be strong
I may not be with you
But you got to hold on
They'll see in time, I know
We'll show them together*

*'Cause you'll be in my heart
Believe me, you'll be in my heart*

I'll be there from this day on

Now and forever more

You'll be in my heart

No matter what they say

You'll be here in my heart

Always

Always I'll be with you

I'll be there for you always

Always and always

Just look over your shoulder

Just look over your shoulder

Just look over your shoulder

I'll be there

Always..."

Achilles took deep gasping breaths, looking up at his mother. She had his hand on her chest, getting him to breathe with her. She nodded every time he succeeded in getting it right.

"From this day on. Now and forever more. You'll be in my heart, No matter what they say. You'll be here in my heart, Always..." He mumbled through sniffles and burrowing his face into her chest. Artemis still hugged him tightly.

Adaline was kneeling on the floor, cradling her son and daughter in her arms. All she could focus on were the two little lives that depended on her.

Suddenly, the room fell silent. Then someone cleared their throat.

Adaline snapped her eyes up to find someone else entirely new.

A tall, very tall dark-haired figure with snowy white skin that could rival her own was looking down at her. Unlike any red she had seen so far, his looked like a newly born rose, still milky from birth. Her heart began skipping several beats as she locked eyes with him. There was an instant connection, a strange pull in her chest that she couldn't explain.

"Are you alright, Cara Mia?" His voice was low and smooth sending tingles down her spine.

She nodded unable to find her voice. He grazed her temples with his fingertips. The coolness relieved the ache almost instantly that had been building in her head since the moment they arrived. She was still in a lot of pain, even if Demetri helped pop her arm back into its socket. The sling Gianna got for her helped but between that and her (damn sure) fractured pinky, a headache was nothing.

His eyes softened and he knelt down beside her, his presence commanding yet comforting. Adaline felt a warmth spread through her as he reached out to gently touch her son's cheek who refused to let her go. Artemis on the other hand glared at him.

"Why do you weep, little one?" He asked Achilles, ignoring the burning eyes of his twin.

Achilles slowly looked at him.

"I want to go home... I want my pop-pop."

The unknown vampire looked into Adaline's eyes once more after giving her son a sad sort of smile. There was a depth of understanding between them, a silent communication that spoke volumes. And in that moment, Adaline knew that her life would never be the same again.

And Marcus felt a sense of peace wash over him. As he looked into her beautiful silvery eyes like a raging thunderstorm of lightning, he saw a future filled with love, hope, and endless possibilities.

Even if he was going to have a hellish time of getting there.

Chapter 8

"My auntie is what mommy calls a human headache. *You sir*, look like a vampire headache."

Artemis' sassy quip left everyone's jaws on the floor. Though her comment was cheeky, it revealed the innocent bluntness of a child.

Adaline flushed, (*oh, my sweet child, you did not just say that*) torn between embarrassment and stifling laughter. She shot Marcus an apologetic look, Gianna continued to gape while Marcus raised his eyebrows, he was somewhat surprised that Artemis was talking to him. Even more with sass like that.

Little Artemis was a spitfire, no doubt. Adaline wondered where she picked up such an attitude. Perhaps her own sharp tongue was to blame.

Still, Adaline worried for her daughter's lack of filter. Artemis meant no true offense - she was merely parroting her mother's colorful words. But before the Kings, a slip of the tongue could prove dire.

"Mommy also tells strangers who touch us, *knoweth thy lane and stayeth the fucketh in it.*"

Gianna's jaw dropped.

Adaline was now covering her face to hide the fact she was so close to tears. It was so hard to discipline herself out of her daughter. She felt for Charlie so much when Artemis pulled wiseass comments like this right out of thin air. Artemis was a little shit, but so was she.

"Right, momma?" Artemis turned to her mother expectantly.

Adaline just nodded her head because she felt like if she opened her mouth now, she would only make it worse. She didn't care if she made it worse for herself. She just had to use her manners. Adaline resolved to mind her speech. With care and manners, hopefully, she could convince the Kings by striking a deal with them to let her children leave. Her babies were only five after all. They would only see this as a bad dream or they would forget it. If she could convince the Kings to let her take her children back and *preferably* have her piece of shit husband, you know... Disposed of, meeting his untimely end. Her children must be spared. If only Charlie could raise them, that would be great and then they could do whatever they pleased with her.

A cold plan formed in Adaline's mind. She would plead and bargain for her children's lives, using honeyed words. Whatever the Kings desired of her, she would accept - so long as her little ones stayed innocent, safe, and alive.

