Time

by Kravn

Summary

This takes place right after 3x09. Bo’s and Lauren’s relationship is rocky and Lauren decides that she needs to regain control of her life and takes matters into her own hands.

Notes

I know there are a few stories out there about angsty Doccubus post 3x09 and this may fall within that group. I hope however, that it will be different. This is an emotional and introspective journey for Lauren and Bo.

Thanks to Neytiri's Heart for her help and advice; and to Glasswrks for her support.
Bo made her way through the long hallway to the lab; the sound of her boots against the tiles, echoed down the hall. With the Dawning finally behind her, she felt energized and elated at her success in passing this major Fae milestone. She also felt more confident as she now had a better understanding of herself and of her power. But more importantly, she was just so relieved that this ordeal was over and things could go back to normal. No more long days and nights of training and being afraid of devolving into some grotesque, drooling Under Fae with horns and fangs and sporting back hair. Now she could go back to working on cases; hanging out with Kenzi at the Dal and at the shack; and she could actually spend time with her girlfriend instead of the text messages relationship that they had of late.

As she made her way into the lab, she noticed that there seemed to be an unusual amount of activity, with staff bustling about the lab and Lauren being in the centre of the maelstrom. The Succubus wondered what was going on but those thoughts quickly left her mind as her attention fixated on her girlfriend.

“Lauren!” she called out.

No response.

Lauren was deeply enthralled with whatever information was on her clipboard. Bo stood back, observing her lover – she loved watching Lauren work and right now she was in command with her personnel heeding every word she said. The blonde was busily scribbling something down on a clipboard and handing it off to one of her staff before another staff member gave her a very thick file for her to review. Lauren rattled off some instructions to them while gesturing in her usual cute, animated way; they nodded their head in understanding before scuttling off. Her girlfriend was definitely in serious doctor mode and looked pensive as she read the folder while walking over to a nearby counter. She placed the file down; her hair falling down in waves, hiding her face as she reviewed the file’s contents. Bo loved watching Lauren. She was so beautiful and amazing. To say that Bo was in awe of Lauren would be simplifying how she felt.

The doctor seemed to have a break from her revolving medical entourage and Bo chose this moment to approach. “Lo!” Still nothing. Bo tried again, “Dr. Lewis!” This time there was a reaction. Lauren seemed to be in a daze as she raised her head to acknowledge her name. She scanned the lab till her eyes met the brunette.

“Bo? Are you here to see Dyson? If so, he’s just down the hall.”

Bo wasn’t expecting that. Lauren’s comment literally stopped her in her tracks. “Actually, I came to see you. We didn’t really get a chance to talk or spend any time together after my Dawning ceremony yesterday and I thought I could take you to lunch.” Bo resumed closing the distance between her and the Doctor but not touching.

“I was here all night monitoring Dyson. You could’ve stopped by.” Lauren said in a matter of fact tone, looking Bo straight in the eyes.
Bo looked away briefly to recover. Lauren was right but she had needed time last night to figure things out. Looking back to her girlfriend, she said in a shaky voice, “You’re right. I could’ve… I should’ve. I just…I needed to think. There was so much that happened in the temple and then… afterwards. I just needed to process everything that happened and the changes that I went through.”

Lauren understood that Bo must’ve felt overwhelmed even though she was successful with the Dawning. “It’s okay Bo. I imagine that the ceremony must’ve taken a lot out of you.”

She moved towards her girlfriend but the blonde seemed to be preoccupied with her file. Bo was concerned. Lauren was acting strangely. “Are you okay babe? You don’t seem yourself.”

Lauren sighed. She was physically and emotionally exhausted and she wasn’t ready to face Bo; her emotions were chaotic. “I’m just tired. What with having my chi sucked out of me and working here all night…."

The Succubus felt shame rush through her. She knew that she took the life force from the people that she loved – well Stella didn’t count – and she felt badly about it but she did what she had to do. “About that. I am sorry. I didn’t mean to hurt anyone but I had to do it to save Dyson. You know that I would’ve done the same if it were you or Kenzi.”

Lauren nodded her head and smiled sadly. She knew that Bo would’ve moved Heaven and Earth to save those that she cared about. It wasn’t Bo chi-sucking the room that unnerved her, but rather how Bo looked at Dyson when she brought him back. There was something there. Call it a gut feeling because there was no empirical evidence to prove otherwise, but the way they looked at each other, it looked like love and not the kind between friends.

Bo cleared her throat, feeling the tension between them and chose to switch topics. “You said that you spent the night here. Why didn’t you go home?”

The brunette’s voice brought Lauren out of her thoughts. Her weariness too much for her; she let her cool Doctor persona take over. “Dyson needed to be monitored and there was no one else here to do it. And now that I don’t have to come up with a formula to stop you from devolving, I used the time to catch up on all the things that I let fall to the wayside.”

Bo was slowly floundering and didn’t know how to act or respond to her lover’s uncharacteristic behaviour. Uncertainty in her voice, Bo managed to respond, “Okay. So did you get caught up?”

Lauren was on auto pilot now. As much as she was glad that Bo was here to see her, she just didn’t have the emotional fortitude to deal with her - she just wanted to focus on her work and continue with the lab preparations. “For the most part but there’s still a lot left to be done.”

Bo knew that Lauren was forever dedicated to her work and it was to her own detriment. As much as she loved that quality in her girlfriend, it was also frustrating having to reason with her to be realistic with her work hours. “Babe, you really need to get some rest. At least don’t work too late today.”

The doctor was frustrated and conflicted. On one hand this was what she wanted from Bo – for her to be concerned and thoughtful - but after these past few weeks of her being selfish, secretive, inconsiderate and unsupportive; it was just too much. Lauren tried to suppress her emotions but wasn’t completely successful. Instead, she came across as being a bit cool. “I appreciate your concern Bo, but I’ve managed just fine the last five and a half years.”

Not to be daunted by her girlfriend’s abruptness, Bo chose to keep things light and ignore the blonde’s grumpy-sleep-and-energy-deprived tone. “But you didn’t have me to nag you back then.
As your girlfriend, it’s in my job description to ensure that you don’t over work yourself.”

It always surprised Lauren how charming Bo could be; it cut through some of her frustration and she gave her one of her famous half smiles in response. Lauren knew that the Succubus was trying and she did appreciate it but she needed to be resolute and strong. Time was of the essence and she still had a lot to do. Before Bo could reply, the blonde blurted out, “I know that you came to visit me but I really have to get going. I have a meeting with the Ash.”

The brunette pouted and inched closer, putting her hands on Lauren’s hips, “I’m sure that Hale won’t mind waiting a few minutes. We haven’t been able to spend any time together what with all my training for the Dawning... I’ve missed you Lauren.”

Lauren silenced her conflicted thoughts and feelings and allowed herself to react naturally. She cupped Bo’s face, causing the brunette to smile – it seemed like forever since she felt Lauren’s touch. The blonde leaned forward and pressed her forehead against her lover’s; inhaling her scent. Closing her eyes, Lauren felt herself relax within the Succubus’ hands and from being in close proximity to her. Blocking out all the sounds and activity in the lab; nothing else existed right now – no thoughts of being a slave; no insecurities; no Dyson; no Dawning and no Bo feeding off of others – it was just them in that instant and it brought her peace. Lauren allowed herself to be swept up in the comfort and tenderness of the moment; of the feeling of being safe and of being loved. She just wanted to savour this and commit it to memory.

“Ahem!”

“Ahem, Dr. Lewis!”

Lauren sighed. And just that quickly, the moment was gone; interrupted by a member of her staff. Her eyes snapped open as she moved her forehead away from Bo’s and turned her head towards the direction of the voice; her hands dropping to her girlfriend’s forearms that refused to budge from its spot. Bo wasn’t about to relinquish touching her girlfriend because of a lab Harpy.

“Yes?” Lauren breathed out irritated.

“I’m sorry to interrupt but the Ash is ready to see you now.”

Upon the doctor’s acknowledgement of her appointment, the Fae scurried out of the lab.

Lauren looked at Bo, her fingers gently massaging the Succubus’ forearms; she said softly, “I have to go.” Bo frowned but stepped back and released her grip on her lover; missing the contact immediately. As Lauren turned to grab the file folder from the counter, Bo used that moment to collect herself and stuff down her desire to drag Lauren into her office and take her on her desk; on her chair; against the wall…

The brunette physically shook her head to clear her thoughts. She missed being intimate with her girlfriend but this would have to wait. Lauren thought she saw her girlfriend’s eyes flash blue but she wasn’t sure if it happened or if she imagined it due to lack of sleep.

In a hopeful voice, Bo breathed out, “See you later?”

Lauren’s stomach started churning again as a wave of chaotic emotions passed through her; she felt as if the acid would eat through her stomach lining. “I’m probably going to be awhile.”

“That’s okay. Call me and I’ll come for you.” Lauren looked softly into Bo’s eyes; wanting so much to grab her and hold her tight but she knew that she shouldn’t. Instead, she nodded and turned to
leave the lab. Bo’s eyes followed the blonde as she walked away and out the door; she couldn’t
shake the uneasiness that she felt.
Chapter Notes

A big thank you to all those who have left reviews - it means more to me than you could know. This is my first multi-chapter story, so I need all the encouragement that I can get. Encouragement in the form of reviews – both good (preferably) and bad (constructive criticism), would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks to my Beta, Neytiri's Heart for her help, advice and welcomed sarcasm. Yes, the shoe is on the other foot.

The Ash’s office

As Lauren was ushered into the Ash’s inner office by his assistant, she quickly took in her surroundings. She realized that Hale was in the process of moving his office out of the Dal and back into the compound, however to say that the Ash’s office was bare was an understatement. The only furnishings were a dark mahogany desk with an ergonomic office chair behind it and two black leather chairs facing his desk. There were no photos, statues, weapons or even a stuffed trophy animal or Under Fae anywhere in the office. In fact, the only thing that could be considered decorative, was the fancy fountain pen set adorning his desk; along with his cell phone and a huge pile of files.

Hale looked up from his mountain of paperwork as Lauren was escorted in; his assistant not wasting any time to leave. “Hey Doc.” the Siren said with a smile; if he were honest with himself, since he became Acting Ash, he didn’t have much time to hang out with his friends. All his time was spent treading the political Fae waters, dealing with red tape and learning the fine art of political correctness in order to get things accomplished. To see a friendly face was a wonderful reprieve from the arduous paperwork that greeted him each day.

Lauren bowed her head in respect, “Ash.” Hale waved his hand dismissing the formality, “Please, there’s no need for that Doc.”

The blonde was all business. It was the only way she knew to be in order to get through this. “I insist. I must stick with protocol. I have to make a request of you.”

Hale arched his eyebrow as his curiosity peaked, “Sounds serious. Please have a seat.” as he indicated to a chair.

Lauren was too anxious to sit still, “I’d rather stand if you don’t mind.” Hale nodded and walked around to the front of his desk; and leaned back so that he was semi-seated on the top of his desk; his hands clasped together; relaxed yet curious as to what had the doctor so antsy.

“First of all, I wanted to let you know that Dyson is recovering and with bed rest, he should be back on his feet in a couple of days.”

“That’s good to hear.” Hale was relieved. After hearing about Dyson’s near death experience in the temple, he was concerned about his well being.
Lauren took a deep breath to collect herself. These past few years have been increasingly difficult but she coped; she pushed past her fear, her concern, her feelings, her pride; in order to get the job done; and in so doing, she lost a bit of herself each time. If anything was going to change, now was the time.

Hale recognized that something was concerning the blonde and prompted her by gently asking, “And your request?”

Lauren exhaled. “I received a phone call this morning from a Fae medical… colleague, for lack of a better word. Her name is Dr. Mila Hernandez from the Brazilian Light Fae clan. There is some kind of Fae outbreak there and she would like my assistance. I’d like to request to assist them.”

Hale was pleasantly surprised; thinking it was something more dire. “That’s it? I don’t have an issue helping out a fellow clan. Just make arrangements with the tech guys and they’ll set you up with satellite video conferencing.”

Lauren blinked. She didn’t expect this response. Maybe she wasn’t clear. “You misunderstand. I wish to assist on site… in Brazil.”

The Siren was taken aback. He should’ve known that it couldn’t have been that simple.

“Go there? Why you would have to go to Brazil?”

“From what she told me, there have been a significant number of deaths and this may be a strain similar to the epidemic that I treated in the Congo. However, I won’t know for certain until I see it for myself and as they say in the Army, nothing is more effective than boots on the ground. If I were physically there, I would be on hand to review their findings, conduct testing, treat patients, go to where it all started, etc.”

Lauren’s fingers played nervously with the file in her hands before she closed the distance between her and the Siren. “Dr. Hernandez sent me some information on the epidemic thus far – on patients that have been infected and who have died.” The blonde stood next to Hale with the file open, showing pictures of some of the afflicted and dead.

Hale looked at the photos, grimacing at the physical effects of the disease on the patients; before looking back up at Lauren. “Protocol dictates that in situations like these, where a clan is requesting aid from another, a formal request has to be made from their Ash. I haven’t received any word from theirs.”

“The Ash there is Vicente Medeiros.” Lauren stated. “They never asked me to come – rather they just requested any assistance that I would be able to provide them. I am the one asking to go there on assignment to help.”

This kept getting more and more puzzling to Hale. “Why would you want to go there? I thought that things were better for you as a Ward of the Light. Did something happen? Did someone do something to you? If so, tell me and I’ll make sure it never happens again!” Hale stood up from where he was seated; agitated at the thought that someone possibly hurt her.

Lauren’s emotions quickly unravelled; it took everything within her to be calm all morning, especially in Bo’s presence and now that the moment was here, she couldn’t contain herself anymore and blurted out, “I need to leave! I can’t stay here!”

Hale’s anger was quickly extinguished and replaced with concern and confusion. “What? What do you mean you can’t stay here?”
Lauren was pacing now, her arms wrapped around herself; clearly upset. “I need to get away for awhile. I know that I’m your… employee… and that this is a lot to ask but I just can’t be here anymore; at least not for awhile.”

The Siren had never seen Lauren not be her normal cool, collected and confident self. Her demeanor now was definitely atypical. “What’s this about Doc? Does this have something to do with Bo?”

The doctor sighed; she needed to get her emotions under control. She stopped pacing and turned to face the Acting Ash. “And Dyson.”

Hale was completely lost, “I don’t understand.”

Lauren sighed again; her shoulders slumped. “Somehow Dyson got his love back. And no, I don’t have any proof but he has been different. He’s different around Bo – the way he looks at her; the way he acts; what he says… The only way to know would be to ask him and I’m the last person in the world to do that.”

Hale was flabbergasted. He opened his mouth to say something but nothing came out.

The blonde continued, “I know how this seems. That I’m having relationship issues; that it’s preventing me from being professional and I’m running away. And when I put it like that in the most basic terms, yes, that is how it is. But it’s more than that. It’s not just Dyson…”

The Siren was still dumbfounded and it showed in his tone and in his expression. “I don’t know what to say. I’m shocked by all of this.”

Lauren knew that she had to be honest with Hale so that he could understand her situation; how she was feeling. She was not one for airing her personal laundry; and years of controlling her feelings made it even more difficult to express it with others but time was of the essence and she would not get another opportunity.

Swallowing her pride, Lauren took the leap and looked the Siren in the eyes; all her turmoil etched on her face; her eyes brimming with unshed tears. “I know that what I am asking of you is huge. But I need this Hale. I have sacrificed everything that I am - first for Nadia and now for Bo. And I am empty. I can’t think clearly; I can’t eat; and I can’t sleep.” The blonde exhaled before continuing; her hands clasped in front of her, “When I first came here, things were so hard, so bleak… but I had science and medicine and that helped me cope. I need to find that again but I can’t do that here; not right now; there are too many distractions. If I stay here - the way things are and the way I feel - I won’t be any good to you, to the Light or to myself. And if I can’t perform, then my… services will no longer be required and I’m afraid to think what that would mean for me.”

Hale understood the risk that the doctor was taking in expressing her fears and emotions and he was truly sympathetic but he was the Acting Ash and even though he respected her and considered them to be friends, he had to consider what was in the best interest of the Light first. Having their doctor and his Ward be thousands of miles away instead of treating his own clan wouldn’t be in their best interest or at least, it would be frowned upon which would make his already difficult job, more difficult. Hale sighed. “I don’t know what I can do Lauren. I sympathize with your situation but…”

Lauren decided to try a different tactic. “I know that the Elders sometimes need to weigh in on some of your decisions. However, think of this as an opportunity to make a name for yourself as Acting Ash - your human doctor assisting to eradicate this outbreak that is affecting another Light Fae clan.”

Hale smiled at Lauren’s gumption and raised one eyebrow. “You have that much faith in your abilities?”
The doctor replied matter of factly, “My work speaks for itself... one word: Congo.” Lauren continued to explain herself, “I acknowledge and resign myself to my situation. I am a slave to the Light.” Lauren waved her hand to silence Hale’s aversion to the word ‘slave’. “Science is all I have and I want to focus all my energy into it. **I know** that I can do this. **I know** that I can make a difference Hale.”

The Siren was slowly becoming convinced. “Let’s say that I agree, I don’t know if I’d be able to convince the Elders that this is a good idea and get their support.”

The blonde was on a roll; her mind working all the angles. “Hale, I know that I don’t know much about Fae politics but I know that this can work to your benefit. **When I** come up with a cure and I will; it will reflect **very** positively on you, your position as Acting Ash and your clan. It’ll be your name that will be associated with saving thousands of Fae from this outbreak. And even more, it would be Fae that’s not even part of your clan, so they will be indebted to you.”

Lauren could tell that what she was saying was sinking in by reading Hale’s body language, so she continued. “I know that you only took this position until a new Ash could be chosen but I can tell that you are enjoying what you are doing; you’ve settled into this role and you are making a difference and you realize that you are. I can help you continue to make a difference Hale.” The doctor paused for the coup de grâce, “And besides, weren’t your ancestors from that area?”

Hale’s eyes twinkled and he chuckled out loud, “You’re wrong Lauren, you know enough about Fae politics. How long are we talking about here?”

The blonde breathed out quickly, “Two to six months.”

Hale whistled unconsciously, fortunately nothing exploded. “Damn Doc, that’s a long time! I don’t know if I can spare you for that long.”

Lauren continued, not to be discouraged, “In the event that you were willing to approve my request, I made a list of Fae doctors that would be a good fit during my absence. And they would all willingly jump at the opportunity to be Chief Medical Doctor here.” She handed him a list of names which he took automatically; still surprised by these turn of events. “As well, I updated all active case records last night and have a turnover report ready for whomever you choose to replace me while I’m away. All they have to do is show up for work.”

Hale was impressed by the doctor’s ingenuity and level of preparation. “You’re not afraid that your replacement will do a fantastic job and that there won’t be a position for you upon your return?”

In a very matter of fact tone and devoid of arrogance, Lauren said, “First of all, when I return here, I would’ve found the cure for this epidemic. And secondly, I don’t think anyone would question your authority or my abilities. So, no, it won’t be an issue.”

Being devil’s advocate, Hale continued to list possible arguments against this arrangement. “The Elders could argue that you may use this opportunity to run away.”

Always one to consider all the angles, Lauren wasn’t stumped. “I thought about that and I think that it would be prudent of you to send someone with me, for security purposes. They would be there in a dual capacity - to protect me as Ward of the Ash and to ensure that I won’t flee; which I won’t.”

In a very serious tone, Hale said, “Lauren, **if** I agree to this, promise me that you won’t run.”

Lauren looked directly into Hale’s eyes and replied very emphatically, “I promise! As a doctor and as your Ward, I swear to uphold my agreement and my responsibility. I give you my word.”
exhaled and released some of the tension that she was didn’t realize she was holding in her shoulders. She reiterated, “This is just temporary. I just need time so that I can … come to terms with everything and be able to function as I should; as I need to.”

Hale sighed. “You’ve given this a lot of thought. Do you have someone in mind for your Security detail?”

“I have worked with Serena in the past. She was very efficient with the whole Djieiene spider situation. She’s fair and honourable and I’m comfortable with her. She is the first Fae that comes to mind if you are willing to spare her. If not her, anyone that you trust and that you think is capable of not looking down on me because I’m human and that would be able and willing to protect me. If I’m going to be there for a few months, I don’t need the headache of having to watch my back around the Fae who is there to ‘protect’ me.”

Again, Hale was impressed that Lauren had considered everything. “And I suppose that you’ll want to leave right away?”

Lauren nodded, “Tonight preferably or tomorrow morning.”

“Ok, is there anything else that I need to know?”

The blonde nodded, “This assignment will require me to travel out in the field for extended periods of time - at different locations - so I’ll be on the move constantly. There are temporary labs set up at each location I believe. As well, some of the areas that I will be in will most likely not have cell phone coverage or internet. Communication will be difficult at times.” Lauren saw Hale’s shoulder slump. She pressed on; she wasn’t about to let this fall apart now. “With that said, I’m sure that you can equip me or my Security person with top of the line communication gear so that they and/or I can provide you with regular reports or updates.”

Hale chuckled again, “Of course you don’t make this easy.” He paused for a few seconds contemplating all the information and possible ramifications. “Okay. I’ll support your assignment and I’ll do what I can to make it happen but there are no guarantees. I still have to convince the Elders.”

Lauren smiled with relief. “Thank you Hale! I appreciate your support and I do understand that some things may be out of your hands. But if I get the go ahead, you won’t regret it.”

Very solemnly, the Siren asked, “What about Bo? Are you going to tell her?”

The blonde’s smile quickly disappeared, “I can’t say anything beforehand. If I do, she’ll try to stop me from leaving. I don’t want to hurt her but I need to do this for me.”

Hale shook his head, “I don’t know about that Doc. She’s gonna be royally pissed…”

Lauren closed her eyes briefly and rubbed the bridge of her nose. All the stress and emotional turmoil gave her a massive headache. “I know. I’ll call her from the airport and I’ll also leave her a letter explaining everything.” She looked at Hale sadly, “I’ll make sure she understands that this was my idea and not yours.”

The Siren walked up to the blonde and gently put his hand on her shoulder; the act startled her but she didn’t flinch from the contact. He normally would never make such a physical gesture towards the doctor, but he now had a better understanding of her emotional and mental state for her to go to such extreme measures. He was genuinely concerned about her. “I’m not worried about me Lauren. I really hope you know what you’re doing - for your sake and for hers.”
Lauren smiled but it never reached her eyes. “This is for me Hale. For once, I’m doing something for me.”

Hale dropped his hand and his look said that he understood. “Okay. I’ll get things rolling – deal with the Elders; Ash Medeiros; Security, etc. If it’s a go, be ready to move at a moment’s notice.”

The blonde replied quickly, “That won’t be a problem. I’m already packed.”

Hale was surprised – not just by the fact that Lauren was confident that her request would be approved but that she was already packed. “What about all your belongings in your apartment?”

There was a resignation and sadness in her voice; “There’s nothing of importance for me to take. I’ll be ready when you call.” She paused and asked tentatively, “Can you keep this between us? I don’t want anyone knowing the real reason why I’ve taken this assignment.”

Hale nodded his understanding, “Trust me Doc, I don’t want anyone else to know either. My rep is at stake.” Lauren was visibly relieved – not just that she would most likely be going on this assignment but that Hale would do everything he could to support her and keep her secret.

Lauren bowed her head. “Thank you Ash.”

The Siren watched her as walked out his office; he felt a great deal of concern and respect for the doctor. He would make sure to check up on her while she was away to make sure that she was alright. He would also talk to Serena to ensure that she knew how important it was to protect and look out for the good Doctor.

He shook his head and sighed. He knew that Bo would not take this well and she would be one irate Succubus. He imagined that she would pay him a visit once she found out.

The Siren drew himself out of his thoughts and reached for his cell; punching in some numbers from memory.

Hale smiled when he heard the voice. It had been a while.

“Dyson? Hey!”

The Siren chuckled, “Yeah, I decided to take time out of my busy Ash schedule to talk to the little people.”

“Look, I need to confirm something…”

“Sure, I’ll see you in 30.”

Hale ended the call. He needed to know if Dyson had his love back. He would ask the awkward question that Lauren couldn’t and he would keep her confidence.

The Crack Shack

Kenzi staggered down the stairs and groped around the kitchen for a clean coffee cup. The smell of freshly brewed coffee wafted in the air, calling her name. A couple of sips and a few seconds later, java was surging through her veins. It was the pick-me-up that she needed to pry her eyes open so that she could pour her sugar fix of ‘Toastie Bun Buns’ into a bowl.

Making her way over to the couch, she saw that her BFF was already dressed and enjoying a cup of
coffee. Well, enjoying was debatable. Bo was seated at the far end of the couch with her legs tucked underneath her; her coffee mug in her hands; and she was staring at the blank TV.

“Hey Bo Bo, you know that TV’s are way more enjoyable when you turn them on? It’s a proven fact!” Kenzi said as she plopped down on the couch with her coffee and bowl of cereal.

Bo didn’t respond.

Kenzi snapped her fingers in front of the Succubus’ face. “Earth to Bo. Come in Bo.”

“Huh?” Bo seemed to come out of her haze.

“What’s going on Succum? Why the face?” Kenzi asked in between mouthfuls of cereal.

“Nothing’s going on.” Bo mumbled.

The Goth stopped in mid-chew. “You lie like a cheap rug on a bald dude!

Bo stared at Kenzi with a look that said ‘What the hell? That the best you got!’ The look resonated in the Goth, who got a bit defensive. “What?! I just woke up. That’s pretty good for first thing in the morning.”

The brunette shook her head. “It’s noon Kenz!”

“Like I said, it’s first thing in the morning.” The Goth smiled nonchalantly. “It’s just that you got your frowny face on.”

Bo sighed. “Lauren. Lauren’s what’s going on. She’s acting weird.”

Kenzi couldn’t resist, “What, like normal Lauren weird or abnormally Lauren weird?”

The jab at her girlfriend didn’t register; Bo was preoccupied. “I think she’s mad at me Kenz.”

“If that were true, why would Hot Pants be mad at you?” the Goth put the bowl up to her lips and slurped down the remaining milk; wiping her mouth with the back of her hand.

“Well, she’s normally happy to see me when I stop by the lab; but today it was like she was annoyed that I was there. And she was really cold and abrupt with me; almost giving me the brush off. And she had that tone like she would give you when you mess with her lab equipment.”

“Oh tits! That’s not good.” The Goth made a scrunched up face. She remembered all the times that Lauren would chastise her for handling the lab equipment, almost breaking a couple unintentionally of course. It basically made her want to unplug everything from all the gizmos in the lab and switch around all the beakers, just to show her a thing or two. But she didn’t, that would require too much effort.

Bo continued talking even though Kenzi had spaced out for a few seconds. “I mean, I know that I haven’t been the greatest girlfriend in the world-”

The Goth quickly jumped to her friend’s defense, “You’ve been busy training for the Dawning. I mean, I hardly saw you and you always need your Kenzi-fix.”

Bo sighed and slumped her shoulders. She knew that she was focused on training for the Dawning and let her relationship slide and she felt guilty about that. ’I know but I was really harsh with her with the whole Kitsune thing – I mean really harsh Kenz even after everything that she did for me. She and I agreed that I needed to feed off of others and then at the Club, she brought me back from
my Succubitch self even when I threatened her!" Bo shook her head, feeling horribly with how things transpired.

"I healed with Dyson – which I can't put into words, how much that hurt her despite her understanding that it was just to heal. I totally missed her Award ceremony, which was a huge deal to her Kenz. You should've seen how excited she was. And with all my training for the Dawning, I haven't spent much time with her – in fact, less time that I spend with you. Plus, there's the whole feeding from others which I know is really hard on her – more than she would ever say but she's been super understanding; and then the whole Tamsin kissing me thing." Bo's eyes brimmed with tears. "I mean, I would even hate me for all of this."

The tiny Goth raised her head out of her coffee mug, "Yeah, about that. You still haven't said what the hell happened there!"

"Focus Kenz please! Look, there's no story. She kissed me, okay. It didn't mean anything to me but I feel guilty about it because I knew it would hurt her. Plus, between training and the Dawning and things being strained, it never seemed like it was the right time to tell her. And to be honest, I was scared to tell her 'cuz I didn't want to make things worse... I don't even know what the hell got into Tamsin."

“Ok, now that I got the scoop – as uneventful as it was - I’m focusing. But I need another cup of coffee.” With that she hopped off the couch and made a beeline to the coffee maker; pouring herself another cup of caffeine goodness.

Bo’s mind was whirling. “I have to make things up to her Kenzi. I have to tell her that I know that I’ve been a horrible girlfriend and that I want to make things right. I have to show her how important she is to me. Now that the Dawning is done, things can go back to normal.”

The Goth made her way back to the sofa, coffee in hand; seeing her friend perk up, made Kenzi smile. “That’s my Bo! So, what’s the plan?”

The brunette had a smile on her face now. “Well, for starters, I think we should have some quality time tonight; have take-out and just hang out together. Re-connect. It’s been awhile since we’ve had any alone time together.”

The Goth slugged her friend in the shoulder, smiling. “Sounds like a good plan Bo Bo. I’m sure the Doc would love that.”

With a renewed sense of confidence in herself and in the direction of her relationship with Lauren, Bo beamed. She looked forward to tonight and couldn’t wait to spend time with her girlfriend after work.
Brutal Honesty

Chapter Notes

This chapter borrows slightly from 3x10 but its still AU.

Words in italics represent Lauren’s internal thoughts.

Be prepared for some angst in this and the next few chapters. I hope that you will stick through it to see how things develop and progress for Lauren and Bo. I promise that there will be happier times ahead, just not right at this moment.

Thanks again to my Beta, Neytiri's Heart, for her advice and ideas.

Chapter 3

Light Fae Compound – Lab (early afternoon)

After her meeting with Hale, Lauren called Dr. Hernandez and explained that due to an unexpected situation, her schedule ‘opened up’ and she was willing to come to Brazil and assist in any way she could, however it was not guaranteed until she received authorization from Ash Santiago and the Elders. To say that Dr. Hernandez was elated was putting it mildly.

Mila, as Dr. Hernandez insisted she be called, was going to meet with her Ash ASAP, to ensure that the official request for Lauren’s assistance be made to Ash Santiago. If this was going to occur, there could not be any political hiccups and Fae politics needed to be adhered to. Mila also stated that she would initiate all arrangements for her accommodations and any equipment that she would need in case approval was granted. She did not want to waste any time getting this endeavour started. After numerous thank you’s and ‘obrigado’ from Mila, the doctors said their goodbyes and assured one other that they would keep each other updated as things progressed.

Lauren’s thoughts were reeling and she had to keep busy in order to keep her thoughts organized and her emotions from surfacing. She would stuff them all down. She had to. A couple hours and finalizing of paperwork later, Lauren decided that it would be the best use of her time to leave work and start her own preparations in case she got the green light. So Lauren did something that she had never done before in her 6 years with the Fae - she left work at 3pm. It was so unusual, that her staff thought she was ill as she never, ever left work early.

Lauren’s condo

Once at her place, Lauren quickly packed minimum clothing, essential toiletries, her laptop and her Congo research. Her time in the Army taught her to pack lightly when on the move. Only take what was necessary as excess equipment, meant excess weight, which wasn’t smart when one needed to be mobile. If she needed anything, she would get it there when she was on the ground.

The next thing on her ‘to do’ list was to get her condo organized in case she was going to leave it vacant for an extended period of time. Granted, her place was already very organized and tidy, with nothing out of place; Lauren just wanted to ensure that certain items were properly secured such as
the chemicals in her lab. The blonde’s ‘clean freak’ persona came out in full force as she ensured that her condo was put into tip top condition for her possible absence - she made sure that her bed sheets were changed; the laundry done and put away; that every flat surface was dusted; the floor swept; and that the dishes were washed.

It was 6:45 p.m. when Lauren finished obsessing. With nothing left to do, she started growing restless and decided that she needed a tall glass of white wine to calm her nerves – she didn’t want to give into her emotions and she needed to stop clock watching. Settling into the couch, Lauren looked around her condo as she absentmindedly caressed the stem of her wine glass. The thought that she could be in Brazil tonight or tomorrow and not be in these surroundings was startling. Aside from the odd trip away to treat Light Fae in remote areas, Lauren had never been away from the compound or her condo for more than a week at a time. If she went to Brazil, it would be her first time since she started with the Fae that she would be a significant distance away and for an extended period of time. The realization of this fact was scary yet exhilarating.

Not wanting to get her hopes up, Lauren tried thinking of anything else to deflect her emotions and anxiety. Normally, reciting the Periodic Table calmed her but in this instance, it wasn’t working. Instead, Lauren swirled her wine and started to think about the health benefits of consuming it. As the blonde observed its color she started processing: Wine is a mild natural tranquilizer which can reduce anxiety and tension (hence the reason for a glass of wine in her hands). However, red wine may prevent coronary disease and some forms of cancer. The chemical component, Catechins, is believed to function as an anti-oxidant, preventing free-radical molecules from doing cellular damage. Furthermore, the compounds Resveratrol and Quercetin, which are found in the grapes used to make red wine, have shown to boost the immune system and block cancer formation.

Lauren sighed and stopped her wine and health introspection as the thought that crossed her mind was that Bo would be turned on by all her geek-speak; and the thought of Bo was too much for her at the moment. It was hard to believe that just 12 hours earlier, everything changed and her life turned upside down; maybe if she knew then what she knew now, she would’ve called in sick.

Light Fae Compound – Lab (flashback to 6:40 a.m. – earlier that day)

Lauren normally arrived at the lab between 6:30 a.m. and 7 a.m. in order to get caught up on work or to get a head start on the day. With most of the compound staff arriving at 8 a.m. she was able to work in peace and quiet with no interruptions, which was the way she liked it.

Unfortunately, unbeknownst to her, this morning was going to be full of interruptions. At the moment, the blonde was in her office, wrapping up a phone call with Dr. Mila Hernandez, the Chief Medical Doctor for the Light Fae clan in Brazil.

“I would be more than happy to make my research notes from the Congo available to you but I need authorization from Ash Santiago before I can forward them.” Lauren explained.

“Of course.” Dr. Hernandez hesitated before continuing, hopefulness tinged in her voice, “Would there be any possibility of you being able to visit and provide your insight and experience in person?”

Lauren was caught off guard. “I’m truly flattered that you would request my assistance… unfortunately my schedule is completely busy for the next few months. If things weren’t so hectic, I would make the request of my Ash.” The blonde felt guilty that she wasn’t being more forthcoming but she needed to focus on her relationship with Bo. Things were so shaky between them and now that the Dawning was over, they would have time to concentrate on them; she couldn’t do that if she wasn’t there. Lauren knew that Dr. Hernandez had a huge scientific facility and state of the art equipment at her disposal that would more than handle this epidemic; however she would do
everything possible to help her from here; whether it would be in the form of research; reviewing her notes; or providing consultation.

“I understand completely. I’m sure you can’t blame me for trying.” She gave a sad chuckle. “Any information or assistance you could provide would be greatly appreciated. And if your circumstances change, please consider visiting – we would be honoured to have you share your knowledge, experience and insight with us while we try to figure out this epidemic.”

“It is I who am honoured that you would even consider my help. I will be sure to let you know if anything changes. Until then, I will do my best to get approval so that you can have access to my research notes.” Lauren replied with a genuine modesty.

After ending that call, Lauren immediately dialled the Ash’s assistant’s number. Surok was the only other Fae that would be in at this time besides Lauren and the compound security; they both used these early off-hours to get caught up on work. The doctor wanted to meet with Hale soonest, so that she could convince him that Dr. Hernandez needed her notes. The epidemic there seemed to be similar to what she treated in the Congo; and with the high number of deaths incurred; her information could make a difference.

The phone only rang once before the Ash’s assistant answered:

“Good morning, Surok”
“I am well thank you. And you?”
“Yes, I would like to schedule an appointment with the Ash; this morning preferably.” “11:15 a.m. is the only opening? I’ll take it! Thank you.”

Now that an appointment was made with Hale, Lauren went to her filing cabinet to look for her research notes from the Congo. She really wanted to get this to Dr. Hernandez as soon as possible. In her concern for the situation in Brazil and being focused on looking for her files, she didn’t see or hear Tamsin approach her office and knock on the door, effectively, making her jump.

“You startled me. What are you doing here at this time?” Lauren looked up at the wall clock in her office and noted that it was 7 a.m. Tamsin replied in her usual no-nonsense, sarcastic tone, “The early bird gets the worm and all that. I’ve come to pick up that autopsy report.”

“Aha, yes. Just a second.” Lauren fingered through some files in her In/Out Box and quickly scanned over one before handing it to the blonde Fae. “Here you go Detective.”

The Dark Fae took the file and with a grin, said. “You can call me Tamsin you know. I don’t bite… much.”

Lauren was a bit surprised by the Detective; she was normally moody and didn’t engage in small talk. Not knowing what she was up to, the blonde chose to take the safe route. “I prefer to keep things professional when I’m at work.”

The Detective didn’t drop the subject. “You don’t like me much do you Doctor?” Tamsin emphasised the word ‘doctor’. “You know, you can tell me the truth. I won’t take offense. In fact, I rather prefer if people / Fae were more honest.”

If the Dark Fae wanted honesty, Lauren would be happy to give it to her. She was tired of the Detective constantly badgering Bo; her borderline harassment of herself at work and at her condo; and her incessant sarcasm that she used as a weapon to cut people down.

“If you insist Detective.” Lauren made sure to enunciate the word. “I don’t particularly care for those
who abuse their position of authority to manipulate people and situations. Or those who completely disregard evidence and ignore all the facts and information presented, despite their insistence that they seek ‘justice’. When in reality, their only goal is to arrest my girlfriend for murders that she did not commit because the Morrigan wishes it. So, no, I don’t particularly like you or what you stand for because you are dishonorable… No offense.” Lauren didn’t hold back and it felt good.

Tamsin was surprised by the Doctor’s verbal assault on her honor and that she was being called out on disregarding facts because of the Morrigan’s orders to arrest Bo at any cost. Despite the truth in her words, Tamsin wouldn’t give the blonde the satisfaction of knowing that she hit a nerve. Instead the Dark Fae smirked which made the doctor a little concerned but she didn’t let it show.

“None taken. Doesn’t that feel better? Being brutally honest is freeing isn’t it? It’s like a weight has been lifted.” Tamsin chose this moment to hit the good doctor where it hurt the most. “In fact, I’d like to be honest as well, if you don’t mind. I’ve been carrying around something that I’d like to get off my chest.”

Lauren was hesitant but she couldn’t really stop Tamsin from saying what she wanted. “Sure.”

“Did Bo tell you about the trial in Brazenwood?” Tamsin knew that taking this path would take the wind out of Lauren’s sails. She knew that it was cruel but she needed to throw the doctor off, in the hopes that she would stop focusing on the Morrigan’s intentions of wanting Bo captured.

The doctor nodded, “Yes, she had to go there to rescue a Squonk and you went with her to help, which she appreciated.”

The Detective grinned again but this time it seemed devious, “I was glad to assist but I’m sure that’s not all she appreciated.”

Lauren knew that Tamsin loved pushing buttons and that she was walking straight into her trap but it couldn’t be helped. “What do you mean by that?”

The Detective was almost bragging now, “Didn’t she tell you that once the trial was over that we shared a moment and kissed?”

Lauren was stunned. She couldn’t believe what she just heard. “What?” She was so shocked that the words came out in an almost whisper.

Tamsin continued her casual confession, “Oh don’t worry, she wasn’t hurt or anything. Bo didn’t take any chi from me. She is a damn good kisser though. After that kiss, I can see the fascination with Succubi. You are quite lucky Doc.” Tamsin paused and smirked for dramatic effect. “Oh, and the celebratory champagne at your place was de-lish! I’m sorry that you weren’t there as we toasted to your achievement.”

Lauren lost it. She was livid at the gall of this Dark Fae standing in front of her; she was hurt that what Tamsin said was possibly true; that Bo was kissing Tamsin instead of being with her at her Award ceremony; and that they were at her place afterwards drinking the champagne that was meant for her and Bo. Her blood boiled and her eyes saw red; before she knew it, her hand connected with the Detective’s face; the resounding slap sounding a lot louder than it should because of the lack of ambient noise in the lab. “Get out!” she hissed.

If Tamsin was surprised by the doctor’s reaction, she didn’t let it show. Instead, she had that infuriating smirk on her face as she recovered; her face still stinging from the slap. She knew that she deserved it and a part of her was glad and impressed that the human acted on her anger. “I guess not everyone likes brutal honesty.” she quipped as she sauntered out of Lauren’s office.
Lauren was stunned. Her thoughts and emotions were tumultuous; not knowing what to believe and how to process what the Detective just told her. *Tamsin kissed Bo. Bo kissed Tamsin.* Her body automatically fell into her chair.

Lauren’s thoughts were conflicted. The scientific side of her tried to reason out all the possibilities but doubt got in the way each time:

*Tamsin had to be lying!*
*But why would she lie? She has nothing to gain from telling me this.*

*And if she doesn’t like Bo and is still trying to pin the murders on her, how does hurting our relationship affect all these cases of dead Fae? It doesn’t…. that just doesn’t make any sense.*

*Besides, Bo would only kiss Tamsin if she had to heal.*
*But Tamsin said that she wasn’t injured; and Bo seemed fine the next day; she never mentioned being hurt to me.*

*Ok, so if Bo wasn’t hurt, why would she kiss Tamsin? They don’t even like each other.*
*But they had kissed before with the whole Fae adolescent parasite incident; and they did seem chummier after Brazenwood…*

*Bo would never be unfaithful to me. She loves me.*
*But you saw how she looked at Dyson after the Temple?*

*The Kitsune said that Dyson got his love back and that Bo knew. Yet Bo hasn’t said anything and there was no doubting the intensity of the look between them after the Temple….*

Something happened between them inside the Temple and Bo never said what it was. What else has she not told me?

Lauren faltered. She couldn’t think of any other arguments to explain this away. Logically, the only thing the Detective gained from telling her this was to hurt her; but that was intrinsic; there was no tangible or physical benefit. And Dark Fae do not care about a human being’s feelings - they could care less. So, the only plausible reason was that it had to be the truth.

*Bo and Tamsin kissed. And it wasn’t for healing. Bo took the one intimate, personal thing that was for them alone and shared it with another!*

Lauren’s internal thought process stopped. Her heart couldn’t take it anymore; her emotions and doubt were overpowering and unbearable. She couldn’t think; all she could do was feel and it suffused her to the point that she felt like she was suffocating. She compromised so much to make their relationship work; but she was not going to compromise on this. She had had enough of constantly giving and giving and not even considered a priority - it was one thing if this treatment was coming from other Fae because they looked down upon humans but to be treated this way by Bo, her girlfriend, was the final straw.

Lauren had to lash out; all her emotions were going to erupt and she couldn’t contain them any longer. She stood up quickly; the abrupt movement pushing her chair backwards into the wall. Anger, frustration and anguish coursed through her and with one swoop of her hand, she cleared a swath off of her desk; sending files, In/Out baskets, keyboard and mouse crashing to the floor. Her heart was broken; irreparable. Lauren’s legs gave out and she fell to the floor behind her desk; sobbing uncontrollably.

She couldn’t stop crying and she couldn’t stop feeling. It was like a crack in a dam; the water slowly
seeping out until the crack grew bigger and split wide open; the water forcing its way out; uncontrolled, forceful. Lauren’s body shuddering as she sobbed. She sat there crying for about half an hour before finally willing herself to stop. Her staff would be in at 8 and she had to collect herself. She went out into the lab and splashed water on her face and brushed her fingers through her hair. Her eyes were red and she was emotionally drained. She went back into her office to get the bottle of eye drops that she kept in her drawer; she used it often for all those long days and late nights of working in front of a computer.

The blonde needed to compose herself; to focus on her work in the lab - that would be the only way to get through the day. Focus! What was I doing before Tamsin… at the thought of the detective, Lauren’s anger flared and her heart lurched. Forcing herself to calm down, Lauren took some deep breaths.

Ok, focus... I made an appointment with the Ash. I should note this down seeing that my thoughts are scattered. With that, Lauren took out her Blackberry; went to her calendar and started to enter information under 11:15 a.m. Ash – epidemic – Brazil <enter>

Ever the scientist or maybe it was a quality of her anal retentiveness, the blonde double checked to make sure the information saved. There it was. 11:15 a.m.: Ash – epidemic – Brazil.

Brazil …

Lauren paused; she felt a clarity that she hadn’t felt in some time. Brazil. She couldn’t handle being around Bo, much less how she was going to get through this heart break. If she could get away for a while, she could sort out her emotions and re-focus. If she could convince Hale to send her there to help, it would be a perfect opportunity to concentrate on science; help the sick; and heal her broken heart.

Lauren had a goal, now she just needed to come up with a plan. Coming up with solutions to problems was what she excelled at. She would consider all the options, possibilities, answers and reactions. She would think of a plan. She was good at thinking and she was done with feeling. Brazil was her answer.

However, first things first, she had to clean up the mess she made in her office. If she left it in this state, it would draw suspicion.

Lauren’s condo (present)

*ring ring ring*

The sound of Lauren’s cell phone ringing brought her out of her trance. “Dr. Lewis.”

It was Hale. “Doc. After conferring with Ash Medeiros; the Elders and I have unanimously agreed to approve your assignment to Brazil to assist with their epidemic. It would be to everyone’s benefit if you could help in any way possible. And you will be afforded every courtesy.”

Lauren was relieved and it resonated in her tone, “Thank you Hale. This means more to me than you can ever imagine. I will find a solution for them.”

Hale was glad that he could help her plus, this assignment provided him with a huge political advantage. He had every faith in the doctor’s abilities. “Serena will be there on site with you as Security. I have already talked to her about your protection. She will pick you up at 7:30 p.m. to take you to the airport.”

The blonde nodded and realized that the Siren couldn’t see her response. “I am ready.”
Hale wasn’t sure if he should say anything but figured that the doctor had a right to know. “Lauren… you were right.”

The blonde didn’t know what Hale was referring to. “About what?”

“Dyson… I spoke to him today. He had it before our battle with the Garuda.”

Lauren was quiet. She was processing this information. She was emotionally numb. If anything, she was relieved that she wasn’t imagining all the looks and strange behaviour from him; that this wasn’t something that was in her head due to her insecurity. It was real – Dyson had his love back. She couldn’t compete with both Dyson and Tamsin; nor would she. The only thing she had to offer was her heart and science and it seemed as if that wasn’t enough anymore. Lauren was taking herself out of this game, and any residual doubt that she had about leaving Bo and going to Brazil was now cast aside. She knew that she had made the right decision. “Thank you for letting me know.” she said solemnly. “I will be waiting for Serena.”

Before they ended the call, Hale wished her luck and said that he would keep in touch via the satellite phone that Serena was issued.

Lauren sat quietly on the couch. This was happening - she was going to Brazil. This meant that for the next few months, she would have her reprieve; she wouldn’t have to be around Bo while her heart was broken; and she wouldn’t have to face the two Fae that were seemed to want her. Despite it all, she was still madly in love with her girlfriend but she just couldn’t bear to be around her. It would only be a reminder of how their relationship failed; how much she loved her; and that Bo would be the last person that she would ever have any companionship, friendship or intimacy with, as long as she remained with the Fae; which meant till she died. The enormity of that endless bleakness clutched at Lauren’s heart to the point that she physically grabbed at her chest.

Lauren held her tears at bay and forced herself to take a few deep breaths. *One thing at a time. Just focus on the here and now; and make the most out of this opportunity.* Lauren calmed herself down. Now came the hard part – letting Bo know. If she were honest with herself, she hoped that her girlfriend would be hurt and that she would miss her – that would mean that Bo cared at least a little; but in light of everything, she couldn’t say with any certainty if Bo would feel anything; the thought of which saddened her greatly.

The blonde went over to the desk at her lab and took out a pad of paper, a pen and an envelope. This wasn’t going to be easy but she had to tell Bo the truth about how she felt and why she was leaving; she had to do this before Serena came for her in 30 minutes. If there was ever a time to not hold back and express herself, it was now – she had to pour all her emotions out on to paper. This would be her only opportunity. She started to write.

*Dear Bo...*

*TBC*
Lauren’s condo

Lauren had just sealed the envelope and wrote Bo’s name on it when she heard a knock at the door. Upon opening the door, she wasn’t surprised to see Serena there. It was 7:30 p.m. on the dot and in all her dealings with this Light Fae, she had always been very punctual. Maybe this was an Ignis trait – being able to generate and manipulate fire – this type of Fae had to be precise; controlled; and accurate. Or it could just be part of Serena’s personality. Either way, punctuality was always something that Lauren appreciated in herself and in others. “Dr. Lewis.” Serena said in a calm and professional tone.

“Good evening Serena.”

“Are you ready Doctor?”

“Almost. I just have to do a quick check before I lock up.”

“Is this everything?” as she indicated to Lauren’s duffle and back pack.

The blonde nodded yes.

“I’ll take your belongings to the car then.”

“Thank you. I won’t be long.”

Lauren looked around her condo. It was hard to believe that she was actually leaving her ‘home’ even if it was only for a few months. This place was modern and comfortable but she wouldn’t call it cozy. Yet it was her haven; her place of rest; and where she could relax, unwind and do whatever she wanted; and she did enjoy the space and privacy it afforded her. So, in all respects, it was her home these past 6 years.

Lauren’s eyes travelled to where she left Bo’s letter on her desk. She moved over to her lab and placed the envelope upright between two glass beakers, so that it would be more visible. She hoped Bo would read it but that really was beyond her control. With a sigh, she took one last look around; then walked to the entrance, turned off the lights and walked out the door; locking it behind her.
Serena was standing by the dark blue town car and upon seeing the doctor exit the building, opened the rear passenger door for her. When Lauren was seated, she shut the door after her and made her way over to the driver’s side. Once behind the steering wheel, the Ignis buckled up, started the car and pulled away from the curb. Lauren could see her building slowly disappear in the side mirror of the car and released a deep breath once it was no longer in view.

After a few minutes, Lauren chided herself for her lack of manners and cleared her throat in order to get the Ignis’ attention. “Serena, for what it’s worth, I appreciate your accompanying me on this assignment. I know you weren’t given much notice and most likely no choice. So, thank you.”

Lauren observed Serena’s face in the rear view mirror to see if there was any reaction but there wasn’t. Even though she had asked Hale for her specifically due to their working well together in the past, she was still aware that she was human and Serena was Fae; and there was a distinct possibility that the Ignis didn’t want to be on this assignment. If that was the case, it would be a very long 6 months. The blonde was about to say something when the Fae made eye contact with her via the rear view mirror.

“Is it true that you personally requested me for this detail?” Serena asked; no hint of emotion in her voice.

Lauren wondered what can of worms would her answer open; but seeing that she was all about honesty these days, she replied in the affirmative; bracing herself for the possibility of having a disgruntled bodyguard.

Serena was quiet for a couple of seconds before responding; ensuring that she made eye contact with Lauren using the rear view mirror, “Then it is I who should be thanking you Doctor.”

The Fae’s announcement surprised the blonde. One: Lauren could count on one hand how many times any Fae had thanked her; and two: that Serena was thanking her for being assigned as her bodyguard – which meant that she wanted this job.

Serena could see Lauren’s mild shock and proceeded to explain. “Normally, my security assignments are being the back-up to the back-up for the Ash or an Elder; or guarding some worn down, cockroach infested warehouse. This is my first detail where I’m assigned a ‘client’ to protect; I’m not the back-up to the back-up; I’m it!” The normally stoic Fae was actually smiling now; Lauren could tell by the reflection in the rear view mirror - her eyes literally beamed.

“This is a fantastic opportunity for me. I will be in unknown territory – always on the move and having to adjust strategy to match the situation or possible danger. I will have to be on my guard at all times and it will test my skills. It’s perfect!” Serena was actually excited. This was a side of the Fae that Lauren had never seen before; she was surprised that Serena even knew of this emotion as she was always so serious and detached. “Even the guys in my Section are envious that I got this detail and that I was personally assigned by the Ash! And because of the political ties with this job, it will most likely mean a promotion for me or at a minimum, better security assignments upon our return.”

Serena paused for a moment and very seriously said, “Dr. Lewis, I do appreciate that you recommended me because you have provided me with a great opportunity and I won’t ever forget it.” The Ignis’ eyes conveyed the seriousness of her gratitude and she smiled, which caused the blonde to relax and smile herself.

Lauren finally found her voice. “I’m relieved to hear that you’re looking forward to this job and that you don’t consider it to be a nuisance. Though, I hope that your opinion doesn’t change when we’re in the middle of nowhere.” Serena shook her head, “I look at it as an opportunity to travel; plus it’s
hot there and I love the heat…. for obvious reasons.” Serena smiled at her comment because she was an Ignis afterall.

The blonde continued smiling, “Not to squash any of your enthusiasm but I’m not sure how much action you will come across in the Rainforest. And to be honest, I’d rather that you didn’t as it would mean that I was in danger and someone or something wanted me hurt or dead.”

Serena chuckled at Lauren’s comment. “Understood.”

The blonde was relieved that this was not going to be an issue. She had enough issues to deal with. Changing the subject, Lauren asked, “Anything you can tell me about our travel plans? All I knew was that you were picking me up at 7:30.”

The Light Fae was focusing on the road. “We have a ten and a half hour flight to Brasília, the country’s capital. Ash Medeiros wants us on the ground as soon as possible and as the next commercial flight isn’t scheduled to leave until tomorrow night, he spared no expense and chartered a private jet to fly us there. It will only be the flight crew and the two of us onboard. He wanted to ensure that we would arrive soonest and that there would be no issues en route. By the time we arrive at the airport, the pilots should be finalizing their pre-flight checks and fuelling should be almost complete.”

Lauren was surprised to say the least; she wasn’t expecting any special treatment; the only thing she could vocalize was “Wow!” Serena agreed as she looked back at the blonde. “Wow indeed. They must really want and appreciate your expertise Doctor.” Lauren smiled her response. It felt good to be recognized for her abilities; it had been awhile since she felt appreciated. Immediately, her thoughts turned to Bo and her heart grew heavy. Lauren thought that she would have more time to talk to the Succubus at the airport but from what Serena said, she may not have enough time. She’d have to deal with that when they got there. Until then, she sat back into her seat and willed herself to try and relax. Her nerves were shot and there was still so much yet to come; she didn’t know if she would have the strength to handle the phone call to Bo or even what to say.

Serena watched the doctor grow quiet and pensive. She appreciated that Dr. Lewis must feel great pressure to deliver successful results with whatever this outbreak was. More importantly, the Ignis understood that for an Ash to expedite their travel arrangements and not hesitate with any expense, meant that the medical issue that they were facing was very serious and that a lot was riding on Dr. Lewis’ medical knowledge and abilities. She would have to monitor the situation carefully to ensure that once the assignment was complete, that the Clan didn’t forget that the doctor was on loan and not there to stay. She would definitely have to keep an eye out on things and keep her Ash informed of their situation.

Meanwhile at the Crack Shack

Kenzi was in the middle of a blood bath. There were robot hooker corpses strewn about on the screen as her fingers deftly flew over the buttons of the controller; shooting, beheading and disembowelling her attackers. However, every 12 seconds, she would catch movement out of the corner of her eye and it was distracting; it was throwing her off of her killing streak.

The Goth paused the game and quickly jumped off the couch to intercept Bo who was pacing back and forth. “Yo, BoBolicious, what’s the deal? If you keep pacing like this you’ll wear a hole in the floor and I don’t think we’ll be able to find flooring that would match our wonderful décor.” Kenzi gestured to their surroundings like one of the models from ‘The Price is Right’ would.

Instead of a witty comeback, all the petite woman got for a response was “Huh?” Bo was engrossed
in her thoughts and didn’t hear a word that the Goth said.

“What’s with the frown?” Kenzi tried again. Bo looked up from her cell phone, “I haven’t heard from Lauren and it’s late – it’s like, 7:30.” she replied worriedly.

“I’ll let you in on a ‘lil secret.” The tiny brunette leaned in close and whispered, “Hot Pants is a workaholic. But you didn’t hear that from me.”

The Succubus rolled her eyes, “Thanks for the news flash Kenz. I just really wanted to spend time with her and I’m anxious… This is like my second chance - I want to start things over right, you know?”

“I hear ya babe. Why don’t you just head over there then?”

“I don’t want to seem too-”

“Needy? Whipped? Nervous?” Kenzi interjected; a grin on her face.

The tiny Goth received her second eye roll in less than three minutes breaking the previous record.

Bo straightened up. “You’re right, I’m over thinking this. I would normally just go over, so I should just do that.”

Kenzi patted her on the shoulder, “Good idea.”

The brunette chuckled, “You just want me out of your hair so that you can kill robot hookers without any distractions.”

“Moi? Never!”

Bo grinned, “Right! Later Kenz.”

The Goth was already on the couch resuming her game before Bo was able to shut the door behind her; car keys in hand.

Airport – a short while later

Lauren and Serena had just gone through Security and were approaching the gate for their plane. The blonde was getting anxious and turned to her body guard, “I have to make a phone call. I’ll just be over here.” she indicated to the window nearby. Serena nodded, “I’ll take your bags over and talk to the flight crew to find out how much longer till we board.” Lauren watched as the Light Fae walked over to the gate to talk to the staff.

The blonde took a deep breath and pressed ‘1’ on her cell. She looked out the window at the tarmac, watching the baggage handlers load and off load luggage.

Bo picked up on the second ring. “Hey Lauren! I’m just on my way over to your place.”

“Bo-” Lauren was interrupted by a very excitable Succubus. The brunette was anxious to see her girlfriend. She wanted to show Lauren how important she was to her and wanted them to spend some much needed time together. Bo knew that things were strained and she just wanted to start the process of fixing their relationship. “So what do you think of an evening of takeout and then cuddling on the couch as we watch a movie?”

Lauren was a bit taken aback by Bo’s enthusiasm. The doctor was so emotionally drained right now
she was on the opposite end of the energy spectrum that Bo was on. “I’m sorry. I… I won’t be able to.”

Bo’s eagerness faltered a bit, “Don’t tell me you’re still at the lab?! Babe, it’s late and you need to relax. That’s it! I’m turning around and coming to get you.”

Lauren blurted out, “Bo, I can’t. I’m on an assignment.”

The Succubus paused, trying to concentrate on driving and trying to figure out what her girlfriend was saying. “Assignment? Does that mean you have a tight deadline and have to work late?

Lauren ran her free hand through her hair, she knew that this wasn’t going to go well, “It means that I will be on loan to another Light Fae Clan to assist with their medical situation.”

Bo still didn’t understand this arrangement and pressed further. “So what exactly does that mean? Do you stay with them or are you free to come and go? Can you go home? Can you have visitors?”

Lauren didn’t want to talk about this because time was short but she also knew that the brunette wouldn’t be able to focus on what she had to say if she didn’t understand the situation. Lauren sighed. “It means that I will be working and staying at their Compound or at their various sites and it would be very difficult to have visitors. But they asked for my assistance so I will be treated well.”

Bo’s mood went from excited to confused to angry in a matter of seconds. “I’ll be the judge of that! The Light and the Dark always want something from you and it’s always at a cost to you.”

The blonde was about to placate Bo but was interrupted, “Just how long are you on loan for?”

The doctor rested her forehead against the window and exhaled, causing the window to fog up. “Between two to six months.” Her voice was almost a whisper.

Bo was stunned. “What? I didn’t hear you correctly. Did you say months?!”

“Yes.” Lauren’s eyes were welling up with tears but she forced herself to not cry.

The Succubus was now livid. She pulled her Camaro over and put it in park; she couldn’t focus on driving. “Is this Hale’s doing? I’m going to kill him!”

Lauren knew that Bo was upset and she tried her best to keep her voice calm and unwavering despite the fact that her stomach was churning. “Bo, I asked for this assignment. Hale just agreed to it.”

Bo was confused now and pinched the bridge of her nose, trying to deflect the start of a headache. “I don’t understand. Why would you ask for this? And where is this Clan anyway?”

The doctor moved away from the window; her free hand now at the base of her neck, trying to relieve the tension forming there. “I know you don’t understand and I am really sorry Bo. I didn’t want to have to do it this way but if I told you in advance, you wouldn’t let me go.”

There was an announcement in the background which sounded distorted over the phone. Bo tensed; concern evident in her voice. “Go where? Lauren where are you right now?”

The doctor was pacing back and forth in front of the window. “I’m at the airport.”

“Airport?! Where are you going that requires you to travel by plane?” the Succubus exclaimed. Bo heard someone in the background. “Dr. Lewis it’s time to board.” Then everything sounded garbled and Bo could only guess that Lauren’s hand was covering the mouthpiece of her phone.
A few seconds passed and Lauren returned to the phone. “Bo, please listen. I don’t have much
time. I’m going to South America – that’s where the Light Fae Clan is. I left a letter for you at my
place. It’ll explain everything. Just use the hidden spare key.”

“South America?!? What the…!? Why would you ask for this?” Bo was in shock. “Is… is this
because of us? I know that things between us haven’t been great; I know that I’ve been distracted
but the Dawning is over and I want to make things right. I want us to work.” Bo was desperate and
it was evident in her voice. “Lauren, please don’t leave!”

Lauren’s heart lurched hearing the pleading in the brunette’s voice. “Bo, I am so sorry. I really am.
This is already arranged – I couldn’t get out of it even if I wanted to. I… I’m sorry that I wasn’t
enough for you. Maybe things would’ve been different if I were.”

Bo couldn’t believe this was happening; that Lauren was leaving. “Babe, don’t say that. You are
enough for me. You’re all that I want! Just stay!”

The blonde’s eyes were brimming with tears; her heart aching. “I know that this doesn’t make sense
to you now but please know this: I love you – I always have and I always will; whether you believe
it or not.”

The Succubus was trying to convince her girlfriend not to get on that plane but she couldn’t get a
word in. “Bo, just listen. Please take care of yourself. You have a habit of attracting trouble even
when you’re not looking for it. And look after Kenzi – she’s still dealing with everything from the
Kitsune. I’m so proud of you for completing the Dawning and you should be proud of yourself – for
everything that you’ve accomplished these past 3 years.”

“Dr. Lewis!”

“Bo, where I’m going – there most likely will not have any cell phone coverage or internet access, so
I won’t be able to communicate. I love you but I have to do this… Goodbye Bo.”

Lauren ended the call and choked back her tears; she had a lump in her throat from holding in all her
emotions. She refused to cry out in the open; she’d hold it in and then break down once they were in
the air. She would will herself to be strong for a few minutes more.

“Lauren! Wait!” The line went dead. “Dammit!” She re-dialed Lauren’s number. “The customer you
have dialled is currently not available. Please try your call again later.”

“No, no, no!”

She hit re-dial again. “The customer you have dialled is currently not available. Please try your call
again later.”

“FUCK!” Bo slammed her hand down on the steering wheel repeatedly. Leaning her head back
against the head rest, she willed herself to calm down. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath,
replaying the conversation in her head. A letter. Lauren mentioned she left her a letter. Bo threw
the car in gear and peeled off towards her girlfriend’s condo.

Lauren’s condo

Bo ran through the hallway towards Lauren’s apartment. Out of habit, she reached for the door
handle to open it but it didn’t budge. “Right. Locked.” Bo muttered. She reached behind one of
the hanging plants that was mounted on the wall and blindly groped around till she found what she
was looking for. In her haste to get into the apartment, Bo ended up fumbling with the key and it
took her a little longer to gain entry.

Once inside, she noted that the apartment was dark and unnaturally quiet. Bo’s heart was racing as she was afraid of what she’d find. She turned on the lights and quickly scanned the room. Nothing seemed out of place. In fact, the condo looked as per normal - incredibly clean and tidy.

Bo ran upstairs, taking the stairs two at a time. Once in the bedroom, she quickly looked through Lauren’s closet and dresser drawers and noticed that there were some clothes missing. She made her way to the bathroom next and observed that some of her toiletries were also gone. “Shit!” The thought that this was all just a horrible practical joke crossed her mind but discovering that things were actually missing, made this all too real.

Bo made her way back down stairs and her eyes made another pass of the room.

Her gaze stopped at the lab. There was Lauren’s lab coat, neatly draped over the back of the chair. Bo reached for it and instantly, Lauren’s scent wafted to her nose; vanilla and a hint of hand sanitizer. The brunette brought the coat to her face and inhaled deeply; everything about Lauren flooded her senses. Bo was overwhelmed and felt her eyes well up with tears. Lab coat still in hand, she noticed an envelope on the desk and hesitantly reached for it. It was labelled ‘Bo’.

Bo walked into the living room with the envelope in one hand and Lauren’s lab coat in the other; and allowed her body to fall back into the couch. She didn’t know what was contained in the letter but she had her suspicions. Tears were running down Bo’s cheeks before she even realized it; the emotional rollercoaster of the evening was taking its toll on her and she hadn’t even opened the letter yet.

The brunette took in a deep breath and exhaled before taking the knife out of her boot. She carefully cut the envelope open and unfolded the letter. She closed her eyes momentarily to steady herself. Bo wanted to know why Lauren did what she did but the other part of her was also afraid of knowing - that she may have been the reason why the blonde left. Bo sighed as she steeled herself; her eyes fluttered open and came into contact with the first line.

Dear Bo,

Chapter End Notes

Yes, I realize that this is a horrible place to stop and that it’s incredibly cruel on my part. But in all honesty, this cliff-hanger was not on purpose, though it works really well here. The next chapter requires that the content be linked to the letter and if I separated the two, it would’ve affected the flow. So curse me out all you want, but please keep reading and reviewing.
Dear Bo

Chapter Notes

There are some aspects of conversations taken from 3x05 and 3x10.

Thanks to Glasswrks for her advice; and to my Beta, Neytiri’s Heart, for all her help and patience as I was seriously obsessing over this chapter.

Dear Bo,

I am truly sorry that this is the way that you have to find out. It is not the way that I wanted to tell you but I knew that you would try to stop me from leaving if I said anything beforehand. I realize that this is a shock to you and probably doesn’t make any sense. I do hope that by the time you finish reading this letter, you’ll understand and maybe one day you will be able to forgive me for how I chose to handle this.

I made choices out of love, responsibility and guilt; the consequences of which has me as a slave to the Fae. There is no escaping this reality and I have to accept it because I have to – there is no other choice. I have never told you how much this existence has taken its toll on me; granted, I am surprised as some days are easier to handle than others. I think perhaps a reason why I never said anything before was because to vocalize it only cements the harsh reality and utter lack of hope for anything different. And I also never wanted you to look at me with pity or to do anything rash that would cause you to get into trouble.

This pendant around my neck tells everyone that I am a ward of the Ash and under his protection; but to me, it represents my prison. To say that all these years with the Fae have been difficult would be putting it mildly. I had to walk away from everyone and everything that I knew and loved. I am constantly considered inferior and insignificant to the point that I sometimes believe it; I am valued for only one thing yet still doubted because I am human; and living this existence devoid of emotional support, friendship and companionship has filled me with an overwhelming loneliness that is indescribable.

I have accepted that I will never have a normal life. I will never have complete control over my decisions – it can be over ruled or I can be thrown in the dungeon. I will never have happiness; a career; any recognition or appreciation for my efforts; have friends or a family. Such normal every day aspects of life are luxuries that are well beyond my grasp. These are aspects of a life that I signed away when I chose to save Nadia; or rather, when I was tricked into saving Nadia. I cannot even cry out for justice about this because as a slave, none is afforded me. So, I endure it.

Why do I tell you this now? Because I want you to know that meeting you gave me hope when I never thought it would be possible. You were the light in my very dark, meaningless and emotionally void existence. You made me stronger so that I could handle my life as it is. With you, I was able to be myself comfortably and completely – something that I’ve had to hide these past 6 years; and I can’t tell you how incredibly freeing it was, to just be me. You made me happier than I could ever imagine; and you opened up my heart and soul to love again, something that I thought I would never experience again.

But these last few months, I haven’t been happy. I haven’t felt strong or confident. I have only felt
empty, pathetic and lost. I told you in the past to accept who you are and to not change yourself for anyone or for any reason. It’s time that I follow my own advice.

I’ve sacrificed so much for so long and I have nothing else to give – I am empty and I am tired. I gave you everything that I am Bo because I love you and I would do anything for you but the harsh reality is that it was never enough; I was never enough. And I feel that everything that I sacrificed was in vain – that it didn’t make a difference to you; it didn’t help our relationship; and in the end, I only feel used and taken for granted by the person I love with all my heart.

I realize that there are things that you don’t know because you weren't privy to or because I didn't tell you. For the most part, I truly believed that things would get better; that it would pass. That because our relationship wasn't typical, we would have atypical obstacles; and that as long as we were together and were open and honest, we could get through anything.

I think we were like this in the beginning. We both tried to deny the inevitable, which was that you needed to feed off of others. I was willing to accept sharing that private, personal, intimate part of you that only I was supposed to experience. I'm not saying that you enjoyed this – I know you didn't; I know that it wasn't easy for you. I just want you to understand that it wasn't easy for me being on the sidelines knowing what was happening and being helpless to change our circumstances. However, it was knowing that you loved me and that you would always return to me that made this whole situation somewhat bearable.

Bit by bit, I felt myself giving more; bending more; because it was what was best for our relationship. I swallowed my hurt feelings when you fed off of Dyson. I understood that you needed to heal and he was there; and I would rather you be alive because you healed with him than be dead. But Bo, I don't know if you can comprehend how much that hurt me. To know that you had sex with your ex-lover, who had considered you to be his mate for life; a Fae that has made it no secret how much he looks down upon humans; and who has vocalized his derisive opinion of me on numerous occasions.

But still, I stood by you; even when you threatened my life. I stood by you because I believed in you and in us. I knew that our love for each other would allow us to weather any storm. However, I didn't take into account that our inability to communicate would be what would test us the most.

In order to feel useful and to help you in any way that I could, I worked day and night to try and create a formula to slow down your devolution but to no avail. The one thing that I was supposed to be good at – science – and I couldn't come through for you. That failure still eats at me despite your success with the Dawning. You were very understanding about my trying; but to me, it's the fact that I couldn't help you when you needed it the most. I considered it to be a failing on my part.

When it was time for the Dawning and you went into the Temple. I was so scared yet remained hopeful. And when you were victorious, I was just so relieved that you were safe. I was so proud of you and what you had accomplished. But unfortunately Dyson suffered a fatal injury and you took chi from everyone in the room to revive him. I truly understand why you did what you did and I understood your pain in knowing that he had died to help you; but in the moment after he regained consciousness – it was only then that I believed what the Kitsune told me previously – that Dyson had his love back. I saw how Dyson looked at you and how you looked at him; and in that instant, I knew that the Kitsune didn't lie to me. I knew that you were aware that Dyson had his love back and you never told me. I felt our relationship weaken and it frightened me that you were hiding the truth from me. Did it mean that you were happy that Dyson had his love back and that you wanted to go back to him? Only you can answer that; but what I do know, is that in that instance, you made me doubt your love for me and it shook my belief in us and what we shared.
But even with this realization that Dyson may want you back, I still wanted us to work. I wanted to believe that we could fix things and I desperately wanted us to try. I wanted to get past all this doubt. However, that all changed when Tamsin visited me early this morning; before you came to see me at the lab. She wanted to pick up a medical file for a case that I was working on and proceeded to tell me how she helped you with your training exercise in Brazenwood – which I was already aware of. What I didn't know - and which she was more than happy to tell me - was that at the end of the trial, you both kissed; that you didn't need to heal and you didn't take her chi. I thought: why would Tamsin lie? She had absolutely nothing to gain from telling me this except to cause me pain; and from the way that she took delight in telling me, I deduced that she was telling me the truth.

Our past conversations about dreams of wanting a family, the house with the white picket fence and the 2.5 kids, flashed through my mind. I then realized that the reason you weren't there to support me at my Award Ceremony was because you were busy with Tamsin. I always looked past your Succubus nature to see the person you are inside and after everything we've been through, I never thought that you would stray; that you would betray me like this and not be emotionally monogamous; and that you would think so little of me. I guess I was wrong.

But I do have to acknowledge my own part in all of this which is difficult to admit. Because who really wants to confess that one feels insecure in their relationship? To do so is to admit that one feels weak and lacks confidence. But in the spirit of honesty, I do recognize that my insecurities affected things – maybe not directly, but rather, it indirectly affected my reactions and my feelings – a cause and effect of sorts.

I know that as a human being, I will never be enough for you. It doesn't matter how much I love you – that doesn't change the fact that it is a failing of my biological make up that I cannot sustain you. Because of this, you have no choice but to turn to others to feed and I have no choice but to accept it. Knowing that it is my weakness as a human being that has put us both in this situation weighs on me heavily.

I also know that because of my mortality, we will never grow old together. There would be times that I would think of this and wonder how you would feel after I'm gone; and how unfair and painful that would be to you.

I am a slave to the Ash. Our relationship is frowned upon and to some, it is seen as an abomination. If Hale weren't the Ash, I most likely would've been thrown in a dungeon and punished a long time ago. I have only the freedom that they allow me. As such, my family and friends believe me to be dead. I am isolated and alone except for you. Your family and friends accept me because I am your girlfriend but if I weren't with you, I truly believe that they would have no dealings with me except in a professional capacity. Because of this, I battled with myself to not be clingy and to give you space whenever you needed it because I craved your companionship and friendship; your ability to care for me and protect me; and most of all the intimacy that we shared. I lived without all of this for so long that experiencing it was like coming upon an oasis in the desert.

And finally, Dyson. He will always represent everything that I cannot give you and is a constant reminder that I will never be enough for you. He is free, unrestricted and can do as he wishes. He can provide you with the chi you need in order to sustain and heal you more than you can with a human being. He can live thousands of years by your side and provide you with a normal life, without fear of consequence. He will always be your first meaningful relationship since Kyle and as such, there is a connection that cannot be broken. It is for all these reasons that I have always been fearful that you would leave me for him.

With that said, the person you gravitated to was the last person that I would ever expect – the Dark Fae that wanted to imprison you - Tamsin. Nevertheless, I see the signs loud and clear - you made
your choice and you chose Fae. I just wish you had respected me enough to tell me. I thought we meant more to each other to warrant that.

I told you once that the secret to any relationship is trust, understanding and compromise. I say this with a heavy heart but I find it difficult to trust you in light of everything that has happened recently with you and Dyson and Tamsin. And after all the obstacles that we faced together, I can't help but feel that I have compromised more and more of myself to make things work; and in the process, I lost my sense of self. This makes me feel insignificant and unappreciated - all things that the Fae make me feel every single day but which, I never expected you to make me feel.

I don't say this to be hurtful but rather to be honest, something that I suppose I have Tamsin to thank for. We have skirted around the truth to avoid hurting one another; or because there was always some Fae-pocalypse as Kenzi would say; or something more important that was always preventing us from addressing our issues. And I understand Bo, I do. You are meant for great things with the Fae and I was willing to share you because I understood that but to be repeatedly cast aside as if I didn't matter or hold any priority in your life? I can't do that anymore. I can't let you continue to treat me like that because I will grow to resent you like I do my 'masters'. I love you too much to go down that path.

I can only tell you how I feel; whether or not you understand it, is beyond my control. I just wanted you to know why I've made the choices that I have. And that's why I'm making this decision - I'm walking away from our relationship before whatever we have left of our friendship becomes irreparable.

I love you Bo; more than I ever thought it was possible to love another. I will never regret our time together because you gave me more than you could ever imagine and at a time when I needed it the most. But I need to follow my own advice. I need to accept who I am and my situation and not change myself for anyone. I need time to regain my sense of self; to heal and to focus on my abilities. Science and medicine are all that I've ever had to get me through all these years with the Fae. I need time to concentrate on that because I can't get through another minute of another day in this life, feeling the way I feel right now - I won't survive. This assignment gives me the time and space that I need. Understand that I have to do this because I only have me to depend on; and right now, I am broken.

For what it's worth, I am sorry for the issues that I brought to our relationship. I truly wanted us to work. I love you with all my heart and with all that I am. And I can't ever see that changing.

Take care of yourself Bo.

Love always,

Lauren

Bo sat on the couch, numb; her thoughts and emotions a jumbled mess as Lauren's words raced through her mind. She sat there sobbing uncontrollably; clutching Lauren's letter in one hand and burying her face in the other; her tears meandering down her cheeks and fingers; her girlfriend's lab coat abandoned at her side.

Suddenly, her stomach lurched. She dropped everything, jumped off of the couch and ran to the
kitchen quickly; finding the trash can just in time to retch into it. Bo went to the sink and washed her hands and face. She still could taste bile in her mouth despite rinsing thoroughly; she imagined it would be awhile before that taste would go away. After a few moments, Bo turned off the water and rested her hands on the counter. Leaning forward, she watched as the water travelled down the drain; the imagery not lost on her as she felt her own life spiralling out of control. Here she was with the Dawning behind her; being all too relieved that she didn't devolve; and all she wanted to do was to focus on her relationship with Lauren only to find out that she was too late; Lauren had had enough. Tears were flowing down her cheeks; and her heart felt burdened.

*How could I let things get to this point?*

*How could I be so blind to her pain?*

*And how could I be so caught up in myself to not know that I was hurting her?*

*How could I not know!??*

*I let Lauren slip away.*

*And now she is gone.*

*I hurt her so much that she felt that she had to run away. From me!*  
*She said that she was broken. What she meant was that I broke her.*

*Lauren - the strongest, most patient, loving and caring person I know; and I broke her.*

*Ha! Leave it to me to do the impossible.*

*I always wanted her to be free. Who would've thought that it would be me that she needed to be free from?*

*It takes some serious skill to break her down when the Fae couldn't after all these years; not even everything with Nadia....*

*God dammit!*  

Bo wanted to lash out; to throw or hit something but there was nothing within reach. Maybe it was for the best, she didn't want to wreck Lauren's home. She wrecked enough of Lauren's life as it was.

*I really fucked this up!*

*I threw our relationship away.*

*Lauren thinks that I don't love or appreciate her; and that I never considered her important.*

*She thinks that I didn't choose her and that I used her just like all the other Fae have.*

*She's everything to me! She is my heart; my love...*

*Yet she left here thinking that what we had meant nothing... that she meant nothing to me.*

*The person who she loved and trusted the most in her life made her feel worthless and unloved.*

*God, what she must be going through.*
The thought of the pain and sorrow that Lauren must be feeling right now because of her, sent another spasm through the brunette. Her body recoiled at the thought of how much she hurt her girlfriend. Bo turned and vomited into the trash can again. By the time she was done, her stomach was beyond empty and her throat raw from the physical exertion. Bo sat there, loathing herself. She didn't know how much time had passed with her sitting on the floor; her elbows were propped up on her knees and her face was buried in her hands. Bo felt numb; her eyes were red and her cheeks were stained with tears. The brunette didn't know what to do or how to feel. The only thought that registered in her mind was that she needed alcohol; lots of alcohol.

Bo stood up and made her way to the fridge. There she found a bottle of champagne and two bottles of white wine, one of which was open. The champagne was most likely left over from the night she was supposed to celebrate Lauren's award and it was yet another reminder of how she let her girlfriend down. Bo grabbed all three bottles and a corkscrew and placed them on the coffee table in the living room. With the open wine bottle in hand, she took a swig out of it while she walked around the apartment in a daze. She eventually found herself standing in front of Lauren's lab; her award perched on the desk. Bo took another mouthful of wine and with her index finger, gently traced Lauren's name which was engraved upon the award. Bo didn't think she could contain the sadness within her; she was drowning in it; the sorrow overwhelmed her. Seeing the physical reminder of how she took Lauren for granted – staring at her in the form of a glass award - she didn't think she could feel any more guilt, shame and anger for herself than she did right now.

Turning away, Bo made her way back to the couch, plopping down onto it. She felt hopeless and helpless. She tipped her head back and chugged back the wine, drinking it to the last drop. The brunette hoped that the wine would cleanse the taste of bile that still remained in her mouth but it didn't. Discarding the bottle on the floor, she opened the second bottle of wine and took a swig. Bo looked at the letter that was resting on the couch next to Lauren's lab coat and with her free hand, unconsciously wiped her cheek to brush away a stray tear. She knew that re-reading it would only reinforce the pain that she felt, but she also knew that she would read the letter over and over as it was the last thing that she had from Lauren. Plus, Bo felt that she deserved to feel horribly for hurting the woman she loved. She reached out across the couch to pick up the letter and with a deep breath, started to read it.

Meanwhile thousands of miles in the air

Lauren was onboard a Boeing Business Jet 3 VIP Airliner. She was surprised that she absorbed that much information from the flight attendant's safety brief, seeing that she was in an emotional fog. Lauren was focused on one thing – keeping it together until the seat belt sign was turned off. As soon as it happened she would make a bee line for the bathroom for privacy. Until then, she tried to preoccupy her mind. The blonde looked around the interior of the jet and was amazed by the lavishness contained within. The cabin was incredibly spacious, with leather seats, tables, a couple leather sofas, a full galley and a couple of LED TV's throughout. As she looked down the corridor from where she sat, she could see the bathroom and another area that looked like a bedroom. She was definitely flying in the lap of luxury.

A few moments later the seat belt sign was turned off and Lauren wasted no time in unbuckling her belt and making her way to the bathroom. It was the size of a full bathroom complete with a shower - at least four airplane washroom closets combined. The blonde was just relieved that she was able to keep herself collected; she locked the door behind her and allowed herself to crumble. Lauren sat on the toilet and cried. Even though she knew all the reasons why she made this decision, hearing Bo's voice pleading for her to stay broke her heart even further and made her doubt her actions - that
maybe she was wrong and should've stayed. But the blonde knew that she needed to sort out her feelings and re-group and she couldn't do that there.

Lauren was physically and emotionally exhausted. It was an incredibly long day and she just wanted to not think or feel; just sleep. The rational doctor in her took over and forced her to do just that. She was on auto pilot now. She washed and dried her face to remove any signs that she had been crying. Her eyes were a bit red but it wasn't overly obvious - she could say that she was tired, which wasn't a lie. Lauren took a deep breath and exited the bathroom.

Serena had been observing the doctor. She knew that she was upset from her phone call in the airport and guessed that it might have something to do with the unaligned Succubus. The Ignis had heardrumours of their friendship but never heeded it; it was none of her concern and didn't affect her. Now that she was assigned to protect the doctor, it may become her business whether she liked it or not. But she would leave it be for now; they were going to Brazil and would be far, far away from everyone that they knew. She would give Dr. Lewis the privacy that she obviously wanted and would not pry unless it was necessary. Serena looked up as Lauren approached her, saying that she was tired and was going to get some rest. The Light Fae nodded and said good night.

Lauren walked to the far end of the corridor where the bedroom was located. There was a curtain separating the room from the remainder of the cabin; providing the much needed seclusion that she wanted. In the space, there was a double bed covered with a white comforter and numerous extraneous pillows; a bedside table and a reading chair. Lauren undressed, remaining in her bra and panties. She took an item out of her pants pocket before carefully folding her clothes and placing it on the chair.

Once under the sheets, Lauren turned onto her side and sighed; tears resurfacing again. In her hand was a picture of her and Bo during happier times. They had taken a photo of themselves while they were on the couch in her apartment. She couldn't remember what they were laughing at, except that they were very happy and were enjoying themselves. She knew that she shouldn't have brought the photo with her but she couldn't bear not having a physical reminder of Bo, even though it defied all logic as to why she fought for this assignment. At the time of packing, she reasoned that it would act as a reminder of why she needed to get away. This photo was a 'catch-22' but right now Lauren didn't care; she was too exhausted. She had run through a gamut of emotions today and was physically and emotionally spent. Sleep was beckoning to her as her eyelids grew heavy. Within minutes she was asleep in the fetal position; the photo clutched in her hand next to her heart.
The Day After

Chapter Notes

This is my first multi-chapter story and I'm definitely learning with each chapter. Some serious growing pains. Hopefully, there won't be any major screw up's along the way.

A HUGE thank you for all those who have reviewed and who have been following my story.

For Dr. Hernandez, I pictured the actress Nadia Bjorlin as that character. You can Google her or check out a picture of her on my Twitter account (listed on my profile page).

Again, in case there is any doubt through all this angst, Doccubus is still end game. Bo and Lauren each have their individual journeys; it will be emotionally difficult but necessary before they can proceed towards any type of relationship. So, thank you again for sticking with my story and I hope it holds up to expectations.

Thanks again to my Beta, Neytiri's Heart.

Lauren’s Condo

Bo was asleep on the couch; laying partially on her stomach and on her right side, her left hand clutching her cell phone near her head; Lauren’s lab coat bunched up in front of her body; and the empty wine and champagne bottles strewn about the floor nearby.

Suddenly the phone rang. Bo bolted upright and instinctively brought her cell to her ear.

“Lauren?!” she exclaimed in a half-asleep voice.

“No, it’s Kenzi.”

“Oh.” the disappointment was evident in her tone as she rubbed her forehead with her free hand.

“Don’t sound so enthused or anything.” Kenzi grumbled into the phone.

“What’s up?” the brunette ignored her best friend’s sarcasm.

“We have that meeting with our new client in 45 minutes – you know, the one with the lady… cheating husband… blah, blah, blah. This is your wake up call.”

“Uhh, I really can’t handle that right now Kenz. You mind solo’ing this?”

“Is that code for you’re in the middle of handling something else?” Kenzi chuckled.

“No. I …. I just can’t right now. Look, I’ll owe you okay?” Bo breathed out. She really didn’t want to be around anyone.

“Fine. Mega shopping spree it is!” the Goth agreed, sealing their verbal contract; Kenzi was going
to hold her friend to it as there were a pair of black leather boots that she had been eying; they were calling out to her to take them home.

“K. See you later.” Bo ended the call, not waiting for Kenzi’s response. She really was in no mood to talk to anyone right now and she felt the start of a headache forming.

Bo closed her eyes and sighed. She checked her cell for phone and text messages but there was nothing. She shuffled off of the couch; Lauren’s lab coat falling to the floor. The brunette quickly picked it up and brushed it off; bringing it to her body and hugging it. Bo didn’t care how silly it looked; the lab coat represented Lauren – her craft; her dedication; who she was - it was something that she used and wore every day and Bo found it difficult to detach herself from something that was so personal to Lauren. She closed her eyes and inhaled deeply, breathing her in; her girlfriend’s scent triggering memories of Bo observing the blonde being all science-y; intently peering through a microscope; talking her geek speak; and followed by lustful thoughts of Lauren wearing nothing but her lab coat. After a few moments, Bo opened her eyes and allowed herself to come back to reality; her smile quickly disappearing. She sighed and carefully folded the coat before placing it on the couch.

Bo brushed her fingers through her hair, trying to get rid of her sofa-head hair. Her headache was intensifying. She knew that she should leave Lauren’s apartment but couldn’t leave this mess – it would bother Lauren. The brunette picked up the bottles and took them to the kitchen where she rinsed them out thoroughly before placing them in the recycling bin under the sink. She then grabbed a wet cloth and went back to the living room, wiping up some sticky spots on the coffee table and floor.

Bo took one final look around to make sure that she didn’t miss anything and that the apartment was as Lauren left it. Even though most of Lauren’s belongings were still there, the apartment lacked energy - Lauren’s energy. Bo thought back to a time when she had felt a similar feeling though it wasn’t as intense - it was when she was a child and her grandparents would visit; there was always this vibe in the house when they were there and after they left, that vibe or essence left with them, leaving a hole; an emptiness in the house. However, after a couple of days things would revert back to normal. Though in this case, Bo couldn’t see that happening; she knew that the emptiness would remain, not just in the apartment but inside her as well. Lauren’s essence was missing and she didn’t know how things would ever revert back to how they were before.

It was time to go. Bo looked down at the lab coat; even though the blonde had a few belongings at her place, this coat was such an integral part of Lauren and she wanted to have it with her. Not hesitating, Bo gently picked it up. Without looking back, she walked to the door, turned off the lights and locked the door behind her, keeping the key.

Crack Shack (two hours later)

Bo had finished taking a shower and took some aspirin to try and get rid of her headache. Even though the shower made her body feel a bit more energized, she was still exhausted and her thoughts and emotions were a jumbled mess. Her body gravitated to her bed.

That’s where Kenzi found her friend when she returned home from her meeting – Bo lying in bed on her side, cuddling a pillow; her cell on the bedside table. “Yo, Bo Bo whatcha doing in bed? You’re supposed to be barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen while I bring home the bacon. Okay, well, not barefoot and pregnant but bacon would be awesome right now!” The thought of bacon made the Goth’s stomach grumble.

“I just need to rest. Can you leave me alone please Kenz.” Bo groaned out. Kenzi recognised
depressed Bo; she was like this after she and Dyson broke up. Not one to listen to her friend, she jumped onto the bed behind the brunette, bouncing a bit on the mattress for good measure. “What’s up Succubum? Trouble in Lewis-ville? I thought you two would be joined at the hip… in bed. Oh God! I just went there! Out visual, out!” the petite woman rubbed her eyes vigorously.

“She’s gone Kenz. Lauren’s gone.” the Succubus all but whispered. Kenzi’s joviality halted. “Gone? What do you mean gone?” Bo sighed and sat up against the head board; discarding the pillow and wrapping her arms around herself as if doing so would keep her together. “Lauren left me. She wasn’t happy with how things were going with our relationship so she left. She is on some assignment for the Light Fae, somewhere in South America for like 6 months.” Bo choked out the words; a lump forming in her throat as she kept her emotions at bay.

“South America for 6 months?! How’d this happen – she told you all of this during your romantic evening together?” Kenzi enquired, still not quite understanding.

“I never saw her last night. She called me from the airport to say goodbye and she left me a letter explaining—” the brunette couldn’t finish her sentence and started to cry.

The Goth quickly moved over to her friend, hugging her as she sobbed; Bo clutched at her friend as her body shuddered. Kenzi’s heart broke seeing the brunette so despondent. To say that the Goth was shocked was putting it mildly. This was not something that she ever saw coming. She knew that they had some relationship issues from her conversation with Bo yesterday but despite that, she thought that things were still good. She couldn’t believe that Lauren would just leave; that she would hurt Bo again after everything they had gone through. Her anger grew as she started to process the information. “So she left you a ‘Dear John’ letter? That bitch!” Kenzi pulled away to rant, “When I get my hands on her…. I can’t believe that she would hurt you again, after everything! I even believed her when she told me she loved you. We were even bonding. I was right when I initially said that she had a cold speculum for a heart!”

“Kenzi Stop! Just stop!” Bo found her voice; she didn’t want to deal with any Lauren bashing. “She was right to leave—” The petite woman interrupted as she looked at Bo incredulously, “How can you defend her after she up and ditched you? You’re a Succubus in a monogamous relationship! That’s unheard of! That in itself shows that you’re dedicated to make things work. For a brainiac, can’t she see that?! And she doesn’t even have the decency to tell you in person? That’s just fucking cold! And don’t get me started with the whole Ash spy-banging and Nadia!”

Bo’s voice was surprisingly steady; interrupting her friend, “Kenzi, listen to me.” The Goth stopped her tirade and looked at her. Bo took a deep breath before speaking. “When you ran away from home, you had your reasons; but you did it because you felt that you had no other choice; you left to survive and to protect yourself. You put yourself first and you did what you had to. What do you think Lauren is doing? She’s trying to survive. She left in order to protect her heart; to protect herself.”

Bo took a breath to collect her thoughts and her emotions. “After I told my parents what happened when Kyle… died, they didn’t help or comfort me; in fact, they refused to listen; they didn’t want to understand. Instead they put their religion and beliefs ahead of me, calling me a deviant, a whore and a sinner; that I was evil and had no morals. They were cold and cruel and said that I wasn’t their daughter, essentially disowning me. When I ran away from home I was scared because I didn’t know what I was but more than that, I felt so alone because they didn’t support or protect me; they made me feel unloved, worthless and unimportant. And I’ve hated them for so long for making me feel that way.”

Bo wiped at the tears rolling down her cheek. “Kenz, the way that my parents made me feel… I
never ever wanted to feel that way again. So what do I do? I made Lauren feel that way instead. She ran away from me because I made her feel unloved, worthless and unimportant. Do you know how that makes me feel Kenzi? To know that I turned into my parents and that I treated the woman I love, the same way that they treated me?! She must absolutely hate me. I wouldn’t blame her either. I would hate me too. So, please, just… just stop bashing Lauren. If anything, I’m the one who deserves it.”

Bo’s words sunk in. Kenzi had her reasons for running away from home and now she could somewhat understand what Lauren must’ve gone through – how desperate she had to be, to leave. The Goth moved closer to her friend, leaning her back against the head board; her hand resting on top of Bo’s. “I’m so sorry Bo - for everything. I just wish I could make this better for you.” The brunette adjusted herself so that she was lying down and cuddled up to Kenzi, one arm draped around her waist. “Do you want me to just stay here with you till you fall asleep?” Bo nodded her answer; all her crying; the admission of how much she hurt Lauren; and dredging up old memories of running away from home, had taken its toll. Kenzi sat there, gently rubbing small circles on Bo’s back as she lay next to her. It wasn’t long before she heard the change in her friend’s breathing and she knew that Bo was sleeping.