Adaline blinked in confusion as Marcus rose smoothly from the ground, his pale hand extended towards her with a gentle smile. One dark eyebrow quirked upwards as if daring her - "Go on, take it." She bit her lip, unsure. Her legs were numb and tingly - if she tried to stand, she'd surely just fall right over. But his hand remained outstretched, waiting. With a

deep breath, she placed her hand on his. A shock jolted up her arm at the contact. He was so cold! Yet somehow, she also felt strangely warm. It made no sense. The tingles in her hand turned to fluttering butterflies in her stomach, and her heart skipped several beats. Heat rose in her cheeks as he gazed at her. She felt oddly exposed under his eyes, but not in a bad way. Strangely, it felt...right.

"My name is Marcus," he said, his voice soft yet deep and gravelly, as if he hadn't spoken in a very long time.

Adaline blushed harder, bashfully meeting his intense gaze. What was happening here? She was so confused, but somehow, she didn't want this odd moment to end.

"Adaline," She said quietly. "Adaline Swan."

He mouthed her name as if tasting it on his tongue before giving her a brilliant smile that made her heart stutter again. "Piacere, Signora Adaline," He lifted her knuckles to his lips and pressed a gentle kiss.

"This is Achilles and Artemis," Adaline let go of Marcus's hand immediately when she realized where her line of thoughts was going.

Achilles shyly smiled up at him but Artemis was still glaring as if she could burn him at the mere blink.

"Pleased to make your acquaintances," He nodded his head to them. Achilles blushed, smiling faintly with a nod of his own.

"I'm certainly not," Artemis sniffed.

"*Oh, for the love of god...*" Adaline sighed under her breath, even going so far as to pinch the bridge of her nose and close her eyes.

Marcus chuckled. Ah.... Yes, it was going to be very difficult, indeed.

"If you'd please come this way," He directed to the room down the hall. The very same that all that noise was coming from earlier.

Adaline would rather not, but she would also rather not test their patience.

The bright light from the chambers spilled into the shadowy corridor, and Adaline felt her stomach twist up suddenly. The harsh glare illuminated the pristine white marble floor and walls, almost blinding in its intensity. But what truly made her queasy was the odd hole in the floor—it looked like a shower drain, but she had an ominous feeling it served some far more sinister purpose in this vampire lair.

With hesitant steps, Adaline entered the circular room, her hands squeezing her children's as if holding them tighter would keep them safer. Seven red-eyed vampires lined the walls, silently watching them. Jane was there, standing beside a taller, dark-haired boy who must have been her brother. Adaline's gaze was drawn to the man staring intently at her. His eyes held that same unsettling intensity as Marcus's.

The vampire nudged her away from her cousin and the two vampires named Edward and Alice. He steered her to the door behind the thrones, separating her from Bella's group.

Just before the doors closed, Adaline heard the raven-haired vampire say, "You've dishonored your blood ties, Isabella. You brought harm to her, so there must be a pri..."

The doors slammed shut, cutting off his words. Adaline shuddered, confused and horrified by the sinister implications.

What price did he intend to extract from Bella?

And what did it mean for her?



"Let us be done with this. Heidi will arrive any moment. I want our mate and her children out of harm's way before then." Marcus rasped out.

Aro gestured to Felix, and he threw open the carved double doors. Caius glared at them threateningly.

"We will make sure she follows through. I would not delay. We do not offer second chances!"

Bella hesitated.

"My sister?" She asked. A part of her was scared to ask.

"Alice brought them for a trade-off," Aro said with no blunted words. "We've agreed to accept such terms."

Edward closed his eyes, he was horrified by all of this. He never meant for more innocents to be damn to eternity like himself.

A pierced wail suddenly echoed through the room and Marcus vanished from his throne in a blink of an eye. They all stood silently, Aro and Caius had their milky red gazes on the doors with fierce intensity.

A panicked heartbeat, small and young... Belonging to a child met their ears. Another panicked but calming... And a lovely voice began to sing.

"Come stop your crying

It will be alright

Just take my hand

And hold it tight,

I will protect you

From all around you

I will be here

Don't you cry..."

Bella's eyes burned. A harsh sting in her nose. She very suddenly realized what the consequences were. It was a bitter pill to swallow but time could not turn back.

Charlie was going to be *devastated*.

It felt like long dreadful minutes when Adaline and her children were being escorted in by Marcus. Her sister met her gaze for a split moment before they focused on Aro.

Edward went frigid again as Aro's thoughts came into his mind. They were fascinated and enchanted, yet already he was planning to lock her away to keep her safe. And Caius who couldn't wait to sink his teeth into her and tear the humanness from her body.

As for the children?