Watching her best friend sleep, Kenzi was still not 100 percent Team Lauren. As far as she was concerned, the doctor broke Bo’s heart and she wasn’t as forgiving as her friend was. But she would bite back her criticism of Lauren for Bo’s sake. With the Dawning behind her, Bo had a better handle on her Succubus abilities but she still was very impulsive and reactive. In her current state, Kenzi knew that she would have to keep a close eye on Bo to make sure she didn’t do something reckless.

Meanwhile thousands of miles in the air

Serena knocked on the panelling outside the curtained room. “Dr. Lewis?” She could hear rustling. “Yes?” Lauren replied groggily.

“We will be landing in an hour and a half. I thought you might want to freshen up and eat something before we arrive.”

“Thanks. Umm, what time is it?”

“It’s 6:30 a.m. I’ve left your duffle bag outside the curtain.”

“Thank you.”

Lauren sat up, rubbed her eyes and stretched. Even though she was still emotionally tired, she felt a little better after getting some sleep. The blonde put on the clothes that she left on the chair and grabbed her duffle bag. She then quickly rummaged through it for her toiletries and a clean change of clothes before making her way to the bathroom.

Feeling refreshed after her shower, Lauren returned to the room and packed up her belongings. She scooped up the photo from where it lay on the bed and forced herself to not look at it before she pocketed it away – she couldn’t afford any sentimentality right now as she had to get her head in the game; they were almost in Brazil and she needed to concentrate on work. Making her way to the galley where Serena was seated, they traded good mornings before the flight attendant served them a breakfast of scrambled eggs, toast, mixed fruit and coffee. As they sat there eating, the Ignis briefed Lauren on what the pilot had told her – that they would be landing at 8 a.m.; there will have a driver
waiting to take them to the compound; and it would be a 45 minute drive there. Once they arrive, they would be escorted to the lab where Dr. Hernandez will meet them.

As they sat there drinking their coffee, Lauren broke the silence and very sincerely said, “I just wanted to say thank you for your … thoughtfulness yesterday and again this morning. It’s been a trying few days and… anyway, I just wanted to say thanks.” She was going to say ‘kindness’ but thought her bodyguard would be opposed to that word being associated with her gruff image. She appreciated the privacy that the Ignis allowed her and that she didn’t enquire about her phone call with Bo even though it was evident that she was upset last night. Fae have a tendency to not be sympathetic towards humans and normally, they would’ve made their belittling comments or observations known.

Serena wasn’t expecting any thanks. In her line of work, she had become accustomed to being ‘behind the scenes’ where she would never be given a second thought or any consideration. Serena understood what the doctor had meant and it surprised her that Lauren had noticed; regardless, she didn’t let her it show. “Not a problem, Dr. Lewis.”

“You know we’ll be working together for the next few months, you can call me Lauren.”

Serena shook her head. “I cannot. You are my client and it would be unprofessional if I referred to you by your first name.” To start calling the person one was assigned to protect, by their given name would create familiarity. Serena had to remain detached so that she could be objective and do her job effectively and efficiently. This was her first one-on-one security detail and it was at the Ash’s request. It didn’t matter that she was assigned to protect a human; her client could’ve been an orangutan and it wouldn’t have mattered; she wasn’t about to screw this up.

“I understand. I don’t want you to compromise your professionalism.” Lauren smiled at the Ignis; she wasn’t surprised by her bodyguard’s response.

When they disembarked from the plane, Lauren was surprised by how hot and humid it was; it was like she walked straight into a wall of heat; she was already starting to sweat.

“God it’s humid! Don’t you find it incredibly hot?” Lauren exclaimed.

Serena chuckled, “I’m comfortable.”

The blonde rolled her eyes and smiled, “Must be nice to be an Ignis in this climate.”

Serena grinned and shrugged her shoulders.

Lauren knew that it was going to be hot here but knowing and experiencing were two different things; but she would adjust to her environment, just like she did in Afghanistan and in the Congo and with everything else since.

It didn’t take them long to clear Customs and Immigration and once past the luggage carousels, they saw a man holding a sign with ‘Dr. Lewis’ on it. He took their belongings and ushered them to a black town car.

Lauren stared out the window, deep in thought. Nothing registered; not even the lush landscape, shanty towns, buildings and people that they drove past. The blonde found it difficult to concentrate; her thoughts battling back and forth between Bo and how she must be feeling; to justifying her own actions to herself in order to reinforce her decision; and what she had to do here in Brazil.

Everything was blurring together and Lauren physically shook her head to clear her mind. She knew that she needed to focus, so she started a mental checklist of things that she would have to do once
she got into the lab. Before she knew it, they were pulling up to a large concrete building lined with black, tinted glass windows.

The driver escorted them into the building and directed them to some lockers where they could secure their luggage. He then took them through various security checkpoints before they arrived at an elevator which took them to a sub-level. Upon alighting from the elevator, they came across a set of double doors with a key card access pad next to it. Once their escort swiped his card, the doors opened into a very antiseptic looking waiting room - the walls, tiles and ceiling were all white; the only color in the entire room came from two large potted plants located in the far corners and the brown waiting room chairs along the wall. Directly across from them was a large glass window with a receptionist sitting behind it; and to the right of that window was another set of double doors with its own key card access pad. Their escort instructed them to ask for Dr. Hernandez before he turned and left the room.

Both Lauren and Serena watched as the doors shut behind him, making an audible clicking sound which indicated that they were now locked in the room. They both walked up to the receptionist and Lauren attempted to speak Portuguese through the holes in the plexi-glass window.

“Bom dia. Estamos aqui para ver o doutor Hernandez.”

“Bom dia. Qual?”

“Excuse me?

“Which Hernandez? There are a few Dr. Hernandezes that work here.”

“Oh, I see. We are here to see Dr. Mila Hernandez.”

“Which one?”

Lauren turned to look at Serena; her expression saying “Are you kidding me?” The Ignis just shrugged in response.

“I’m guessing that there is more than one Dr. Mila Hernandez?”

The receptionist nodded yes.

Lauren sighed.

“Dr. Mila Hernandez, the Chief Medical Doctor.”

“Ah! Please have a seat while I page her.”

“Thank you.”

They weren’t seated very long, when the double doors next to the receptionist opened; and two persons entered the room – one male and one female.

The man was easily over 6 feet tall and well dressed; had dark brown hair which he kept close cropped; was ruggedly handsome; and his broad shoulders and muscular arms caused his white, long sleeve shirt to strain against his torso. If Lauren were to guess, she would assume he worked in the Security Section.

As for the woman that was walking next to him, she was absolutely stunning and elegantly dressed. Despite Lauren’s heartache, she would have had to be blind to not appreciate this woman’s exotic
beauty. She was approximately 5 foot 6 inches; had flawlessly tanned skin; and long, wavy, black hair. The dark haired woman wore a lab coat over a cobalt blue, v-neck blouse and a black skirt which showed off her toned legs. But of all her features, it was her eyes that Lauren couldn’t look away from—they were the palest blue that she had ever seen and were incredibly striking against her tanned skin.

As they approached, the woman flashed a dazzling smile, “Dr. Lewis?”

Lauren recognized the woman’s voice from the few times they spoke on the phone and stood, “Hello, Dr. Hernandez.” The blonde put out her hand to greet her but the woman ignored the gesture and instead put her hands on Lauren’s arms and pulled her close; kissing her on her left cheek, then on her right and back again on her left, before pulling away. The blonde was mildly surprised but quickly realized that this must be a customary greeting in Brazil.

“Please Lauren, call me Mila. I apologize for keeping you waiting. My meeting went much later than expected.”

“We haven’t been waiting long, however there was some, umm, confusion. I guess there is more than one Dr. Mila Hernandez working here?” Lauren smiled awkwardly.

“Ah yes, right! I suppose that would cause some confusion. We are just accustomed to it here. Hernandez is a common surname around these parts and Mila is a popular female name.” the dark haired beauty chuckled. “To avoid any confusion, I insist that you call me by my middle name, Nayara. Only my family and close friends call me Nayara, but I can tell that we will become good friends.” Dr. Hernandez seemed sincere and showed Lauren her sparkling smile again.

“Well, it’s nice to finally meet you Nayara.” Lauren said.

“And it’s an honour to finally meet you Lauren. I am looking forward to working with you.”

Lauren smiled in response and turned to introduce Serena. “This is Serena Thorne. She is a representative of Ash Santiago and she is also here to ensure my safety on his behalf. No reflection on your security, of course.”

“Of course not, I understand completely. It’s in an Ash’s best interest to ensure their personnel’s well being. It’s nice to meet you.” Nayara turned to the Ignis and greeted her in the same manner as she did Lauren. The blonde stifled a chuckle seeing how stiff and awkward Serena seemed by the greeting.

Nayara turned to the man that had accompanied her, “This is Carlos Arantes. He is our Chief of Security here.” The large man nodded and shook their hands before handing them their security access cards attached to lanyards, which they promptly placed around their necks.

Dr. Hernandez turned to the two women, “Serena - Carlos will take you for a tour of the Security Section, while I give Lauren a tour of the lab. Then afterwards, we will meet with Ash Vicente Medeiros before continuing with a tour of the rest of the facility.” She turned to Carlos, “We will meet you both in the Ash’s office in 45 minutes.”

Serena gave Lauren a look to determine if she was okay with being left alone and Lauren gave her a subtle nod saying that she was fine. Both Security personnel then left the doctors in the waiting room.

“So, I have a confession - my knowledge of Portuguese is very basic.” Lauren admitted.

The brunette smiled, “That’s okay. I’m fluent in English. In fact, most of the Fae here speak
English, so you should have no difficulty communicating with anyone.”

“Maybe I’ll be able to work on my Portuguese while I’m here.” Lauren mused out loud.

Nayara smiled at the blonde and indicated to the doors, “Shall we?” Going through the double doors, the hallway diverged into three separate areas: one led to the lab; one to where patients were being treated and the other to a quarantine and decontamination area.

They went to the lab first which was impressive in terms of size and the level of technology. There were seven lab technicians present and every piece of laboratory equipment imaginable was available and located throughout. Behind the first section of the lab, were offices; testing stations complete with microscopes, Centrifuges and Coagulation Analyzers; fridges for storing samples; and filing cabinets.

They spent the majority of the tour in the lab and quickly walked through the patient and quarantine areas before making their way to the reception area of the Ash’s office where Serena and Carlos were waiting.

They were escorted into the Ash’s office, which was very formal yet inviting. There were a lot of wood carvings and furniture as well as plants everywhere; it was a stark difference from the décor in the labs. Ash Medeiros was a tall man, over 6 feet tall and dark skinned. He had long, tight braids that flowed neatly across his broad shoulders. He was also very handsome and well turned out in a crisp, purple long sleeved shirt with matching black tie, trousers and shoes. Lauren noted that it must be a Brazilian Fae trait to be good looking and well dressed.

Nayara introduced Lauren and Serena to the Ash. Ash Vicente Medeiros’ movements were very fluid and the way he crossed the room, it almost looked like he was hovering above the ground; his eyes focused on Lauren. “Dr. Lewis! It’s a pleasure to finally meet you. I’ve heard so much about you.”

The Ash had a smooth, deep voice which reminded Lauren of her first Ash. Thinking of him and how he changed her and Nadia’s lives irreparably, made her clench her jaw muscles. Forcing herself to focus on the present, Lauren allowed herself to relax and bowed out of respect, “The pleasure is all mine Ash Medeiros.”

The Ash kept his attention on Lauren, completely ignoring everyone else in the room. “I won’t keep you long as I know that you just arrived and there is a lot of work to be done. I just wanted to personally welcome you here. You have quite the impressive reputation and we need all the help that we can get to deal with this epidemic that is plaguing my people.”

“Thank you Ash. I will do everything in my power to help.” Lauren was aware that even though she was human, she represented Hale and his Clan. To say that there was a little bit of political pressure resting on her shoulders, would be putting it mildly. However, she quickly dismissed the thought as she had to focus on science and not politics.

“If there is anything you need; anything at all; please make sure to let Dr. Hernandez know. Finding a cure is our number one priority.” Medeiros stated firmly.

“I understand.” Lauren replied.

And with that, the meeting was over. They all bowed and departed the Ash’s office. Once in the reception area, Nayara turned to the two women, “So, before we continue, I’m sure you’d both like to settle into your rooms first and perhaps have some lunch.”
“I’ve already stowed my gear in my room. However, I can meet you in the cafeteria after you are done Dr. Lewis.” Serena said.

“That won’t be necessary. I’d really like to get started on the case files, lab results, etc.” Lauren was going through her list.

Nayara smiled at the blonde, “I do appreciate your enthusiasm to begin but it would be remiss of me as your hostess to not ensure your comfort. I insist that we take your belongings to your room and you can get washed up before going to lunch. After we eat, we’ll head straight to the lab and I’ll answer all of your questions and provide you with all the information you need.”

Lauren realized that she wasn’t going to win this and reluctantly agreed; Serena used that as her cue to leave.

After the Ignis left, the brunette held Lauren’s attention and very genuinely stated, “I would like to reiterate what the Ash said but at a more a personal level. To be honest, this epidemic has us all perplexed. I am very appreciative that you are here to assist us in finding a cure. I know that there are no guarantees but just having you here - with your previous experience and knowledge of the Congo virus - already puts us at an advantage. So, I thank you.”

“I promise that I will do my very best to help in any way possible Nayara.” The blonde gave the doctor her patented shy smile, “Please, lead the way.”

Nayara took Lauren to collect her bags out of the locker and led her through a separate section of the facility. The building was like a giant ‘Y’ with multiple levels; the entrance and security were the stem; the labs and work areas were on the left and the dining hall/cafeteria and residential section on the right.

Lauren’s ‘room’ was the size of a fully furnished one bedroom apartment complete with washer and dryer and a small study area. Even the kitchen cupboards and fridge were fully stocked with food. Nayara could tell that Lauren was surprised, “We wanted to make sure that you were comfortable. It’s the least we could do for your coming here to help us. We realize that you wouldn’t be here if your Ash did not agree to this assignment, but it is your vast knowledge and expertise that we need.” Before Lauren could respond to the compliment, the brunette said, “How about I leave you to freshen up and I’ll come back for you in 30 minutes?”

Lauren nodded, “Sounds good. I’ll see you in a bit.” And with that, Nayara left the blonde to her thoughts. She wasn’t used to all this attention and appreciation of her skills and knowledge; it would take some getting used to. But more importantly, she started to feel the pressure to provide favourable results and she had only just arrived. The Ash and Nayara were obviously placing a lot of faith in her; granted she understood the enormity of the situation and that the Clan wanted as much assistance as possible to get this illness under control.

Lauren took a deep breath to calm herself; quickly reviewing her checklist. “First get to the Lab; review files; look over Patient Zero information; look at all subsequent test results; examine patients; go to sites; take samples; conduct tests...” Just creating a list of things that she needed to do, helped her focus on the goal and not on all the extraneous issues and emotions associated with it.

Lauren took her bags into the bedroom and then went to the bathroom to freshen up. She washed her hands and splashed water on her face. The blonde looked in the mirror; her mind reeling. All her planning was to get her to this point and now it was a reality. Now she had to deliver. There were no guarantees that she could find a cure but expectations from everyone, including herself, were high. She didn’t doubt her abilities; she knew that she was skilled and she hoped that that would be enough; that and some luck.
She still had some time before Nayara returned and Lauren needed to occupy herself; she decided to check her cell on the off chance that she had any messages. To her surprise, she had six new voice messages; all from Bo. The blonde steadied herself as she wasn’t sure what to expect.

* Lauren, I’m so, so sorry. I never meant to hurt you.*

* Please give me another chance. I really want us to try.*

* Lauren, I love you. Please call me. *

* I love you. Don’t doubt that please. *

* Lauren, please call me. *

* Hi, it’s me again. I… I just wanted to hear your voice and see how you were doing. *

Lauren’s heart broke hearing Bo; and from the sound of the Succubus’ voice, she had been drunk and crying when she left these messages. The blonde didn’t know whether she should call or not - part of her wanted to contact her so that she could hear her voice and the other part of her didn’t know if she would be able to talk to ex-girlfriend – she was hurt and angry and she wasn’t sure if it would be a good idea to speak to Bo.

Lauren had to be resolute in her decision but Bo’s messages had shaken her resolve. She stared at her cell, contemplating what to do.

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**Meanwhile at the Crack Shack**

Bo was sound asleep. In her subconscious, she could hear her phone ringing. It took a few seconds for the sound to actually register, forcing her out of hibernation. She groped around for her cell as her eyes remain closed.

“Hello?” she mumbled.

“Hi.”

Bo’s eyes popped open immediately, “Lauren?! Baby, are you okay?”

Lauren sounded hesitant, “Yes... I just wanted you to know that I arrived safely.”

The Succubus was overjoyed that Lauren had finally contacted her, “I’m so glad that you did. How… how are things there?”

*So far, so good.* She replied matter of factly.

Bo was in ‘concerned’ mode; Lauren was a human amongst a Light Fae Clan that she didn’t know; it couldn’t be easy for her, “Can you trust them? I mean, do you feel safe?”

“Well, they really want my help, so there is no reason for them to hurt me.” She said quietly.

The brunette was slightly relieved, “Okay… that’s good then.”

*The blonde sighed, “Well, I should get going. I knew you’d worry and I just wanted you to know that I got here safely.”*

Bo pleaded, “Lauren, please talk to me.”
Lauren was frustrated, “I don’t know what else there is to say Bo. My letter said it all.

Bo choked back her tears, “I know I messed up. I messed up royally. But I want to try. I love you Lauren. You’re all that I want.”

Lauren’s temper was starting to flare and it was reflected in her voice, “I don’t think you know what you want Bo.”

The brunette was taken aback by Lauren’s tone, “What do you mean by that?

The doctor erupted, “What do I mean? I mean Tamsin! The two of you kissed! Can you deny that happened?”

Bo hesitated, “No, I… I can’t deny that but it’s not what you think-”

The blonde wasn’t holding back anymore. “Really?! If that’s the case, why didn’t you say something before instead of my finding out from Tamsin?”

Bo didn’t know how to respond and instead silence filled the air; the lump in her throat growing; this wasn’t how she expected their first conversation to play out.

Lauren’s anger intensified, “Just as I thought! You have no idea what I think and you know even less about how I feel! You say that you love me but if you did, you never would’ve done this to me.”

The Succubus couldn’t hold back her tears any more and sobbed, “I’m so sorry Lauren. I didn’t mean to hurt you.”

“I know that you didn’t mean to Bo, but you still hurt me. Repeatedly. I won’t be your doormat! There’s a long line of Fae ready to treat me as such. I won’t let you treat me that way.”

Bo was begging, “Lauren please… give me another chance! I want to make things right.”

Lauren sounded defeated, “I don’t have it in me to try anymore, Bo. Life is too short. MY life is too short. I’m only human after all.”

She couldn’t believe this was happening. Bo couldn’t let things end like this, “What about us? Are you willing to walk away from us so easily?”

Lauren’s voice sounded distant, “Bo, I didn’t walk away. You threw our relationship away. There is no us. I… I can’t do this. I have to go. Goodbye.”

The call ended abruptly.

“Lauren? WAIT!” Bo cried out.

Bo suddenly bolted upright in bed screaming “WAIT!” Her hand clutching at her chest as tears streamed down her cheeks; her heart beating fast. It was just a dream. But it felt incredibly real. The Succubus was relieved; she knew that she wouldn’t have been able to handle it if that conversation had actually happened. However, as relieved as she was, she couldn’t stop replaying what ‘dream’ Lauren told her. Bo wondered if Lauren really felt that way. If she did, how could she convince her otherwise? How could she make things right between them? The brunette knew that she needed to figure out the answers to these questions if she wanted to win Lauren back.

Bo rubbed her eyes and exhaled; blinking the sleep out of her eyes. As she glanced over to her bedside table, she noticed that the light on her cell phone was blinking, which meant that she had a
new message.

Bo checked her cell; there was a text message and it was from Lauren. She took a deep breath and exhaled before reading:

*I just wanted you to know that I arrived safely and that they are treating me well here. I didn’t want you to be concerned.*

It wasn’t a love note but it wasn’t angry either; Lauren texted her out of consideration. Bo took that to be a positive sign. After the emotional, angry dream she just had; she would take a hopeful, considerate, lukewarm text any day. She realized that she was grasping at straws but she didn’t care; this was a baby step and she was thankful for it.

TBC
All Work and No Play - part 1

Chapter Notes

I apologize for the delay with this chapter. Real life stuff and writer’s block are to blame. Here’s a longer chapter than normal to say thanks for your patience.

- Please note that this is the beginning of Bo’s and Lauren’s individual journeys and it charts how they start to cope after their break up.

- The next few chapters will alternate between Bo and Lauren – this is necessary to develop their individual progress while they are apart; so keep this in mind when you don’t see Bo in this chapter.

Special thanks to my Beta, Neytiri’s Heart for helping me through my writer’s block and for all her suggestions; and to bluebunnyRAFI for providing me with information on Brazil – supper is for you blue! ;)

Light Fae Compound – Brasília (day three)

These past few days were a whirlwind with Lauren working through lunch and supper; and working late into the night after everyone had left the lab. The blonde absorbed all the information that she could and was making great progress on the files and notes that she needed to review. Unfortunately, this meant that she was forgetting to take care of herself – something that Bo used to remind her to do by either bringing her, her meals or convincing her to take breaks. So far, her meals consisted of a big breakfast in the morning in the dining hall which carried her through the day and when she returned to her apartment late at night, she would have toast or cereal for supper.

Living with the Fae, Lauren had to master her ability to mask her emotions; this made others think that she was cold and uncaring. The fact of the matter was that the doctor was very passionate and having to hide how she felt all these years was exhausting. With Bo, she was able to put down those walls and be herself; to feel; and to not hide who she was. It was very liberating and Lauren didn’t realize how much she had missed that part of herself as it was deeply hidden away. But that freedom was gone and now that she had to revert back to these measures, she was finding it difficult to do so. When immersed in work Lauren was able to hide her feelings, however when there was no distraction, there was nothing preventing her emotions from rushing out; causing her to drown in the hurt, pain and loss of her relationship with Bo.

Because of this, the blonde wasn’t getting much sleep. It was during the quiet moments lying in bed and waiting for sleep to take her, that her thoughts would always drift to Bo; and the emotional pain she felt was unbearable. Lauren just wanted the world to stop spinning for awhile - to stop long enough so that she could catch her breath and recover; to see some semblance of her old self again. She was tired of everyone and everything around her functioning while she felt as if she were slowly dying inside.

Realistically she knew that the world would continue to spin on its axis and that life would continue to operate around her regardless of how she felt but it didn’t change the fact that she just wanted to scream the pain and emptiness away. After the last two nights of not being able to sleep, Lauren was desperate, so she decided to do just that. She took a pillow into the bathroom and turned on the
shower. As she stood there in the middle of the room, she covered her face with the pillow and screamed into it as loudly as she could; she screamed till her legs buckled and she couldn’t scream any more; the pillow and the water masking her sounds. It was a release; albeit temporary; but it helped nevertheless. She wiped her tears away and turned off the shower before crawling into bed. The emotional release left her physically exhausted; and dimmed her thoughts to a dull roar so that she could fall asleep. The doctor knew that this wasn’t healthy but when all she wanted to do was sleep, she didn’t care what she did, as long as she achieved the desired results.

Morning came quickly and Lauren was anxious to resume work; it was her constant; her reprieve. It was only her fourth day at the compound but she already had her schedule set. Wake up early, have a hearty breakfast and be in the lab for 7:00 A.M. The doctor was normally the first to arrive and could be found in her office at the back of the lab with stacks of files on her desk. Lauren had copious amounts of notes, patients’ files and test results that had to be reviewed and she wanted to get caught up on everything; she needed to have a strong understanding of this epidemic before diving into any field work and experiments.

The blonde was absolutely focused on the task at hand – not just because she wanted to find a cure for the disease; but she also needed the distraction. When she was working, it meant she wasn’t feeling or thinking about Bo; her heart ache; and their failed relationship. Being in Brazil was also a return to her medical roots – combining medicine and research to develop a cure for a disease that caused pain, suffering and death. It also wasn’t lost on Lauren that this situation mirrored the start of her career when she was in the Congo. However, this time around she was more knowledgeable, skilled and experienced; she was aware of the Fae; and she had all the support and equipment necessary to work on finding a cure.

It was almost noon when Serena left the Security Section and made her way towards the lab. There wasn’t much need to guard the doctor while they were in the compound as the facility was extremely secure, however, it didn’t stop the Ignis from checking in on the blonde a few times a day.

Serena thrived on routine, regardless of where she was working, so being in Brazil was no different. Her day’s schedule comprised of meeting with Carlos Arantes in the morning to review the security policies and procedures for the compound and the various camps and bases that they would be travelling to when in the field. She also began familiarizing herself with the geographical maps of those areas and received briefings on the latest incidents between the Light and Dark Fae in the area – tensions between the Fae clans were high, so altercations were common. The afternoons were reserved for providing Ash Santiago with a quick Situation Report or SITREP; and sparring with the other security staff or training on her own in the gym.

Since they arrived, Serena had observed the doctor’s routine and assumed that the blonde was just overwhelmed by all the information that she had to process; and that she would eventually settle into a sensible schedule. However, from what the Ignis had seen so far, she didn’t think that would happen any time soon. Dr. Lewis looked tired; she had dark circles under her eyes and her face was gaunt, most likely from not eating enough. It was obvious that the doctor wasn’t taking care of herself. Serena knew that the blonde was a workaholic and that something personal happened prior to leaving for Brazil; she didn’t know the details of why the blonde was preoccupied, nor would she pry, but she had a strong suspicion that whatever was going on with the doctor was linked to her relationship with the Succubus.

As a body guard, Serena’s job is to take care of and protect her client; however, if her client couldn’t even manage the basics of having three square meals a day and getting rest, then, it would make her job difficult. She wasn’t about to let anything happen to the doctor nor was she about to fail at her
first solo assignment. Serena would ensure that the blonde took care of herself even if she had to force her to do so.

Serena entered the lab and made her way to Lauren’s office where she knew the doctor would be engrossed in whatever file she was reviewing.

The Ignis knocked on the door, “Dr. Lewis.”

Lauren looked up and seemed to take an extra second to focus; blinking away the information that she was reading and instead concentrating on the person that was interrupting her thought process. “Serena, hello. How are you? How can I help you?”

Serena stood at attention at the edge of Lauren’s desk, “I am well thank you. Everything is fine. I am here to accompany you to the dining hall for lunch.”

The blonde looked at the wall clock, not realizing how quickly the hours had passed by and that it was noon already. She returned her attention to Serena, “Thank you but I’m right in the middle of something. I’ll just go later.”

The Ignis expected this response, “You misunderstand doctor; I am not asking. I will wait.” And with that, Serena remained standing by Lauren’s desk.

It didn’t register with the blonde that her bodyguard literally meant what she said. Lauren didn’t intend on ignoring the Ignis; she was only going to read till the end of the page before insisting that Serena proceed without her, but instead she quickly got caught up in the material that she was reviewing. When she looked up fifteen minutes later, the Ignis had not moved from her position – she was as still as a statue. The blonde exhaled deeply and rubbed her eyes; she realized then that Serena would not leave her office unless she went with her to the dining hall. Lauren bookmarked the page in the file and closed it as she stood up. Serena gestured towards the door, “After you doctor.” The Ignis smiled as the blonde walked past her.

It was almost 12:30 P.M. and the dining hall was packed; finding an available table was going to be like trying to find Waldo during Carnival in Rio. Both Serena and Lauren had their trays of food and were scouring the room for a place to sit. Fortunately, Nayara saw when they entered the hall and had the foresight to save two chairs for them when some people got up from her table; she waved them over.

“Thanks for the seats. We were going to resort to sitting on the ground outside.” Lauren said as she sat across from the doctor.

Nayara smiled at them both, “You’re welcome. It’s good to see you outside of the lab Lauren. I was beginning to think that I would have to pry you out of there.”

“Serena did actually.” Lauren confessed as she focused on her salad and avoided eye contact with both women.

“Well, then, it seems that you beat me to it Serena. I was thinking of resorting to extreme measures.” the brunette chuckled.

The Ignis nodded. She knew that Nayara was an observant woman and was probably also assessing Lauren’s work habits.

“Oh, Nayara, when we get back to the lab, could you provide me with-”

The brunette interrupted Lauren and flashed her, her patented dazzling smile, “I am going to stop you
right there. No ‘shop talk’ while we eat. You need to give your brain a break, enjoy your meal and socialize a bit. When we return to the lab, I would be more than happy to provide you with whatever you need.”

The Ignis gave Nayara a look that said ‘well done’; Lauren didn’t notice as she was a bit taken aback.

“I’m sorry; it is sometimes difficult for me to switch out of work mode.” Lauren said sheepishly.

The doctor nodded, “Trust me, I do understand. I used to be like you. I just don’t want to see you burning yourself out like I did. You need to make sure that you pace yourself – don’t miss meals; take breaks; don’t live in the lab; take time to talk to others about anything other than work; get a change of scenery; and make sure you get plenty of rest.”

Lauren knew that Nayara was right but it was hard to change, especially since she did not want to be idle – the emotional consequence of that was just too much for her.

The blonde smiled, “I know you’re right but it’s easier said than done. I always need to keep occupied; that’s why I’ve been working late – to keep busy.”

Serena piped up, “If that is the case, I can help you there.”

They both turned their heads towards the bodyguard; it was rare for the Ignis to talk in a social setting, so they were a bit surprised.

Serena ignored their looks, “Boxing is a great way to let off some steam and it would also give you something to do in the evenings.”

“I, uh, am not sure about that.” Lauren stammered.

“I think that’s a great idea Serena!” Nayara exclaimed. “I used to box to relieve stress – it was a great outlet for me. I’m sure you will enjoy it.”

“Umm, I don’t have any sports gear. I didn’t bring any with me.” Lauren said; she hoped that this fact would end all this talk of trying to occupy her time; all she wanted to do was continue her research in the lab.

“That won’t be a problem. I’m sure that I have something that will fit you.” Nayara offered. “Tell you what, we can go to supper together around 5:00 P.M. and then after we eat, we can walk back to my apartment and I’ll lend you some clothes. What do you say?”

Lauren was hesitant but she knew that she couldn’t get out of this, “Sure. Thanks.”

“Now that the logistics are sorted out… I’ll pick you up at seven o’clock so that we can head to the gym.” Serena wanted to make sure that the blonde was clear that there was no escape.

“Sounds great.” Lauren said unenthusiastically.

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**Light Fae Compound - Gym**

Lauren had brought a pair of sneakers on this trip but needed to borrow a pair of shorts and a t-shirt from Nayara. The brunette was curvaceous like Bo and so the clothes weren’t an exact fit for the blonde, but it was still comfortable and not too loose on her frame.

Serena was punctual as always, knocking on Lauren’s door at 7:00 P.M. They both walked to the
gym in a comfortable silence. The doctor was thankful for that; some people felt the need to fill the
silence with unnecessary conversation; Serena wasn’t like that and it was refreshing. She
appreciated what Serena was trying to do for her; it wasn’t that she was against exercising; she just
felt that there were better things that she could be doing, especially since she was only in Brazil for a
short period of time. In her mind, every minute spent away from reviewing files and test results; was
a minute taken away from finding a solution.

Once in the gym, Serena grabbed a pair of boxing gloves for the doctor and a pair of hand pads for
herself. She gave Lauren a quick run through on the proper boxing stance – weak side forward; eyes
on the opponent and chin down; and taught her the three basic punches: jab, right cross and left
hook.

To practice, Serena put on the hand pads and had the doctor hit them; calling out the punches slowly
till Lauren was comfortable with the punches and the foot work associated with it. Once the blonde
got the hang of it, the Ignis picked up the pace, moving her around the gym floor and varying the
punch combinations. By the time they were done these drills, Lauren was sweating and breathing
hard.

From there, the Ignis moved the doctor over to the other side of the gym to do some heavy bag
boxing drills. It was Serena’s intent to make sure that Lauren got a good work out in order to release
any stress and frustration. She showed Lauren the proper way to hit the heavy bag to avoid
spraining her wrist and taught her the 30-30-30 method. This drill comprised of three rounds lasting
30 seconds each. The first 30 seconds had Lauren hitting the bag at regular speed, using all punch
combinations; for the second 30 seconds she would ‘ride the bike’ which meant hitting the bag as
fast as possible, keeping her legs constantly moving as if she were jogging on the spot; and for the
final 30 seconds, she would hit the bag as hard as possible so that every punch would be a knock
out. Once the first set of 30-30-30 was done, Serena had Lauren take a one minute break before
resuming again. This was a physically demanding workout, so doing a few sets would tire anyone
out.

By the time they left the gym, Lauren was drenched in sweat and physically exhausted; she knew
that she would ache all over tomorrow. They walked back to the doctor’s apartment and said good
night. Once inside, the blonde just wanted to crawl into bed but instead forced herself to have a quick
shower and changed into her night clothes. Lauren was asleep shortly after her head hit the pillow.
It was the first time in weeks that she didn’t think about Bo and all their relationship issues before
falling asleep.

Light Fae Compound - Lab (day five)

The next day Serena arrived at the lab to escort Lauren to lunch. The blonde was not expecting her
but she was also not surprised. However, this time, the Ignis did not have to wait and as such, there
was no difficulty in finding a place to sit in the dining hall.

It had been so long since Lauren had a good night’s sleep that she forgot what it felt like to be well
rested and energized; she knew that her workout last night was the reason for it even though her
muscles were incredibly sore. Lauren thanked Serena for taking the time to teach her how to box
and asked if they could continue doing so a couple days a week. Serena agreed to continue training
with her. Internally, the Ignis was more than happy to oblige as it was good to see that the doctor was
acknowledging that she needed to take better care of herself.

Back in the lab, Lauren was reviewing some test results when Nayara knocked on the door to her
office.
“Hi, how are things going?” Nayara asked.

Lauren looked up and smiled, “Things are going well actually. It took awhile but I think I’m caught up on all the notes, files and test results. Aside from seeing some of the patients and comparing tests; I’m ready to head into the field – to see things at the source as it were.” The blonde was happy to have finally finished reviewing everything; it was incredibly tedious but necessary before she could move forward with research.

“That’s great!” Nayara was pleased to hear about Lauren’s progress. “For the field portion, the Base Camp is located on the outskirts of São Paulo, which is as close as we can get to the outbreak in Mata Atlantica, the Atlantic Forest. Normally, we have a ten day rotation there – we set up at Base Camp and then drive or hike to the villages to see and treat patients and gather samples. After a week and a half, lab and scientific teams swap out - this gives us the chance to process all the samples and information that we collected; while the other scientific team takes over. Then we do it all over again in another ten days.”

Lauren was anxious to get started, “I’m really looking forward to starting this phase. Now that I’ve completed reviewing all the background information, I can begin tackling the issue at hand.”

Nayara looked at the blonde and smiled, “I’ve been thinking… You’ve been here for five days and I haven’t had the chance to thank you or welcome you to Brazil. I’d like to have you over for supper tonight.”

Lauren shook her head, “There’s no need to thank me Nayara. I haven’t done anything yet.”

The brunette put up her hand to stop the blonde, “Lauren, please. I normally check the access logs for the lab – since you arrived, you’ve been in the lab early before everyone and you’re the last to leave late at night. You’ve poured over every single file, test result and research note that we have. You have already proven that you are devoted to the cause. If your work ethic is any indication … well, I know that you will always give 100 percent. So, please allow me to say thank you. I would love to properly welcome you here by cooking you a traditional Brazilian meal.”

Lauren acquiesced; she also found it difficult to refuse the brunette while she looked at her so intently with those beautiful pale blue eyes. “If you insist. I can’t remember when last someone cooked for me.”

Nayara winked at the blonde, “It’s a date then. I’ll see you at 7:00 p.m.”

The blonde balked at the word ‘date’ but as she watched the brunette walk away, she couldn’t help but admire how beautiful Nayara was and that her dress accentuated every positive aspect of her figure. The blonde physically shook her head to stop herself from staring; she felt guilty for ogling Nayara who was her peer and who was only being nice to her; not to mention the fact that she had only just gotten out of a relationship. Lauren had to stop thinking of how beautiful Nayara was and the best way to do that was to submerge herself in the stack of test results on her desk.

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Nayara’s apartment

It was seven o’clock when Lauren knocked on the Light Fae’s apartment door. She wore a white three-quarter sleeve shirt over a pale blue tank top, blue jeans and a pair of brown sandals. Nayara opened the door and looked absolutely beautiful in her red and yellow sun dress and black strapped wedged shoes. The brunette greeted Lauren, kissing her on her left cheek, her right and back again on her left.
“Whatever you’re cooking smells delicious!” Lauren remarked as Nayara showed her to the living room couch.

“It’s moqueca de camarão. It’s a common Brazilian dish; essentially, it’s a shrimp stew. The shrimp is marinated in garlic, lemon juice and various spices; it’s cooked in a tomato puree and coconut milk with peppers and spices; once cooked, it’s served with rice. It’s quite tasty.”

“I’m sure that it is. I’m looking forward to trying an authentic Brazilian meal.”

“Would you like something to drink?”

“Please. Do you have beer?”

“What kind of question is that? Do I have beer? Do you not realize that you’re in Brazil?” The Fae winked at the blonde causing Lauren to smile.

Nayara returned with two bottles.

The blonde took a sip. “That’s pretty good.” She looked at the brand, “‘Antarctica’? I’ve never heard of it before.”

“It’s one of our popular beers.” Nayara replied as she absentmindedly played with the label on the bottle.

“Thank you again for the invite.” Lauren looked the brunette in the eyes, “I meant it when I said that it’s been a long time since anyone has cooked for me. It may seem insignificant but it means a lot… to me anyway.”

“How long has it been since someone has cooked you a meal?” Nayara inquired.

“Umm, about six and a half years.”

“Really?! Well then, I’m honored to be your first after all this time.” Nayara smiled.

Lauren wasn’t sure if the brunette was flirting with her or if she was just making a joke; so she chose to ignore it and decided to just enjoy a normal evening between co-workers.

“That was absolutely delicious, Nayara. You are a wonderful cook.” Lauren complimented her hostess as she helped clear the table.

“It was my pleasure. I’m glad that you enjoyed it.” The Fae replied genuinely. “Thanks for helping me clean up.”

“It’s the least I could do.” Lauren replied as she put the dishes in the dishwasher.

“Why don’t you sit on the couch while I make us some tea?”

Lauren watched Nayara as she put water to boil and gathered some tea cups. “So, I’ve been meaning to ask you something since I arrived but never had the chance before now.”

The Light Fae’s curiosity was peaked. “What did you want to ask?”

“I noticed that the humans and Fae in the compound are, for lack of a better word, very friendly towards one another. There just seems to be an amazing sense of camaraderie overall. I’m not used to seeing humans and Fae openly mingling and socializing with each other and in large numbers.
Am I reading things right?”

Nayara chuckled, “Yes, you’re quite perceptive. There is definitely a very strong working and social relationship between humans and Fae here.”

The Fae grew serious, “Six months ago, the presence and growth of pathogenic biological agents were discovered in Mata Atlântica - the Atlantic Forest on the South East coast. We didn’t know the method of transmission for this disease – was it airborne; could it have been genetic; was it passed via touch, ingestion, blood or bodily fluids? We had all these questions and the number of casualties was increasing.”

She paused to collect her thoughts. “We had to act quickly and carefully; however because of all these unknown factors, we had to build and set up Quarantines in various cities so as to take the necessary precautions of not spreading the disease to others as well as to ourselves. All of this took time; time that we needed to treat the sick. Fortunately, it was determined within the first week of the outbreak that Fae were the only ones affected. So even though we didn’t know how the disease was transmitted, our human employees were at least able to go to the infected areas, treat our sick and isolated them by taking them to make shift quarantine areas; once permanent quarantine facilities were built, patients were transferred there.”

Nayara smiled sadly. “Our human counterparts were vital. For the first four months of the epidemic, they were the only ones who were able to deal directly with infected Fae before they were brought to quarantine. Humans took care of; treated; and buried those that contracted the disease. The death toll so far is 2,348; however, if it weren’t for humans, that number would have been substantially higher. We recognize and appreciate humans for what they have done for us and because of that, the Fae-human relationship changed from the single minded thought of humans only being valued as a food source to something closer to a symbiotic relationship. I know that it’s not a complete transformation of old ideals but it’s a move in the right direction.”

“No but it’s a huge step towards a better understanding and esprit de corps between humans and Fae. It’s a shame that it had to take an epidemic to change thousands of years of thinking. I can only wish for your clan’s epiphany to spread to other clans… starting in Toronto.” Lauren smiled a bittersweet smile.

Nayara handed the blonde a cup of tea as she sat down next to her. The brunette had been meaning to broach a subject with the blonde ever since she arrived but there was never an appropriate moment. “Lauren, do you know what type of Fae I am?”

The blonde was a bit surprised by the question, “No. I normally do not ask.”

Nayara nodded her understanding, “I’m an Empath.”

“Your species has the ability to feel exactly what someone else feels and you know what’s needed to make them feel better. You feed off of emotions.” Lauren excitedly explained what she knew of Empaths; however her excitement quickly diminished as the realization of Nayara’s abilities sunk in.

Nayara smiled at the doctor’s knowledge of her kind; Lauren never failed to surprise her. “That’s correct. However, when I feed off of someone’s emotions, it diminishes that emotion temporarily. I can also replace one emotion with another, for example I can take someone’s anger and make them feel happy instead.”

“I wasn’t aware of that aspect of your ability. I’ve never met any of your species before. Though, from what I read, your kind are normally very cool and stand-offish in order to stay detached; this prevents any chance of becoming overwhelmed by the emotional environment around them….. You
do not reflect the textbook definition of your species.” Lauren slipped into her detached doctor persona and tried to keep her feelings at bay; she felt awkward knowing that Nayara must have been able to sense her emotions all this time.

The brunette sensed the shift within the blonde. “Lauren, please do not feel uncomfortable around me. I’m over 2,200 years old and I’ve more than perfected my ability to shield myself so that I don’t have to be detached. Because of this, I can adapt my interactions with others based off of what I sense from them.”

“I see.” Lauren still felt awkward.

Nayara feared that the blonde would react this way before she told her of her Fae background and tried to allay her concerns. “Right now, I can sense that you’re trying to rein in your feelings. You don’t have to.”

Lauren hated not being in control and knowing that her emotions were exposed put her on the defensive, “Are your feeding off of me right now?!”

The Empath realized that what she said only made the situation worse and in a soft, calm voice explained, “No, you misunderstand. For Empaths, sensing does not include feeding. Because I sense how you feel that doesn’t mean that I’ve fed from you. I know that you would feel, for lack of a better word, violated, if I did that. I respect you and would never take from you unless you wanted me to… I would only feed from you if you asked; and know that I would never ask you.”

The blonde took a deep, calming breath but still felt uncomfortable.

Nayara continued to explain, “You have been nothing but professional since you’ve been here but your emotions are… intense. It was only obvious to me because I am an Empath. I’ve felt what you’ve been feeling since the first day we met... It has been very difficult to ignore.”

Whatever sense of calm Lauren was able to muster quickly dissipated and frustration took over, “It’s not like I’m flaunting it. I’m doing everything I can to keep how I feel contained-”

Nayara didn’t want the blonde to feel guilty or uncomfortable over how she felt; and gently held Lauren’s hand. “I didn’t say you were. I just want to help.”

“Help how?” Lauren was struggling to maintain her composure and it felt as if the walls were closing in, making it hard to breathe.

“I think you need to talk to someone. I’m a great listener and would be happy to listen if you wanted to talk. I just… feeling the way you feel… it must be incredibly difficult holding it all in.”

Lauren quickly pulled her hand out of Nayara’s grasp and stood up suddenly, “I think I should leave.”

Nayara didn’t expect this reaction. “No, please! I didn’t mean to upset you.”

The blonde wasn’t listening. She needed out of the apartment. She needed to be in control of her emotions and it was quickly slipping away. If she didn’t leave now, she wouldn’t be able to rein it in and she would crumble. That was something that she couldn’t allow to happen in front of anyone, much less Nayara; it was bad enough that the brunette knew how she felt. This made Lauren feel weak and pathetic.

The Empath felt the emotions racing through the blonde and chose to act. She rushed ahead of Lauren and blocked the door, preventing her from leaving.
“I don’t want to talk about it!” the blonde’s voice was starting to waver.

Nayara quickly bridged the gap between them; her eyes softly peering into Lauren’s as her hands reached out to brush blonde hair but Lauren put her arms up to deflect the soothing gesture. Before Lauren could say a word, Nayara grabbed her and pulled her into an embrace.

“Let me go!” Lauren exclaimed as she tried to free herself.

The brunette didn’t let the doctor’s attempts to free herself deter her; she just continued to hug her and gently said “I’m not letting you go” into blonde curls.

“I’m not letting you go.” The Empath repeated softly.

Lauren’s eroding emotional barrier was no match for Nayara’s warm embrace and soothing words; the last of her walls came crumbling down as she wrapped her arms around the brunette and started to sob.

Nayara just held her while Lauren cried; her body shuddering against her. The blonde had kept all her emotions buried and now that she had released them, she couldn’t stop nor did she want to. This was the first time that Lauren received any comfort from anyone since she left Bo and as much as she didn’t want anyone to see her break down, it was a relief to finally have some solace.

The Empath continued to soothe her while she cried; she meant what she had said to Lauren – she wouldn’t feed from her unless the blonde asked; she just wanted her to get through her emotional pain and be happy.

Once Lauren’s sobs subsided, Nayara gently guided her to the couch and handed her a handkerchief.

“Would you like something to drink? Tea or water or…?” Nayara asked.

“Something stronger if you don’t mind?” Lauren said as she wiped her cheeks and nose.

Nayara returned with 2 cold beers and adjusted herself on the couch next to Lauren; angling herself so that she was semi-facing the blonde.

They both drank in silence; Lauren trying to compose herself and Nayara giving her time to recover and decide what she wanted to do.

When the silence was finally broken, it was by Lauren. She needed to talk and Nayara was the closest to a friend that she had. She told her everything – how she came about to be with the Fae and her time with them; her love for Bo; all her sacrifices she made for Nadia and for Bo; how difficult being in a relationship with a Succubus was; their issues; her insecurities; Dyson’s and Tamsin’s part in their break-up; she didn’t hold anything back.

Nayara listened and by the time Lauren stopped talking it was well after midnight. The blonde was exhausted but also felt as if a weight had been lifted. She knew she still had a long way to go to mend her broken heart but this was a good start.

“I think you should get some sleep – you’re tired. Take my bed and get some rest. Okay?” Nayara suggested.

Lauren nodded; she didn’t have the energy to argue or dismiss the plan of her staying over at Nayara’s for the night. She felt drained. By the time the Empath tucked her in bed and exited the bedroom, Lauren had already fallen asleep.
The Empath put the tea cups and beer bottles in the kitchen sink and grabbed herself a blanket as she made herself comfortable on the couch. Nayara was at least glad that Lauren had acknowledged her pain - that was a first step. She couldn’t imagine how the blonde managed to get through the last six years of her life - the revelation of what she went through only made the Fae respect Lauren’s fortitude even more. The brunette closed her eyes; she was also tired from the evening’s events. She didn’t know what to expect in the morning – if Lauren would close herself off again or not; she hoped after tonight, Lauren would realize that she could trust her.

Light Fae Compound – Brasília (day six to nine)

After Lauren told Nayara about her life with the Fae and her relationship with Bo, instead of emotionally distancing herself as she would normally do, the blonde decided to just be herself with the Empath and to cast away her discomfort about Nayara’s ability to sense her emotions. Allowing herself to cry in front of someone and to talk about her problems was more freeing that Lauren could ever imagine.

In doing so, Lauren and Nayara became good friends within a short period of time. When in the lab, they entered into numerous discussions about the etiology and vector of transmission of the disease. Outside of the lab, they spent most of their meals chatting about anything and everything; and they socialized together on the evenings when Lauren wasn’t boxing with Serena. It had been a long time since Lauren had a friend and it was a very easy friendship as they both had a lot in common. Plus, the Empath was also a scientist which meant that she understood all the blonde’s geek speak. In fact, when Lauren told her, her ‘Why do chemists like nitrates?’ joke, Nayara couldn’t stop laughing. It made Lauren smile, knowing that the joke would have been a hit at her Award Ceremony.

Having a friend made Lauren feel the most normal she had ever felt in a long while. Even though the blonde could be herself when she was with Bo, her being human was always an issue – it made her feel weak and it helped create a fissure in their relationship. With Nayara – there were no strings; no issues of her humanity being a liability; she was just able to be herself and it was liberating.

TBC
Light Fae Compound – Brasília (day 10)

It was early morning and Lauren and Serena were preparing to leave for Base Camp in an hour. They were each doing their final checks before meeting.

The Ignis had finished packing and was double checking that all her personal weapons were safely stowed. Aside from the fact that she was a walking weapon; Serena loved blades and had a propensity to use throwing knives, Shurikens and throwing stars. She had already provided Hale with an early SITREP to let him know that they were headed into the forest and communication may be intermittent even with a Satellite Phone. If there were any issues, the Compound would contact him immediately.

Meanwhile, Lauren was in her apartment conducting a final check of her back pack to make sure that she had everything that she needed. She was anxious and nervous. Going to Mata Atlântica represented her reason for coming to Brazil – to investigate the epidemic and to treat it. She was excited about starting this aspect of her assignment and the fact that she absolutely loved field work made this phase even more exciting. More importantly however, Lauren desperately wanted to help Nayara and her Clan find a cure for this disease and she hoped that she would be successful in doing so; she didn't want to fail as too much was at stake.

The blonde had to do one last thing before meeting up with Serena and Nayara. She opened her dresser drawer and pulled out her cell phone; she was about to turn it on to check for messages but her thumb hesitated over the power button. A part of her hoped that there was a message from Bo; but the other part knew that if there was a message, it would only be upsetting and she just didn't trust herself not to go running back to Bo at this point; she needed a clear head before heading out in the field. Lauren sighed and tucked the cell back into the drawer. She then took out the photo that she'd been carrying with her everywhere; it was worn around the edges from being constantly held, looked at and shoved into pockets. She was about to place it next to her cell phone but stopped herself; instead she closed the dresser drawer and placed the photo back into her pocket. "One thing at a time." she thought.

Light Fae Compound – Roof top

Lauren and Serena had their gear and were on the roof top with Nayara getting ready to board a
helicopter. The Empath explained that the Base Camp was just outside of São Paulo in Mata Atlântica and was a 90 minute chopper ride there. As the remainder of the scientists from their team were from São Paulo, they would be the only ones flying in from Brasília.

Once in the chopper, they all buckled in and donned their headsets. It was Lauren's first time in a helicopter since she left Afghanistan and the experience quickly triggered memories from that time of her life: fear, apprehension, exhilaration, sense of duty and pride. Nayara looked over at her friend at the sudden change in emotions but the blonde smiled, indicating that she was okay. Lauren's reminiscing quickly faded as she took in the beauty of the landscape below her. Nayara was right, the view was spectacular.

The helicopter flew over lush green forests, mountain tops and mangroves; long, winding rivers and roaring waterfalls. As they gazed out at the wondrous landscape below, the Empath gave them a little history about the Atlantic Forest; that though adjacent to the Amazon rainforest, the Mata Atlântica had always been isolated from its larger and more famous neighbour; and it in fact was more ancient than the Amazon. Furthermore, being cut off from other tropical forests has allowed the Atlantic Forest to evolve unique ecosystems, which harbour a large number of species that are found nowhere else on Earth.

As they were about to land, Serena reminded Lauren about the tension between the Light and the Dark; and that even though security was in place she still needed to be careful when outside the confines of the Base Camp. The blonde nodded her understanding.

When the helicopter put down in a clearing, the Empath explained that it would be a 10 minute ride to Base Camp. As they alighted from the chopper, the security personnel quickly ushered them into one jeep and placed their gear into another before driving them towards the Camp.

Base Camp – near São Paulo (Mata Atlântica)

Lauren did not know what to expect as they approached the Base Camp. It was circular in shape with only one way in and out and its perimeter was completely surrounded by a 15 foot tall wooden barricade. As they drove in, the blonde got a better view of the Camp's layout. There were military styled tents throughout – some large and some small but with sufficient space between each so that there was no congestion.

As Nayara gave them a tour, she explained that a few Base Camps were erected throughout Mata Atlântica in order to expedite travel to and from the various villages for data collection. Due to the fact that a cure hadn't been found and no one knew how long it would take to find a cure, it only made sense to create semi-permanent structures with magical wards surrounding them for added protection against attacks.

If the Base Camp were the face of a watch, the entrance / exit would be at 6 o'clock; the large tents were in the foreground and closer to the center - they comprised of the Quarantine and Lab tents at 7 and 8 o'clock respectively; and the meal and security tents were at 4 and 5 o'clock. The smaller tents were two tents deep and housed all the staff. They were located in the back part of the Camp along the edge of the perimeter, from positions 9 to 11 and 1 to 3; with the washrooms and bathrooms located at the 12 o'clock position. The jeeps and ATVs were parked between the entrance and the centre where the arms of the clock would be; the large generators were next to the lab; and between the vehicles and the washrooms, there was a section that was cordoned off which housed a fire pit and some benches.

The Empath continued to explain that each Base consisted of 20 staff: seven scientists; eight security personnel / drivers; three cooks; and two maintenance personnel. Every member had their own tent – with the scientists normally on the 9 to 11 o'clock side as they changed out every ten days; whereas
the rest of the staff had their own tents assigned as they remained on site.

Nayara showed them to their tents. It wasn't the Taj Mahal but they would be comfortable - each tent had a cot and clean bedding to sleep on, complete with a mosquito net; a locker to put their belongings in; and a table and chair.

Once they dropped off their gear and settled in, Lauren and Nayara made their way to the Lab and Serena to Security. The first day there was spent reviewing the previous shift's notes – which villages they went to; what samples they gathered; if any other Fae became ill; and if so, how many. They also determined which villages they were going to visit during their 10 day stint.

As head of this scientific team's shift, Nayara liaised with the head of security so that they could determine what route to take and the time allocated for each village. Depending on the location from the Base Camp, the scientists could visit one to two villages a day before returning to Camp.

Lauren and Serena quickly fell into the Camp's routine. Lauren, Serena and Nayara travelled with the scientists and the assigned security detail to various villages. The daily schedule would entail having breakfast early; pack up their equipment and lunch rations; and leave by 7 A.M to go to the scheduled village. For the most part, trails to the villages were already established and well groomed due to the continuous traversing over the last six months. For those easier to reach areas, the group got there via jeep or ATV; and for the more difficult to reach villages, they drove as far as they could and hiked in the rest of the way.

Once at a village, the medical team collected blood samples from everyone; they also gathered air, water, soil and plant life specimens; ensuring that everything was properly labelled and categorized. This sample collecting was important for running tests when back at the Compound. It was also mandatory that everyone wore gloves when in contact with villagers. It was determined early on that minimal skin exposure seemed to deter the spread of the disease, therefore, all Fae personnel also had to wear, safety goggles, face masks and cover all exposed skin.

There were always dangers to be expected in the forest – poisonous snakes, panthers, crocodiles; so, from the moment they left Base Camp to the time they returned, Security personnel were always on guard with their main concern being the presence of Dark Fae - there had been a few attacks on staff in the past, so security was always vigilant. Because of this, Serena never left Lauren's side whenever they were outside the Camp.

By the time the team returned to Camp at the end of the day, it would normally be between five and six o'clock. Everyone had to go through quarantine protocols immediately upon returning before they could secure their samples, eat supper or do anything else.

Days in the field were normally very hot, long and exhausting; so the evenings after supper were normally spent chatting in the meal tent or at the fire pit, which was an excellent repellent for the various bugs. This was everyone's way of unwinding and bonding after a long day and because of this, there was a great deal of camaraderie within the team.

Serena would always be in the general vicinity of the doctor when inside the Camp but she adopted a more relaxed posture while within the Base's walls. By the time Lauren retired for the evening, she was always exhausted yet relaxed, so she never had a problem falling asleep. The blonde definitely enjoyed field work and being in Mata Atlântica was the most fulfilling, exhausting and alive she'd felt in a long time.

Base Camp (day 20)
The week and a half in Mata Atlântica were incredibly busy for Lauren and the time just flew by. The blonde was in her element gathering and collating samples and conferring with other scientists. Despite the circumstances of her being there, she was enjoying herself.

It was the last day of their shift and there was a flurry of activity with the scientists packing up their equipment; the entire team would be departing in the morning and the oncoming team would arrive to replace them. Lauren had finished packing and decided to take a walk around the camp instead of staying cooped up in her tent. It was a beautiful evening – the sun was low in the sky and the cool, steady breeze was a welcome break from the seasonal warm temperatures. Lauren's stroll brought her to Nayara's tent.

"Hi." Lauren said.

"Hi yourself. Finished packing?" Nayara looked up from her bag and smiled at the blonde. Whenever she was in Lauren's presence, she couldn't help but smile.

"Yes, all done. I'm not quite sure what to do with myself seeing that everything is packed." Lauren admitted. "But at least I'm not holed away in the lab. I think that's progress, no?"

"No. That's called a miracle!" They both laughed. Lauren had definitely gotten better at taking care of herself during these last three weeks.

"There… finished!" Nayara said as she zipped up her back pack. "Come with me." The Empath linked her arm in Lauren's as they walked towards the fire pit.

The blonde wasn't surprised by the gesture as she felt very comfortable being with the brunette and was very relaxed as they walked arm in arm. Nayara was very charming and always made everyone feel at ease, so it wasn't difficult to understand why people gravitated to her; Lauren also was not immune to her charisma.

When they arrived at the fire pit, there was an unusual amount of people already there chatting and mingling. Lauren looked at Nayara questioningly about what was going on. The brunette motioned to a bench and they arranged themselves so that they were semi-facing each other; their elbows resting on the back of the bench.

Nayara explained, "As you know, Fae can live for thousands of years and are almost immortal. This existence brought about a very lax way of thinking when it came to life – we took things for granted. However, because of this epidemic, a lot of Fae died; things changed. Our way of thinking changed. It made us realize that we were not immune to death and as such, it gave us a better appreciation of life… I think it's the one of the few good things that came out of all of this."

Lauren nodded, "I can see how tragedy can provide a change in perspective."

"Exactly. So, it's been a tradition since we built these Base Camps, that on the last night in the field, we hold a small concert. We do this as a reminder: to celebrate life; to show our appreciation for what we have; to honour and remember who and what we've lost; and to continue to recognize the importance of Fae and humans working together, side by side."

The blonde smiled at Nayara, "That's a wonderful idea." Lauren was in awe of this Fae clan - they had such a strong appreciation for humans and life; and it gave her hope for what could be for the clan in Toronto. If the Fae here could change thousands of years of thinking; the same could happen anywhere.

Lauren brought herself out of her reverie. "Do you have any hidden talents Nayara?"
The brunette smiled, "I've been told that I'm a good singer. What about you?"

Lauren waved her hand dismissively, "Aside from science and the incredible ability to babble on in a
geeky way, not really."

Nayara poked Lauren in the ribs and chuckled, "I don't believe you. I'm sure there is something. Stop
me when I get close … you can umm, tap dance? … Do magic tricks? … Play an instrument?"

The blonde smiled shyly, "Well I can play the guitar but it's been many, many years and another
lifetime ago since I've even strummed one. I don't think I'd even remember how to play."

"I knew it! You were holding out on me!" Nayara laughed; she had a pure, joyous, laugh that was
contagious; Lauren couldn't help but smile and laugh along with her. Maintaining her smile, Nayara
looked directly into the blonde's eyes, "You are definitely a woman of many hidden talents."

Lauren blushed and quickly changed the subject. "Oh, there's Serena. I'll go get her." The blonde
quickly got up to intercept the Ignis. She needed to clear her head as a part of her was enjoying
Nayara's flirtatious nature while the other part felt guilty that she was. By the time they got back to
the bench, most of the personnel in the camp minus the on duty security staff were already seated;
and a make-shift wooden platform stage, was already set up.

They sat down just as four scientists got up on the stage with guitars and percussion instruments to
perform.

Lauren couldn't remember the last time she experienced and enjoyed live music; to relax and enjoy
culture. She also couldn't believe how normal and human she felt amidst all these Fae so far away
from what she considered home. The normalcy of the moment overwhelmed her and made her smile.
The blonde looked at her friend and gently squeezed her hand to get her attention. "I just wanted to
say that despite the circumstances that brought me here, I am truly enjoying myself and I'm really
glad that we met and have become good friends."

Nayara gazed into the blonde's brown eyes and smiled in response; her smile was warm and bright,
"I, too, am glad that we have become such good friends."

Their attention was quickly drawn back to the quartet as they finished performing and everyone was
applauding. While clapping, Nayara leaned over to Lauren and said, "Oh, I forgot to mention… all
first timers to the Camp have to perform."

Lauren's eyes went wide at this revelation; she looked at the Empath for any sign of it being a cruel
joke; when she realized that the brunette was very serious, her hands started to sweat. The blonde
shook her head, "I was serious when I said that I haven't played in a long time."

Nayara stood up and waved to one of the scientists who had just finished performing. Lauren
watched in horror as he handed over his guitar to the brunette and then her mortification level
skyrocketed when Nayara stood with the guitar outstretched towards her. The blonde just stared at
the instrument and then up at her tormentor; not moving from her spot. At this point, Serena had
inched as far away from Lauren as she could on the bench; all the while chuckling at the doctor's
predicament.

"Come on Lauren; don't make me resort to plan B." Nayara reasoned.

The blonde was afraid to ask but curiosity got the better of her. "What… what's plan B?" she
stammered.

Nayara cocked her head to one side and grinned; and Lauren instantly regretted asking.
The brunette started to chant, "Lew-is! Lew-is! Lew-is!" The blonde dropped her head into her hands and groaned. Very quickly, the crowd joined in with chanting her name, until Lauren had no choice but to take the guitar out of Nayara's hands. She looked at the brunette and mouthed the words "I am going to get you for this." before making her way to the stage. The Empath sat down, chuckling at the blonde but at the same time, she was very anxious to hear her play.

Lauren sat on one of the folding chairs on the stage; took a deep breath and exhaled. She made herself as comfortable as possible; and plucked at the strings to quickly familiarize herself with the instrument. Looking up into the crowd, her eyes searched and found Nayara's; her voice steady, not betraying the nervousness she felt, "This is the last song that I taught myself, which was a little over six years ago. So please bear with me because I'm incredibly rusty." Lauren adjusted herself in the seat again before continuing, "It's called 'Everything'.”

The blonde exhaled and closed her eyes, tuning out everyone and everything as she focused on the music and the words in her mind. Before she realized it, her fingers seemed to tap into the memory of when she last played the song and they moved of their own volition. Her fingers plucked at the strings without hesitation; capturing and releasing notes accurately and giving her the confidence she needed to continue.

Lauren's body relaxed as she leaned into the guitar and allowed the music to flow through her. Any assumptions about her quiet and reserved personality dictating her ability to sing, was instantly dismissed as soon as she opened her mouth. Lauren's voice was haunting and she sang with a clarity and passion that was unexpected and wonderfully surprising.

Find me here,
And speak to me.
I want to feel you,
I need to hear you.
You are the light,
That's leading me,
To the place,
Where I find peace again.

You are the strength,
That keeps me walking.
You are the hope,
That keeps me trusting.
You are the light To my soul.
You are my purpose,
You're everything.

How can I stand here with you,
And not be moved by you?
Would you tell me,
How could it be,
Any better than this?

You calm the storms,
And you give me rest.
You hold me in your hands,
You won't let me fall.
You steal my heart,
And you take my breath away.
Would you take me in,
Take me deeper now.

And how can I stand here with you,
And not be moved by you?
Would you tell me,
How could it be,
Any better than this?

Cause you're all I want,
You're all I need,
You're everything,
Everything.

You're all I want,
You're all I need,
You're everything,
Everything.

The song triggered forgotten memories; causing the emotional pain to come rushing back with a ferocity that Lauren had not expected. It took everything within her to hold it together and finish performing; to not cry and to keep her voice from wavering.

When the blonde finished playing, there was a moment of silence before the audience erupted into applause. Lauren slowly looked up; smiling sheepishly. To say that everyone was pleasantly surprised by her performance would be putting it mildly - they were literally blown away; with Nayara and Serena clapping the loudest. The Empath still had goose bumps from listening to Lauren sing and had to quickly collect herself as she had gotten swept away by Lauren's voice and her passionate performance.

Lauren quickly dismounted from the stage and handed the guitar back to its owner who patted her on the back for a job well done. Lauren needed space; she needed to get away from the crowd. It was Serena's turn to perform as her security cohorts pushed her on stage; the blonde used this opportunity to slip away and head back to her tent so that she could get her emotions in check.

Nayara sensed the gamut of emotions coming off of the blonde while she was performing; it overwhelmed her and she had to shield herself otherwise she would've been swept up in those feelings. She knew that Lauren was upset and once the blonde got off the stage, she saw her duck away. By the time the Empath made it past everyone, the doctor was already gone.

The brunette quickly made her way to Lauren's tent and found her seated on her cot with her face in her hands. Lauren looked up, startled by the intrusion; her cheeks already stained with tears. The Empath didn't say a word; she rushed over to the blonde and pulled her up so that she was standing and hugged her tightly. This time, Lauren didn't struggle; instead she melted into her friend's comforting arms; her body shuddering against Nayara as she sobbed.

They stood there for a few minutes with the Empath holding her until her sobs subsided. Nayara then guided her to sit on the cot while she pulled up a chair to sit across from her; her hands holding Lauren's.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Nayara asked softly.

Lauren took a deep calming breath. "About six and a half years ago, I learned to play that song for my girlfriend, Nadia. It was one of her favourite songs and I learned it so that I could surprise her.
She loved it when I played that song for her." The blonde smiled at the memory.

"This was at a time in my life when things were normal; before everything changed – before the Congo, the Fae, Nadia's coma, my servitude and everything with Bo. This was when life was simple."

Lauren took a deep breath and exhaled. "This song summarized how Nadia felt about me. At the time I thought I felt the same but I knew that I wasn't honest with myself – I cared about her greatly and I loved her but I knew that her feelings were stronger than mine. I considered ending things before we left for the Congo but she convinced me that it would only bring us closer together… I've always felt guilty about prolonging our relationship and not ending things when I should have. But I didn't and now my guilt is further compounded by the fact that Nadia lost her life because of me."

The blonde sniffed and held back her tears. "Nadia was young, vibrant and passionate and she had so many plans. But her life was taken away when the Ash wanted me in his service; and when the Garuda used her as a puppet in his war. Nadia deserved more than that; she deserved to live – to be the successful photographer that she wanted to be; to marry and have a family… to love someone and to have them love her back with the same intensity. Those opportunities were taken from her… she will never get to have that life and sadly, neither will I."

Lauren breathed out, "Nadia is gone and I have to live with her death but I don't know how."

Tears made their way down her face as she laughed bitterly, "But you want to know what's ironic? This song expresses exactly how I feel for Bo; even after all that has happened; after all that I've sacrificed; and despite all the pain she caused me I still love her; I'm still in love with her… Yet she doesn't feel the same for me. What does that say about me? How pathetic am I? I guess karma is a bitch."

Nayara gently squeezed Lauren's hands; she hated seeing her friend hurt so much.

Lauren looked at Nayara with intense sadness in her eyes, "Can you take this from me? This pain and guilt I feel over Nadia and Bo is unbearable. It swirls around my head and my heart and its suffocating…"

Nayara was not expecting this. "You want me to feed from you?"

"Yes," the blonde whispered.

"You realize that it would only be temporary; only for a short period of time. I can't take away your pain completely. I want you to be sure of what you're asking." the brunette said, concern etched in her voice.

"I'm sure. A respite is better than nothing. I'm just so tired Nayara…. please!" Lauren begged.

Nayara removed one of her hands and gently caressed Lauren's cheek; a tender smile formed but there was a sadness behind it. "Okay," she breathed out. "Lie back and close your eyes."

_TBC_
The song "Everything" © was written by the band Lifehouse. All lyrics are theirs.

Have no fear, the next chapter will give insight into what Bo has been up to.
As stated previously, these chapters show Bo's and Lauren's individual journeys. Keep this in mind when you don't see Lauren in this chapter.

Thanks to my Beta, Neytiri's Heart for her insight; to Glasswrks and my friend Lil for their advice and assistance.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Dal Riata (Three weeks have passed since Lauren left)

Kenzi strolled into the Dal and had to pick her way through the crowd in order to get to her usual spot at the bar. The bar was extremely busy and loud from all the laughter and various conversations taking place. Ever since Trick installed the mechanical bull three weeks ago, his customer base doubled, causing the Dal to be packed to the rafters almost every night. Though this meant that business was great for Trick, it also meant that it was hard to find a place to sit. After the first two nights of not being able to sit at the bar, Kenzi recommended that their favourite spots be permanently reserved for them; the selling point for Trick being that Bo wouldn't have to 'force' anyone to move. When the Goth asked what made him think of a mechanical bull, he was a bit vague and simply said that one of his regulars mentioned it in passing awhile back and he finally decided to purchase one. Kenzi guessed that it wasn't the same customer that suggested Bingo Night as that had been a massive flop.

"Yo Trickster!"

"Hello Kenzi. How are you?"

"Tired and thirsty. I'm sooo parched. Hit me up!" The Goth batted her eyelashes at her favourite bartender as she drummed her hands on the top of the bar. He rolled his eyes.

"Where's Bo?" Trick asked as he turned to get her a beer.

"She should be here shortly. She's just finishing up on a case." Kenzi gazed longingly at the free booze in Trick's hand, making 'gimme' gestures with her fingers as she reached for it, "Come to mama!"

"Seems like that's all you two have been doing lately." Trick observed; concern evident in his voice.

"No kidding. I'm not used to all this hard work. I don't even recognize myself in the mirror." Kenzi joked to diffuse the anxiety that she felt.

As Kenzi waited for her best friend to arrive, she looked around the bar; taking a swig from her bottle. "Ahhh! Nothing beats an ice cold beer after an incredibly long day." she said to no one in particular.

There had been many a long day for Bo and Kenzi working their various cases; in fact, these last three weeks since Lauren left, it was one client after another. Bo was in heavy duty 'work hard' mode and no client issue was too big or too small. They photographed cheating spouses in the midst of
their extra curricular activities; looked for missing persons and Fae; searched for lost household pets; and tracked down exes who were not paying child support.

Kenzi would round up clients - both human and Fae; they weren't picky - and Bo would work the cases, sometimes with her partner or sometimes she would go solo. The Goth would use her contacts and computer savvy to get the information that they needed and Bo would follow leads and handle all the physical aspects of the job. They had a good tempo, opening and closing cases in rapid succession. Even their precious weekends were taken up with clients. For once in quite a long time, they weren't short on cash, which normally the Goth would be happy about, but she was too busy and exhausted to spend their hard earned money. She had numerous shopping sprees planned but clients and cases interfered with all the shoes, boots and clothes she intended to buy. Yet she kept her complaints to a minimum and stood by Bo. Kenzi hoped that given time, Bo would have a serious talk with her and revert back to her normal self.

Bo was possessed - not in the dark Succubus way but rather in the 'all about work' way. She was incredibly focused on their cases; always pushing Kenzi to seek out more clientele. The brunette never mentioned why she had a sudden fixation on their PI business but Kenzi knew what was motivating Bo - keeping busy meant that the Succubus didn't have time to think or feel anything about a certain blonde. At least that was the perceived plan behind Bo immersing herself in her work. But Kenzi knew that her friend's plan was flawed. Even though the brunette never mentioned Lauren since she left, the Goth knew that her best friend was heart broken. The signs were obvious.

Ever since their break up, Bo's emotions fluctuated from being depressed to being eerily calm to incredibly angry. Kenzi never knew what mood the Brunette was going to be in when she woke up and so she braced herself each day and reacted accordingly - whether it was being the supportive, understanding friend when Bo was moping around the shack listening to sappy, break-up songs; to being the cool-headed partner in crime when the Brunette was raving about a case or some jerk that cut them off in traffic or if she thought there wasn't enough cheese on their extra cheese pizza. Unfortunately, anything could set Bo off.

However, Bo was never angry with Kenzi though she did tend to be abrupt at times; which was why Bo never dealt with the clients – Kenzi did; which was ironic considering Bo was the politically correct member of the Investigative Team. However, these past few weeks, the tiny Goth was most definitely the spokeswoman for their PI business when meeting and dealing with clients as Bo's patience and ability to be social or polite was tenuous.

Unfortunately, her abruptness and her lack of social graces weren't her only issues. The Brunette was taking chances that she normally wouldn't. She would fight first and talk later; and if she did talk, the situation usually gravitated towards her fists or her trusty dagger ending the conversation. Kenzi knew that Bo needed to blow off some steam but she was definitely concerned – this wasn't her normal behaviour.

When Bo was on a case - if there was a fray - she would just jump in and not pay attention to how dangerous the situation was; or she would goad others into starting fights. In fact, it wasn't unusual for the Brunette to return to the Crack Shack with cuts and bruises all over her face and body; bleeding; or have broken bones and knife wounds. Each time Bo would always shrug it off as if it were nothing. She would say that she was testing the limits of her powers and abilities since she passed the Dawning. Kenzi knew it was just an excuse but she couldn't do anything to stop Bo from getting into fights. All she could do was stay calm, try to mitigate the situation as much as possible and when that failed, act as the Succubus' wing man when she was too weak to find someone on her own for healing purposes.

When Bo wasn't working on a case, she would normally be found with Kenzi at the Dal or at Vex's
bar, Carpe Noctem; quickly switching from 'work hard' to 'play hard' mode. Normally the Goth would never complain about spending the night unwinding in a bar with beverages, loud music and watching Bo on the prowl. In fact, Kenzi used to enjoy observing Bo do her Succubus thing – how people and Fae would gravitate towards her; and how she would be putty in her hands once she flashed them a smile or gave them a gentle touch. The whole process was fluid, smooth and precise; yet still flirtatious, fun and sexy.

How quickly three weeks can change things. Kenzi no longer enjoyed seeing Bo in her Succubus element. Now, the process was more like watching a hunter and their prey – hungry, cold and calculating; there were no more fun and flirty times.

Bo was always on the hunt for her next sexual conquest. It didn't matter if they were human or Fae; male or female. She didn't discriminate. The brunette once mentioned that she had two rules: no repeat sex or feed with someone; and no kissing. Kenzi wondered about the 'no kissing' rule but didn't ask as her friend never went into the details.

The brunette would choose her 'target' at bars, restaurants, movie theatres, grocery stores, department stores, parks... it didn't matter where. And then feed and/or have sex with them in her car; in alley ways; public washrooms; dark, hidden corners - anywhere that was available and that afforded some privacy if they couldn't make it back to the Shack. No place was off limits.

Kenzi had the unfortunate experience of walking in on Bo a few times in the bathroom of the Carpe Noctem; in the alley behind the Dal as she was leaving; in the Camaro when she went to grab her forgotten cell phone; and in the living room of the Shack. Normally, the Goth would make a smart ass comment but this wasn't the same as accidentally walking in on Bo and Lauren; this was walking in on the Succubus and her prey. It would be the equivalent to walking into a lion's den as it was feeding; one's instincts would be to stop and very slowly and quietly back away; hoping to escape unnoticed. It wasn't that Bo hurt anyone - she didn't; she knew exactly when to stop so that she wouldn't take all of their chi. What unnerved Kenzi was seeing her friend's warm, brown eyes turn electric blue because that signified that the Succubitch was at the helm of the good ship 'Bo'. When that happened, it was as if a switch was flicked and Bo went to sleep and her alter ego awoke. This alter ego only had one thing on her mind – her conquest; and everything around her was inconsequential; including Kenzi. It was very eerie to see and it made the Goth uneasy.

The Goth was suddenly roused from her thoughts when her cell buzzed, indicating that she just received a text.

* How come ur Succubunny friend is here and u r not? *

* Hey V-man! Bo's where? *

* At my bar, where else? *

* K, I'll be there soon. *

The Goth sighed. She knew it would be another night of babysitting to make sure Bo didn't get drunk and start a fight before she would find someone to shag, as Vex would say. It had only been three weeks that the brunette had been like this but it felt like a year. Kenzi was exhausted from watching her friend be self-destructive; as well, she felt that she was falling back into the same pattern that she was in before she ran away from home. When Kenzi left home, she vowed that she would never again surround herself with people who were so self-destructive; but she knew that she couldn't abandon Bo. Bo was her family; her best friend; and she needed her.

Kenzi stood up and chugged back the rest of her beer before saying goodbye to Trick. She would
support Bo for as long as she could; hoping that her best friend would snap out of her funk; but she also knew that something had to change soon.

The Carpe Noctem

The energy in Vex’s bar was different from that at the Dal. The Carpe Noctem’s interior was black, punctuated with bright flashing strobe lights and neon lights; the music was loud - vibrating off of every surface and pounding in one’s ears; and there were people everywhere - queued around the bar waiting to place their drink orders and on the dance floor crammed together, moving rhythmically to the beat. The Goth fit in with this crowd in her ensemble of leather; various belts and buckles criss-crossing her tiny frame; and her black ‘don't mess with me’ heeled boots.

Kenzi’s eyes did a quick sweep of the place and eventually spotted the Mesmer at the end of the bar. Vex had returned from his 'spiritual journey' in India two and a half weeks ago, with his powers restored – he never said how, just that he was 'whole' again. He quickly proved to Evony that he was no longer impotent and after passing her numerous tests, the Morrigan wasted no time in re-instating him; ensuring that all his regular responsibilities and perks were returned to him, which also included his bar.

He was the same Vex that everyone knew, hated and feared; but to Kenzi, they were friends - they had a quiet understanding and respect for one another; and Vex was fiercely protective of her. He may not have voiced it to the Goth but if any Fae tried anything with her, it was the last thing that they did - a point that he made quite clear to two Dark Fae Harpies the first time Kenzi came into his bar. Kenzi didn't realize that it was that 'example' that made it so easy for her to come and go into his bar; she just assumed that it was because she was associated with Bo.

"Where is she?" she asked him as she continued to look around the bar.

"What am I, her nurse maid? Though I do look rather fetching in a nurse's uniform." Vex smirked as he ran his hands suggestively over his torso.

Kenzi rolled her eyes; the Mesmer could always make her smile. "Have I mentioned that I didn't miss you while you were away?"

He put his hand on her shoulder and turned them both to face the bar; ordering Tequila shots for them both. One of the many perks of owning the bar meant that Vex never had to wait to be served.

"Here.” he handed her the drink. "To not missing me." They clinked their glasses together and gulped down their shots, not even bothering with the lime and salt; slamming their glasses down on the bar when they were finished.

"That's good shit!" Kenzi exclaimed as the alcohol burned a path down her throat.

Vex grinned and then indicated upwards. "Why don't we go to the VIP area? It'll be easier to spot Bo from up there."

Kenzi let the Mesmer lead the way. When they got up to the VIP lounge, there was a group already settled there. Vex made a ‘get out' motion with his thumb and they cleared out of the room instantly. With a nod of his head, the bartender quickly cleaned up the bottles and drinks that were left behind. The Goth was impressed by the authority that Vex commanded and was giddy with delight when he told the bartender to keep the Tequila coming.

Kenzi had been to The Carpe Noctem many times before but this was her first time in the VIP lounge. It was a large balcony that jutted out from the wall and over looked the main level. It was
semi-circular in shape and had a floor to ceiling privacy glass on the outside, which meant that they
could see out but no one could see in. The room also afforded an unobstructed view of everything
below: the entrance, main bar, dance floor, the seated areas, bathrooms and back exit. There were
tables, chairs and leather sofas arranged within the room; and it was also fully equipped with a
private bar and bartender to make whatever drink one desired, as well as washroom facilities, so no
one had to go downstairs until it was time to leave. Kenzi was impressed and raised her eyebrow,
conveying this to the Mesmer.

He smirked and plopped himself down on one of the couches; putting his feet up on the coffee table;
and indicated for her to do the same. "Just relax luv. We both know the routine."

The petite woman knew that he was right. The same thing happened every night; it just changed
slightly depending on the brunette's mood: Bo would find someone and feed, get drunk and then
possibly start a fight; or she would get drunk and then get into a fight. Either way, both Kenzi and
Vex would try to stop the melee and then the tiny woman would carry a drunken Succubus home to
sleep it off.

Kenzi stood and walked to the wall of glass; her eyes scouring the downstairs level. "I see her… she
just came in from outside, which means that she's already fed. Maybe this will be a quiet night?"

"We can only hope." The Mesmer said wishfully.

The Goth observed Bo sitting at the bar; a drink in one hand and her cell in the other. "Yup, she's at
the bar. She'll be drinking quietly for awhile."

Kenzi made her way back to the couch and marvelled at how comfortable the leather felt. She
wondered how she could get the couch back to the Shack when the bartender placed four shot
glasses each in front of them; thereby distracting her from her thoughts of appropriating the furniture.

Once they were alone again, Kenzi asked, "So, when will you tell me a story about a certain Mesmer
who travelled to India and regained his powers?"

Vex smiled, "When you are done Succusitting, I will tell you all about my fab-u-lous adventures."

"Well, when that time comes, we should make a night of it – movie, popcorn, drinks, and mascara!"
The tiny Goth said excitedly. "I need a refresher on my double pump smudge proof technique."

The Mesmer smiled, "Deal. I need the practice anyway. I let a lot of things slide when I was away."

They both sat there in a comfortable silence, enjoying their Tequila; Kenzi looking around the lounge
and occasionally glancing down to where Bo sat at the bar.

Vex broke the silence. "So, has she talked about the Doc at all?"

Kenzi shook her head, "Nope, not a peep since she told me that Lauren high-tailed it outta here."

The Dark Fae pondered for a bit, "I'm sure blondie had her reasons-"

The Goth interrupted, "Don't you start defending her too!"

Vex was puzzled, "Too?"

Kenzi sighed, "Yeah, Bo asked me to not bad mouth Lauren – that she was right to leave."

The Mesmer nodded his head in understanding, "As I said, I'm sure that the Doc had her reasons; it
couldn't have been easy for her to leave. From what I saw, it was undeniable that she loved the Succuslut. The petite woman shot him a look stopping Vex in mid-sentence. "I mean… that she loved Bo... And Bo is obviously hurting right now."

Kenzi made a face and threw her hands up in the air, "No shit Sherlock! I know that. I live with it every day!"

"Hey luv, no need to get testy!"

The Goth looked away briefly before resuming eye contact with her friend, sighing, "I'm sorry… it's just exhausting and frustrating watching her do this to herself. I'm worried about her."

"And she's a grown woman… albeit baby Fae."

"Who is making huge ass mistakes." Kenzi interjected.

Vex nodded in agreement, glancing below.

"So, does she ever pick up blondes?" he asked out of curiosity.

Kenzi shook her head, "Nope! Red heads, brunettes, purple hair, orange hair, mohawks, spiked hair, no hair… but no blondes. I think it hits too close to home."

The Mesmer's attention was still directed below. "Well, I think she's gotten over that because she's dancing with a blonde right now."

"Dancing? Bo doesn't ever dance with her food. Did you trade in part of your vision to get your powers back?" Kenzi said incredulously.

"My eyesight's just fine, thank you. Look!" Vex indicated to the dance floor.

Kenzi stood up to get a better look. Sure enough there was Bo slow dancing with a beautiful, leggy blonde. As they swayed to the music, the Goth could plainly see that the blonde woman looked very much like Lauren. They were glued to one another; Bo's hands were wrapped around the woman's waist and her nose was buried in her hair, while the blonde was nuzzling the brunette's neck. It didn't take a genius to figure out that the reason Bo was dancing with this woman was because she resembled Lauren.

Kenzi was dumbfounded at the odds that Bo would meet someone that held such an uncanny resemblance to the Doctor. As she stood there staring, something caught her eye. "Uh oh. I think we have a shit-uation."

Vex sat up when he heard the concern in Kenzi's voice and made his way next to her.

Kenzi's nose was now pressed to the glass as if that would allow her a better view; tapping the glass with her index finger in order to point towards the dance floor. "I think that determined looking dude making his way towards Bo - the one with the scowl on his face and the skull tats all over his arms… I think that's blondie's boyfriend."

Vex's eyes moved to where she was pointing and agreed with Kenzi's assessment. And if this Fae's body language was any indication, he was very angry.

"We should get down there ASAP to avoid a repeat performance of the other night." Kenzi exclaimed.
Vex nodded his understanding. The incident in question was a fight between Bo and a Redcap - Bo walked out with a busted lip and the Redcap was carried out on a stretcher. The Mesmer didn't mind fights in his establishment; they were to be expected but he shared Kenzi's concern and was genuinely worried about the Succubus' behaviour.

Without another word, they raced down the stairs and quickly parted ways. Vex grabbed two bouncers and pointed out the boyfriend to one; and took the other bouncer with him as he made a bee line towards the blonde woman. Kenzi went straight for Bo.

The Dark Fae with the skull tattoos marched up behind Bo; grabbed her by the shoulder and roughly pulled her away from the blonde woman. Both women were startled by the interruption and Bo's confusion quickly turned to anger when she realized that the man was trying to stop her from dancing with the blonde. Fortunately for all concerned, Bo was very drunk and her reaction time was slow. Her intent to respond with a fist to the man's face was thwarted when one of Vex's bouncers appeared out of nowhere. Kenzi swore she saw the bouncer Vulcan Nerve Pinch the boyfriend; and then watched as he quickly carted the unconscious body away. This whole near-altercation was over in seconds and wasn't even noticed by the people dancing in the vicinity.

While Bo's attention was on the tattooed man and bouncer, Vex quickly took control of the blonde and had the other bouncer escort her out the back and into a cab. By the time Bo turned around, the woman was gone and Kenzi was standing in her spot.

"Kenzeee!" The brunette slurred as she wrapped the Goth in a tight embrace; happy to see her friend. "You're here!"

"Of course I'm here BoBo. Where else would I be?"

"Hey, did you see Lauren? She was right here!" The brunette did a 360 degree turn as she slowly looked around the bar for the blonde; this wasn't the greatest move for a drunken Succubus as it left her wobbly and a bit dizzy.

"No, I didn't see her." Kenzi said as she tried to steady her friend.

"We were dancing and having fun. She's not mad at me anymore Kenz." The brunette had a goofy, happy smile etched on her face as she placed her hands on the Goth's shoulders.

"That's great Bo." Kenzi smiled on the outside but on the inside, her heart ached for her friend.

"I don't know where she could be though." Bo looked perplexed.

Kenzi used this opportunity to try to get Bo home and in bed before she got into any more trouble. "You know how Lauren is – she worked all day at the lab and is probably tired. I'm sure she made her way back to the Shack and is waiting for you there."

Bo paused to think about Kenzi's response, "You're probably right. We should leave now, I don't want Lauren waiting up for me if she's tired."

The tension in the Goth's shoulders relaxed slightly. "That's very considerate of you."

The brunette smiled a bittersweet smile, "I'm trying to be. I want Lauren to know that she's my number one priority."

The Goth nodded and put her arm around her friend's waist; guiding her out of the bar and towards the Camaro that was parked in the back. Vex was waiting for them and helped Kenzi put Bo in the car.
Kenzi just managed to get Bo into bed before she passed out. She sighed sadly as she looked at her friend. She had never seen her so drunk to the point that Bo actually thought that blonde woman was Lauren. However, the brunette's display reinforced Kenzi's concerns that Bo was spiralling out of control.

The Goth knew that after an evening of heavy drinking, Bo would sleep straight through the night. Kenzi took off her friend's boots and covered her with a blanket so that she would be comfortable. As she was about to turn away, something caught her eye – there was something sticking out from under the spare pillow. She made her way to the other side of the bed and lifted the pillow, revealing an envelope marked 'Bo'.

Kenzi hesitated. She knew that this had to be 'the' letter that Lauren left for Bo. She didn't want to invade her best friend's privacy but she needed to have a clearer understanding of the situation and she knew that Bo wouldn't tell her. In fact these past three weeks were a good indication of that. She knew that if she read the letter it would help shed some light on Bo's behaviour and she would be in a better position to help her friend.

The decision had been made - the end justified the means and the Goth hoped that someday Bo would forgive her for breaching her privacy. Kenzi's hand hovered over the envelope as she looked sadly at her friend and whispered, "I'm sorry Bo. I have to do this."

The brunette was out like a light; she could have fired a cannon in the room and Bo would not have woken up. Kenzi quietly took the letter; removed the pages from the envelope and unfolded it. She noticed that Bo must've read it numerous times as the paper was ripped along the folds, it was dog eared and there were tear stains on the pages.

Kenzi stood there reading; her back to Bo. She didn't know what to expect when she opened the envelope. All she knew was that she was very angry at Lauren for breaking her best friend's heart. Bo was an emotional mess right now because of Lauren and Kenzi just assumed that Bo was under the blonde's spell thinking that Lauren could do no wrong.

However, the unexpected happened as Kenzi started to read the letter. In reading Lauren's words, things became clearer - she finally understood the doctor; why she left; and why Bo was so upset.

The petite woman was incredibly moved by Lauren's words and emotions and quickly regretted that she never took the time to understand what it meant for Lauren to be a slave to the Light Fae; what she lost and sacrificed for Nadia and for Bo; and how alone and insecure she felt being a human working for and surrounded by the Fae. The Goth could relate to the feeling of not being enough as she too, was a mere human amongst all these super beings.

The more she read, the more Kenzi chastised herself for not being more sympathetic towards Lauren. Yes, they did have a better understanding and respect for one another and were starting to become friends but they should've stuck together as they were both minorities in this world that they found themselves in.

When Kenzi reached the end of the letter, she wiped away the unexpected tears that stained her cheeks. Lauren's letter was heart wrenching and she couldn't imagine how difficult it must've been for her to write it or how hard it must've been for Bo to read it.

Kenzi's initial plan was to have a better understanding of what Bo was going through and instead, she also gained further insight into the blonde. The Goth was surprised that Lauren felt so much as she was always so closed off; keeping her emotions hidden. She felt guilty saying that Lauren had a
cold speculum for a heart, as well as all the many, scathing comments about being cold and not having a personality. It must've hurt Lauren to hear herself be described that way. But even if it did bother her, she never let it show. Now the Goth knew why she acted the way she did – she did it to protect herself from the Fae and to survive all these years without friendship or companionship. Even when Kenzi was living on the streets, she had friends and they had each other's backs. Lauren didn't have anyone or any support. Kenzi also could relate to what Bo said about running away - how desperate Lauren must've been to actually leave and how she must be feeling right now. The tiny woman felt for the blonde; she remembered how alone and scared she felt after she ran away from home and she wouldn't wish that on anyone.

As for Bo, Kenzi knew how much Bo felt and how intense her feelings were in general – she would always feel guilty for the deaths that she caused in her past because she didn't know who she was or how to control her abilities. And now after reading the letter, Kenzi knew that Bo was carrying the burden of being the cause for Lauren leaving, as well as the part she played in their relationship ending. The tiny brunette knew that Bo could not forgive herself for hurting Lauren and as such, Bo was punishing herself by immersing herself in work, booze and meaningless sex with strangers.

What Kenzi didn't realize was that Tamsin told Lauren about the kiss. When the Goth read that, she had an intense desire to kick the Valkyrie's ass repeatedly. The really unfortunate thing was that the Doctor didn't know that the kiss meant nothing to Bo; and that she didn't instigate it - Bo was faithful to her. Kenzi sighed at all their misconceptions and misunderstandings and how all this heartache could have been avoided if they had only talked.

Now that Kenzi knew about Tamsin's involvement in the break up, Bo's rule about 'no kissing', finally made sense. Bo equated the personal and intimate act of kissing to being emotionally monogamous to Lauren even though they were no longer together.

Kenzi carefully and quietly put the letter back into the envelope and replaced it under the pillow; Bo never stirred. The Goth was now 100 percent Team Lauren and she vowed to do everything she could to help her best friend and the doctor. Something had to change soon and Kenzi was going to be that instrument of change.

TBC

Chapter End Notes

- No Harpies were killed during the writing of this chapter – maimed, yes; but not killed.

- The next chapter will focus on Lauren.
The Bond

Chapter Notes

- This chapter follows Lauren and continues directly from where chapter 8 ended.

Special thanks to bluebunnyRAFI for providing me with information on Brazil's culture – much appreciated!