Edward didn't know what was worse. Being raised around bloodthirsty vampires just to become one or being killed now just to be done with it and have their soul saved.

"You've dishonored your blood ties, Isabella. You brought harm to her, so there must be a price to pay," Aro said suddenly.

Bella looked away from the closed door and looked to Aro wondering what else he was going to take away from her.

Aro leaned in, Edward and Alice were very suddenly snatched into holds they could escape as Jane's gift coursed through them. Their mouths opened in silent screams. Bella wanted to yell at Aro, to stop hurting them but fear was at her throat as Aro was very very up close... Too close... His cold ghostly hand squeezing her... Taking her ability to breathe.

Caius began crackling.

Aro's mouth was at her ear... And Bella's horror only grew.

When he pulled away, he released her. She clutched at her throat, gasping for air.

"Go make your preparations. Demetri will escort you to the foyer where you will wait for nightfall," Aro smiled as if he hadn't just choked a human and demanded her to do something so heinous.

"*You're letting them leave?*" Caius spit.

"Dear Caius, the girl's disappearance will be conspicuous at best. And surely you see her potential." Aro brushed off Caius's anger.

"And what of our *human* mate?" He said the word as if it disgusted him.

"Do *kindly* cease your talking."



Marcus led them deeper into their prison. At least that was what it felt like. A prison, dark and cold... Gas lamps lit the way... There was no sun here.

The shadows even in the dark, leaned away from Adaline even as she was, with her human eyes she would not be able to not see it. Marcus, however, could. He was mildly curious about it. He opened an unassuming black door. "These will be your rooms for the time being. The bathroom is behind the door on your left at the end. There are two smaller rooms for the children on your right and to that, will be your room. Feel free to explore and make yourselves at home. Felix will drop your bags off shortly."

"T-Thank you?" Adaline stuttered, bewildered.

She was so sure they were going to kill her not give her a whole apartment.

Because that was exactly what it was.

An ENORMOUS apartment. The door to the apartment may be unassuming but inside? It was lined with ancient frescos and gold paint. Jewels crested the ceilings. Dark oak planks made up the floor with plush rugs that looked like they cost ten two-bedroom houses alone. Paintings, the size of cars and sofas, and regular-size lined the walls. The windows were almost from floor to ceiling on one side... And the sun... It was so bright and airy and definitely better than the corridors.

Adaline stepped towards the open window blowing the sheer white fabric around in the breeze. She closed her eyes, basking in its warmth.

Thank god she and her children did not have to hide in the shadows too.

"Momma?" Artemis said quietly. "I need to potty."

When she turned around, Marcus was gone. She quickly ushered the children to the bathroom so they could use the potty. Thankfully, she had found a crap ton of toilet paper under the

sink.

It looked like they were hoarding it.

Once their hands were washed, she sat them on the comfy kin-size bed she found in what she assumed was her room. She removed their shoes just as there was a knock before Felix came in, setting their bags down before he left again. Adaline grabbed them, or more so dragged them over to the bench in front of the large bed and set them there, to dig around for clean clothes.

"He said to make ourselves at home. So...Bath time?" she stated calmly.

They nodded their heads.

They stood in front of the large tub as she filled it up. Digging around in the cabinets for some soap and pouring it into the warm water. Adaline had no idea what was going on right now but she needed some stability. Something normal and giving her children their nighttime routine was stability.

After bathing the twins, she got them dressed in their matching pajamas that Alice had packed them. Thankfully their stuffies were in the suitcase as well or else Adaline was going to have an even harder time getting them in bed. After skimming the bookshelf that was in the sitting room, she found what looked like a brand new book of Peter Pan. Why a bunch of Vampires was in possession of a storybook like Peter Pan, she didn't know. But was grateful nonetheless.

Once all tucked into her sides while they were under the covers. Adaline opened the book and began reading to them. The twins clung to their stuffed dragon and teddy bear. Their little fingers knitted tight into her shirt and heads resting on her thighs. They slowly fell into a peaceful sleep, their even little breaths accompanied by soft snores. Adaline carefully eased herself from between them, tucking the covers around them better. They shifted so they could hold one another unconsciously.

She picked up the novel placed it on the bedside table and leaned down to kiss their heads before slipping from the room to take a long and very hot shower.

She hoped they brought her a doctor or something. She really needed her pinky checked over.



The moment the feeding was done, The three Kings returned to their study. Sending Felix and Demetri to guard their mate's quarters. Aro didn't look as happy as he should have been for finally having his true mate with them after all this time. Marcus had told them both that they should wait a day or two before seeking her out.