Thanks to my Beta, Neytiri's Heart - for her advice and awesome insight. And to my friend Bev, for helping me hash out storyline details and getting me past my slump.

Base Camp – Lauren's tent (evening - day 20)

Lauren lay back on her cot and closed her eyes. She felt emotionally exhausted from dredging up her past; her residual feelings regarding Nadia; and all her hurt and disappointment with regards to her relationship with Bo. The blonde was a pro at hiding and masking her emotions but once she allowed them to show, she found it difficult to stuff them back down again.

Before Nayara could begin, Lauren gently squeezed her hand and looked in her eyes, "This may sound stupid but... will this hurt?"

Nayara replied genuinely, "No. There will be no pain whatsoever."

The Empath could tell that Lauren had some questions but was hesitant to ask. As if reading her friend's mind, she asked, "Would you like me to explain what will happen?"

She nodded her head. "I'm sorry, I know that you're trying to help and I don't want to hinder your... process. I just have this compulsion to understand."

Nayara chuckled. "I know, Lauren - you can't turn off your scientific brain." The brunette paused for a moment before continuing. "How about this? I'll give you the Cole's Notes version and once we have a quiet moment back at the Compound, you can ask me all the questions you want."

"Okay." Lauren sat upright so that she was at the same eye level as the brunette.

Nayara adjusted her chair so that it was closer to Lauren's cot. "It's ironic that as a Fae that feeds off of emotions, I need to physically touch the person. Well, that's not quite accurate. I don't have to touch the person - I can feed or channel as long as I'm within visual sight of the individual; but having a physical link makes for a better connection and transference."

The Light Fae continued, "It's different for every Empath but what works for me is touching some part of the person's face – whether it's with my hand to some part of their face or my forehead to theirs."

The brunette settled back into her chair. "When I start, you will feel my hand grow warm – it won't be burning hot but it will definitely be noticeable. There is also the possibility that you may feel a tingling sensation throughout your body. But this is different for everyone, so you may not experience it."
Lauren nodded her understanding, prompting Nayara to continue.

"As I feed, you will start to feel incredibly tired as if you had a long, hard day and all you want to do is sleep. In fact, it would be very difficult for you to stay awake. But when you do wake, you will feel well rested; probably the best sleep that you've had in a long time. You'll also feel very happy, energized and light, like a heavy burden has been lifted. This sensation or euphoria as I like to call it, will last for a few days, perhaps five, but it is really dependant upon how much I consume."

The blonde interrupted, "Take as much as you like."

"Are you certain?" the brunette wanted to make sure.

"Yes, I am." Lauren said resolutely.

Nayara nodded her acknowledgement. "Okay then. Finally, and this is important, channelling causes a bond to form which affects both parties - such is the nature of the feed. This bond is determined by the state of our existing relationship, which is then intensified or magnified, and which lasts for the entire euphoric period.

I'll give you few examples to clarify. If the state of our relationship was that we didn't like each other, then after feeding, our feelings would be more intense and we would hate one another. If we were casual friends, then our friendship would feel stronger as if we were best friends. And if we liked each other romantically, then those feelings would be more intense and would lean towards love. Regardless of the type of relationship, this heightened emotion would affect us both and last for a few days."

The brunette looked into her friend's eyes, seeking confirmation again. "Do you understand everything that I've just told you? I want you to be sure of this Lauren."

The blonde nodded her head. "I trust you." she said genuinely.

Nayara exhaled deeply, "Alright then; close your eyes and relax."

Lauren laid back and got comfortable on her cot.

Leaning forward slightly, Nayara placed her left hand on Lauren's forehead and momentarily closed her eyes as she took a deep breath and exhaled. The blonde noted how soft her friend's hand felt and relaxed under her touch.

A few seconds passed before Lauren started to feel something. At first she wasn't sure but then she felt the warmth slowly intensify from underneath the Empath's hand. "I can feel it… the spot under your hand is very warm."

Lauren always considered her observations of Fae and their feeding methods to be interesting; so finding herself on the receiving end of a feed, despite the circumstances, tugged at her curiosity. The blonde noted her physical reactions to the Empath's channelling and felt compelled to verbalize her observations, moreso for herself than for anyone else's benefit. "My body also feels tingly… the sensation starts from near your hand and then radiates out."

Nayara smiled at her friend's scientific geekiness and saw her stifle a yawn. Lauren was starting to feel tired and it was just a matter of time before she fell asleep.

Despite her grogginess, the blonde's insatiable curiosity compelled her to force her eyes open to observe Nayara.
"Your eyes!" Lauren exclaimed.

"What?!” Nayara was taken aback by the slight outburst and pulled her hand away in reaction.

"Your eyes are brown." The blonde said in a softer tone; her fascination with the physical change in the Empath's appearance temporarily surpassed any fatigue she felt.

Nayara smiled. "You know how a person's eyes normally indicate their mood or emotional state?"

"Yes." Lauren's sudden burst of energy instantly receded and she was now struggling to keep her eyes open.

"For an Empath, the eyes are the doorway to one's emotions – they reflect it completely. When I feed, my eyes take on the color of the person that I'm channelling from." Nayara observed the blonde's eyelids grow heavy and softly placed her hand back on Lauren's forehead. "So, feeding from you, my eyes become brown."

The blonde blinked a few times but was unsuccessful in keeping them open. "That's a shame." she drawled.

"What's a shame?" the Fae asked, confused by her friend's statement.

"Your blue eyes… so beautiful." Lauren managed to reply through her drowsiness.

Nayara blushed at the compliment and smiled that only the blonde could illicit such a response from her. "I consider myself honoured to reflect your eyes Lauren."

Lauren smiled sweetly at her comment before she drifted off to sleep.

The Empath stood up from her chair some time later and covered Lauren with a blanket. The blonde was resting and would sleep through the night. It wasn't that Nayara didn't want to help Lauren but feeding from her meant that a deeper connection would form and she was trying to prevent that from happening. As it was, Nayara already felt strongly for Lauren and had been suppressing her admiration for and attraction to her. She considered her to be an amazing person; a wonderful friend; and a brilliant scientist who was extremely loyal and passionate. The Empath wanted nothing more than to pursue a relationship with the blonde but she knew that Lauren was not ready and she didn't know if she ever would be; her love for the Succubus ran deep and the pain of her heartbreak, even more so. Now that Nayara fed off of her, she was cognizant that the next few days would be difficult as her feelings for the blonde would be more intense.

Nayara sighed as she looked down at the doctor. She gently brushed a strand of blonde hair from her face; her fingers lingering on Lauren's cheek to memorize how soft and wonderful her skin felt. The Empath didn't know how the blonde survived these six years with the Fae after everything that she went through and yet still remained loyal to them. Nayara felt her anger grow as she thought about Lauren's treatment by her own kind and she felt ashamed to be Fae.

The brunette kissed Lauren's forehead tenderly and quietly exited her tent. Nayara knew that Lauren would feel better in the morning and she hoped that it would be the start towards her recovery. However as she walked away, her thoughts began to stray and she felt her emotions fluctuate. She grew angry thinking about how foolish and selfish Bo was for hurting Lauren and for throwing her love away; and at the same time, she was also incredibly jealous as the Succubus held the blonde's heart. Nayara wished she were so lucky – if she were Bo, she knew that she never would've made such a mistake. The Empath stopped in mid-stride and took a couple of cleansing breaths to get her
emotions under control before resuming the trek back to her tent. The next few days were definitely going to be difficult.

**Base Camp** (day 21 – early morning)

Lauren woke up feeling refreshed and incredibly well rested. She couldn't remember when last she had such a restful sleep. As she contemplated last night's events, the blonde was surprised to find that she wasn't upset about what led to her requesting Nayara's help. Instead, she felt as if the weight of the world was taken off of her shoulders. Rationally, she knew that her situation hadn't changed but it was as if her emotions were detached. She couldn't even make herself feel sad or overwhelmed when she thought about her life's circumstances - her brain knew the reality of her situation but her emotions weren't affected by them. She felt liberated in every sense and it was a wonderful feeling.

They were all seated quietly in the helicopter making their way back to Brasília. It had been a long but productive 10 days in the field and thoughts of what had to be done when they returned to the Compound, filled the minds of the three women. Serena noticed that the doctor seemed different this morning but she couldn't quite put a finger on what it was. There was a slight change in her gait and how she spoke; and though the doctor was normally pleasant and professional, this was something more.

It wasn't until they were about half-way through their flight that it occurred to her what was different. They were all watching the lush green landscape below when the Ignis heard something. At first it didn't register as it was indiscernible against the sound of the helicopter blades and all the cabin noise, however once Serena was able to differentiate the sound from the rest of the din she was able to trace it back to the blonde. Serena finally clued in to what was different with Dr. Lewis - she was 'chipper'. The doctor seemed to be in her own world, smiling and humming to herself as she looked out at the countryside below. Serena had never heard or seen the doctor hum in her six years with the Fae; and she didn't know if she should be amused, thankful or concerned by what caused it.

Back at the Compound's Lab, Lauren couldn't wait to get her hands on all the samples that they collected in the field. She had boundless energy and her mind was racing with all the things that she had to do: extract the samples; examine them for variations or mutations; record findings and pertinent information; and properly store for preservation and avoidance of contamination. In following this procedure for each sample, there would be a plethora of information collected from all the villages surrounding all three Base Camps. They would then be able to collate and compare the information and look for any commonalities between all the sites and the infected patients.

The hours flew by as Lauren worked diligently; testing and observing blood, plant and water samples under the microscope and recording the information. Nothing else existed as Lauren hummed to herself, happily immersed in her work.

When Serena entered the lab to take the blonde to lunch, she knew that with everything collected in the field, the doctor would be busy. As such, the Ignis was prepared for the doctor's workaholic persona to try and deflect her attention in some way or that she would insist on eating later. Instead, Lauren just smiled, thanked her for reminding her about lunch and promptly put the samples and equipment away so that she could go to the dining hall with the Ignis. Serena was flabbergasted.

In the dining hall, Lauren was all smiles and engaged in small talk with those seated next to her even if she didn't know them. When Serena walked Lauren back to the lab afterwards, the doctor asked her to pass her regards on to Ash Santiago. While they were talking, the blonde intentionally but briefly touched her arm. The Ignis was baffled - the doctor was never touchy feely. Serena even enquired about her health to see if she was feeling okay, to which the blonde chuckled.
Later that evening

Nayara had observed the blonde during the day but didn’t want to intrude on her work tempo. Aside from also being incredibly busy and having to provide the Ash with her weekly field report, the brunette was still adjusting to her amplified feelings and needed time to control what was real and what was heightened. Now that the work day was done and her emotions were somewhat contained, the Empath decided to pay the blonde a visit to see how she was doing.

Lauren opened her door and smiled. "Nay! Hi!"

"Hello… Nay?" the brunette repeated in a puzzled tone as Lauren showed her in to her apartment.

The blonde beamed, "It's my new nickname for you – it's short for Nayara."

The Empath chuckled. "I like it."

"Would you like something to drink?" Lauren asked.

"No thanks, I can't stay long. I just wanted to see how you were feeling."

Nayara sat on the couch while Lauren sat beside her. The blonde seemed to have a permanent smile on her face. "I feel great! Never better!"

"That's good to hear, though to be honest, you've been acting as if you've been on Methamphetamines all day." Nayara chuckled. "I know that you're not but you don't seem yourself to everyone else – you're hyper-focused and almost bouncing off the walls; and you're humming and smiling all the time." The Empath paused and had a sparkle in her eyes, "Though you do have a beautiful smile and really should smile more often."

"Flatterer." Lauren laughed and playfully swatted the brunette's arm. "I suppose it would look like that. I just felt incredibly happy and energized all day… I still do. It's an amazing feeling. Thank you so much, Nay."

"I'm happy to hear that you're feeling better Lauren." The Empath smiled genuinely as she got up to leave.

The blonde reached out and gently grabbed Nayara's hand to stop her from leaving and the brunette instinctively curled her fingers around Lauren's. The simple touch caused Lauren's heart to race which caught her off guard; similarly, chills travelled through Nayara's body and she had to take a quick breath to collect herself.

"Can I ask a favour of you?" Lauren asked as she quickly composed herself and let her hand drop down to her side.

"Anything." The Empath replied seriously as she sat back down.

"I didn't pack much coming here and I really need some extra clothes and other essentials. I don't know the area and I was wondering if you could take me shopping sometime this week?" Lauren asked.

The Fae thought it was going to be something serious or dire and chuckled at the request. "Of course! I'm sorry, I'm such a terrible hostess – I haven't even shown you around Brasília."

"I wasn't expecting you to Nay. We've had more pressing things to deal with. My needing clothes for the field and gym is not a priority-"
"Nonsense, Lauren." The Empath interrupted. "Having you comfortable while you work to find a cure for the disease ailing my people is more than reason enough. I am swamped with meetings tomorrow but how about we leave work a little early the day after?"

"That sounds great, thank you." Lauren said genuinely. "I'll let Serena know. I'm sure that she will be happy to flex her bodyguard muscles outside the walls of the Compound." Lauren chuckled. Even though the Ignis never complained, she knew that Serena was bored whenever in the Compound and would appreciate the opportunity to actually perform her duties as a protector instead of spending her time escorting her to the dining hall for meals.

Brasília (day 23 – early afternoon)

When the doctor told Serena that they would be going into the city a couple of days ago, she was ecstatic. Even though it hadn't been long since they were in the Atlantic Forest, being in the Compound was mind numbing. She longed to do the job that she was assigned but whilst within the Light Fae HQ, there was no point. However, venturing out into an unknown environment would put her on her guard for any possible threats - this would be a better use of her time, effort and skills - and she was looking forward to it. Serena was aware that their excursion would most likely be uneventful but anything would be a better change of pace from the routine of the Compound.

Dr. Hernandez drove them to one of the popular shopping districts that had a huge variety and selection of stores. Both Serena and Lauren didn't know what to expect and were surprised to find that the outlet stores were very similar to those in Toronto. They quickly realized that the business of retail didn't change because one was located in a different hemisphere. When they got out of the car, Serena explained to Lauren that she would hang back a bit in order to assess the surroundings; that both she and Dr. Hernandez could go wherever and do whatever they wanted - she would be there in the background.

At first Lauren felt that she was being rude that Serena was walking behind them as she was not able to participate in their conversation or shop together; but as soon as she thought it, she realized how silly that was. First of all, this was what the Ignis wanted – she was doing her job; secondly, Serena didn't do conversations; and lastly, could she really picture the Ignis shopping, trying on clothes and asking if the outfit matched her complexion? Once the blonde chuckled at herself, she didn't give the bodyguard situation a second thought and was able to comfortably walk, talk and shop with Nayara without feeling as if she were ignoring or being discourteous to Serena.

Being in security, one needed to be observant of one's surroundings and also of people – not so much what they said but how they said it; their eyes; their mannerisms; and their body language. Fortunately, Serena had an eye for details and was skilled at reading people; both of which were an asset in her line of work. In keeping some distance between herself and the two doctors, the Ignis was able to assess the area and have a clear view of anyone that would approach Dr. Lewis. She was also able to observe the blonde carefully and without interruption. Ever since they returned from the Atlantic Forest, the doctor was happy; she was all smiles and constantly humming; and even though she was the consummate professional she was more pleasant than usual. The Dr. Lewis that she knew back in Toronto was cool and detached; now she was warm, friendly and very personable. It's not that Serena didn't like seeing this side of the blonde or that she was concerned about her behaviour; she just didn't know what happened to cause the change.

She watched as both doctors went from store to store, looking at clothes and trying them on; talking and laughing as they did so. Each woman would bring the other something to try on just for the fun of it and then they would give their opinion once they were finished modelling. Even though Lauren was looking for clothing for the gym and the field, she also tried on hats, shoes, blouses and dresses for fun. Both doctors seemed to be enjoying themselves as they modelled various articles of clothes
whilst also teasing each other about the clothes that they were wearing. Serena knew that they both needed a well earned break after the long hours that they spent in the lab and in the field; and if this was their way of blowing off steam, it was harmless fun and definitely well deserved. As she watched the two women interact, she wondered if Dr. Hernandez was the cause for Dr. Lewis' change in attitude. It was obvious that they were close friends but the subtle glances that they shared, as well as, indications in their body language whenever they were in close proximity of one another, suggested that there may be something more between them. Granted, it didn't matter to Serena if her client was involved with anyone – her only concern was Dr. Lewis' safety. However, if she were a matchmaker, she would say that the two looked good together.

Three hours later they were done shopping – Lauren had purchased what she needed as well as two outfits – a sun dress and an evening dress – upon the Empath's insistence that they fit her perfectly and looked fabulous on her. Nayara then suggested that seeing that they were in the city, they should make the most of the opportunity and grab a bite to eat at a popular Churrascaria, which she explained, was a restaurant that specialized in barbequed food.

As they entered the restaurant, the smell of barbequed meat permeated the air, making them salivate; the aroma fuelling their hunger. Lauren insisted that Serena sit and eat with them and was pleasantly shocked when the Ignis didn't argue - she was starving and not surprisingly, loved meat cooked over an open fire. Nayara explained that the Passadores or meat waiters would come to their table a few times during their meal with sizzling skewers on which were speared various kinds of meat: prime rib, steak, pork ribs, sirloin, lamb, steak wrapped in bacon and chicken. After they chose what they wanted, it would be served with rice, black beans, sweet plantains and potatoes.

By the time they had finished eating, they were stuffed and completely satisfied with their meal and dining experience. If Serena could take one of these Churrascaria restaurants back to Toronto, she would. As they quietly walked back to Nayara's car, their individual thoughts were on the delicious food that they just consumed as well as the fact that it was a nice change of pace being out of the Compound. As they drove back, Serena listened to the two women talk about what they bought; clearly enjoying their shopping high. The Ignis just smiled as she herself was on a high of her own - she was able to escape the humdrum routine of being inside the Compound and do her job; she could only hope that Dr. Lewis would want to go shopping again soon.

Back at the Compound, Serena said good night as Nayara walked with Lauren to her apartment.

"Thank you so much Nay. I can't tell you when last I went shopping for myself or with anyone else for that matter... I had a great time." Lauren gushed.

"I did too." Nayara said as they approached her apartment.

"Would you like to come in for some tea?" Lauren said before the brunette had the chance to say good night.

Despite the fact that Nayara's rational instincts screamed 'no' and insisted that she make a hasty retreat to her apartment; she replied, "Thanks, I'd love some." The Empath couldn't pass up the opportunity to spend some time alone with Lauren even though she knew that it wasn't a good idea.

They were both on the couch enjoying their tea and sat so that they were facing one another - Nayara's back was resting against the arm of the couch and Lauren was seated in the centre.

"So, when we were in the field and I asked you what talents you had, why didn't you say you could sing?" the Empath asked curiously.
"I guess I never considered my singing to be a talent; it's just something that I always did growing up… my family and I always sang at events and gatherings – it's what we did together." Lauren smiled at the memory. "I hadn't realized how long it had been since I last sang though."

"That explains the humming then." Nayara mused.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you've been humming almost constantly since we left Mata Atlântica but you never hummed before that; so I'm guessing that you had a tendency to hum at some point in your life."

"Now that you mention it, yes, I used to hum a lot – it was an unconscious habit of mine... I've forgotten how much of myself I've hidden since I've been with the Fae." the blonde contemplated out loud.

"You should start singing again Lauren, you have a lovely voice." The brunette said genuinely.

"Thanks, that's sweet of you to say, however, I'd really like to hear you sing sometime." Lauren smiled at her friend and pondered on her recommendation, "Though I'll definitely give your suggestion some thought as I've always enjoyed singing."

The blonde took a sip of her tea before switching topics. "Anyway, you said that I could ask you questions about your feeding and you also said that you never had the opportunity to discuss the after effects from someone who you have fed off of. How about we help each other out?"

"Sure." The Fae agreed, looking forward to gaining some insight into how her feeding affected others.

"Why don't you start?" the blonde offered.

"Okay. What exactly did you feel as I fed off of you – aside from the heat from my hand and your feeling tired?" Nayara asked.

"Well, it felt as if I had a high fever that was restricted to the spot under your hand - at the time I assumed that the heat would radiate out past that point, but it didn't; instead it felt like, umm… tendrils reaching out through my body and where it travelled, it left a cool, tingling sensation." Lauren paused to formulate her thoughts, "It didn't hurt though; in fact it was a pleasant sensation. It also made me feel very calm and relaxed."

The brunette nodded indicating that she was happy with the response and that Lauren could ask her question.

"I have this intense desire to say and act upon everything I think and feel; it's like I don't have a filter or any restraint whatsoever. It's incredibly difficult to suppress. Is this normal?" Lauren blurted out without taking a breath.

"Yes, very normal – it's a side effect of my feeding from you. Freeing one's emotions is very liberating and for the entire euphoric period you will want to say and do exactly what you think and feel – it's like your body craves that emotional expression. Trying to suppress it will be arduous as your ability to censor yourself will be greatly diminished - you'll have to try really hard to not say and do what you want." Nayara paused and smiled, "Though I have to admit it's very interesting seeing this side of you without all the walls that you normally have in place."

"Enjoy it while you can Nay." Lauren smiled. "It's ironic actually… usually it would be very easy for me to censor myself and the fact that I am currently experiencing difficulty doing so would
normally be very disconcerting for me. However, at the moment, I just don't seem to care." the blonde chuckled at this revelation.

"How do you feel now though… after the fact?" the Empath asked.

"I feel incredibly happy and full of energy. My mind feels clear and uncluttered. And I feel as if all my troubles have disappeared because the feelings associated with them seem to be… gone. I have you to thank for that Nay." The blonde suddenly reached over and pulled the brunette into a warm embrace; surprising the Empath. "Sorry, that's me not showing any restraint."

Nayara chuckled as Lauren released her, "I don't mind. I'm just glad that you're feeling better. Just remember that all of this is temporary."

"I know. I'll just enjoy it while it lasts." Lauren smiled. "Are there any after-effects? Will I come crashing down from a high?"

The brunette shook her head, "No, you'll just feel as you did before but it should be slightly less intense. The reason is that you've released some of your pain, frustration, sadness and anger; so even though it still exists, there would be less of it."

The blonde smiled and nodded her understanding.

"Thank you Lauren. In all my years, I've always wanted to know if my feeding had any negative or hurtful effects but I never had the opportunity to find out. It always seemed incredibly rude to ask."

"It was my pleasure; besides, it is I who should be thanking you." Lauren gave her famous smile.

Nayara smiled genuinely at the blonde and reached for her hand.

Both women quietly looked at how comfortably their fingers intertwined and fit together. However, when Nayara realized what she had done, she pulled her hand away hastily. "I'm sorry. I… I shouldn't have done that." she said embarrassed by her actions.

"It's okay Nay. I don't mind… really." Lauren admitted.

"We can't trust our feelings right now Lauren. Everything will feel more intense because of our bond." Nayara cautioned, irritated at herself for being rational and also for giving into her heightened emotions.

Lauren closed the distance between them and gently cupped Nayara's cheek, causing the brunette to melt into her touch. "Why do we have to be careful? We could continue lying to ourselves but we both know that we've felt an attraction to each other before the bond."

Nayara covered the blonde's hand with hers, savouring the moment before she brought their hands down to rest on their laps. "I don't want our friendship to suffer Lauren; besides, you're not over Bo."

The blonde smiled sweetly at the Fae sitting in front of her, "You are wonderful, do you know that?"

Nayara tried to diffuse the situation and made light of things. "This is your lack of restraint talking."

"True but I'm also being honest. You've done so much for me Nayara – I won't ever forget it."

Lauren replied seriously as she looked sincerely into the brunette's eyes. "Do you know what I thought when I first saw you?" she asked softly. "I thought you were absolutely stunning and I found
myself lost in your incredible blue eyes."

"Lauren..." the brunette tried to find an excuse to pull away or stop what was happening but she couldn't come up with a reason that mattered; all rational thought was rapidly dwindling. "My God, you're beautiful."

Lauren dipped her head and blushed; allowing her hair to act as a curtain to hide behind so that she could quickly regain her composure. Once she did, she looked deep into the Empath's eyes, "I've wondered what it would be like to kiss you but was afraid to try." The blonde adjusted herself so that one leg was half-kneeling on the couch and her right foot planted next to the brunette's feet; each hand was resting on the couch on either side of Nayara as she leaned in towards her, essentially trapping her in place. "I'm not afraid now." The blonde said in a husky voice as her eyes drifted from Nayara's eyes to her mouth.

The longing in Lauren's voice and the proximity of her body made the Empath's desire spike and whatever was left of her control, immediately went out the window when she felt the blonde's soft lips on hers. She instantly cupped Lauren's face in her hands and pulled her into her; forcing the blonde to straddle her as their mouths crashed against one another. Lauren's fingers wove themselves through Nayara's hair at the nape of her neck, while the brunette's hands found their way down Lauren's back and waist, holding her in place. At first, their kisses were slow and tender as they savoured the sensation of their lips on one another, but it quickly turned hungry and passionate; their hands roving over each other's bodies.

As their kisses intensified, Lauren was flooded with a wave of intense emotion. The blonde wasn't sure if it was the bond or if it was an affect of her physical contact with the Empath; all she knew was that she was experiencing exactly what Nayara was feeling at that moment and this connection was incredibly emotional and arousing. As strange and wonderful as the sensation was, the blonde wasn't afraid or concerned; instead it only made her feel closer to the Empath.

Nayara had fantasized about kissing Lauren and now that it was happening, it was so much better than she had ever imagined but she couldn't trust if it was because of their real feelings or if it was the bond making them act on their attraction. It took everything within her to rein her emotions in; with her hands gripping Lauren's waist, she lifted her off of her, effectively ending a very sexually and emotionally charged moment.

They were both breathing heavily as Nayara promptly stood and put some distance between them.

The Empath saw the puzzled look on the blonde's face. "I'm sorry Lauren... believe me I didn't want to stop but if I continued, I wouldn't want to leave your apartment tonight and we're not ready to take things further."

Lauren took a few deep breaths as the meaning behind Nayara's words sank in. "You're right." she said, her logical side agreeing with the brunette.

The Empath exhaled in relief. "Are we okay? I don't want things to be awkward between us."

The blonde nodded her head and smiled reassuringly, "Yes, we are okay. Though, I'd really like for us to talk about this after our bond ceases."

Nayara's eyes brightened, "I'd like that."

They both stood there gazing at one another; each hesitant to move. Finally, Nayara broke the silence. "I should go." she said softly and turned to make her way to the door.
Lauren's voice halted her movements. "You know, you can hug or kiss me goodnight. I won't bite… unless you want me to?" She smirked.

The Empath cocked her head and grinned, "I think its best if I don't answer that."

Nayara bridged the gap between them and gently kissed Lauren on her cheeks, alternating between left, right and left; before resting her forehead against the blonde's; breathing in. They both stayed that way for a few moments before Lauren pulled away and kissed the brunette lightly on her forehead. "Good night Nay." she said sweetly.

The Empath nodded and said goodnight before walking out the door.

Lauren locked the door and leaned her back against it. She took a deep breath and exhaled loudly, 'What are you doing?' the sensible side of her said as she rolled her eyes upwards. The blonde was still adjusting to this euphoric bond that she had with the Empath - it simultaneously fascinated her and perplexed her. She smiled as her fingertips instinctively touched her mouth where only a few moments ago, Nayara's lips were.

Pushing away from the door, the blonde collected the dishes and put them in the dishwasher before turning off the lights in the kitchen. Despite everything going on in her life right now, Lauren didn't feel any guilt or regret about kissing Nayara. She knew that before the feeding, she cared about the Empath and had found her attractive but knew that she most likely wouldn't have acted upon it. Maybe the channelling did make her fearless and maybe the bond did heighten her feelings for Nayara but regardless of why she felt what she felt, she was glad that they kissed. It was very liberating to act on an emotion instead of ignoring it and burying it deep inside.

It was late and Lauren had a long day ahead of her tomorrow, so she got ready for bed. As she took her night clothes out of the drawer, she glanced at her cell phone and decided to check for messages. Based on the date-time stamps, Bo had left a number of voice and text messages while she was in the Atlantic Forest and judging from their tone, the blonde gathered that the Succubus was drunk when she left some of them:

* How are you? I hope you're ok and they're treating you well. *

* I miss you Lauren. I wish you were here. *

* Guess what? Trick installed a mechanical bull at the Dal! Its fun but it hurts like a bitch when you fall off? *

* How could you just run away? You didn't even stay and fight for us. *

* Vex is back in town and has his powers back! Thought that would appeal to your scientific curiosity. *

* You were willing to listen to Tamsin but you wouldn't even give me, your own girlfriend; a chance to explain what happened? *

* You always keep things from me as if I can't handle the truth and then you expect me to know what you're thinking and feeling?! *

* I love you Lauren. *

* There were two of us in this relationship. You brought your share of shit to the table and you put everything on me yet you didn't see me run away from us! *
* Please give me another chance. *

* How could you just leave without us talking things out? *

* What gives you the right to make a decision that affects us both?! I never got the chance to explain my side of things and you expect me to be okay with this?! *

* I'm so sorry Lauren. My life is empty without you in it. Please give me another chance. I want to make things right. *

Normally Lauren would be upset – angry or crying or heartbroken - yet listening to and reading Bo's messages didn't phase her; it was as if a stranger called and texted her by mistake. She knew she should be upset but she just wasn't.

The blonde was very calm when she returned Bo's texts:

* I'm fine. I've been very busy in the lab and field. *

* They're treating me well here so there's no need for you to worry. *

* Bo, I have to be honest, I don't believe you when you say that you love me. I also don't trust you after you lied to me about Dyson and Tamsin.*

The blonde turned off her phone and put it away in the drawer. The rational side of her peeked through and was concerned that she texted Bo while she was in this state. However, all sensible thoughts rapidly disappeared and were replaced with a 'don't care' attitude. It was late and she was tired and all she wanted to do was go to sleep. Lauren had a superabundance of tests to complete in the lab this week before they went to the second Base Camp site to extract more samples. Her primary concern was to find a cure and not whether or not she should've responded to a text message.

TBC
Chapter Notes

- Lost Girl is created by Michelle Lovretta and produced by Prodigy Pictures in association with Shaw Media. Some conversations are taken from 3x09, 3x10 and 3x13 – I'm not claiming them as my own. This is just how I wanted the conversations to occur in the first place.

- Sorry for the delay. Life and Beta'ing for other stories has been keeping me busy. Here's an extra long chapter for being so patient.

- Thanks to my Beta, Neytiri's Heart for your ideas and great input.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Dal Riata (26 days since Lauren left)

Bo was sitting at one of the tables at the back where it was more private. She didn’t want to be disturbed – she just wanted to be alone with her Scotch. She was glad that Trick wasn’t at the bar when she entered and ordered her drink; and now that the place was packed, he probably wouldn’t even know that she was there - something that she was thankful for. She didn’t have the energy to chat with anyone.

Bo couldn't understand how she lost sight of the important things in her life and how quickly things spiralled out of control because of it. She had passed the Dawning and in so doing, was stronger and was finally in tune with her Fae abilities - this gave her a confidence and sense of peace that she never thought she would have. To know that she had complete control of her Succubus powers and that she couldn’t accidentally hurt anyone again, felt amazing. She was also surrounded by family and friends - something that she hadn't had since she ran away from home. And she had love. Had. Past tense. Bo knew that she should be appreciative and thankful for what she accomplished and what she had but it didn’t seem to matter - all she felt was the heartache and the void of not having Lauren in her life; of not having her love and trust anymore.

Bo hadn't even uttered Lauren's name to anyone since she told Kenzi that Lauren ended their relationship and left for Brazil; choosing instead to internalize everything. Bo felt lost. Her emotions were chaotic - they fluctuated wildly and overwhelmed her so much so, that getting drunk and having sex were the only things that numbed her pain; and fighting was her only outlet to release her frustration and anger. Bo knew that it was fleeting; that it was a temporary reprieve in helping her forget her heartache; that it didn’t fix anything as her pain was still there in the morning when she woke up with a hangover or stranger in her bed.

Images from a few nights ago came back to her in fragments. She didn't recall everything but what she did remember, filled her with regret. She couldn't believe that she got so drunk that she actually thought that the woman she was dancing with was Lauren. She couldn't believe that she had fallen so far. Looking at her cell phone, she realized that she had to recant her previous statement as she had sunk to a whole new low. She scrolled through the numerous text messages that she sent Lauren and felt embarrassed and angry that she did so while drunk. It was an incredibly stupid and immature thing to do and she wished that she could undo it.
Bo sighed heavily as she re-read Lauren's response about not believing or trusting her. The text was cold and abrupt but she knew that it reflected how Lauren felt and she really couldn't fault her for it – she knew that she would feel the same way if the roles were reversed. If anything, she was surprised that Lauren hadn't told her to stop contacting her.

Glancing at her watch, Bo remembered that she told Kenzi that she would meet her at The Carpe Noctem. A part of her didn't want to go but the other part of her wanted and needed the distraction. She drank the rest of her Scotch and exited the Dal without Trick seeing her.

Outside the Dal

The cool night air gently caressed the brunette's skin and helped clear some of the emotional cobwebs, giving her a sliver of hope that her night might improve. She was half-way to her Camaro when she stopped dead in her tracks at the sight of a certain blonde. Bo's eyes instantly flashed electric blue as she watched Tamsin get out of her truck and make her way into the Dal.

Right after Lauren left, Bo had gone looking for the Valkyrie but couldn't find her. Upon enquiring, Dyson informed her that Tamsin had some unexpected family business that she had to deal with and had left the city; that it was unknown how long she would be gone.

Whatever it was that the Valkyrie said to Lauren, she made her believe that Bo wasn't faithful to her and for that reason, Bo wanted to confront and subsequently kick the shit out of the Dark Fae. It was almost four weeks since Lauren left and Bo had been marinating in her heartache. Seeing the Valkyrie in front of her, triggered her anger and filled her with a rage that was indescribable. The only thoughts that filled the Succubus' mind were: 'This was Tamsin's fault… Lauren left because of Tamsin.'

Bo took a couple of deep breaths to calm herself down; her eyes reverting back to their normal chocolate brown. She needed to think of a way to get the blonde out of the Dal as it was neutral territory; plus Trick would interfere if they got into a fight within the bar. As she absently stared at Tamsin's truck parked in the alley, a grin slowly appeared on her face.

A few minutes later, Bo rushed into the Dal; her eyes scanning the bar for Tamsin before making a bee line for the Dark Fae. Bo contained her anger as she approached the Valkyrie. "Hey, you own a black pick up truck right?"

Tamsin looked up from her beer, a little surprised to see the Succubus. "Yeah, why?"

"I just saw a guy slicing the tires on it."

A scowl grew on the blonde's face as she thought who would be so stupid to mess with her truck. "What the fuck?!!" Tamsin said as she rushed out the bar and towards her vehicle; Bo following right behind her.

The alley was quiet, deserted and dimly lit; the only light came streaming from the security lamp affixed to the back wall of the Dal. Tamsin stooped down to take a close look at the tires of her truck but besides the regular dents and scratched paint, it was as she left it – there was no additional damage. The Valkyrie was confused. "I thought you said someone was fucking with my truck? It's fine."

Bo wanted answers and in order to get that, she knew that she couldn't let her fists do the talking; she had to stay calm. She reined in her anger and kept the Succubus at bay. "Did you tell Lauren that we kissed?"
Tamsin stood up and looked incredulously at the brunette, "Are you serious? Is that what this is about?"

"Answer me!" Bo bellowed; she wanted an answer and didn't have time for Tamsin's shit.

Tamsin rolled her eyes, "Yeah, what of it?"

"Why would you do that?" Bo really wanted to understand. Tamsin was the only one who believed her when the Kitsune body snatched Kenzi; she broke her out of the lockup in the Dal; and helped her rescue her best friend. Because of this, she was restraining herself and not bashing the Valkyrie's face in right now.

"I told her the truth." The blonde said in a matter of fact tone.

Bo was flabbergasted. "In what way was that the truth?"

"Are you ashamed of what happened between us?" Tamsin smirked as she walked into the brunette's personal space.

"Us? There's no us! You're delusional." Bo started pacing and put some distance between them. "And for the record, you kissed me!" She couldn't believe that Tamsin actually thought that there was something between them.

"Perhaps I initiated the kiss but you didn't pull away - you kissed me back." Tamsin countered.

"I'm a Succubus; you were aroused and caught me off guard. I would never intentionally kiss you. I'm not even interested in you!" The brunette couldn't deny what happened but she also knew that she would never kiss Tamsin or anyone else unless she was seriously hurt and needed to heal.

Tamsin flinched at Bo's comment. It was a brief reaction that she immediately hid and which was quickly replaced with irritation. "Now you've gone and hurt my feeling. How ever will I get over the pain of your rejection? Oh, wait. I'm over it. Don't flatter yourself bitch!"

"So because I don't feel the same about you, that gives you the right to sabotage my relationship with Lauren?" Bo's anger was rising and she wasn't sure how long she would be able to control her temper.

"Whatevs! The world doesn't revolve around you Succubus. Get over yourself." Tamsin had enough and started to walk away from the brunette.

The Succubus was starting to stir. She was itching for a fight and the Fae that was at the top of her list was the Valkyrie that was currently walking away from her. Bo chased after the blonde; grabbed her wrist; and roughly turned her around to face her.

"Lauren broke up with me because of what you told her!" Bo yelled in the Dark Fae's face; poking her in the chest repeatedly with her index finger.

Tamsin pushed Bo away. "Oh please! If your relationship blew up because I told the Doc that we kissed, then news flash, you didn't have much of a relationship. If anything, you should be thanking me - I did you both a favour."

"What the fuck is your malfunction?! You are so close to getting your ass kick-!"

Tamsin smirked and interrupted Bo's rant. "If anyone's delusional here, it's you! You're a Succubus that wants to be in a monogamous relationship. And with a human! How fucked up is that?! You
would've only hurt her in the end... she's better off without you."

Bo snapped and embraced her inner Succubus. She was tired of talking and as far as she was concerned, the Dark Fae just used up all her 'Get out of Jail Free' cards. The Valkyrie needed to be taught a lesson and she was going to start by wiping that smirk right off her face. In the blink of an eye, Bo's fist made contact with the blonde's mouth, effectively ending her gloating and busting her lip in the process.

"What was that Tam-Tam? You're mumbling. Didn't your parents ever teach you not to talk with your mouth full... of blood." The Succubus grinned as her eyes glowed electric blue. Tamsin spat on the ground and wiped her mouth with the back of her hand; she smiled and flashed her blood stained teeth at the brunette.

The two women circled each other slowly; assessing one another and readying themselves. "You want to do this old school do you? I'd be happy to show you how it's done. I am stronger and older." Tamsin declared.

"All I just heard was old." Bo taunted.

Tamsin snarled. She wasn't impressed that she allowed the Succubus to get in a sucker punch; much less her comment on her frailty and life span. "Baby Fae!"

"Dead woman!" Bo growled.

Both women rushed each other; punches were thrown and deftly dodged and blocked before they grappled onto one another and wrestled until their bodies crashed against the nearby brick building. Tamsin grabbed a fistful of Bo's hair and used her hold to bash the brunette's face against the wall a couple of times before she was able to break free.

The rough bricks had cut into Bo's flesh making it look like she had road rash on the left side of her face. "Oh, you just had to go for the face didn't you?" Bo exclaimed, grimacing as she wiped at the blood that was dripping into her eye. "No matter. This..." as she pointed to her injured face, "is still a huge improvement over your..." Bo's hand gestured in the vicinity of Tasmin's head, "Skeletor face."

"Sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never harm me." the blonde sing-songed.

"Well, let me introduce you to my buddy, Stick." Bo swiftly picked up a broken wooden chair leg that was on the ground by the dumpster and swung it at Tamsin, smashing it into her rib cage. The impact of the blow caused the wood to shatter and sent the fragments scattering along the grimy alley road. "That's gotta hurt!" the Succubus laughed.

The blonde bent over and clutched at her side, snarling. "You're going to pay for that bitch!"

"Promises, promises. Bring it!" Bo taunted angrily.

Tamsin charged at the brunette, shoving her into the dumpster and delivered a rapid series of punches to Bo's injured face and to her midsection. Bo countered and grabbed a fistful of blonde hair and roughly pushed her head down into her rising knee; sending the Valkyrie flying backwards; her nose broken and bleeding.

The blonde grinned and eyed the Succubus; both had blood dripping down their faces. Bo was a worthy adversary and the Dark Fae enjoyed a good fight. With a roundhouse kick, her foot made contact with Bo's head and sent her staggering back into the wall. Tamsin quickly pounced on her
and held her in place as her face started to morph - her ivory Nordic complexion darkened and her features became sunken as a skeletal face looked back at Bo. "You don't want to fight me. You want to succumb." The blonde said, using her ability to inflict doubt and fear.

"What I want is your hideous Skeletor face out of mine." The Succubus growled and delivered a right hook to Tamsin's face. The Dark Fae recovered and pushed Bo back against the wall. "Impressive but you can't resist me forever."

"That's my line." Bo grabbed Tamsin's head in her hands, keeping her face in place as she started to draw on the Valkyrie's chi.

After a few seconds, Tamsin was finally able to push Bo away. Both women were now panting; their injuries starting to take their toll. "Tastes like fear to me. Delicious." Bo continued to taunt.

"Playtimes over!" Tamsin declared as she delivered a series of high kicks to Bo's face and torso, sending her flying backwards.

The Succubus was doubled over, catching her breath; she was tired of this dance. She waited till Tamsin was within arm's reach and rapidly unleashed a powerful combination of jabs, right crosses and left hooks to the Valkyrie's head and torso; dazing the blonde and causing her to stagger backwards. Bo moved in and finished her attack with a strong upper cut that sent the Dark Fae flying through the air and landing on her back; knocking the wind out of her. Tamsin lay there shaking her head in order to clear her blurry vision but before she could stand up, Bo was already kneeling on her, pinning her to the ground; her hands gripping the blonde's shirt collar and lifting her upper body so that she could suck the chi from her body and thereby ending the fight for good.

Tamsin knew that she was in no position to retaliate - she had no energy and she was at the Succubus' mercy. Despite her dire circumstances, she wasn't afraid. She had been living on borrowed time for awhile as she was at the end of her lifespan. If she had a choice, she'd rather die in battle as it was the honourable way to go.

Bo and Tamsin stared each other down; the Succubus' eyes glowed blue as the adrenaline coursed through her body. The Valkyrie's calm voice broke the silence. "You can blame me all you want and you can kill me for it, but you and I both know that your relationship was in trouble before I kissed you. So, continue lying to yourself but this is on you; not me."

Bo hesitated and it showed in her eyes. Tamsin's words hit home. She hurt the person she loved the most in life and now that Lauren was gone, she couldn't function; she felt empty. Lauren had made it clear in her letter how she felt Bo had hurt her and here she was being a coward for not accepting responsibility for it.

"Finish it!" the blonde shouted. A part of her wanted this done for good. She was tired of waiting for her end.

"No." Bo released her hold, letting Tamsin fall back to the ground with a thud; her blue eyes faded and reverted to her dark brown color. Bo stood up and put some distance between her and the blonde; silencing her inner Succubus' protests. The brunette's voice was resigned; there was no more anger, only acceptance of the situation. She turned to look at the Valkyrie, "I don't know why you kissed me and I don't care. Even though Lauren and I aren't together any more, I still love her. I'm still in love with her."

Bo released a sigh as she maintained eye contact with the blonde. "As for you and I; the most we could ever be is friends and I'm using that word very loosely… You would be wise to stay away from me." Bo turned and walked away before she changed her mind; returning to the Dal and
leaving Tamsin in the alley.

The Valkyrie didn't move. Moving caused pain. Her body throbbed all over and not in the good way. Instead, she opted to remain laying on the dirty, grimy ground until the pain from her numerous broken and cracked bones, receded. As she lay there, she closed her eyes and wished for an ice cold beer to miraculously appear in her hand. Unfortunately, none materialized and she let out a pitiful groan in frustration.

The Dal Riata

The Succubus sat at the far end of the bar, looking worse for wear. She was covered in blood but was oblivious to her current appearance. Bo had a lot on her mind; all thoughts of meeting Kenzi were forgotten; she just needed to think. Before Trick could ask her anything, the brunette ordered a drink and silenced him with a look. The Blood King knew when to leave his granddaughter alone; pushing her would only make things worse; she needed time.

Bo sat there playing with her whiskey tumbler; slowly rotating it in her hands; mesmerized by the condensation on the glass and the various water mark trails she could leave on the bar top. The brunette had been nursing the same drink for the past 30 minutes as she continually replayed her conversation with Tamsin. She hated to admit it but the Dark Fae was right - if their relationship was healthy, Tamsin's kiss would never have caused their break up; but it did, which meant that things weren't as strong as Bo wished they were. The Valkyrie wasn't to blame for the end of her relationship - she just gave it the final push.

Looking back, Bo had seen signs that Lauren wasn't happy but chose to ignore it, thinking that she maybe she was reading things wrong. After all, what did she know about relationships? She also had a lot on her mind with her possible devolution and the fact that dead Fae were found murdered and she was the prime suspect. However, these were all excuses and she knew that. She could've made the time and effort but instead she allowed herself to get caught up in her own personal shit that she didn't consider what Lauren had sacrificed for her; and Kenzi as well. Bo was Unaligned - she chose humans over Fae but as she sat there at the bar, it dawned on her that she had let down the two humans in her life – the two people who were most important to her. She realized that she ended up choosing herself despite all her best intentions.

Bo sighed. Things were a mess and she knew that she needed to fix things; she couldn't continue the way she had been. Bo didn't recognize herself anymore – she was a shell of herself - she wasn't happy and she didn't believe in anything as she had lost her hope, her love and her passion. How could she ask Lauren to give her another chance if she was such a mess? And why would Lauren even want to come back to her if she hadn't changed?

Trick was drying beer glasses and observing his granddaughter from the other end of the bar. He was concerned about her ever since Lauren left but he knew that there was nothing that he could say or do to make her feel better or stop her from the path that she was taking. The Blood King watched as Dyson entered the bar; both Fae nodded their hellos as the Detective made his way over to the Succubus. Bo was roused out of her thoughts as the wolf sat next to her.

"What happened to you?" he asked; concern evident in his voice.

"Nothing." she said quietly.

"Really? Because it looks like you were hit by a truck." Dyson retorted.

"I just had a wake up call… it had to be beaten into my thick skull." Bo laughed sadly.
Dyson didn't understand her comment but knew better to not pursue it. "You need to heal." He said calmly.

"I'm not in the mood. Besides, I've done enough healing these last few weeks and it's done more harm than good… I've been ignoring my problems and they won't go away. I can't ignore them any longer." The brunette said matter of factly.

"I don't understand." Dyson knew that Bo had been very moody since Lauren left to go on assignment but didn't know if her cryptic statement was related to Lauren's absence or something else altogether.

Bo sighed as she pushed her glass away. "I've been putting off a lot of things – not wanting to address them because I was either afraid to or I didn't know how to; so instead, I ignored it. But I can't do that anymore. It already cost me too much. So, I have to start setting things right and I might as well start with you."

"Start with me?" Dyson had his suspicions as to where this conversation was headed.

Bo nodded and exhaled. "I need to talk about what happened at the Dawning."

The Detective had been waiting for the other shoe to drop ever since he told Bo that he had his love back; it was just a matter of when she was ready to address it. "Okay."

The brunette knew that she had to say this - that she should've had this conversation a long time ago when she had her suspicions about Dyson getting his love back. "I need you to know that I appreciate so much what you were willing to risk for me. But I also need you to know that I am still in love with Lauren."

"Alright." Dyson said softly. He knew what Bo was going to say before she even said it. It was painfully obvious that she was in love with the doctor. It killed him to see how Bo looked at Lauren as she used to look at him that way before he sacrificed his love. But he couldn't force Bo to be in love with him again.

"Alright?" Bo didn't think he would understand and accept so easily.

"Bo, I think the tales of my romantic heroism might be slightly exaggerated." He chuckled and gently reached out and held her hand.

"You volunteered to be my hand knowing that you weren't getting out alive." She stated incredulously.

"Then why aren't I dead?" Dyson squeezed her hand. "We've been through a lot together Bo and the main thing that I've learned is that the people, who underestimate you, always lose. When I volunteered, I wasn't risking my life. I was trusting that you would save it."

Bo gave him a sad smile. "I wish I could've saved my relationship." She looked up from their hands and into Dyson's eyes and sighed. "You know, Lauren thought that you were going to swoop in and take me away from her? Turns out, I've done a fine job screwing it up all by myself."

Bo paused to collect herself; her emotions were raw and she knew that she had no one but herself to blame. "Lauren left me - she even took a plane to make sure she put enough distance between us. I still love her but I'm afraid that she… she may not love me anymore." Bo finally said it. She was afraid that Lauren was no longer in love with her because of all their mistakes and lack of communication.
Dyson understood her emotional pain as he had been experiencing it ever since he got his love back. The irony wasn't lost on him that he was sitting with the woman he considered to be his mate and they were discussing her heartache for someone else. "We're gonna need shots." Dyson reached across the bar and grabbed a bottle and two shot glasses.

Bo sighed and held back her tears; she felt like an idiot when it came to being in relationships – first Dyson and now Lauren; her relationships ended in disaster. "Tell me the truth, was it hard dating me?"

Dyson chuckled sadly, "It was harder losing you."

Bo felt relieved to finally be honest with Dyson; she was glad that they didn't have this unspoken tension between them anymore; it felt as if they were now in a good place. "I'm glad that we talked about this….You know even after everything we have been through, I'm really glad that we ended up here."

A comfortable silence fell between them; they chugged back their drinks as they sat there lost in their thoughts; shot glasses sitting idly in their hands. Bo's declaration of love for Lauren was final – she couldn't be any clearer. Dyson always knew that Bo was in love with Lauren but he thought that it would pass even though deep down he knew that he was only maintaining false hope. Talking with Bo, he knew that he couldn't continue holding out hope as it would affect their friendship and he would rather that they be friends than have nothing.

He also realized that he had to accept that what they had was over. Maybe they would have another opportunity to be together in the future but no one knew what life had planned. He also couldn't hold out for the possibility of something happening as that was no way for him to live – always hoping for something that may not occur; it would be a life half-lived. What he did know was that he still loved Bo and he hated seeing how hurt she was. If he could help her be happy, even if it were in someone else's arms, he would do it; he would do anything for her.

With that acceptance, Dyson did something that he never though he would do. With as much sincerity that he could muster, he said, "For what it's worth, she really does love you… I can tell."

Bo was jarred out of her thoughts upon hearing Dyson. She couldn't believe what she heard. If Dyson, who considered Lauren to be a rival for her affections, could admit that Lauren still loved her, it had to be true; there was still a chance. The brunette smiled at that possibility but just as quickly, doubt crept in and took over; her smile faltering. "How can you even know that?"

"I'm not blind Bo. I've seen the way Lauren looks at you. Time and time again, she took risks to help you, knowing that as a slave to the Light, she could be punished for it; but she did it anyway. People only take reckless chances like that in the name of love… Trust me on that."

Bo sighed, "I don't know Dyson…"

The Detective continued, "The day before your Dawning, I went to her apartment to drop off a case file and she told me that she had a hard time believing that she ever found someone like you… That you even existed." Dyson remembered the moment when the blonde made that declaration; it hung in the air between them – they both felt the same way for Bo and in an odd way, it was the closest that he ever felt to the doctor. Relating this story to the Succubus, Dyson felt a strange sense of release. His accepting that his mate was in love with another, freed him from the emotional chains that tied him down – his anger, jealousy, frustration, depression - it didn't have such an intense hold on him anymore; he knew that it was a first step but this was the most unburdened that he had felt since the Norn took his love away.
Bo quietly thought about what Dyson just told her; wanting desperately to believe him. She eventually shook her head sadly; her belief that she lost Lauren forever, eclipsed everything. "It doesn't make a difference anymore. Lauren doesn't believe that I love her and she doesn't trust me because I wasn't honest with her."

Dyson was shocked. "Then you make her believe you! Since when do you give up, Bo? You're too stubborn to quit!"

The brunette couldn't hold back her tears any longer. "I let her down Dyson! I took her and our relationship for granted and I made her doubt my love for her… Every waking minute of every day that she's been gone, I've thought about going after her. What stops me from doing that is the fact that she left – that she doesn't want to be with me… It's not a matter of being stubborn. I'm trying to respect her decision even though it's killing me to do so."

Bo wiped away the tears streaming down her cheeks; her voice broken, "I don't know how I can ever get over her."

There was nothing else that Dyson could say to help. Bo's mind was made up. The most he could offer was a comforting shoulder to lean on if she wanted it. "More shots." Dyson said as he poured alcohol into their glasses and handed one to her. They clinked their glasses and chugged back their drinks; wincing as the liquid burned its way down their throats.

A few minutes passed and the alcohol started to take affect. Bo ached, emotionally and physically; in fact, she was certain that her body was swearing at her for the thrashing that she received from Tamsin. It was time to go home and get some rest. "I'm beat. I'm gonna head home… See you around?"

"Sure. Good night." Dyson smiled sadly as he watched his former mate walk out of the Dal and out of his heart.

As Bo walked to her Camaro, she texted Kenzi apologizing for not meeting up with her, stating that she was heading home as she was tired. All Bo wanted right now was to be home.

Crack Shack

Once home, the brunette took a long, hot shower to clean the alley way grime off of her, as well as, all the dried blood that covered her body. Had she known that she looked so ghastly and bloody, she would've gone straight home instead of staying at the Dal. She was surprised that the Fae in the bar weren't staring at her; granted she was a bit preoccupied so it was quite possible that she didn't notice if they were.

Even though she was incredibly sore everywhere, the bath helped make her feel a bit better. Instead of looking like a bloody bruise on legs, she was now a clean and slightly refreshed bruise on legs that chose to get into her comfiest comfy clothes and curl up on the couch. Though she was completely exhausted, she couldn't sleep as her mind was going a mile a minute. Now that she recognized and acknowledged the part she played in her relationship's demise, she didn't know what to do.

Kenzi came home to find Bo with her legs curled up on the couch; the room dimly lit. The petite woman was surprised to see Bo alone and dressed in sweats as opposed to being naked and draped in the arms of one of her conquests. The Goth noticed that the brunette was battered and bruised and looked very despondent, so when she sat next to friend, she didn't say a word; instead she put her
arm around her shoulder. At the physical contact, Bo leaned into her Russian friend, wrapped her arms around her and broke down crying; she couldn't keep it in anymore. As much as Kenzi's heart broke for Bo, she was thankful to see that she was finally acknowledging her pain. They stayed huddled into each other for some time; the sound of Bo's sobs piercing through the silence while Kenzi comforted her.

After Bo was all cried out, she sat up and wiped her red, swollen eyes with the sleeve of her sweat shirt. Kenzi got up and returned moments later with a box of Kleenex which the brunette desperately needed. As they sat on the couch; Bo blew her nose loudly, creating a small mountain of used tissues on the coffee table. The tiny Goth waited patiently as she knew that Bo was finally ready to talk.

"I really messed things up Kenz. Not just my part in causing Lauren to leave and how pathetically I've been behaving but I… I did something really stupid. I think I made things worse with Lauren." Bo confessed.

"What do you mean?" Kenzi didn't understand how Bo could have made things worse seeing that Hot Pants wasn't even here.

Bo timidly said, "I, umm, I've been leaving Lauren voice and texts messages whenever I've been drinking; it's been the only time I have the nerve to contact her. Some of them have been… angry."

"Oh-kay. Can I see?" The Goth asked calmly; wondering how bad it could really be.

Bo scrolled to the texts that she sent and hesitantly handed her mobile phone over to Kenzi.

The Goth sat on the edge of the couch, her elbows resting on her knees and the cell phone in her hands; she quietly mouthed the words as she read.

* How are you? I hope you're ok and they're treating you well. *
* I miss you Lauren. I wish you were here. *
* Guess what? Trick installed a mechanical bull at the Dal! Its fun but it hurts like a bitch when you fall off! *

Kenzi shook her head as she continued to read; meanwhile the brunette twirled her hair nervously around her fingers as she watched her friend.

* How could you just run away? You didn't even stay and fight for us. *
* Vex is back in town and has his powers back! Thought that would appeal to your scientific curiosity. *
* You were willing to listen to Tamsin but you wouldn't even give me, your own girlfriend; a chance to explain what happened? *
* You always keep things from me as if I can't handle the truth and then you expect me to know what you're thinking and feeling?! *

"Really Bo?!" Kenzi muttered as she briefly looked up at her friend before continuing to read the train wreck of texts. The brunette squirmed in her seat ashamed.

* I love you Lauren. *
* There were two of us in this relationship. You brought your share of shit to the table and you put everything on me yet you didn't see me run away from us! *

Kenzi shook her head, groaning. "No! You didn't send that!?!" Bo made an embarrassed scrunched up face at her friend's comment as she continued to squeeze the life out of the couch pillow that was resting on her lap.
* Please give me another chance. *
* How could you just leave without us talking things out? *
* What gives you the right to make a decision that affects us both?! I never got the chance to explain my side of things and you expect me to be okay with this?! *
* I'm so sorry Lauren. My life is empty without you in it. Please give me another chance. I want to make things right. *

The tiny Goth made a hissing sound. "Ohhh… this would make a good 'after school special' on why drunk texting is a bad, **bad** idea." The Succubus buried her face into the pillow, absolutely mortified. If Kenzi thought this about her texts, she can only imagine what Lauren thought. All the worse case scenarios that she had envisioned before suddenly grew worse.

Kenzi hesitantly moved on to the Doc's replies; she wasn't sure what to expect from the blonde after she read Bo's texts. To say that reading these personal texts made her feel a bit awkward, would an understatement.

* I'm fine. I've been very busy in the lab and field. *
* They're treating me well here so there's no need for you to worry. *
* Bo, I have to be honest, I don't believe you when you say that you love me. I also don't trust you after you lied to me about Dyson and Tamsin. *

"Ouch! Dr. Freeze is back…not that I blame her." the Goth muttered.

Kenzi sat staring blankly at the mobile as she let everything she just read, sink in. The silence was suddenly broken when Kenzi did a face palm. "Jesus Bo! Single white female much?"

"I know, I know. I can't believe I turned into a Succu-stalker!" Bo was wringing the pillow in her hands. "I come across clingy, angry, depressed and immature. What a great way to make a good impression to try and win her back." Bo felt embarrassed by what she had done and also angry that her actions pushed Lauren to retaliate. "Did you read her response? I'm actually surprised that she didn't tell me to fuck off; to leave her alone and to stop contacting her." Bo threw her head back so that it was resting against the couch; shaking her head in disgust as she looked at the ceiling.

"Is that what you want - to win her back?" Kenzi asked.

"I can't picture my life without Lauren in it but she doesn't want me. She left me remember?" Bo covered her face with her hands.

Kenzi grabbed her friend's hands and pulled them down to her lap; giving them a squeeze. "Lauren loves you Bo. She's just hurting – this is her way of dealing and getting some space. And you didn't answer my question – do you want her back?"

Bo knew that Kenzi was being serious as she just called Lauren by her name and not any of her numerous nicknames. "Yes… but I don't know what to do. I don't know where to start."

The tiny Russian looked the brunette in the eyes. "Do you want it straight up – the honest, brutal truth? And promise that you won't go all Succubitch on me?"

"Yes, I do. And I promise." Bo replied genuinely and nodded her head.

Kenzi stood up; she needed to stand just in case Bo didn't take it well. She had been waiting for this moment – for Bo to be open to what she had to say; she only hoped that her friend would listen. She turned to face the brunette and maintained eye contact. "You need to get your head out of your ass
and get your shit together – you're a fucking mess. Take responsibility for what you've done and stop feeling sorry for yourself - you've been doing that for the past month and look where it's gotten you. You've been getting into fights, getting drunk and having sex with a different person or Fae every single night. I get that you blame yourself for the break up but this isn't working. You are not happy."

The Goth paused, checking to see that what she was saying was getting through to the brunette and that there were no blue eyes glowing back at her. Seeing that she still had Bo's attention, she continued. "If you want Lauren back, you have to fight for her. You need to find her; beg for her forgiveness; let her know that you are aware that you messed up; and you need to be very patient - the Doc won't run back to you with open arms. But most importantly, you need to be honest about everything; otherwise it'll only make things worse. I'm not saying to bend over and take it - you have to call her on her shit as it wasn't all you… well, mostly you but still… it takes two to tango. You wanted to be in a relationship Bo. This is what it takes. Are you ready to fix things?"

Bo's eyes were brimmed with tears; she knew that Kenzi was right – she and her best friend had come to the same conclusion, essentially confirming that she made a mess of things. It was time to own up to it and fix it. She nodded her head resolutely. "Yes, I'm ready. I want Lauren back more than anything."

"Are you certain? Because if you do this, you have to go all the way; you can't afford to do less." Kenzi cautioned.

Bo was adamant. "I've never been more certain. I've been unhappy and pathetic without her and I know that I've made everyone else's life – yours most especially – miserable." This was the first time since Lauren had left, that the brunette felt confident and sure of anything – she had been hiding and ignoring the truth for too long. This was the right decision; it was the only decision.

The Succubus shook her head and smiled at her friend as she plopped back down on the sofa; putting her boots up on the coffee table. "When did you get to be so wise?"

Kenzi grinned and flashed her pearly whites, patting Bo's hand, "I've always been wise, Grasshopper. Just everyone here in Fae-nation has been blind to my awesomeness."

Bo chuckled at her friend. "I bow before you oh wise sensei. First thing tomorrow, I'm going to meet with Hale and find out where Lauren is. But right now, I really need to get some rest. I'm exhausted."

The Goth nodded her head and made a scrunched up face. "You really do BoBo. If there was ever a time that you needed beauty rest, it's now. You look like shit… like death warmed over repeatedly… like an Ogre chewed you up and spit you out… like-"

Bo interrupted. "I get the point Kenz, thanks."

"What?! It's true! You've definitely looked better… hotter… less lumpy and bruised." The petite woman gestured at Bo's head and torso.

"Yeah, well you can thank Tamsin for that." Bo revealed.

"She did this to you?! I'm so going to kick her freakin' Dark Fae ass… well, I can distract her and you can kick her ass. Just tell me when and we'll get 'Operation Kick Ass' in motion!" Kenzi was angry – first for what Tamsin did to Lauren and now this.

It was the second time that night that her best friend got her to chuckle. "Calm down Kemo Sabe. I
"I know! Big surprise but I had my reasons. I didn't tell you this before but in Lauren's letter, she said that Tamsin took great pleasure in telling her about the kiss and that's why she left. I've wanted to confront Tamsin ever since I read that but she was out of the city. So when I saw her tonight, it was like something snapped inside me. I just wanted her to suffer; I wanted to hurt her like she hurt Lauren. So, once she was outside the Dal, I asked her and when she confirmed it; I hit her… it was all downhill from there."

"What happened?" the young Russian asked as she sat on the edge of the couch.

"We fought for awhile, trading blows and insults. I know I look horrible but she looks worse. I busted up her face and I think I broke a few of her ribs. I left her lying flat on her back in the nasty ass alley behind the Dal. And no, I didn't kill her… though I was really tempted to suck her dry."

"What stopped you?" Kenzi was curious. She was glad that Bo told her about Tamsin; after she had snooped-read Lauren's letter, she knew that Bo would be very upset about the Valkyrie. She was just surprised that her friend was able to stop herself from finishing off the Dark Fae.

"Tamsin said something that made me realize that my relationship had issues before she ever said anything to Lauren. She said that I could blame her all I wanted but the truth was that it was all on me. It made me realize that I was ignoring my part in all of this. Tamsin may have given our relationship the final push off the cliff but I took us to the edge to begin with." Bo sighed heavily.

"Sounds like you had an eventful night Bo-Bo. For what it's worth, I'm glad that you finally figured it out." Kenzi smiled sadly at her friend.

Bo looked directly into the Goth's eyes, "I'm sorry that it took so long for me to figure it out. I really am Kenz. I'm sorry for all the shit that I put you through these past few weeks." Bo said solemnly.

"You've always been a slow learner." Kenzi teased; it was her way of accepting Bo's apology.

The Succubus moved towards her friend and unfortunately, it was a little too quickly for her body's liking. Grunting from the pain, she said, "You're lucky that my bruises have bruises, otherwise, I'd come over there and slap you."

"How many times do I have to tell you that I'm not into that S&M shit. No wonder Vex likes you."

Kenzi wiggled her eyebrows at the brunette. "I'd settle for a hug instead." Kenzi said in a low but serious voice.

"Deal! But you have to come over here cuz I was serious about my bruises having bruises. I really do ache all over." The brunette whined.

The tiny Goth quickly covered the distance between them; flinging her arms around the brunette and hugged her tight. Kenzi's death grip caused Bo to groan in pain but she didn't budge, she was overcome with joy that her behaviour hadn't pushed her best friend away.

Kenzi had missed her best friend and was so relieved to have her back. "I missed you Succubum." She whispered into Bo's ear. She knew that the brunette still had a rocky road ahead of her but at least she was finally on track and ready to make some much needed changes.

"I missed you too Kenz. I am really sorry." Bo apologized; kissing the side of her friend's head.

Kenzi pulled away gently so that she could look her friend in the eyes. "You're forgiven but you still owe me a few shopping sprees. Add a month's supply of take-out to this arrangement - my choice for a month – and we're good!"
Bo smiled, "You drive a hard bargain but you got yourself a deal. Let me speak with Hale first and I'll make good on my promises."

Bo was looking forward to tomorrow; to talking to Hale and finding out where Lauren was so that she fly there and make things right between them. Aside from some serious soul searching, she wasn't sure exactly how she was going to fix things but she would do whatever it would take to get Lauren back. Failing was not an option.

"I'm going to bed. I'll see you in the morning." Bo yawned as she slowly got off the couch; grimacing in pain.

Kenzi used the newly acquired couch real estate to stretch out and turn on the game console so that she could start her killing spree of robot hookers. "You mean, later in the morning. Tell Hale 'hola!' for me and when you get back, I want all the deets."

The brunette nodded and hobbled out of the living room; making her slow, excruciating ascent to her bedroom. In the mean time, the tiny Goth had started her war on the evil, slutty robots. When Bo finally made it to the top of the stairs, she stopped and yelled down. "Oh I almost forgot. I told Dyson that even though he has his love back, I am very much in love with Lauren. I made it very clear to him and it's all good. Niiiight!"

It took a second to process what she just heard. "$\text{BACK UP THE BUS! Say what?!!}" Kenzi stood up, stopping in mid-kill. Instead she was greeted with silence as Bo had already gone into her room and shut the door; completely disregarding the fact that she had dropped a bombshell on her friend and left her hanging. The Goth continued staring at the empty stairs dumbstruck; her controller dangling at her side. A few seconds passed before she was able to collect herself and sat back down on the couch. By the time she returned her attention to her game, it was too late - a crazed gang of hookers had already killed her avatar and were doing the robot dance on her corpse.

$TBC$

Chapter End Notes

Unfortunately, Kenzi's avatar was killed during the writing of this chapter. There was a very private service and a closed casket due to the extent of the injuries. Kenzi's avatar's peeps have sworn bloody revenge on all robot hookers and all of their sympathizers. Condolences can be sent to the Crack Shack; Kenzi is accepting food primarily in the form of burgers and extra cheese pizzas.
"Move it Lewis! Thirty seconds! Come on, hit it harder! Just picture someone who really ticks you off and lay into it!" Serena bellowed.

The blonde grunted as she continued her assault on the bag; sweat rolled down her face and into her eyes, stinging them. Images of Tamsin and Dyson inadvertently appeared in her mind and the anger that flared within her caught her off-guard. Lauren's arms pistoned back and forth rapidly as she increased the power behind each blow; her rage fuelling her body. Her fists connected solidly with each punch, thrusting Serena and the heavy bag backwards repeatedly, surprising and forcing the Ignis her to re-adjust her stance in order to provide more resistance behind the bag.

"Fifteen seconds left…. That's it! Harder!" the Light Fae encouraged.

Blonde hair was plastered to her damp forehead; her ponytail swinging from side to side as her body turned into each punch. Lauren's breathing was heavy; the muscles in her arms and forearms, burning as she focused all her energy into her punches. Her gloved hands were a blur as they moved; combinations of left and right crosses, jabs and upper cuts slammed against the bag. The doctor's thoughts wandered momentarily to distract from the biting pain in all her muscles - she imagined that if she were hitting a person, they would've taken multiple blows to the head and body, resulting in cuts to the eyelids, cheeks and lips, a broken jaw, cracked ribs and bruised internal organs. Lauren wasn't a violent person but she had to admit that over these last few weeks, boxing proved to be a great release for her and she had noticed an improvement in her strength and coordination.

"Five… four… three… two… one. Done!"

"Ugghhh!" Lauren leaned against the heavy bag; wrapping her arms around it to keep herself upright. Her muscles were so taut that it felt as if they would burst out of her skin. She was beyond exhausted; the perspiration from her face, neck and arms smeared onto the bag as she clung to it. The blonde allowed her body to slowly slide down the bag till her butt and legs made contact with the ground before gently falling backwards to lay on the floor. Her arms and legs sprawled haphazardly as she enjoyed the cool sensation against her skin.

"That about… killed me." She panted as her chest rose and fell with each gasping breath.

"What doesn't kill you only makes you stronger. And you're definitely stronger – your punches have more power behind it; your reflexes are faster when you dodge and block; and you're lighter on your feet when we spar." Serena said genuinely.

Lauren raised her head to look up at the Ignis, a tired smile plastered on her face and all memory of her anger, long forgotten. "Are you, Serena Thorne, paying me a compliment? If so, I'd do a
celebratory fist pump but I'm too exhausted to move."

Serena responded with a raised eyebrow before offering her hand; helping the blonde to her feet.

Lauren's apartment (Day 26)

Lauren awoke well rested - her intense workout last night ensured a good night's sleep. As per her usual routine, the blonde arrived at the lab early, conducting a mental checklist of things she had to do. She wanted to make sure she finished all her testing within the next few days before they went to the field; she knew that if she didn't meet her self-imposed deadline there would be a backlog of specimens to test upon their return.

Normally, the blonde was the first one in the lab but as she walked through the outer lab's main doors, she stopped dead in her tracks. Twenty feet ahead of her through the inner lab's glass double doors, was Bo. She was pacing back and forth amidst a sea of laboratory equipment, looking impatiently at her watch. Time seemed to stand still as Lauren gazed at the distracted brunette who had no idea that she was being observed. Bo looked breathtaking; her long, brown, wavy hair framed her face and flowed down her shoulders; her deep purple tank top hugged her torso; and her black leggings and knee high boots clung to her toned legs. Lauren smiled and felt butterflies in her stomach. She didn't expect this to be her reaction but she was definitely happy to see the brunette; she hadn't realized how much she had missed her. The only thing that was stopping her from running through those doors and towards Bo was that she was still processing the fact that Bo was in Brazil for her – there could be no other reason for her presence. She couldn't believe that after everything that had happened between them, Bo still came looking for her; most likely to work things out. The blonde couldn't stop smiling. The thought of them working their relationship out never crossed her mind until now. Lauren had thought that things were too far gone for their relationship to be saved but looking at Bo now, she couldn't consider not trying.

Before Lauren could say or do anything, she heard a clattering sound come from the inner lab. Unfortunately, the privacy panels running along either side of the glass doors restricted her vision to line of sight. Because of this she was only able to observe Bo look up from her watch and walk towards the sound before she lost sight of her. The blonde assumed that whatever it was, it had to involve Kenzi as the Goth was attracted to shiny objects and was never far away from her friend. Lauren smiled thinking of the petite woman; she had to admit that she missed her crazy antics. The doctor sighed, closed her eyes as she collected herself and tried to figure out what she was going to say to Bo – saying that things would be awkward between them would be an understatement, nevertheless, she was willing to try.

As she nervously ran her fingers through her hair and gathered her courage, Lauren heard a loud sound, startling her out of her thoughts. She looked up to see Bo slumped against one of the lab tables; the equipment that resided there, strewn about the floor. Concerned, Lauren cast her anxiety aside to find out what was happening but was surprised to find the doors were locked. The fact that these doors were never secured before had her puzzled. Averting her attention from her glass barrier, the doctor saw Bo lunge forward and out of sight before hearing what sounded like a skirmish. With her heart racing, the blonde quickly re-focused her attention on the doors - all that mattered was that she get into the inner lab to help Bo. She yanked back on them repeatedly but it was to no avail – they were not budging. Just then, she saw a pair of hands reach for Bo and that's when her heart dropped. For the second time that morning, time stood still. 'This can't be happening.' flashing through her mind.

The pair of hands belonged to the blonde Valkyrie who was roughly pawing at Bo's neck, breasts and hips. Lauren closed her eyes and shook her head in an attempt to clear her vision. "I must be hallucinating." she thought. When she opened her eyes again, Bo's fingers were entangled in blonde
tresses and she was kissing Tamsin passionately. Lauren felt sick to her stomach; her hands now braced against the handles of the glass doors for support. She wanted to look away but couldn't; it was like being at the scene of a car accident knowing that it was a horrific sight but still feeling compelled to watch.

Just when she thought that things couldn't get worse, Dyson appeared out of nowhere, grinning at both women. Bo shifted her attention to the wolf as he approached her and with a seductive smile on her face, she cupped his cheek and captured his mouth with hers. The vein in Lauren's temple throbbed as she watched Bo alternate between the two Fae standing in front of her; kissing each of them hungrily. Lauren continued to observe the strange scene unfold in front of her, thinking it was something out of an erotic 'Twilight Zone' episode. "None of this makes sense." she thought. Suddenly, Bo pushed the two Detectives towards one another causing a surprised unintelligible sound to escape from Lauren's mouth as she watched the two partners kiss and grope one another while Bo looked on; her eyes a bright electric blue. After a few moments and with a snap of her fingers, they pried their mouths away from each other and turned their attention back to the Succubus; their hands roaming all over her body; their mouths latched onto either side of her neck causing her to close her eyes in pleasure. Lauren's emotions quickly shifted from being hurt and heart broken to that of intense rage. All thoughts of reconciliation were instantly flushed down the toilet. In that exact moment, Bo's blue eyes blinked open and she stared straight at Lauren who refused to crumble under such intense scrutiny. The Succubus held the blonde's gaze and smirked; she then grabbed Dyson and Tamsin by the back of their necks and began kissing them, all the while maintaining eye contact with the blonde.

"BITCH!" The doctor growled out as she slammed her fist against the glass door in anger; the impact causing a loud banging sound to reverberate throughout the lab.

However, the echo didn't fade; instead the sound only grew louder despite the fact that Lauren was no longer hitting the door. The blonde couldn't understand where the incessant noise was coming from or what was causing it as the volume continued to increase. It soon became difficult to think and she had to cover her ears with her hands to block out the now annoying high pitched buzzing sound.

BUZZZ! BUZZZ! BUZZZ!

Lauren abruptly sat up in bed; the blaring alarm clock jarring her out of her dream. After turning off the alarm, the blonde fell back into bed and closed her eyes; resting the back of her hand against her forehead. Her heart was beating rapidly from the emotions dredged up by her horrible dream. Everything had seemed so real. Bo, Dyson and Tamsin had seemed so real and despite her rational nature, Lauren still felt the sting of 'dream' Bo's cruel actions as she tasted bile in her mouth.

The blonde finally blinked her eyes open as she quietly laid there trying to get her breathing under control. It was a few moments later before she realized that the heaviness that she felt in her heart hadn't disappeared and that all the feelings that had seemingly vanished over the last five days were front and centre again. Lauren let out a deep sigh knowing that the bond that she shared with Nayara had faded during the course of the night and her reprieve was unfortunately, over. She had no choice now but to live with her feelings.

After Lauren shook the dregs of her dream out of her mind, she allowed herself to fully wake up and run through her morning routine of getting ready for work and going to the dining hall. It was while staring at her plate of food trying unsuccessfully to sift through the barrage of emotions, that she realized that she would have to go through the healing process all over again; the thought of which completely overwhelmed her and left her feeling hopeless. Sighing loudly she picked up her tray of uneaten food and deposited it before making her way to the lab.
When she walked into the lab, Lauren faltered at the sight of the double glass doors; her dream replayed in her mind as she stood rooted to the spot. The blonde took a couple of deep, cleansing breaths to regain her composure. "It was just a dream; it wasn't real." she repeated to herself as she finally pushed through the doors and glanced at the table that 'dream' Bo was standing in front of. Giving her head a quick shake to clear the images out of her mind, Lauren made a beeline for her office. In that moment she decided that she would cocoon herself away and immerse herself in test reports as she didn't know how to handle this feeling of despondence. Until she figured it out, she opted to distract herself.

It was later in the morning when Nayara made her way over to Lauren's office to check on her. The blonde was so engrossed with what she was doing that she didn't notice the brunette walk in, lean comfortably against the door frame and cross her arms. Nayara observed Lauren for a few more seconds and smiled at the way the blonde unconsciously nibbled on her bottom lip when she was in deep concentration.

The Empath cleared her throat. "Good morning."

Lauren jumped slightly, causing the brunette to chuckle. "Sorry, I didn't mean to startle you."

"Hi. It's fine. I was just preoccupied with this report."

"Yes because those reports are so riveting." The brunette said sarcastically causing them both to laugh. Nayara noticed the dark circles under her friend's eyes. "You look like crap. How are you feeling?"

Lauren rolled her eyes at the brunette, "Just peachy." she said sarcastically. "Even though I knew that our bond was temporary, I still felt unprepared when it occurred. Everything just feels overwhelming and raw all over again." She stood up and walked to the front of her desk; leaning back on it as she faced her friend. "Enough about me, how are you doing?"

"I am off-kilter; sorting out what was real and what was heightened… It will take time to adjust…. for both of us."

Lauren bowed her head momentarily before looking up into Nayara's eyes. "I'm sorry that we had to avoid being alone together these past few days. I missed us hanging out."

"I did too and it's okay; it was necessary. We probably would've done something that we would've regretted if we didn't take precautions." Nayara paused before continuing. "For what it's worth, you won't feel this way for long. It's just the shock of everything returning all at once. It will get better and it won't seem as difficult. I promise." Nayara gently reassured her.

Lauren didn't respond; all her emotions were caught in her throat, restricting her speech. She really hoped that Nayara was right as she really didn't know how she would be able to go through this all over again.

The Empath's voice brought her out of her thoughts. "Anyway, I just wanted to see how you were doing. I'll let you get back to work."

Lauren nodded and watched sadly as her friend turned and walked away. She knew that things were awkward between them and she appreciated that Nayara was being patient and understanding with her. The blonde knew that she would have to talk to her at some point but now was not the time for it; besides she wasn't sure what she was going to say. All she knew was that they would have to talk soon. If there was anything Lauren had learnt from her relationship with Bo was that communication
was important and she didn't want to make the same mistake twice.

Lauren's apartment (later that evening)

Lauren paced back and forth; she couldn't sit still. She had already done a quick cleaning of the apartment and threw some laundry in the washing machine to occupy herself but nothing worked to soothe her heart and calm her thoughts. She looked at her cell phone for the umpteenth time, checking for messages but there were none; she hadn't heard back from Bo ever since she had returned her texts. As Lauren re-read the texts she sent, she sighed. She was glad that she was honest; however she regretted how she expressed herself. She didn't mean to come across as cold and uncaring; and she really couldn't blame Bo for not replying as her text seemed final.

The blonde felt as if the walls were closing in on her and decided to go for a walk to clear her head and get a change of scenery. After walking around the compound for a few minutes, Lauren wasn't surprised to find herself in front of Nayara's apartment even though it wasn't her intended destination.

Lauren took a deep breath and exhaled before knocking. A few seconds later, she heard footsteps before the door unlocked.

"Hi." She breathed out when the door opened.

Nayara smiled, "Hi."

"I hope I'm not interrupting?" Lauren said as she fidgeted in front of the door.

"Not at all. Come in."

Lauren made her way to her usual spot on the couch, making herself comfortable as Nayara went to the kitchen to grab them a couple of beers.

The blonde smiled as the Empath handed her a bottle before sitting down. "Thanks." They both took a long sip of their beer as silence filled the room.

After what seemed like eternity, Lauren bit the bullet and looked into Nayara's beautiful blue eyes, "I'd like to address the elephant in the room."

"Okay." The brunette said calmly. Nayara had found it difficult keeping her distance from the blonde over the last few days and now, with their bond broken, she found it challenging to sort out her feelings; but despite her own emotional upheaval, she knew that it was worse for Lauren. Because of this, she didn't want to push the blonde into talking about what happened between them. She however, had hoped that this would be that discussion because she hated that their friendship was somewhat strained.

The blonde exhaled, put her beer down on the coffee table and rested her hands in her lap. "I said some things when we were bonded; things that I wouldn't normally say because, well, I'm guarded and controlled... big surprise, I know."

Both women laughed, releasing some of the tension that they felt.

Lauren grew serious again, maintaining eye contact. "But it doesn't negate the fact I meant what I said. I am attracted to you Nay - very much so. I know that things are awkward between us because we kissed and I know that I should regret it but I don't. Instead of normally ignoring my thoughts and feelings, I acted on it and I'm glad that I did because it was wonderful and real for me."

"But?" the Empath prompted, knowing that there was more.
"But I'm an emotional mess and much to my chagrin, despite how much Bo has hurt me, I am still in love with her. I really wish that I wasn't as it would make it easier to move on and get through this so-called life of mine." Lauren sighed, wringing her hands together. "As much as I'd like to see where things could lead between us, it wouldn't be fair to you as I'd only end up hurting you. You're my best friend Nay and I care about you too much to do that."

Nayara smiled sadly, "I know."

"I only hope that I haven't jeopardized our friendship." the blonde said hesitantly.

Nayara put her beer down and reached out to gently take one of the blonde's hands. "You haven't Lauren. Don't think that. You are my best friend and I care about you greatly. Yes, our bonding heightened those feelings and even though I wasn't expecting it to be romantic in nature, I don't regret anything as it made me realize that I wasn't being true to myself. I was trying to deny my feelings and for an Empath, that isn't healthy."

Lauren looked down at their hands sadly before looking back at her friend. "I'm sorry that I put you in this position Nay. I was so focused on my pain that I didn't think of how it could or would affect you."

Nayara shook her head. "Don't be sorry. I did this to help you and if I had to do things all over again, I wouldn't change a thing…. But in the spirit of honesty, I do wish we were more than friends."

Lauren's brown eyes grew wide at this revelation. Even though she suspected Nayara had feelings for her, hearing it out loud made it real and intensified the guilt she felt over the whole situation. The blonde opened her mouth to say something but Nayara held up her free hand to stop her.

"Please let me finish. I understand and accept everything that you've told me. I have never been blind to your situation or how you feel for Bo; because of that, I knew that it could never work between us. It's just that our bonding made it difficult to reconcile that fact." Nayara sighed deeply. "I've been alive for many lifetimes Lauren and I've experienced more than you can imagine. I…" The brunette stopped in mid-sentence as if assessing whether she should continue with that train of thought. "Just know that I cherish our friendship and I would never do anything to jeopardize it or make you feel uncomfortable."

"I know that Nay. I never doubted that for a moment." Lauren smiled tenderly at her friend before reaching for her beer.

A comfortable silence fell between the two women as they quietly pondered over what they discussed. "Where do we stand now?" Lauren asked hesitantly before taking a sip from her bottle.

"Well, I can live with us being really good friends who find each other incredibly hot."

Lauren, not expecting that response, choked on her beer, causing the brunette to laugh out loud. The blonde covered her mouth, coughing repeatedly. Once composed, she shook her head and smiled at Nayara. "I can live with that too."

"You realize that I'll still flirt with you shamelessly but if I find that you can't control yourself around me, I'll stop. I'm not that cruel." The Empath teased.

"I'm sure that I can handle it but I do appreciate your being so considerate." Lauren said sarcastically.

"Anytime."
Lauren's tone turned serious again. "I did mean what I said before… when we were bonded. You are wonderful and I really don't know how I could've gotten through these past few weeks if I hadn't have met you."

"You're a lot stronger than you think Lauren." The Empath encouraged.

"Please don't downplay this Nayara. I mean it. Thank you for everything."

Nayara nodded and pulled her friend in for a hug; both women smiling within the embrace.

With the tension and awkwardness gone, Nayara asked, "So, how are you doing… really?"

"I'm having a difficult time adjusting to my emotions being back." Lauren sighed.

"It is normal. You just need to give yourself time to acclimatize." Nayara explained.

"These last few days that we were bonded, I felt calm. And aside from us avoiding being alone with one another, I still felt at peace with myself. But now, everything is chaotic; it's hard to concentrate; and my heart feels heavy… Those five days made me forget how I felt before and now I feel as if I'm back at square one. I don't know if I have the strength to do this again." Lauren admitted sadly.

"You can get through this; your emotions are just overpowering you right now. I know that it feels as if you have to start over but you don't. I promise you will feel better about things soon. It won't seem so intense and overwhelming once you have a good night's sleep and once you give yourself time to adjust."

"I really hope you're right." Lauren sighed.

"Who do you think you're talking to? I'm always right!" the brunette said feigning false modesty, eliciting a chuckle from the blonde.

"You've come a long way since you arrived in Brazil. Don't sell yourself short Lauren."

The blonde smiled at her friend in appreciation.

"Would you like to talk about Bo?" the Empath offered knowing that Lauren's feelings about the Succubus were at the forefront of her pain.

"I'd rather not right now. My emotions are jumbled and I'm still trying to sort them out. Besides, we always talk about me. What about you?"

"What about me?"

"Why is it that I don't know anything personal about you?" Lauren enquired.

The Empath shook her head. "You know a lot about me."

"I know that you are exactly 2,214 years old but you don't look a day over 35; you are an Aries…." Both women smiled before the blonde continued speaking. "I know that you've travelled extensively and lived all over the world; that you are multilingual and that you've held numerous careers, some of which were: teacher, painter, singer, Archaeologist, Curator, Linguist, Nurse, Psychiatrist, Physician and last but not least, Medical Research Scientist."


"Sometimes. What I don't know is why is it that an incredibly beautiful, smart and caring woman as
yourself doesn't have someone special in her life?" Lauren asked.

"Well, that's a long story." The Empath said sadly.

"I have time." Lauren adjusted herself on the couch, making herself more comfortable.

Nayara contemplated whether she should divulge anything about her past. Because of her inherent ability, she was normally the one listening to others' problems and was never the one talking about them; in fact, it had been an incredibly long time since anyone had ever asked her if she wanted to discuss what was bothering her. The Empath exhaled deeply; for a being that was very emotional, she was also very controlled – controlling of her privacy and of her past; the downside being that it was exhausting not letting anyone in; and she was tired of living that way. As Nayara gazed at Lauren, she couldn't think of anyone else that she would rather share her past with. "I don't know where to start."

"Wherever you would like." Lauren said softly.

Nayara released a heavy sigh and settled back into the couch.

I came from an affluent family in São Paulo. My mother, who was also an Empath, died when I was 11. After her death, my father couldn't cope and isolated himself from me by involving himself heavily in every social and political event imaginable, so I hardly saw him growing up. Being an only child and an Empath, I was left alone to fend for myself; discovering my abilities and not knowing what to do or how to manage – this all during the worst moment of my childhood. Fortunately, I had a wonderful nanny, who helped me learn about my powers otherwise I would've gone crazy. But aside from her, I was on my own and free to do whatever I wanted, which was both good and bad. Let's just say, I got myself into a lot of trouble growing up.

In my early 20's I started travelling. If it was one thing that my father did for me, it was to make sure that I had enough money, so I used that to my advantage and travelled a lot. What started as a vacation to Bora Bora turned out to be the beginning of my love for travel as I never returned home after that trip. Looking back, it's funny how naïve I was. Back then, my reasons for travelling was to escape; to get away from my non-existent life at home or rather my non-existent family; it had nothing to do with experiencing various cultures and their history or the wonder of being somewhere new and different.

But I was young. I was very carefree, feeding from whomever I chose; doing whatever I wanted and being with whomever I wanted. I didn't do serious relationships. I didn't care about responsibilities or ties or consequences. I just wanted to do my own thing; after all, it was all I knew. I loved being spontaneous - if I woke up and wanted to go to Scotland or Moscow or Rome, I went.

I was like that for most of my first millennia before I grew tired of all the drinking, partying, sex and just being aimless. I decided I needed a change, so I used my immortality to my benefit and started studying and exploring different careers in various countries to determine what I wanted to do. I essentially would choose a job that I considered interesting and then studied within that field and followed that career path. I quickly learned about budgeting and responsibility once I started working and became financially independent, no longer needing to rely on my father as I earned and built my own wealth.

Over time, my interests would change or there would no longer be a challenge with that particular job or if I were living amongst humans, I had to leave before it was noticed that I didn't age. Whatever the reason, I moved on to a different career and country and started the process all over again; hence all the jobs that I've held. However, no matter how fulfilling working within my field of choice was, I still felt as if something was missing from my life.
When I was 1,885 years old, my father was very ill and I returned home from Spain, to be with him and say my goodbyes. It was my first time back home since I had left and I was no longer that young, naïve girl. I had matured considerably since he had last seen me and he had become very introspective during his illness, so we were able to mend some bridges before he passed away but I never got over his abandoning me. Being the only heir, everything was left to me, including the family mansion which was devoid of warmth and love. I just wanted to sell it all and leave for good as there were more negative memories than good ones but I just couldn't bring myself to do so because whatever was left of my mother was still in that house. Instead, I arranged for custodial staff to take care of the mansion and I found an apartment until I could decide what to do next. As I had my own medical practice in Spain, I figured I could use my experience as a doctor here until I made a decision about what I wanted to do and where I wanted to live.

My first day on the job at the São Paulo Light Fae Compound's hospital, I met a doctor named Gabriel who was assigned to show me around so I wouldn't get lost. I remember thinking how handsome he was and that if the job was boring, that at least some good would come out of this. It turned out the job was incredibly boring but I didn't care, Gabriel and I had hit it off immediately - it was the first time I didn't leave a job for that reason. He and I just had this connection; we had so much in common and really understood one another; and for the first time ever, I could be myself completely. Any thoughts of leaving Brazil quickly vanished as we fell deeply in love and married within a short period of time.

We both decided that my familial house would be the ideal place to live – to make the house a home and create new, happy memories there. For the first time since I left home in my 20's, I had found a place that I wanted to stay and settle down. The irony wasn't lost on me that it took me most of my life to figure out that everything that I wanted and needed was here all along and that I had to run away to learn that lesson.

Gabriel and I travelled extensively and we enjoyed experiencing and learning about new, exotic locations and cultures together. We also volunteered with an organization similar to 'doctors without borders' and for two months every year we went to developing countries and helped those in need. Everything was just better with Gabriel at my side; we were partners in every sense of the word and that hole that I had felt inside me all my life was finally filled; I had never been happier.

After 105 years of marriage, with all our travelling and volunteering behind us, we decided that it was time to start a family of our own and had a little boy, Téo. He was a beautiful, sweet, inquisitive boy with sandy brown curls, just like his father. I never thought I could be so happy and it warmed my heart knowing that my parent's mansion was filled with love and the sound of a child's laughter after so many years without.

One day everything changed. Gabriel went to pick up Téo from school while I was at work. According to witness reports, it happened so quickly that no one had time to react. The police said that Dark Fae were targeting one of the Light Fae Elders who was there to pick up their child from school and they didn't care who got caught in the crossfire. Twenty-three children and adults died that day, including my Gabriel and Téo. My son was 10 years old when he was taken from me.

I was a mess. I closed myself off from everyone – friends, co-workers and in-laws. It was then that I finally understood what my father went through when my mother died. I had lost my soul mate of 115 years and my son; I never thought I could feel so lost and empty.

I changed careers as I couldn't work in the same place that Gabriel and I had worked and I moved out of the mansion as it was too difficult living there with everything a reminder. Instead, I filled my time with work to the point of exhaustion before I realized that I was tainting their memory by just existing and not living; Gabriel and Téo wouldn't want me to be so unhappy. So I try to live my life
to the fullest for them; in their memory. It's been 214 years since and it has gotten better - I've learned to live again and to love myself and life.

Nayara let out a long sigh after telling her story. "It's been a long time since I've talked to anyone about myself." She said with tear filled eyes.

Lauren, who had been listening intently, was moved by her friend's pain and loss; deep sorrow reflected in her eyes. She reached out and enveloped the brunette in a warm embrace, holding her tightly. "I'm so sorry Nay." whispered into her hair.

The Empath melted within her friend's arms; time had relieved most of her pain but it still lingered and will always be a part of her, however feeling the physical comfort from another, eased some of the residual grief.

After a few moments, Nayara pulled away and wiped the tears from her eyes. "I'm okay; sometimes my emotions surprise me…. I know I'm an Empath."

Both women chuckled at the comment.