Aro sat down at his desk, thumbing his lips. He had hoped his decision would at the very least make her happy. He would give anything she desired and from what Jane said Artemis said their momma was furious with their father.

"*What do you know?*" Caius hissed. He had wanted to go ahead and change her now. He didn't want to wait.

"Killian Uley is alive. They are still married," Aro felt like he had an acid mouth saying that. Caius hissed, venom-spitting.

"So we kill him, and be done with it."

"Not... Right... Now..." Marcus spoke up, still speaking quietly.

"Why not!"

"*Because,*" Aro rolled his eyes. Tilting his head in an annoyed fashion at Caius. "He is still their father."

"I killed my father," Caius smiled, shrugging as if he really didn't see the point they were trying to make.

"How..." Aro touched his lips as he looked at Caius. "How do you expect to gain the trust of the little ones if you go and just... Murder their father?"

"They don't need their human father," Caius laughed. "They have three vampire Kings as their πατέρας."

Aro giggled.

"Ah, Ναι, μου αρέσει πολύ ο ήχος αυτού..."

Marcus placed his head in his palm. He supposed he should have foreseen this. "We are not killing their father," Marcus said. "We are not doing anything unless *she asks it* of us."

"*You are not fun,*" Caius groaned. "You are **always** killing our plans. Have you no shame?"

"I am practical," Marcus said simply. "Have you such a thirst for violence that you risk annihilating any relationship you could have with the children?"

"They will understand when they are changed," Caius gritted out. "I do not care for them while they are human. Until then..."

He was gone.

"He's such a theatrical princess," Tsked Aro.

"I **HEARD** THAT!"

Aro began giggling. Marcus laughed with him.

First thing in the morning, there came a knock making Adaline jump up and scramble to open the door before whoever it was could wake the children. She froze when she saw the people on the other side were... Humans.

"Buongiorno Signora!" One of the women greeted her with a wide smile. "We've brought you and the children breakfast!"

Adaline stepped back, a bit flustered. What in the world?

"Where would you like it?" Another woman asked as the two women wheeled the silver carts in.

Adaline stuttered out "There" in front of the fireplace. Her fluster only worsened when the woman curtsied to her and left the room. Adaline blinked rapidly when Felix winked at her and shut the door.

"Huh?" She blinked again.

Did they... Did they curtsy?

Was Felix there all night?

Another knock.

Adaline had half the mind to just leave the door open in silent invitation. She swung it open once more.

Adaline stood frozen in disbelief as she took in the breathtaking sight before her. "Hello!" The woman beamed excitedly. "I'm Chelsea!"

The woman, exuded an aura of elegance and allure that was simply captivating. Adaline couldn't help but notice the striking resemblance Chelsea bore to the famous actress Rachel Luttrell from the beloved television show Stargate. However, it was evident that Chelsea possessed an unparalleled beauty that even surpassed her doppelgänger.

As Adaline's eyes wandered across Chelsea's radiant face, she couldn't help but be enthralled by her gorgeously bronze and gold shimmering skin tone. The combination of her dark complexion and piercing red eyes created a mesmerizing contrast that left Adaline momentarily starstruck. It was as if Chelsea possessed a unique aura that drew attention and admiration from everyone around her.

Breaking free from her trance, Adaline managed to find her voice and stammered out a simple questionable "H-Hello?" in response to Chelsea's enthusiastic greeting. She couldn't help but feel a sense of awe and curiosity in the presence of someone so captivating.

With a warm smile that radiated genuine friendliness, Chelsea continued to introduce herself as the trusted bodyguard of Master Marcus. Adaline couldn't help but be even more intrigued by this new piece of information. The mere idea of having a bodyguard, and one as strikingly beautiful and confident as Chelsea seemed odd.

As Adaline stood there, still somewhat bemused.

“I *HOPE* we can be great friends!”

Adaline was suddenly being hugged by the vampire. She lifted her hand and awkwardly patted the girl's back.

“S-Sure?”

“Oh, goodie!” Chelsea pulled back and grinned widely. “Alright! I’m also your personal shopper, by the way! First on the agenda today is...”

Chelsea whipped out a large stack of catalogs out of thin air.

Where in the hell did she keep those? Adaline wondered.

“Heidi wants you to pick out clothes so she can order them and from there, I will get whatever else you are in need of!” Chelsea bounced over to the sofa, plopping down on it.

“Whose... Whose Heidi?” Adaline asked as she closed the door again behind them.

“My best friend! You’re going to love her! I promise!”

“Huh.”

Adaline despaired internally. She didn't handle peppy people who smiled all the time very well. And to top it off, the vampire was very pretty.

Fuck my life.

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