"I appreciate that you trusted me enough to tell me about your past. It means a lot Nay." Lauren said genuinely as she squeezed her friend's hand.

"Well, aside from wanting to confide in you, I also had another reason for telling you." The brunette admitted, sniffing back the rest of her tears.

"Oh? And what reason is that?"

"I wanted you to know that I speak from experience when I say this. I think that you need to find other outlets to help you filter your feelings. I think if you took up a hobby - something outside of Science to occupy your mind and calm your spirit - it would be healthier for you."

"Oh-kay. I don't understand where this is coming from though."

Nayara looked directly in Lauren's warm brown eyes. "You need something more in your life Lauren; something other than Science. You need something that is yours; that you are passionate about; and that you enjoy doing outside of work and that is independent of others. Of course, having people in your life would be great but in case that is not possible…."

The brunette's voice hitched in her throat and as she continued to speak, there was a hint of sorrow, "If I could change things I would. And if it was possible and you wanted to, I think you would be very happy living here. What I'm trying to say is that as much as I would love for you to stay here, you would have to return to Toronto at some point. Call it selfish on my part but I couldn't bear thinking of you just managing to survive day by day. I know you and you wouldn't be able to continue as you have been for the last six years - too much has happened. You need something more than just existing need to have some kind of enjoyment in your life and after everything that has happened, I don't think that you can get that from Science alone, especially what Science has come to mean for you with the Fae."

"What do you suggest?" the blonde asked, feeling the weight and truth of Nayara's words. She didn't want to think about Toronto but she knew that it was inevitable.

"I think you already know."

Lauren didn't have to guess. "I only sing when I'm happy and I can't see myself ever being content as a slave to the Light once I return there; and as for other people in my life, well, that'll probably be
next to nil." The blonde felt dejected just thinking about the bleak life waiting for her.

Nayara sensed this. "I'm really sorry for bringing this up, truly I am. But I do think you need to consider changing the way you've been doing things and you need to figure this out before you return to Toronto. I think you agree with me on that."

Lauren nodded, unable to speak.

The Empath continued her explanation. "Sometimes you need to force things to happen. You know when you've had a bad day and someone smiles at you and you can't help but smile back?" Lauren nodded again. "Well, maybe forcing yourself to sing can help bring you some joy, even if it's only for a moment." Nayara explained. "First you have one moment and then another and another; and before you know it, it adds up. I know that that's a simplistic example and I am by no means making light of your situation. I cannot imagine what it must be like... but what I do know is that you cannot continue this way - you need to replace what was lost with something else no matter how insignificant it may seem... I tell you this from experience."

Lauren was sceptical but she trusted Nayara and right now she didn't have any options upon her return to Toronto. "I have some doubts about your theory but I promise I will keep it in mind."

"That's all I ask. And while you consider that option, I have something for you." Nayara got up from the couch. "Be right back."

Nayara left and went into her bedroom; when she returned, she was smiling and carrying a guitar case in her hand.

The Empath handed the case to Lauren. "Here. One of the guys in the lab had an extra guitar and I borrowed it for you. It's yours to use for the remainder of your time here."

Lauren shook her head. "I appreciate it Nay but I couldn't."

In a resolute tone, the Empath said, "Look, I'm not taking this back to Bernard and the guitar is not staying here, so you're going to have to leave with it."

The blonde chuckled at her friend's gumption as she took the case and opened it; smiling, she plucked at the strings before her fingers slowly glided over the smooth body of the instrument. "Thanks." She said genuinely.

"Oh, you will be thanking me alright. Now that you have a guitar, we could practice a few songs together for concert night at Base Camp and blow the male Scientists quartet out of the water! Not that I'm competitive or anything."

"Not at all." Lauren mocked the brunette.

"Besides, it's better to be prepared than forced on stage; not that you know what that's like." The Empath winked at her friend. "No pressure of course."

"Of course not." Lauren chuckled. "Wow, it's been awhile since I've performed with anyone. It'll be fun! And I'll finally get to hear you sing." she said as she smiled brightly at Nayara. "So, what songs do you have in mind?"

Lauren's apartment (Day 31)

Over the next few days Lauren followed Nayara's advice of giving herself time to adjust. She stuck to her routine of working in the lab, boxing with Serena and hanging out with Nayara; being careful
of not falling back into old, unhealthy habits of working late and not eating. She also started playing
the guitar during her down time, which surprisingly, she enjoyed, so that whenever she and Nayara
hung out, they practiced for the concert.

Lauren quickly discovered that focusing on other things – healthy things – helped her not ruminate
on her pain as much and she soon started to feel a bit better, lighter and not as depressed. This
solution that Nayara suggested, though simplistic in nature, was an eye opener for the blonde and it
gave her some hope for getting past her heartache and for her future with the Fae upon her return to
Toronto.

Lauren didn't lie to herself; she knew that she sometimes avoided thinking about Bo and the pain
associated with their relationship, after all distance did help. However, she also knew that acceptance
and time were vital and necessary for her to heal. Because of this understanding, she did her best to
try and accept what transpired; to learn from that experience; and to be patient and allow herself time
to get past the pain so that she could function normally. She had by no means perfected this but she
still had time to work on it before she returned to Toronto. Her hope was that she could achieve a
healthier state of mind before then.

Until that happened, she was going to focus on the here and now; and that entailed preparing for her
second trip into the field tomorrow. Lauren hadn't forgotten her purpose in Brazil – a cure for the
epidemic was her priority. They would be heading to the second Base Camp, which meant different
villages and new samples. Aside from enjoying being in the field, this trip meant more specimens
would be collected, which would create a significant increase in their information pool as they would
have data to compare against the first Base Camp. Any similarities would bring them a step closer to
finding a cure.

Tomorrow would mark the beginning of a brand new day and endless possibilities. Lauren couldn't
wait to start.

Chapter End Notes

Without giving details away, just bear with me a teeny bit longer. The moment you have
been patiently waiting for is getting closer. Just keep in mind that nothing is ever easy.
One Step at a Time

Chapter Notes

Thanks to my Beta, Neytiri's Heart, for helping me stay true to the characters; to Spcecadet for her awesome suggestions; and to my friend Bev for helping me talk out and re-vamp the entire story's timeline – you're a lifesaver!

The Crack Shack (27 days since Lauren left)

Bo was up and out of bed early, much to her body's dismay. She had gashes and bruises all over her body and every single muscle ached, however, she didn't let that deter her. All she wanted was to get to Hale's office and find out where Lauren was. Healing would come after; Lauren's location was priority.

It was 7:30 A.M. when the brunette limped into the Light Fae Compound. Bo was greeted by the sounds of silence as there was no one around except for the guards which was a welcome change to the chaotic noise that was her life this past month. As she made her way through the quiet corridors to the Ash's office, it finally occurred to Bo why Lauren liked coming in early. The brunette always thought that it was about work but it was most likely the peace and quiet that the early morning afforded her and the fact that it was probably one of the few times in the day when Lauren wasn't surrounded by Fae. Just thinking about the blonde made Bo's heart ache and she wondered if things would ever get better; if her girlfriend would ever forgive her. She shook her head to physically chase away the negative thoughts – she was determined to find Lauren and make things right between them.

Bo pulled herself together as she opened the door to the Ash's outer office. The office was eerily quiet despite the fact that there were five Fae sitting in the waiting area along the far wall. Bo walked past them and headed straight for Hale's assistant, stopping in front of his desk. "Good morning. I'm here to see Hale."

Surok, the Ash's assistant, looked up from the paperwork on his desk. "You mean the Ash?" he emphasized. "Do you have an appointment?" he asked haughtily.

"No, I don't but I'm sure that he'll make time to see me."

"I'm sorry but the Ash has a full schedule today, you will have to make an appointment. Let's see…" Surok scanned through the electronic calendar. "His next available time is a week and a half from now. Tuesday at 10:30 a.m. Does that work for you?"

"No that doesn't work for me!" Bo almost shouted. She took a breath to calm herself. "Just… please let him know that Bo is here."

"I know who you are but I cannot. You do not have an appointment and the Ash has a very busy schedule this morning." The assistant reiterated this point by nodding his head towards the Fae in the waiting room.

The brunette didn't have time for this. She didn't come here just to be turned away before talking to Hale. The Succubus subtly leaned forward and gently touched Surok's hand, sending a low pulse
through him; the warmth of her hand on his was the only indication of what she was doing. "I'm sure you can squeeze me in. It won't take long." Bo said sweetly.

The assistant's stern look quickly faded and was replaced with a silly smile, "Of course. Anything for you." He said through hooded eyes as he ushered Bo into Hale's office.

Hearing the door open, Hale looked up from his stack of papers and noticed the glazed look on his assistant's face. "That will be all Surok." The Ash said. The Fae hesitated for a second, his hand lingering on the door knob as he took a final, longing glance at the brunette before closing the door behind him.

"Bo. Hi. You look like shit!"

"Hi. Yeah, I know. I ran into a problem last night but I was able to resolve it. I'll heal." Bo said as she stood in the centre of the office.

Hale stood up and made his way to the front of his desk, straightening and buttoning his jacket as he walked. This was a habit that he had developed ever since he came into office. He discovered, through Kenzi, that if his outward appearance showed him to be impeccably dressed and well put together, it made a strong, positive impression on others. That coupled with the simple act of smoothing and buttoning his jacket helped him feel collected and mentally prepared. "So, what brings you to this neck of the woods?"

Bo decided to cut to the chase. "I need a favour, Hale. I need to know where Lauren is. I… I need to fix things between us."

Hale was expecting this. He knew that when Lauren left, Bo would eventually pay him a visit but knowing this didn't alleviate his discomfort. "I'm actually surprised that it's taken you this long to come see me. I've been expecting you for some time. Regardless, I cannot tell you where she is." Bo was taken aback. She had not anticipated that Hale would not tell her where Lauren was. It never occurred to her that he wouldn't give her the information. "You know how I feel about Lauren. I thought you of all people would understand. Why won't you tell me where she is?" she asked perplexed.

Hale sighed. "Bo, I don't know the whole story but what I do know is that the Doc wanted out. She knew that you were aware that Dyson had his love back and begged me to send her on this assignment as she didn't want to be around either of you. All she wanted was to get away to sort things out while also helping others."

Bo was taken aback. She had not anticipated that Hale would not tell her where Lauren was. It never occurred to her that he wouldn't give her the information. "You know how I feel about Lauren. I thought you of all people would understand. Why won't you tell me where she is?" she asked perplexed.

Hale sighed. "Bo, I don't know the whole story but what I do know is that the Doc wanted out. She knew that you were aware that Dyson had his love back and begged me to send her on this assignment as she didn't want to be around either of you. All she wanted was to get away to sort things out while also helping others."

Bo's heart lurched. She already knew that Lauren had requested this assignment but hearing it from Hale was just further proof of how much she had hurt the woman she loved. Lauren was never one to reveal her fears or emotional concerns as she didn't want to be considered weak yet she confided in Hale instead of her girlfriend. Bo knew that Lauren had to have been at her wit's end to do so. The brunette also knew that Lauren never ran from anything - she always faced things head on regardless of the risk or consequence but in this situation she ran. Bo let out a heavy sigh; she was starting to doubt her resolve and berated herself. "How could I have been so self-absorbed to not see how unhappy she was to the point that she couldn't be around me anymore?"

The brunette held back her tears and gathered herself. Now wasn't the time for self-pity or self-flagellation; she had to convince Hale to help her. She had to find Lauren. "I know that I hurt Lauren but I want to make it up to her, Hale. Please, tell me where she is. I need to apologize to her and make things right."
The Siren felt horrible. He heard the desperation in the Succubus’ voice but he had to stick to his decision as well as honour Lauren's request. "I can't Bo. I am sorry but there is too much at stake here – for Lauren, for the Fae that she's trying to save and for me. I can't have you going after her especially the way that you've been."

"What do you mean by the way that I've been?!" Bo's patience was dwindling; she was getting nowhere fast and Hale's outward indifference was making her angry.

Hale was also losing his patience. "You really want me to spell it out for you? I've received numerous reports and complaints about you every day for the last month – issues about the unaligned Succubus being intoxicated, destroying property and getting into numerous fights, causing serious injury to Dark and Light Fae. You are unstable Bo and there is no way that I'll let you go after Lauren to hurt her or undo what she is trying to accomplish."

The anger and disappointment resonated in Bo's voice. "I wouldn't hurt Lauren! I can't believe that you really think so little of me! I thought we were friends Hale."

It was now Hale's turn to be angry; his voice laced with frustration. "It's because we're friends that I looked the other way and ignored requests to have you punished! It's because we're friends that I repeatedly convinced the Morrigan to not go after you!"

"I never asked you to do that! I can take care of myself." Bo said, interrupting the Siren's rant.

Hale couldn't believe the Succubus' gall and scoffed at her. "You really think that don't you? The fact of the matter is that you've only survived this long because your friends have been helping and protecting you. Even though I am the Acting Ash, my time here is tenuous and I put that on the line every time I defended you against the Light Fae Elders. My hope was that you would come around but you didn't and each time I came to your defence, it was to the detriment of my reputation and good standing with the Light Fae community. Did you really think that there would be no consequences to your actions? Did you really think that no one would notice all the Fae you've injured and all the property that you've destroyed? Whatever rep that you built these past few years, you've now tarnished with your actions."

Bo was speechless.

The Siren continued with his tirade. "You accuse me of not being a friend but what about you? You are only here now because you want something from me. And what did you do when you got here?"

Bo went to interject but Hale cut her off, pointing to the small TV screen on his desk that had a live feed of the outer office. "Don't even deny it - I saw and heard you. You couldn't even be respectful of me and my position in front of my assistant and when he refused your request, you enthralled him even though he was only doing his job. You then cut in front of all the Fae who have been waiting weeks to get an appointment with this office and demand information from me. And why? Because Bo Dennis wants what she wants immediately, regardless of others. Isn't that what got you into this situation to begin with – your disregard for others? Isn't that why Lauren left? So don't come preaching to me about friendship. Take a good, long look in the mirror and get back to me when you understand what you're preaching about. Now if you'll excuse me, I have work to do. Please show yourself out."

Hale turned away and made his way back to his chair, not looking at Bo.

The brunette stood there for a few moments, dumbstruck by everything that the Siren said, before turning and leaving his office; the sound of the door shutting behind her breaking the silence. Hale was angry. He knew that he was harsh. He hadn't intended to unload a verbal barrage onto Bo but
she was being a selfish ass and had been inconsiderate and irresponsible for far too long. He didn't realize how much her actions had affected him this past month until her attitude pushed him over the edge. He sighed and allowed himself to calm down before he buzzed Surok to let his next appointment in.

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Bo walked or rather limped, to clear her head; she didn't know where she was going, just that she couldn't be behind the wheel right now as she found it impossible to get Hale's words out of her mind. She was filled with so much hope when she woke up this morning; hope of finding out where Lauren was and then going to her. Instead her heart and spirit felt heavier than ever which she didn't think was possible. The truth hurt but she had to accept it. Hale's words made her realize how incredibly selfish and inconsiderate she had been. She was so focused on fixing things with Lauren and Kenzi that she hadn't even considered the consequences of her actions to those around her.

Bo felt as if she were drowning – drowning in her heartache and in her disappointment of all the poor choices she made. Right now all she wanted was a few stiff drinks to silence her thoughts and feelings. Drinking was her go-to solution to numb everything but she refused to succumb. The brunette knew that the time for quick fixes had passed - that's what got her in this predicament to begin with. Instead she stopped at a diner and picked up two large coffees before making her way back to her car and heading home.

The Crack Shack

As she walked in, Bo was surprised to see a half-awake Kenzi slouched on the couch. "Kenz? What are you doing up? It's 9 A.M."

The Goth groaned as she tilted her head back and to the side as she looked in her friend's direction; the couch supporting her head. "Gahhh, I think my body is in shock and having a bad reaction. I'm serious. I think I have a fever." She brought the back of her hand up to her forehead to check her temperature before sitting up straight. "I was just about to call you to see how things went with Hale."

The brunette sighed as she plopped down next to her friend, handing her a coffee cup. "It didn't."

Kenzi scrunched up her face, "Whaddya mean?"

Bo recounted the entire conversation and how Hale refused to give her any information on Lauren.

"Wow, I didn't see that coming." Genuine surprise was etched on the Goth's face as she took a sip of her coffee.

"I didn't either. He's right though - I screwed up royally. I will make things right but I just want to fix things with Lauren. How do I get him to see that I've changed and that I won't hurt her or screw up what she's trying to accomplish?"

Kenzi knew that she had to intercede. "Let me talk to Hale. I'll get him to listen. But it will go a long way if you kept out of trouble for awhile – you know, to show that you're serious about things."

Bo nodded her thanks and understanding. "I can do that."

After a few moments, the Goth added, "I also think you need to make amends to those that tried to help you while you were Succu-slutting it up."

Bo ran her hand through her hair and sighed, "I don't think Hale wants to see me anytime soon."
"I agree. You need to give him time to cool off. However, I was talking about Vex."

"Vex?"

"Dude, you started so many fights in his bar and busted up his place each time but he never mesmerized you or reported you to the Morrigan. I also lost count how many times he helped me calm you down so that we could get you home safely or how often he looked out for you when I wasn't around." Kenzi explained.

The brunette was truly ashamed; she hadn't realized how much she had put Kenzi and Vex through. "I … I didn't know." The morning was turning out to be full of ugly revelations.

"That's why I'm telling you now BoBo. You need to do some serious house cleaning and sort out your shit before you go find Hot Pants."

The brunette's eyes welled up with tears as the reality of how much she had screwed up came crashing down on her. "Fuck, I've made a mess!" Rubbing her eyes with the heels of her hands, she exhaled. "I don't know what I'd do without you."

"Let's not find out, okay?" Kenzi smiled tiredly; she was too emotionally exhausted to make a quip.

Bo pulled her friend into her and hugged her tight, tears flowing down her cheeks. She whispered into the Goth's hair; "I'm so sorry Kenz. I swear, I'll make things right."

Kenzi nodded in response as a lump formed in her throat. The Goth had gone through an emotional and stressful roller coaster ride taking care of Bo and it seemed that the ride had finally come to an end; the realization of which made her feel an overpowering sense of relief. Bo leaned back and gave Kenzi a sloppy kiss on her cheek causing the tiny woman to smile from ear to ear. The Goth had really missed her friend and it was so good to see that she was back.

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Kenzi waited till Bo went upstairs; after the emotional and physical beating she took the last couple of days she needed some rest. The Goth took out her cell and hesitated over Hale's name - it had been a while since they had spoken or even seen each other. When she was dealing with the Norn's 'gift', she was scared and went to him for help but instead he turned his back on her and gave her the cold shoulder. Now that the whole Kitsune thing was behind her and her arm was healed, she still had a hard time forgiving him; mostly because she was disappointed that he had let her down when she needed him the most. She also thought that their friendship surpassed the human-Fae divide but she guessed wrong.

For now, she would put it behind her; she needed to talk to Hale for Bo's sake. Looking at her cell, she took a deep breath and exhaled before she started typing.

* Hey. *

* Yo! Sup? *

* Can we meet? I need 2 talk 2 u about something. *

* What about? *

* I think u know. *
* I'm in meetings all day, how about the Dal tomorrow 8 a.m.? *

* OK. *

* Wow, u agreeing to a morning meeting? *

* Yeah. I'll c u then. *

---

The Dal (28 days since Lauren left)

Kenzi shuffled through the door with her coffee cup in hand and made her way to the bar, grunting her hello's to Trick. She was very thankful that the Dal was never busy at this time of the day; she didn't do mornings very well and noise and excessive talking only compounded her allergic reaction to being awake at this time. Fortunately, Trick knew this and indicated to his office with a nod of his head.

The tiny Goth made her way down the stairs to Trick's office, steeling herself for the conversation with Hale. She knew that things would be awkward but she would try to be civil. When she opened the door, she found the Siren standing in the centre of the room, waiting for her. They looked at each other for a few moments without saying a word; the tension between them making the silence uncomfortable.

Hale was the first to speak. "Hey 'lil mama; long time no see." His calm exterior masked the nervousness that he felt.

His seeming nonchalance immediately irked the Goth and she automatically went on the defensive. "You can thank your guard dogs for that. You trained them well in keeping the human peons out of your presence."

Hale knew that he deserved the snide remark; he had felt horrible about having his guard keep Kenzi at bay but he did what he felt he had to do – Kenzi was a distraction and he needed to keep his focus. "About that... I'm sorry but I had Ash business to deal with and-"

The petite Russian cut him off before he could finish. "I'm not here to discuss that but make no mistake; we will be talking about it at some point." The stern look she gave him made him avert his eyes briefly.

The Siren sighed. "Fair enough. Let's get straight down to it then. What did you want to discuss?"

Kenzi indicated towards the leather chairs so that they could sit down and have a civilized conversation. Once seated, she looked straight into Hale's eyes. "I know that Bo has been a mess this past month. I'm the first to call her on her shit – she was heartbroken when Hot Pants... when Lauren left and she handled things really badly but she's better now. She's realized her mistakes and is trying to fix things. And one of those things is her relationship with Lauren. She wants to go to her and apologize in person; she never got the chance because Lauren just up and left. She really wants to make things right. Can you please tell her where the Doc is so that she can do this?"

Hale shook his head sadly, "I can't Kenzi. There's more riding here than just a relationship gone wrong. Thousands of Fae lives are at stake – that's why Lauren is there - to help sick and dying Fae. Plus, it's political - this is an agreement between two Light Fae clans. I can't have Bo going over there and messing with the Doc's head. If things don't go the way that she wants, you and I both know that she'll lose her shit and it'll fuck up everything that Lauren is trying to accomplish."

Kenzi was stunned. She was certain that Hale would help once she spoke to him and explained that...
Bo wasn't unstable anymore. "Jesus Hale, this is Bo and Lauren that we're talking about here – they love each other! You know that. Since when did you turn away from doing what's right?"

The Siren was frustrated and it echoed in his voice as he stood up suddenly, his arms gesturing wildly. "Dammit Kenzi, that's all I've been doing! I'm trying to do right by everyone and I'm being torn in so many fucking directions! I'm navigating this political nightmare of a road by myself; trying to change thousands of years of stagnant thinking and it's all on my shoulders. I've learned that if I want to make a difference, I have to think beyond myself and my friends; I have to think about the bigger picture and the greater good for all. So, don't assume that I made this decision lightly." He sighed loudly and sat down now that he was a little calmer after his vent. "I thought you knew me better than that." He said softly, disappointment in his voice.

"I knew the old Hale. I don't recognize this Hale." As soon as she said it, she regretted it but it was too late to take it back.

The Siren winced at her words. "If that's the case, why did you contact me? Why am I even here?"

Kenzi didn't reply. She didn't know what to say or how to recant her harsh remark. After a few moments of silence, Hale stood up and started to walk towards the door.

"Wait!" Kenzi shouted, standing up with her arm outstretched; this is not how she had envisioned this conversation going. She let her arm fall back to her side and in a calm tone she tried to appeal to Hale again. "Look, I don't want to fight. I hear what you're saying. How about this – what if Bo can show you that she's changed? It would prove that she won't go ape shit over there, wherever there is. If she did that, would you reconsider and tell her where Lauren is?"

Hale had stopped in mid-step and turned around to face the petite woman. "If I consider this… how will she prove herself?"

Kenzi smiled internally as Hale was willing to listen. "If Bo stays out of trouble for a week, would you agree to tell her what she wants to know?"

The Siren stood there quietly thinking for a few moments. "Make it two weeks trouble free."

"A week and a half." Kenzi replied quickly.

"Two!" he repeated in a firm voice.

Kenzi rolled her eyes. "Okay, let me explain how negotiating works. You make an offer that is slightly lower than your previous number but still higher than mine; then I do the same when I make my bid; we keep doing this till we meet in the middle. It's called compromise. Let's try this again."

The young thief's antics always made him smile but he had to suppress it. "There is a lot at stake here Kenzi – for me, for Lauren, for the Fae clan in… umm, over there and for the ailing Fae that she's helping. As it is, I shouldn't even be considering this. If Bo stays out of trouble and I don't get any reports or complaints about her for the next two weeks, I'll tell her exactly where Lauren is. She has two weeks to keep her nose clean, starting today. That's my final offer."

Kenzi knew it was this or nothing. "Fine! Deal." She stuck her hand out for Hale to seal the deal. He shook her hand and maintained his grip as if he were afraid to let go; after a few moments he seemed to awaken from his daze and released her hand, a blush forming on his face.

The Goth pretended not to notice. "Know that I'm holding you to this." She said firmly.

"I have no doubt that you will." Hale said softly.
Later at the Crack Shack

Kenzi wasn't sure how her friend was going to react to the news but Bo surprised her by handling it well. In Bo's mind she had no choice - Hale was the only one who knew where Lauren was and she didn't want to enthral him for the information as that would wreck whatever was left of their friendship. The brunette was determined to stay out of trouble as she wanted to prove to herself, Kenzi and Hale that she could. More importantly, she was willing to do anything necessary to get to Lauren and if she had to be good for two weeks, she would be very good.

The Succubus and the Goth quickly fell into the routine of working cases during the day to keep busy and still earn cash; and in the evenings, they stayed home, watching TV and ordering take out with Kenzi getting to choose what they ate, as per their arrangement.

Things were quickly back to normal in the Crack Shack; however, outside of work and home, Bo often wondered if her Succubus cravings would make her slip up – it was a theory that she didn't want to test. At first, the brunette was a bit hesitant going out to bars, especially to the Dal and the Carpe Noctem, which were her old stomping grounds; however she soon fell back into her old, healthy groove; keeping herself in check by staying sober. When it came time to feed, she made sure to only siphon small amounts from those she enthralled instead of having sex; this meant that she had to suck chi from more than one person or Fae at a time to sustain her.

Kenzi noticed the difference in Bo's feeding habits right away and questioned her on it when they got back home – she didn't want there to be any secrets or strange behaviour especially since her friend was starting to get back on track. Subtly, the Goth asked, "What's with all the Succu-sucking when you feed? How come you're not sexing it up?"

Bo, who was in the midst of drinking her beer, choked which caused beer to come out through her nose. After her coughing spurt was done, Bo shook her head at her friend. "You really must learn how to segue. Why do you ask?"

"Well, I've noticed that now that you're out of your funk, you only suck chi – you're not having sex to feed. Are you abstaining? Is that even possible?"

The Succubus ran her fingers through her wavy hair. "I'm fine. I was having sex all the time because I constantly needed to heal from all the fights. But since the Dawning, I've changed - I have more control over my chi after feeding. It's like I can tap into it whenever I want, taking as much or as little as I need to keep me going. I haven't tried it yet but I think I could go a few days off of one feeding; maybe longer." Bo smiled to herself as she knew that this would be something that Lauren would geek out about and would want to test; she would happily comply if it meant having her girlfriend back.

Bo paused to collect her thoughts before continuing. "After everything that happened these past few weeks, I am kinda abstaining from sex right now. I know it sounds really weird saying it out loud."

The brunette sighed, the weight of her self-destructive behaviour rested heavily on her shoulders. "I just need to sort myself out first; everything that I've done, it's... it's just messed up. I need to get my Succubus side under control - I was at an all you can eat buffet for a month after all. So, until I feel more stable, I'm choosing to feed by sucking it out of someone instead of having sex with them. With that said, if I get hurt and need to heal, sex is the fastest and best way to replenish my chi."

Bo looked at her friend to see if what she said sunk in. "Does that make sense?"

Kenzi tilted her head to the side as she processed this information. "So, before the Dawning, you were like a sexy sports car with a high performance engine that had shitty gas mileage, quickly
burning through gas. And after the Dawning, your high performance engine became more fuel
efficient, so you don't have to gas up as often?"

"Aside from the fact that you are comparing me to a sports car, yes, that's it exactly."

"Cool! Why didn't you explain it like that then? I would've understood you a lot sooner."

Bo shook her head at her friend and continued to drink her beer.

During the next two weeks, Bo heeded Kenzi's advice to clean up house. She made sure to
apologize to Vex for all the trouble she caused and thanked him for helping Kenzi take care of her.
The brunette could tell that the Mesmer was surprised by the apology as he tried to be nonchalant
about it, saying that he liked the chaos that she brought to his establishment, but when she hugged
him, he didn't push her away or make any sarcastic comments nor did he try to cop a feel.

The brunette felt better after apologizing to Vex. It was like a weight was lifted off of her shoulders
as she took responsibility for her actions and acknowledged those who tried to help her. However,
she knew that she still had a ways to go to make things right. Bo had amassed a great deal of money
from all the cases that they had worked and even though she knew that it wouldn't completely make
up for her behaviour, she used some of it to pay for the repairs to property that she had caused
damage to; figuring it was the least that she could do.

Crack Shack (41 days since Lauren left - evening)

It was almost the end of the longest two weeks of her life and Bo had one last thing that she had to
do; something which would involve a very special client.

"Hey Kenz, can you do me a favour? I, uh, double booked us with two clients tomorrow morning on
the opposite sides of the city. Can you take one and I'll take the other?" Bo asked sheepishly.

Kenzi groaned. "How early are we talking about here? You know that I don't function well in the
mornings."

The brunette gave her a big toothy grin. "Um, 8:30 A.M."

"Bo! Really?"

"I know! I'm sorry. I must've spaced out when I made the appointments. I'm taking the earlier
appointment at 8 o'clock."

"Fine! Where am I meeting the client and what's the story?" The Goth agreed grumpily.

"At Cora's on Wellington Street. The client's name is Mrs. Altec and it's the usual cheating hubby
scenario. I told her that you have black hair with purple highlights, so that she would recognize you."

"Presumptuous much? Well, at least I'll be able to have pancakes after the meeting." Kenzi
grumbled.

Cora's (42 days since Lauren left)

The Goth was in a booth at the back of the restaurant and had a clear view of the door. It was 8:50
A.M. and Mrs. Altec hadn't shown up. She was hungry and sleepy and getting grumpier by the
second; as she waited for the waitress to come around and pour her a refill, she cursed Bo in her
head.

She pulled out her cell and texted the Succubus.

* This client is a no-show. *

* Give her till 9; if nothing, leave. *

* U owe me big time! *

* I know. Add another shopping spree to the list. *

* I'm upping it - u owe me an ALL day shopping spree. *

* U got it! When next are you free? *

* I'll have to check my calendar. Sec. *

"How about in an hour?" Bo said as she slid into booth across from the Goth.

Kenzi almost dropped her cell as she jumped in her seat; not expecting her friend to materialize out of thin air. "You scared the shit out of me! What are you doing here?"

"I'm treating you to breakfast and a day of shopping." Bo said giddily.

"Huh?" the tiny Russian woman said eloquently.

"If I told you that I was taking you shopping, we wouldn't get going until sometime this afternoon. This way, I figured we could get an early start and also ensure that you had food and coffee in your system."

"I'm not quite awake yet as I only have one cup of coffee in me but did you just play me?" Kenzi asked mortified.

"I did!" Bo said grinning proudly from ear to ear.

"Oh my God! I'm losing my touch. I can't believe I fell for your pedestrian ploy." Kenzi looked horrified.

"Hey! Was that an insult?" Bo asked uncertainly.

"Oh, there's the waitress. Let's order!" Kenzi said as she excitedly grabbed the menu, obviously changing the subject.

Forty five minutes later, Kenzi had consumed four waffles covered in fresh fruit and custard, along with a stack of pancakes drenched in maple syrup. Bo was amazed at how much the tiny woman had eaten.

"I think you have a giant tape worm inside you. There's no other explanation for it. Where do you put all that food?" Bo asked incredulously.

"It goes straight to my hair and to my 'tude!" Kenzi said as she rubbed her stomach, smiling goofily.

"Happy tummy. Sooo full!"

The brunette laughed at the Goth. This was the first time since Lauren left that she genuinely felt
happy and laughed. Bo knew to cherish the moment and to cherish her friend. If it wasn't for Kenzi she didn't know if she would've been able to get past her depression and find herself again. She owed so much to her best friend and sister.

Bo winked at Kenzi. "Let me know when you can waddle out of here. We have a full day of shopping ahead of us and we can't do that from this booth."

Many, many hours of shopping later, Bo was never so happy to be home and off her feet. Their worn, beaten couch never looked so inviting as the brunette plopped down onto it and immediately took off her boots. "My feet are gonna fall off." She whined. "You have some serious shopping stamina." Bo said wearily as she rubbed her aching feet.

"It's a gift! Don't be jealous." Kenzi replied proudly as she surveyed the mountains of shopping bags piled on the floor around them. "Can I just say that today was the bestest day ever!" the petite Russian exclaimed as she rummaged through her bags.

Kenzi squealed like a little girl as she pulled out a pair of black, knee high, platform boots from one of the bags, "Would it be wrong if I slept with these beautiful babies?" A huge grin was etched on her face as she put one boot against her cheek and caressed the leather. "I know that the other shoes and boots would get jealous but I could take turns and sleep with a different pair each night. I'm considerate; I can share the love."

Bo just shook her head and chuckled at her friend. They had a wonderful day. They shopped, talked, laughed and had a blast - it was like old times again, except this time they had money and didn't steal anything. After everything that happened between them, they needed the time to reconnect and their day of shopping afforded them that.

The brunette was suddenly rousted out of her thoughts when Kenzi launched herself at her, hugging her tightly. "Thanks BoBo. I had a great time today." She said genuinely as she detached herself and sat next to the brunette.

"I did too." Bo replied happily as she put her arm around Kenzi's shoulder and pulled her close.

The two women sat in comfortable silence with Bo relishing being off her feet and Kenzi buzzing from her shopping high. However, the peace and quiet was suddenly interrupted by the sound of Kenzi's cell phone. It took a few moments for the Goth to even locate it amongst all the bags but when she finally found it, she realized that it was a text from the Siren.

"It's Hale." Kenzi said quietly as she looked over at her best friend.

Those two words were enough to make Bo's stomach flip flop. She didn't know if Hale would follow through on his end of the bargain and if he did, then it meant that she was a step closer to finding Lauren and making things right between them. "What did he say?" she asked hesitantly

Kenzi read out Hale's text. "He wants to know if we can be at Trick's office tomorrow at noon."

Bo took a deep breath and exhaled. "We'll be there."

The Goth texted the Siren back saying that they would see him tomorrow, then turned to face her friend. "Are you okay?"

The brunette sighed. "Yeah. Just anxious and nervous… even when I was wallowing in my misery, I always wondered where Lauren was. If Hale makes good on his promise, I will know tomorrow. I'll be able to find her. The thing is that I don't know if she wants me to."
Kenzi gently squeezed her friend's hand. "One step at a time, okay? Let's get Hot Pants' location first and then you can worry about her reaction after."

"You're right." Bo took another deep breath and released the tension in her shoulders. "One step at a time."

_TBC_
Finally

Chapter Notes

A quick shout out to my Beta, Neytiri's Heart now known as LostGirlz - congratulations on your house! Enjoy your new home.

And lastly, a very special thanks to Spcecadet who wonderfully agreed to temp Beta for me while LostGirlz has been getting settled. I seriously can't thank you enough for all your advice, recommendations, keen eye and patience. Thanks Grasshopper!

The Dal - Trick's office (day 43)

Bo and Kenzi had been in Trick's office for over an hour. The Succubus had been restless all morning and they both figured that if she were going to pace a hole through the floor, it might as well happen at the Dal. Granted, waiting was never Kenzi's strong suit but she had to stay calm in order to keep Bo's anxiety levels as low as possible; as it was, she had given up on telling her fidgety friend to sit down and relax 45 minutes ago.

The unaligned Fae glanced nervously at her watch for the umpteenth time as she paced back and forth within the den. These last 14 days had passed at a snail's pace but Bo had been patient throughout, it was only when they received Hale's text last night, that she became too restless to sit still or sleep. All dreams of finding Lauren were finally going to become a reality - a reality that Bo wanted more than anything yet also dreaded. These last two weeks, she clung to the fantasy of finding Lauren; of having her run into her arms, forgiving her and giving them another chance. Even though she knew it would never be that simple, it provided her with hope and comfort. Unfortunately, each minute that passed since Hale's text, her fear grew. Fear that he may not tell her what she wanted to know; or even worse, fear that he would and when she found Lauren, her fantasy would be shattered into a million pieces.

The Succubus sighed. The future was unknown and she would have to deal with it when the time came. She could only deal with the present and any minute now the Siren would arrive and hopefully, give her some answers.

The clock in Trick's office struck 12 and with it, Hale walked into the office. The Blood King had told him that they were already there so it wasn't a surprise. Shutting the door behind him, he greeted the two women. "Bo. Kenzi."

"Ash." Bo replied, politely using his title; to say that things were a little tense between them since their last meeting would be putting it mildly.

Kenzi was aware of this and decided to move things along gently. "So what's the word?" she enquired on Bo's behalf.

The Siren appreciated the Goth's attempts to soften the situation but he still hadn't made up his mind about what he was going to do – he was torn between helping Bo, helping Lauren and thinking of the sick Fae in Brazil, as well as the potential fall out to him. The Succubus had proven that she could stay out of trouble. Granted, it had only been two weeks but on a scale from one to ten, with ten being the shit storm of problems that she had been causing; Bo dropped to a zero almost
immediately, which meant that she was more than capable of putting a brake on her recklessness.

Hale needed further clarification and wanted to observe Bo's reaction and response to his questions before he finalized his decision. The Siren looked straight into Bo's eyes, "I need to ask you a couple of questions first."

"Ask away." Bo replied, doing her best to remain calm.

"Tell me why I should let you know where Lauren is. And I don't want a bullshit answer."

Bo actually wasn't surprised that Hale had asked her this - she probably would've done the same if the shoe were on the other foot. However, she knew that she had to cast aside her pride and be honest if it meant getting Lauren's location.

Holding the Siren's gaze, she spoke honestly. "You have every right to not tell me where Lauren is. I fucked everything up - not just with Lauren but with everything I did after she left. I hurt myself and those around me for which, I am truly sorry. I accept full responsibility but I know that I can never make up for it all."

The Succubus closed her eyes momentarily to compose her thoughts while Hale's silence encouraged her to continue. "I know that Lauren is in South America trying to save sick and dying Fae. She's doing this thinking that she was never enough for me; that I never loved her; and that I was going to leave her for Dyson or Tamsin…. All of which are furthest from the truth but I still made her feel that way."

"I really want to respect her wish of needing time but it's killing me knowing how much she's hurting… and that I, the person she trusted the most, am the cause of it." Bo let down her guard and allowed Hale to see the pain, sorrow and regret hidden behind her eyes; her chocolate brown orbs shimmering, trying to keep her tears at bay.

"The reason is simple, Hale. I am in love with Lauren. She's everything to me and I took her and what we had for granted. I was inconsiderate, insensitive and selfish and she deserved so much more than that." Bo shook her head and quietly sniffed back her tears.

"I can't express how difficult it has been, knowing that I lost her… her love and trust and that I've caused her so much pain. I need to let her know how sorry I am and if she gives me another chance, I will make things right. I will let her know how loved and wanted and special she is, because she is to me."

Hale was moved with Bo's admission but couldn't let her see that. "And what if she doesn't want to give you another chance?"

This question had always been in the back of her mind and she knew that it was a very real possibility. Bo's voice wavered as saying it out loud would make her fear all too real. "It's her decision to make and if that's what she wants, then I will honour it."

Hale heard and felt the sincerity in her voice. It was the first time that Bo wasn't hiding behind her bravado, anger and pride. This was what he wanted to see – the Bo that he knew; the Bo who was in love with Lauren and would do anything for her; the Bo who respected Lauren and her work and who would protect her.

"I'm impressed that you stayed out of trouble these last two weeks. I've also heard that you've provided financial compensation for damages that you caused within the Fae community."

Bo nodded and gave Hale a sad smile. It took everything within her to not break down in front of
him as her admission had her left her feeling raw and vulnerable.

Hale continued. "You kept your end of the bargain, so I'll keep mine. However, before I continue, there are some stipulations which you will not like but they are non-negotiable. Do you agree to these terms?"

Bo maintained eye contact with the Siren and said yes, nodded her understanding.

"Lauren is in Brazil."

Bo let out the breath that she didn't know that she was holding. "Finally." She thought; feeling relieved to be getting some answers.

"I'm assuming that Kenzi will be going with you?" Hale asked.

Kenzi rolled her eyes, "Duh! Ash-ness, do you really have to ask? Who else is gonna entertain Succubum here when Hot Pants is getting her geek on in the lab?"

"I kinda figured." Hale smiled; it had been a long time since Kenzi used a playful nickname for him. He hadn't realized how much he had missed her.

Bo broke out of her temporary haze as the realization struck her that she didn't get a complete answer. "Where in Brazil?"

Hale steeled himself before continuing. "As I said, there are some stipulations. Before, I give you Lauren's exact location; I need you to promise that you will wait till I've dealt with all the protocols before you leave."

"Protocols? What protocols?" Bo was starting to get frustrated; even though she blindly agreed to Hale's terms, she had a feeling that she would have to jump through hoops.

"Permission is I needed from the Ash in Brazil before you can go to their Compound." Hale tried to explain.

Bo's patience level was rapidly declining. "Are you kidding me?!"

Hale was trying to be patient and curbed his frustration. "You can't just show up there Bo. You're unaligned and from a different country. Your showing up unannounced at their Compound is just not done; and worse yet, it could be construed as an act of aggression. Besides, it would go a lot smoother if they knew that you were coming – you would then have access to Lauren."

Bo bit her tongue. She was going to say something that she would most likely regret so she reined in her temper. Kenzi put a reassuring hand on her shoulder supporting her wise decision.

Hale recognized this and continued in a calmer tone. "I know you Bo. If I tell you where Lauren is right now, you will be on the next plane to Brazil before I have everything sorted out.

"What if the Ash there doesn't agree to my coming?" she asked in frustration.

"The Ash won't deny your visit as Lauren is my Ward and it is my right to check in on her or have my delegate do so, on my behalf. With that said, it is still a courtesy. If I were going there, I would have to request it for myself – it's no different."

Bo took a deep, cleansing breath and exhaled. "Fine! I promise I won't fly off to Brazil until everything is arranged."
The Siren relaxed his shoulders a bit, releasing some of his tension. "I'm glad that you understand. Lauren is in Brasília, the country's capital. I will contact Ash Medeiros this afternoon to let him know that my delegate, Bo and her assistant, Kenzi will be visiting to see how Lauren is progressing. Okay?"

"Okay." Bo responded grudgingly.

Hale exhaled deeply; he had cleared one hurdle however, he knew that the next one wouldn't go over well but he had no choice. "With that said, your visit cannot be indefinite."

"What time frame are we talking about?" she asked in an uncharacteristically calm manner.

"Three weeks."

And just like that, all semblance of tranquility vanished. Bo felt as if there was always something preventing her from getting to Lauren or from being with her. "What!? Why only three weeks?"

"There are a couple of reasons for this: Firstly, your presence there will seem as if I lack faith in the agreement that I made with Ash Medeiros, even though it is within my right to check on Lauren. He will agree to you both being guests as a courtesy, however, it will feel as if I am looking over his shoulder. If you stay too long, it would be like a house guest that has overstayed their welcome. Secondly, I have to provide a status report to the Light Fae Elders in just over three weeks. Your being there as my representative, to observe Lauren's progress, is fortuitous. Upon your return, you will be able to provide me with a verbal report so that I can present an update to the Elders." Hale explained.

"It's still not enough time!" the Succubus complained.

"Three weeks is all that you will have." He said with finality in his voice.

Hale was sympathetic to Bo's situation but he had his own problems to deal with. "I'm putting my ass on the line here, Bo. I didn't want to get into this but the main reason for the short time frame is that the Elders don't know about this arrangement. I'm trying to keep this under the radar as they do not like nor trust you. You are unaligned; your recent behaviour hasn't gained you any popularity votes; and if they knew that you were planning to go to Brazil, they would do everything within their power to stop you from going or once there, get you extradited." The Siren exhaled. "Because of this, we have to keep things on the down low – there is no other way."

Bo folded her arms across her torso as if she were trying to contain her anger and keep herself together. The Siren took a deep breath, released it and continued to explain in a softer tone. "Look, I know that this is not the ideal situation but I'm fairly certain that you would rather go and leave there on your own terms than removed early and against your will. The whole point of this is to see Lauren, apologize and try to make things right. Do you really want your visit to be cut shorter than it already is by not having access to her?"

Hale paused to see if what he was saying was getting through to the Succubus. "If I could have you stay longer, I would arrange it but this is the best I can do given the circumstances. Three weeks - take it or leave it Bo."

Bo considered everything that Hale said. She was incredibly frustrated but also knew that she didn't have many options. "I'll take it." She said.

"Good but I need your blood oath that you will not stay there past three weeks." Hale demanded. "There's more at stake here than you and Lauren."
"You have my blood oath Hale. I will not stay there beyond the agreed three weeks." Bo promised; taking a deep breath to calm herself down. She wasn't frustrated with Hale; it was the situation that upset her and she didn't want to take it out on him.

"Excellent! I'll talk to Ash Medeiros and when I get the go ahead from him, I'll let you know. Just hang tight and be patient."

The brunette was a bit calmer when she looked at the Siren. "Thanks Hale. I appreciate what you've done and what you're continuing to do for me. I know that you're going above and beyond. And for what it's worth, I truly am sorry for being such a royal pain in the ass." She said genuinely.

Hale smiled and nodded. "Water under the bridge."

As the two women turned to make their way out of Trick's office, the Siren caught their attention. "I almost forgot… I can't pay for your flight as the cost will raise a flag with the Elders - they go through all my expenses seeing that they consider me to be a Temp. You'll have to find your own way there."

"That's fine; I wasn't expecting you to pay our way. With all the cases we've taken, we can afford it." Bo said confidently. "Anything else I need to know?"

"Yeah, make sure your passports are up to date."

Bo hadn't said a word after they left the Dal, wearing a pensive look on her face as she drove them home. It didn't take a genius to figure out that Bo's thoughts were of a certain doctor but Kenzi thought that her best friend would at least be happy. The Goth planned on enquiring what was going on when they screeched to a halt in front of the Shack. Before the petite girl could open her mouth, Bo quickly opened the car door, slid out from behind the wheel and sprinted towards the front door.

By the time Kenzi made it inside, she found Bo semi-kneeling in front of their defunct fireplace, her arm reached up inside it searching for something. The Russian didn't want to interrupt as she was obviously focused on her task, so she stood back and observed her friend. A few seconds passed before Bo pulled out a brown leather pouch that she had hidden within the chimney. Standing up, she promptly unzipped it and rifled through it till she found what she was looking for. Kenzi used this opportunity to quietly make her way to the couch and wait for her friend's explanation.

"Fuck!" Bo suddenly exclaimed, flinging the leather pouch to the floor in frustration; the contents scattering everywhere. The Succubus' outburst startled the Goth and made her jump in her seat.

"What the hell Bo?! Talk to me."

The unaligned Fae made her way to the couch and plopped down on it; she let her head fall backwards dejectedly and mumbled to the ceiling. "I'm normally more on top of this shit. When I was always on the run, I made sure everything was good to go…"

Kenzi turned her body sideways so that she could look directly at her friend. "You're losing me here Succubum. What are you talking about?"

Bo turned her head to face the Goth. "My passport Kenz! When Hale mentioned it, it was nagging at me. I just checked and it expired six months ago." Bo lifted her hand that held the expired document before letting it fall uselessly on her lap.

"I had my passport renewal hastened by paying extra. What's the big deal?" Kenzi questioned.

Bo's shoulders were slumped as she sighed out. "I didn't get my passport legally before I came to
Toronto and I don't have those contacts here. I also don't have a birth certificate or anything, so getting a new passport will take some time… time that I can't spare right now."

"Is that all? Here I was thinking it was something dire like what awesome birthday present to get me." The Goth leaned forward and playfully mussed her friend's hair. "Leave this to me BoBo. I gots me connections!"

Bo perked up instantly. "You. Are. Awesome!"

The thief smiled and took the expired passport out of her friend's lap before getting up from the couch. "Lemme make some phone calls; in the mean time, start pricing tickets to Brasilia. When Hale gives us the thumb's up, be ready to pay for our flight!"

Bo's eyes followed her friend as she made her way towards the stairs. "You know, at this rate I'm going to owe you my first born."

Kenzi turned around to face the Succubus and winked. "I'd be happy if you just named them after me. Little Kenzi Jr. and I would make a great team. Until then, make sure to put us in First Class or Business Class. My ass is too sweet for economy!" And with that, the tiny Russian turned around, wigged her ass for dramatic effect and quickly went up the stairs.

Half-way up, Kenzi stopped and called down to her bestie. When Bo appeared at the bottom of the stairs and looked up at her, she said genuinely "You can be pretty awesome too when you aren't being an ass. Just don't let it go to your head!" Before Bo could respond, the Goth turned and sprinted up the remainder of the stairs and went to her room; leaving Bo smiling and thinking how lucky she was to have such a wonderful friend; and how human, grounded and loved Kenzi made her feel.

Over the next few hours, the petite Russian contacted her cousins in the 'business' as well as, friends and old acquaintances from her days of being on the streets. She reached out to anyone from her past that could make the necessary arrangements for Bo. Eventually, her sweet talking and calling in of debts paid off.

"Bo! Get this!" Kenzi yelled as she ran down the stairs excitedly. As she alighted from the bottom step, she stopped suddenly, shocked by the sight in front of her. Bo was in the kitchen and had dark red stains on the front of her white tank top. But what was even more startling was the fact that she was hunched over the stove and was using the appliance for what it was intended as opposed to it being a place to stack empty pizza boxes. The kitchen looked like a war zone, with the carcasses of chopped up vegetables haphazardly strewn about the counter while the Succubus was stirring something within one of the pots.

"Woah!" The Goth said with her mouth agape, pausing a few moments before closing the distance between her and her friend. "Hello Rachel Fae, are you cooking?" she said, stunned seeing Bo be domestic.

"Yes, I'm making us supper." she said proudly. Truth be told, she needed to occupy herself while Kenzi was upstairs trying to sort out her passport dilemma and she really wanted to do something nice for her. Seeing that the best way to get to her friend was through her stomach, she decided to cook them a meal.

"Ouch!" Kenzi exclaimed as she rubbed at the welt forming on her arm. "I had to pinch myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming."
Bo made a face at the thief. "I'm going to ignore that. What's the big news?" she said deflecting the attack on her cooking skills.

The Goth couldn't hold back the grin that formed on her face. "We have a meeting tomorrow at 7 P.M. with one of the best forgers in the area! A friend of a friend of a friend got us in." Before Kenzi could say another word, Bo grabbed and enveloped the petite woman in her arms, hugging her tight and kissing her repeatedly on her cheek. "You are the bestest best friend a girl could ever have! Thank you! Thank you!"

Kenzi couldn't suppress the huge smile that grew on her face as she hugged her bestie back. She was so happy and proud of herself for being able to help Bo. But what was even better was that Bo truly needed and appreciated her help. It had been awhile since she felt that she played a necessary part in her life. It was definitely a good feeling to have their sisterly connection again.

Before Kenzi could make some kind of sarcastic remark to cover the sappy emotions that were overwhelming her, her cell phone buzzed. Bo pulled away so that the Goth could check her phone. "It's Hale." she announced.

The thief was silent as she read the texts and Bo grew worried when she saw her friend frown. "What'd he say?"

Kenzi relayed the Siren's message. "He said that he contacted Ash Medeiros but got his assistant instead. There has been a Fae-load of attacks on the Light and the Ash has been out of the compound dealing with it. His assistant will relay Hale's message and will contact him ASAP. Hale will keep us updated."

Bo furrowed her eyebrows and was about to release an expletive but Kenzi calmly cut her off before she had a chance. "I know what you're thinking BoBo. Just let Hale do his thing and we'll do ours. It'll work out. Before you know it, we'll be in Brazil with your Lady Lurve."

"I hope so Kenz. I just don't like the idea of these Dark Fae attacks – if the Ash is concerned, it gives me reason to worry. I just hope that Lauren is safe."

"I'm sure she is Bo." Trying to alleviate Bo's concerns and distract her friend. "Now get me my food woman! I'm starving. And it better be delish otherwise, I'd have to trade you in for a new Succu-chef." With that comment, Bo gave her a look and lunged towards her, sending the Goth running up the stairs screaming like a little girl; the Succubus right behind her, chuckling.

Industrial Business Park (day 44 - evening)

Bo and Kenzi made their way out of a nondescript warehouse after their meeting with the forger. "So, five days for the passport?" she asked, uncertain about the 'processing' time.

Kenzi nodded her head calmly. "The fact that he is incredibly busy but still squeezed us in is a damn good turnaround time."

Bo let out a heavy sigh as they walked towards the Camaro, "So, I guess all we can do now is wait to hear from Hale and then we can book our flights."

"That's the semi-positive spirit!" Kenzi said sarcastically as she patted Bo on her back. "Now, we have time to kill. I'm thinking Vodka or Tequila or both! I'm not fussy."

Before Bo could respond to Kenzi's time-wasting solution, the Goth's cell buzzed. "It's Hale. He wants to meet us." the petite Russian said.
Dal – Trick's office

Forty minutes later the two women walked into Trick's office to find a tired looking Siren. Hale smiled when they entered the room and Bo could've sworn that he was subtly checking out Kenzi. The Succubus had other things on her mind and decided to file that observation away for later.

Looking at Bo, he smiled and said, "I've got good news. We have the go ahead from Ash Medeiros! He's expecting you both within the week."

Bo felt the tension in her shoulders release instantly and the smile that lit up her face was also reflected in her eyes. She was speechless. This was finally it. She was going to see Lauren.

Hale continued to speak, alternating his attention between both women, "Once you book your flight, give me the info and I'll forward it to his assistant, Carlos. He will arrange to pick you up at the airport and take you to the Compound where you will have a place to stay. But most importantly, you will have access to Lauren and everywhere that she has access to."

Bo felt relieved. "Thank you Hale, for everything. I mean it." She said sincerely.

The Siren nodded. "I hope that things work out. You won't get another chance with her."

"I know." she said softly. "Thank you again."

She went to hug Hale to show him how much she appreciated his help but at the last moment decided that it would be awkward and instead placed her hand on his shoulder and gave him a gentle squeeze.

During these past two weeks, Kenzi was internally evaluating her situation with the Siren; realizing that things weren't as black and white as she had first thought. On the one hand, he was a total asshat to her when she needed his help but on the other hand, he went out of his way to help Bo and Lauren. Despite the cold shoulder he gave her, he seemed to be the same Hale that treated her with respect; that she enjoyed hanging out with; and who was her friend. Once the whole situation with Bo and Lauren was sorted out, she would make sure they would sit down and have a serious talk now that she was willing to hear what he had to say. Nodding her head at him, Kenzi gave him a warm, genuine smile which silently conveyed her appreciation. "Thanks Hale… Talk when we get back?" she asked hopefully.

"Looking forward to it 'lil mama." He said softly and returned her sincere smile.

As they walked out the Dal, Kenzi gave Bo an affectionate elbow nudge. "I don't know about you but I'm hungry. There's some delicious spaghetti at home calling my name."

Bo winked and gave her a friendly hip check. "Told you I had skills."

Light Fae Compound, Brasília – Lab (day 45)

Lauren had spent most of the morning pouring over the completed test results from their recent excursion at the second Base Camp in Mata Atlântica. There were still numerous samples yet to be processed but she had hoped that conducting an initial comparison between these results and those collected at the first Base Camp would perhaps provide some information into the disease that was spreading further among the jungle's Fae population. Unfortunately, nothing was jumping out at her.

Rubbing her eyes, Lauren decided to take a break from the numerous pages of data as everything was starting to blur together. With a sigh, Lauren got up from her chair and moved her head from side to side, causing her neck to crack loudly and earning a contented grunt. Walking aimlessly about
her office, she unconsciously massaged the back of her neck while her mind whirled, contemplating the various factors and possibilities of the epidemic's common denominator. She had a gut feeling that she was missing something and that it was most likely simple and staring her right in the face. Standing in front of a map of Mata Atlântica, Lauren's eyes fell on the location of the three Base Camps and their surrounding villages. She stood there staring at the map when an idea popped into her head. Going back to her desk, she grabbed the binder that held all the locations of reported outbreaks and using that information, placed coloured pins in the map, charting the initial outbreak and later manifestations for each village.

An hour later, Lauren bolted out of her office and made a beeline for the Empath, the tail of her lab coat billowing behind her as she ran across the lab. Nayara was in the midst of reviewing some reports when a wave of excitement washed over her. As she looked up from her desk, she saw an elated blonde come to a screeching halt just inside her doorway. "Lauren? What's going on?" Nay asked with a puzzled expression on her face.

"I think I'm onto something but I'm not sure. I need a second set of eyes for confirmation." Lauren said excitedly.

The Empath quickly followed Lauren into her office while the human doctor explained what she did, directing her attention to the map that was now covered with a plethora of multi-coloured pins. "I charted the locations of the outbreak; the initial breakout reports are in red, subsequent reports are in yellow and the more recent – within the last couple of weeks – are in white. From the visual representation, I can see a pattern forming around the villages surrounding the two Base Camps. I am curious to know if you see what I see."

Nayara shifted her attention from Lauren to the map as she walked towards it and focused on the colours. Backing away slowly to get a clearer view of the entire map, she reached her hand out so that her index finger just hovered over the pins, tracing imaginary lines in the air. The human doctor stood to the side and observed Nayara; if the Empath came to the same conclusion as she did then they may have found a possible hypothesis as to the source of the epidemic. Lauren waited quietly, anxious to hear her friend's opinion.

A few moments later, Nayara's voice broke the silence; her eyes still glued to the map. "From this charting, the outbreak seems to be more prominent around mangrove swamp areas."

"That's my hypothesis as well!" Lauren exclaimed as she displayed a toothy grin.

The Empath turned towards her friend, her eyes were wide and she was trying very hard to contain her excitement.

Lauren understood her friend's hesitancy, "I know that we're not scheduled to go to the third Base Camp for another week but is it possible to go there tomorrow? We'd restrict our visits to villages near mangrove swamps; so it should only take a few days to get samples."

Nayara couldn't suppress her excitement any longer and gently gripped Lauren's forearm, smiling, "I'll make it possible! Get your things ready for tomorrow morning – we'll meet up with this week's shift and have them help with collecting samples. I'll figure out which villages fall within this category and will make the necessary arrangements."

Lauren smiled brightly; it was difficult to not be excited about what this could mean. "I know that this may be nothing but…" she trailed off not wanting to be pessimistic.

"I know… but it's our first lead in a long time; it's too important and exciting to not investigate further." The Empath replied, understanding all too well that this endeavour could easily lead to
disappointment. "But if it doesn't pan out, then it's one less theory that we have to deal with, right?" she said trying to be optimistic.

Lauren nodded her head; placing her hand on top of Nayara's she gently squeezed it in response. "I'll let Serena know. She'll be happy to head back out into the field."

Serena was pleasantly surprised when Dr. Lewis told her that they were heading back to the field the following morning. Whenever they were at the Compound, she felt as useful as a solar powered torch. This unscheduled trip to the AtlanticForest would be a wonderful reprieve from the tedious monotony; besides any opportunity to do her job was welcomed.

Normally when she provided her daily SITREP to Ash Santiago, it was straightforward - provide him with an update and clarify any questions he had. However, today when she told him that they were headed back into the field for a few days, he dropped a bombshell on her - one that she never would have expected. He told her that the unaligned Succubus and her human Ward would be arriving in a few days, acting as his delegates, to check on the doctor's progress. He then directed her to inform Dr. Lewis of their three week visit so that it wouldn't be a surprise.

Walking out of the video conference, Serena felt conflicted. She knew that their unscheduled trip back into the field was very important from how excited Dr. Lewis was. She also knew that the Succubus was a delicate topic and she was certain that the doctor would become upset and be distracted once she was informed that Bo Dennis was coming to Brazil. The Ignis had seen the positive transformation in the doctor since they arrived in Brasília and sensed that this reunion would be very unpleasant for her. Even though she would follow her orders, Serena did not enjoy being the bearer of bad news for the good doctor.

After pondering the situation, she decided that she would do what was best for her client and not inform Dr. Lewis until they were finished their task at Base Camp. Serena reasoned that if this trip back into the field was as important as it seemed, the doctor would want to be focused, therefore, it would be senseless to upset her in advance and affect her performance and concentration. Ultimately, as long as Dr. Lewis was made aware of the Succubus' visit before she returned to the Compound, she would have successfully carried out the Ash's orders.

The Dal (day 47 – early afternoon)

Over the last couple of days, Bo and Kenzi had their bags packed and were ready to leave at a moment's notice; they knew that they would be on a plane to Brasília as soon as Bo received her passport and they could book their flights. Until then, they just had to occupy themselves and stay out of trouble.

Ever since Bo acknowledged her issues, she began addressing the external problems that affected her relationship – problems that she had ignored. Unfortunately, her failure to address Dyson's, Tamsin's and Trick's opinions of her relationship with a human sent the message that Lauren and their relationship were not important or a priority. In order to change this perception, Bo made her feelings and intentions very clear to both detectives. However, there was one last conversation that needed to occur in the hope of making things right. That's why she was at the Dal.

After they each downed a shot of Tequila, Kenzi told Bo that she would wait for her and gave her a reassuring pat on the back. The petite Russian watched her friend make her way towards Trick's study and sighed. The Goth knew that her friend had been postponing this discussion ever since she started 'cleaning house', with Bo expressing her concerns about her intended talk with her grandfather. As much as she valued Trick's opinion, she wouldn't let him sway her. Bo needed him to understand how she felt and what her intentions were with Lauren.
Kenzi watched Bo disappear downstairs. She honestly hoped that their talk would go well otherwise it would create a rift between them; Bo would be hurt greatly seeing that Trick was her only known living relative. While the Goth waited, she decided to get comfortable on the worn leather couch with a bottle of 'the good stuff' that the bartender unsuccessfully hid from her.

Forty minutes later, the petite human’s Fae-watching was interrupted when she saw her best friend emerge from Trick's study with a serious look on her face. She stood as Bo approached and nodded her head towards the door, indicating that it was time that they left.

Cradling the bottle in her hand, Kenzi was quietly patient, waiting till they were in the car before bombarding the Succubus with questions. "So, how did it go? What did you say? What did he say? Are things good between you two? Am I ignoring him or talking to him? Do I still have a free lifetime of booze?" Kenzi asked without taking a breath.

Bo sighed as she sat behind the wheel of the Camaro. "It went as well as it could have I guess. I told him that I knew how he felt about human-Fae relationships but that I was in love with Lauren; that I was going after her and would do everything I could to win her back."

"What did he say?" Kenzi asked.

"He argued that she was human and I was Fae; then continued about the short life span of humans and that I would outlive her. Then he said that even though it was difficult for Succubi to be in relationships, it was possible, however, it would never work with a human because Lauren couldn't sustain me. It would be best for me to pursue a relationship with another Fae."

Bo took a breath and continued to relate her story. "I explained about my improved control since the Dawning but it didn't seem to make a difference to him."

Placing her hands on the steering wheel, Bo unconsciously ran her hands over it. "At this point I had had enough and told him that I wasn't seeking his permission or blessing. I just wanted him to know my intentions because when Lauren returns, regardless of how things work out between us, I want him to treat her with respect. She deserves that much after everything she had done for me and for the Fae."

The conversation with her grandfather had taken its toll on her and Bo was feeling exhausted. "I also told him that as much as I respected him, it works both ways. If he couldn't appreciate my relationship and feelings for Lauren, he would lose mine."

"Wow! How did he react to that ultimatum?" "It was strange, Kenz. He just sat there forever, with that crinkle that he gets in his forehead. Eventually he sighed and said that he would try to move past thousands of years of engrained thinking. He continued to say that he always held a great deal of respect for Lauren and his opinions have nothing to do with her personally. And that he didn't want to lose me after we just found one another."

"So, how did you leave things?"

"He hugged me and wished me luck with Lauren." Bo sighed out.

"Well, that's a good start isn't it?" Kenzi asked trying to sound optimistic.

"I think it's the best that I'm going to get from him. The important thing is that he is willing to try."

Kenzi was proud of her friend for sticking to her guns. "You did good BoBo. How do you feel?"

"Relieved. I'm glad that I talked to him. I should've before while Lauren and I were together… but at
least he knows now." Bo said, rubbing the back of her neck, her regret weighing on her.

Kenzi sensed this and tried to lighten the mood. "Let's go home. I found some of Trick's good stash which he lamely tried to hide. It would be a shame not to enjoy it." The Goth smirked as she wiggled the bottle in her hand.

Later that afternoon, Kenzi received a text that Bo's passport was ready a day earlier than expected. Bo couldn't contain her excitement. They rushed over, paid the forger, collected her very authentic looking passport and picked up some Chinese food as per Kenzi's request.

Driving back to the shack, the smell of their take out food filled the car and had both women's mouths watering.

"I'm starving." Bo admitted. "Now that I have my passport, my appetite has returned."

"Speaking of appetite, are you gonna feed and 'top up' before we fly out?" Kenzi asked.

"I wasn't planning to."

"Maybe you should. You don't want to go there hungry and then have to snack as soon as we arrive. It may not send the right message to Hot Pants, you know?" Kenzi reasoned.

Bo nodded her head and let out a sigh. She hated that she was a slave to her Succubus nature but Kenzi made a valid point. She couldn't afford any mistakes or slip up's there.

"I'll make sure that I'm 'full' before we leave for Brazil."

As soon as they got back to the shack, Bo booked their flights. She wanted to ensure that they were on the first available flight to Brasília and was able to book them on one at 7:45 P.M. the next day. It would be a long 11 hour flight and she made sure to get them seats in Business Class, otherwise she wouldn't hear the end of it from Kenzi. Bo was one step closer to Lauren and she was excited and nervous at the same time.

Now that they had passports in hand and their flight booked, all they had to do was wait. Bo looked at her best friend who was in the midst of relaying their itinerary to Hale and decided that she should relax and enjoy the evening with Kenzi. And so began a night of good food, excellent company and a great deal of talking and laughing into the early hours of the morning. Despite her anxiety over her upcoming reunion with Lauren, Bo realized that this was the happiest and most alive that she had felt since the doctor left; this realization allowed her to quickly drift off to sleep with her best friend cuddled next to her in her bed.

Thousands of miles in the air (Day 48)

Bo thought that once she was on the plane and en route to Brasília that she would feel better but instead, she only felt more nervous. All positive thoughts about how her reunion with Lauren would play out, was plagued with doubt.

Once she finished her second mimosa and the excitement of being treated like royalty in Business Class had faded, Kenzi noticed that her seat mate had been preoccupied and was very quiet. "What's up BoBo? Don't tell me you're afraid of flying?"

"No, just thinking."
"About…" Kenzi prompted.

"I've been waiting for this moment – to find Lauren and now that it's happening, I'm nervous and seriously worried about how she's going to react when she sees me." Bo admitted.

"Well, for what it's worth, it's normal to be nervous. In fact, I'm not surprised that you are. Hot Pants has been the only person to make you react this way… I've never seen you nervous with Dyson or Ryan when you were with them."

"Kenz, no offense but when are you going to get to the pep part of your talk?" Bo said sarcastically.

In a serious tone, the petite Russian said, "Bo, you're used to being smooth, calm and in control but when it comes to Lauren, you're not. She turns everything upside down for you but in a good way and that rattles you. She affects you like no one else does. So, it's okay to be nervous just as long as you keep your shit together."

The Goth paused to frame her words properly. "I'm not gonna lie chica, it will suck ass at first, so put on your big girl panties and take whatever Dr. Freeze throws at you. Be honest with her and maybe with time and patience, she'll thaw out and become Dr. Lukewarm."

For the first time since they boarded the plane, the tension in Bo's shoulders diminished. "You're right. I guess I just had to hear it out loud. I know that she'll be upset and angry but I'll just have to take whatever she dishes out at me, be patient and ride it out till she's willing to talk and listen."

Kenzi was about to say something and paused for what seemed like an uncharacteristically long time to Bo; the silence hanging heavily between them before she took a deep breath. "Before we land and things get crazy, I just wanted to say…" The Goth didn't finish her sentence and looked away.

"Say what?" Bo prompted.

"It's okay. Nevermind." She deflected.

"Since when don't you say what's on your mind? Out with it." Bo pestered, poking Kenzi in the ribs with her index finger.

"I'm just… I'm glad that you're back to your normal self and that we're back to being sisters. I've missed you. I've missed you needing me and I've missed us being an important part in each other's lives." The Goth said softly, dipping her head.

Bo reached out and gently lifted Kenzi's chin so that she had no choice but to look at her. "I'm so sorry Kenz." She said with genuine sadness in her voice. "I know I was a complete jerk but even when I was a mess, you were there for me. Even back then I recognized that. I was just too caught up in my own drunken self-pity haze to tell you that you were the only thing that kept me going and that I really appreciated your love and patience."

Bo's eyes were glistening with tears as she held Kenzi's gaze. "You're the sister I never had but always wanted. I'm sorry that I made you feel that you weren't important but you are. You always will be important to me and I'll always need you. That will never change, so don't ever forget that. Okay?"

Kenzi nodded as tears flowed down her face. She quickly wrapped her arms around her best friend and held her tight; crying tears of joy and relief. The Goth hadn't realized how much she had needed reassurance from Bo. It had been a difficult year with the Norn, the Kitsune, getting Bo ready for her Dawning and finally Bo's depression; all of which had taken its toll on her.
Bo eagerly returned the hug, feeling at last the familiar connection that had been missing with the younger woman. She chastised herself internally for letting things get to the point that Kenzi felt that she wasn't needed or important. In that moment, she realized that she had done the same thing to Kenzi as she had done to Lauren. Holding her friend even tighter, Bo vowed that it would never happen again. As much as her heart belonged to Lauren; Kenzi was her family and best friend and she knew that she would be lost without her. She would make sure that the Goth would never doubt her worth to her again.

Brasília – airport (Day 49)

Even with the one hour time difference, it was still too early in the morning for Kenzi to function, much less cope with the wall of heat that they slammed into when they disembarked from the plane. Their hot summers in Toronto were nothing compared to these temperatures. Bo and Kenzi felt the sweat trickling down their necks and under their regular attire of leather pants, vests and boots; clothing which they realized wasn't the wisest choice for Brazil's extreme temperatures.

The petite Russian estimated that it was another 30 metres or so to the terminal entrance and griped. "I don't think I can make it to the entrance. I'm melting!" She whined. "That's it; I'm heading back to the plane!"

Bo quickly grabbed her friend by the arm before she could retreat. "I'm uncomfortably hot too Kenz. I'm sure it'll be cooler inside." Bo hoped.

As soon as they stepped inside the terminal, the cool air swirled around their sticky bodies and the relief was immediate. They both sighed contently. "Oh sweet, sweet AC; how I love thee!" the Goth exclaimed to herself.

Normally Bo would make fun of her friend but she was too busy enjoying the cold air to be sarcastic.

Mata Atlântica

The scientists arrived at the village and spread out into teams of two, taking samples from the swamp water, mud, soil and vegetation as well as blood and bodily fluids from the villagers.

Serena stuck to the doctor like glue; she gave her room to work but always ensured that she was never more than a few paces away. As the Ignis watched Dr. Lewis collect and label her samples, she dreaded having to tell her about the Succubus' visit. Her only windows of opportunity would be on the hike back to Camp or when she was in her tent, packing up her belongings. The helicopter would be too loud and would not afford any privacy, so she didn't want to leave it till then. Regardless of when she told her, Serena knew that the doctor would be upset.

Light Fae Compound

Everything was arranged as Hale had explained it would. Bo & Kenzi were picked up at the airport and driven to the compound where they were greeted by the Ash's assistant. Carlos relayed his Ash's regret in not meeting with them but he was still out of the area, visiting parts of the city and countryside where Light Fae were attacked and properties destroyed. He also explained that Dr. Lewis was in the field and that she would be back at the Compound around 11 o'clock.

The Ash's assistant was very efficient as he had their building security passes ready for them upon arrival and arranged for their luggage to be delivered to their rooms while he gave them a quick tour of the compound – focusing on the labs, gym and dining hall. Upon completion of the tour, he escorted them to their adjacent apartments and in accordance with Ash Santiago's request, were given accommodations that connected through a central door located within their respective living
Right before leaving them to settle in, Carlos handed over their keys and used the opportunity to give Bo his personal mobile number in case she needed anything at any time of day or night. Meanwhile, Kenzi had quickly disappeared and was exploring her apartment like an excited school girl. Even though this was temporary, she had never lived in an apartment this new and modern before. By the time Bo shut the front door, the Goth was already settled on the couch flicking through the channels on the 46" flat screen TV with their connecting door wide open.

Mata Atlântica

The team had collected samples from the village; completing their task within the allotted hour and were hiking back to Camp. Serena noted that Lauren's and Nayara's energy levels never once dissipated during their three day stint in the forest; and subtly smiled at how excited they were as they discussed the various tests they would perform under controlled conditions.

The Ignis didn't want to put a damper on the doctor's mood but decided that she shouldn't put off the inevitable any longer. Walking up behind both women, Serena waited till there was a lull in their conversation before interrupting. "Dr. Lewis, may I speak with you for a moment?"

Lauren and Nayara exchanged looks for a moment before the Empath excused herself, walking ahead to give them some privacy. "This sounds serious." Lauren smiled at her body guard.

Serena gave her a tight smile, which looked awkward coming from the normally stoic Fae. "Before we left, Ash Santiago gave me specific orders; however I held off on carrying them out as I didn't want to interfere with your task here."

Lauren's smile faded. "Should I be worried?" she interrupted.

She tried to assure the doctor. "No, there's nothing to be worried about. I just wanted to-" Serena stopped in mid-sentence as a sound caught her attention. As she looked up the path, she saw that the rest of the group had continued walking ahead and were almost a football field away, with Dr. Hernandez half way between them and the team.

Lauren looked at the Ignis, puzzled by why she didn't finish her sentence but chose not to interrupt her obvious train of thought.

Serena, not seeing or hearing anything out of the ordinary was about to turn her attention back to Dr. Lewis when she heard a hissing sound, followed by a loud explosion and then a cloud of smoke formed and rapidly engulfed the group.

"Ambush! Get down!" she yelled out to the entire group, hoping that they heard and would take cover and be able to defend themselves. Serena quickly grabbed Lauren and pulled her off the path and into a thicket of trees. "Stay here and keep down!" she ordered. She then ran back to the edge of the path and kept low, vigilant of any attackers and looking out for members of the team. She waited a few moments and was about to head back to the doctor when she saw a terrified Nayara emerge from the edges of the smoke, running away from the screams and strange flashes of light contained within; making her way towards her.

Getting her attention, Serena waited till Nayara was next to her before they both ran towards the cover of trees where Lauren was hiding. Serena looked at the two women, enquiring if they were hurt. Once it was determined that they were fine, she took charge and gave them directions. "I need you both to stay calm and stay behind me. We have to get back to Base Camp."
Time seemed to stand still as Lauren looked to the area where the rest of the group had been swallowed up by the eerie, lingering smoke. Loud, anguished screams and sounds of gun fire periodically broke through the silence and were the only indication that anyone was still trapped in there. "What about the group? We can't just leave them." Lauren implored.

"Your safety is my priority. Seeing that it's an ambush and none of our people have emerged, I would assume that we are outnumbered. That means that the odds are in their favour. Once we get back to Camp, we can get more guards out here. Until then, we are sitting ducks and we have to get to safety. Do you understand?"

Both women nodded yes; trying not to let panic set in.

"We have to go wide and around the ambushed area." The Ignis pointed out the route. "The Camp is a 20 minute hike beyond here. We can make it in less than that as long as we are quiet, careful and move quickly. You with me so far?"

They both nodded their heads.

"I need you to stay calm and stay behind me no matter what. However, if at any point I tell you to run, I want you to run as fast as you can and not look back. Just stay with one another. Is that clear?"

They both nodded yes.

Serena looked into their eyes to gauge how they were coping. It was obvious that they were scared but they were alert and calm, which was important. As long as they moved quickly and quietly and didn't panic, they would be fine.

The Ignis took another quick look in the direction that they were going to head towards scanning for the enemy. Seeing that it was clear, she asked. "OK, are you ready?"

"Yes." They said in unison.

"Good. Stay low and follow me." Serena ordered as she steered the women away from the attack and hoped that their assailants wouldn't follow them.

*Light Fae Compound*

Bo was sitting comfortably on the couch trying to distract herself with a Portuguese television show while Kenzi was rummaging through her kitchen cupboards for food, surprised that they were actually stocked. "BoBo, can you believe this? They actually have food in here!"

The Succubus chuckled at her friend as she excitedly found something that looked like chips. Returning to the couch, she offered the opened bag to Bo, who politely declined. Looking at the picture on the packaging, she said, "I don't think those are potato chips Kenz. They look like dehydrated banana slices."

Not one to pass on food, Kenzi grabbed a handful and shoved them in her mouth. "Mffmph. Noth bad." She said with her mouth full.

Bo shook her head and was about to respond when there was a knock at the door. Both women immediately stopped what they were doing and looked in the direction of the sound. A few seconds passed and there was another knock, this time, more insistent. Bo knew that Lauren wasn't due back until 11 A.M. however her heart jumped just thinking that it could be her. She quickly made her way to the door but before she had a chance to open it, she heard Carlos' voice.

Opening the door, a visibly upset Assistant stood before her. "I'm sorry to inform you but we just
received word from the Base Camp. The team of scientists were ambushed as they were making their way back to Camp; there are heavy casualties and some deaths." Carlos said sadly.

Bo tensed up immediately as the thought of Lauren being injured or dead popped in her head. Her eyes flashed blue in reaction. "No, she has to be alright. Lauren is tough." she said to herself as she shook the negative thoughts out of her head.

At the mention of the word 'ambushed', Kenzi had quickly jumped up and made her way to her friend's side and grabbed hold of her hand. She could only imagine what her friend was thinking; all she could do was provide support and keep her calm in case Succu-bitch emerged. Fortunately, the connection to her friend was enough to ground Bo and make her eyes revert back to her normal colour. "Do you have any word on Dr. Lewis?" Bo asked hesitantly.

If Carlos was startled by the quick flash of blue in her eyes, he didn't show it. Instead, he calmly answered her question. "I'm sorry, no. Just that the group that she was with is currently enroute via chopper and should be here some time after 11."

"Can't you call them up on the radio to find out?" Bo asked anxiously.

"Unfortunately, radio communications have always been weak in and above the forest; there is always poor signal strength and interference. The information that I just relayed to you was all that we got before losing comms."

Carlos saw the anxiety in Bo's face. "I'm very sorry. All we can do is wait and see who arrives on the helicopter and get the details from them. If you wish, I can escort you to the ICU wing of the medical lab where you can wait?" he offered, trying to be helpful.

"Yes, thanks." Bo said softly; not letting go of Kenzi's hand as they followed Carlos through the Compound.

The Ash's assistant showed them to the waiting room and brought them some coffee. "I'm going to check to see if there have been any further developments and will let you know if there are."

Bo nodded in acknowledgment and Carlos left them alone.

Kenzi broke the silence. "Bo, Lauren is tough. She's going to be okay." The Goth tried to reassure her best friend and herself at the same time.

Bo only nodded and held on to the Goth's hand. She couldn't lose Lauren.

Bo and Kenzi waited anxiously as an hour went by and still there was no update. The Succubus was slowly going crazy as all the worse case scenarios played through her mind. The Goth lost track of how many times she looked at her watch while the Succubus continuously paced back and forth; the sound of her boots on the tile echoing. Kenzi found it unnerving but didn't want to say anything to her friend as she knew that she was trying to cope.

Carlos suddenly burst through the doors, startling them and causing both women to run towards him, questions evident in their eyes.

In an excited tone, he said, "The helicopter just landed and all three women were rushed to ICU!" Sensing what the next question was, Carlos continued to speak. "Before you ask, no, I didn't get a chance to see or talk to anyone. The doctors whisked the patients away for immediate treatment and the pilots had to take off to refuel as they have to return with additional security ASAP."
Bo exhaled loudly. "You are sure that Dr. Lewis was on that chopper?"

The Assistant nodded. "According to the original message from the Base Camp, she was."

Bo turned to her friend and hugged her. Lauren was here and she was injured. Part of her was relieved that she wasn't lying in the middle of the forest hurt but the other part was beyond worried about what state she was in.

Carlos turned to both women. "Why don't we sit and wait. The doctor will come out as soon as there's word."

Both women nodded and sat next to one another, holding each other's hands. It was going to be a long wait.

Another hour had passed before a doctor came out to speak with them. Everyone stood up suddenly, afraid and anxious to hear what he had to say.

Before Bo could say anything, the doctor spoke. "One of the patients required surgery as she had extensive internal bleeding and several broken bones. She is currently stable but in critical condition – we will monitor her carefully for the next 48 hours; only time will tell. The other two women have several cuts and lacerations - they have been treated and are fine."

Bo spoke up. "Can we see them?"

The doctor nodded, "Yes but not for long; they all need their rest. Follow me."

Bo, Kenzi and the Assistant followed the doctor down the long, white hallway. To Bo, every step was heavy and laboured; the thought of Lauren lying in a hospital bed with broken bones and internal bleeding made her heart ache. As bad as it sounded, she hoped and prayed that it wasn't Lauren that went through the surgery.

As they reached the room, Carlos and the doctor entered but Bo remained behind in the hallway. Kenzi didn't know what to say to her friend so she stood close and put her hand on her shoulder. The Succubus closed her eyes and cleared her thoughts; she needed to gather her courage in case she needed to prepare herself for the worst. Taking a deep breath, Bo exhaled and opened her eyes; giving Kenzi's hand a quick squeeze, she released it and opened the door.

Standing in the doorway, Bo's focus was on the bed, unfortunately her view was completely blocked by the doctor and Assistant who were standing on the side closest to the door talking quietly, while a nurse was on the other side, leaning over the patient's head and torso, adjusting various tubes. Willing her feet to move, the Succubus inched inside and slowly made her way around the men, manoeuvring herself to the foot of the bed so that she could get a clear view of who was lying within it. As her eyes looked at the form hidden under the sheets, her eyes travelled upwards from their feet, over their legs and torso to their face.

Bo released the breath that she didn't realize that she was holding. To her relief, the woman lying in front of her wasn't Lauren.

The Succubus was about to ask the doctor where the other two women were when he bent forward to adjust the patient's bandages. In that moment, Bo's heartbeat started to race. She was so focused on the person lying in the bed, that she didn't pay attention to her surroundings. When the doctor was standing, he blocked her view of the far corner of the room; now that he wasn't in the way, the first thing that she saw was a head of blonde hair.
There Lauren stood holding another woman tightly, providing comfort. As they sat down next to each other, Bo was able to see how tired and haggard they looked - their clothes were torn and whatever skin was exposed was either covered in blood or abrasions. The Succubus could only imagine the hell that they went through.

Bo then saw the brunette take Lauren's hand gently into hers while Lauren leaned in and rested her head on the other woman's shoulder. Though non-sexual, the act was intimate and inferred that Lauren was very comfortable with this woman. Bo felt all the air rush out of her lungs and her eyes flashed blue.

"Lauren?" she said hoarsely.

The blonde looked up when she heard her name. Her first thought was that it was Serena even though she knew the Ignis was unconscious. As her eyes slowly looked past the doctor and Carlos to determine who called out to her, Lauren's body stiffened.

"Bo? What are you doing here?"

TBC
I tried something new writing wise (for me) where the first two scenes are in the first person before reverting to the third person for the rest of the chapter. Hopefully it works as intended and gives you a better understanding inside each character. If it doesn't work, I'll have to chalk it up to a learning experience.

Words in italics indicate when a character is talking to themself.

Thanks to my Beta, LostGirlz for her advice and to T for her suggestions and unlimited patience.

(Bo's POV)

It seemed like forever since I had seen Lauren and now that she was standing here in front of me, I couldn't believe it. She looked absolutely beautiful even with her injuries, dishevelled hair and dry blood caked on her skin and clothes. She still took my breath away.

I knew that my eyes were still glowing blue from seeing Lauren interact with her friend. I hadn't intended on my blue eyed bitch making an appearance but seeing her intimate and comfortable with this woman caught me off guard; I wasn't expecting there to be anyone else in the picture. Closing my eyes, I took a deep breath and shoved my inner Succubus back down. It was at some point after my Dawning that I was able to sense the shift and knew when my eyes changed colour without needing to look in a mirror; so after I exhaled, I knew that my eyes were back to normal.

Gazing into Lauren's beautiful dark, brown eyes, I was finally able to speak. "Are you okay? They told us about the attack. I... I thought that you were..." The lump in my throat grew and I just couldn't finish my sentence. Not knowing whether Lauren was seriously hurt or dead was something I never wanted to experience again; my heart couldn't take it. Willing my feet to move, I walked away from the bed. By the time I got to the corner of the room, Lauren was standing and facing me with the brunette standing right behind her.

I stopped about an arm's length away. It took everything within me to not grab her, hold her tight and not let go. I had to force myself to give her some space as I knew that she was in shock and now my surprise appearance probably didn't help. After what seemed like eternity of us just looking at each other, she finally responded. "I'm fine. I look worse than I really am." Lauren's attention turned to the woman lying in the bed and I could see the concern etched on her face. "It could've been a lot worse." she whispered.

My eyes roam over the cuts on her face and neck before travelling down to see that her left arm was bandaged from the top of her bicep to her wrist; the white bandage standing out against her shredded and blood soaked sleeve. I shook my head sadly; my voice laced with concern. "You're a sight for sore eyes." I clenched my fists to contain my anger; I knew that if I ever got my hands on who attacked her, I would suck them dry.

Lauren seemed to ignore my comment and wore an expression that I couldn't quite read. "What are
"you doing here?" she asked in a curt tone.

I may not have recognized her expression but I certainly recognized her tone. It was the one that she used to mask her frustration while also remaining professional. She normally reserved that tone for Fae that annoyed her, like Dyson; but now I was on the receiving end. Swallowing my pride and nervousness, I said, "I was worried. I missed you."

She ignored my statement and continued to speak tersely. "How did you find me?"

I wasn't used to Lauren directing her aloof tone at me. I sighed, deciding that it was best to be patient and hopefully we would be able to talk afterwards. "I'm here as Hale's delegate to see how you are doing and how things are progressing with finding a cure."

Lauren furrowed her brow and simply said, "I see."

This wasn't going well. How could being in Lauren's presence make me so nervous? Externally, I seemed calm but I was just barely keeping my shit together. Hoping to address things between us, I asked tentatively, "I know you must need rest but could we talk… just for a few minutes?"

"I already said everything that I had to say, Bo." Apparently Lauren didn't want to talk as Dr. Freeze just showed up and shot me down.

"Two can play that game. "Yes, in a letter." I replied automatically as I let my frustration seep out.

My eyes were focused on Lauren and I saw her flinch slightly at my comment - she knew that she never gave me a chance to explain myself. The woman she was with, crossed her arms and stared at me intently, observing our exchange very carefully. Hell, everyone in the room was probably listening to us but I could care less - we needed to talk and she was deflecting. Instead of responding as I had hoped she would, she turned to her friend and whispered something in her ear. Lauren continued to ignore me; went to the side of the bed, politely nudging the two men out of the way in the process and gently squeezed the patient's hand. Turning her attention to the nurse, she said, "I'll be back later to check on Serena." The nurse nodded her understanding before resuming whatever she was doing with the machines on the far side of the bed. The next thing I knew the brunette's hand was on Lauren's lower back and was ushering her past me towards the door.

"Hell, no!" I didn't come all this way just to watch her walk away again. I reached out with my arm to get her attention her but she just glared at me, halting my movement; my hand hanging in mid-air. "Lauren, please." I begged.

She looked directly in my eyes and almost hissed out the words; "This is not the time Bo." Her gaze quickly darted to the medical staff before returning her attention to me.

"But you have time for her?!" I erupted; my eyes wild and my head gesturing towards Lauren’s friend. I regretted it as soon as I said it and let my arm fall helplessly to my side. I knew that I just let my frustration and jealousy get the better of me, causing me to insert boot in mouth.

If Lauren could've shot daggers with her eyes, she would've as she stared me down. I could tell that she was trying to keep her anger contained but it was starting to bubble over. "Are you kidding me?!" she growled out as softly as she could. "You have some nerve showing up here. You-"

I would've preferred if Lauren would've let me have it with both barrels blazing but she stopped herself in mid-sentence, turned and stormed out of the room; her friend quickly shot me a look as she hurried out the door after her.
"Shit!" I muttered under my breath as I hung my head in regret; my shoulders slumped.

"Bo." The sound of Kenzi's voice brought me out of my stupor. I looked up at her to see her give me that 'I-support-you-but-what-the-fuck-were-you-thinking ' look.

"I know!" I groaned out. Kenzi didn't have to say it; I knew that I screwed up. This was not how I wanted things to go with Lauren. "Dammit!" I exhaled as I swiftly made my way to the door, yanked it open and proceeded to race after her with Kenzi right behind me.

(Lauren's POV)

First we were attacked; then Serena nearly died; and now Bo appeared. It really wasn't a good day for surprises. I knew that I was abrupt with her but I hadn't expected to see her for another couple of months. I wasn't prepared.

I was walking rapidly - I needed out. I needed to get off this floor immediately. I just had to make it down the hall and into the elevator and then I would be able to figure things out once I had some space. I was still reeling from seeing Bo. I couldn't believe that she was here. She looked breathtakingly beautiful.

"Dammit!" How could she still affect me to this extent after everything? My heart was beating so hard I thought it would burst out of my chest, even though medically, I knew that wasn't possible. Despite the logic, my heartbeat echoed loudly in my ears and made it seem feasible; it also made it difficult to focus on anything around me. I only just happened to register Nayara's voice asking if I was alright as she maintained my pace down the hallway. I turned to look at her but I couldn't form any words so I just walked faster.

My mind was going a mile a minute; my thoughts were scattered and my emotions were in turmoil. "Why was Bo here? Why would Hale tell her where I was?" Memories of my nightmare of Bo taunting me with Dyson and Tamsin in the lab came flooding back and I physically shook my head to get rid of them.

I needed to focus on something, anything, to get Bo out of my mind. I switched to doctor mode and started thinking about the human brain. "The Limbic System is the area of the brain that regulates emotion and memory. It directly connects the lower and higher brain functions and influences emotions. The Limbic System is comprised of the: Amygdala; Thalamus; Hypothalamus; Cingulate gyrus; Hippocampus; and Basal Ganglia."

My thoughts quickly changed gears. "Bo came here out of the blue to say that she missed me and was worried about me. She actually came here for me. No! It doesn't matter why she's here; it's a little too late. She should've been concerned when we were together."

I shook my head again to clear my thoughts. "The Amygdala is a small, almond shaped mass of nuclei located in the temporal lobes of the brain near the hippocampus. It is linked to emotions and aggression and functions to control fear responses, the secretion of hormones, arousal and the formation of emotional memories."

My anger was growing. This wasn't working. "How dare she flash her blue eyes at Nay and I!? How dare she be jealous especially after everything she did? God, she's infuriating!"

I felt my jaw clench as we walked briskly down the hall. I needed to calm down and get my emotions under control. I had been fine until now. I was enjoying science and research again. I had
my routine and was finally able to get some sleep at night. I was even sorting out my emotions. Then Bo appeared and I'm instantly flustered. It's like everything I accomplished these past two months went flying out the window. How was it possible for her to turn my life upside down in a matter of minutes?

I was almost to the elevator. Once I was able to put some space between us, I'd be able to think clearly.

Bo's voice floated down the hallway towards me. "Lauren! Wait please." How was it possible to hear her voice when nothing else registered? Why did everything about Bo stand out?

I stopped in mid-stride; my posture rigid. I took a deep breath and exhaled to try and calm myself; my feelings were chaotic and I couldn't think straight. Despite how messed up everything was in my life, I was always in control of my emotions; it was one of the few things that I had authority over but now, it was controlling me.

I was angry that Bo broke my heart leaving me feeling lost and confused. I was angry that she was here and complicating things. And I was angry at myself for foolishly thinking that I was getting over her. But what surprised me was that I didn't realize how much I had suppressed until I saw her - everything came rushing back and it all felt raw and intense.

I don't know how much time had passed since Bo called out to me, just that I knew that she was standing behind me. I didn't have to look to know - I just felt her presence. I was always able to.

"Lauren." She said in an almost whisper.

I couldn't turn around and look into her chocolate brown eyes again; not in the state I was in. Her voice was soft and mesmerizing, causing goose bumps to form on my skin. There was a time that hearing her voice would calm my soul and bring me comfort; now it only caused me pain.

"Lauren. I'm sorry… I didn't mean-"

Hearing those two words come out of her mouth, 'I'm sorry', caused something inside me to snap. The weight and meaning of those words made the anger churn within me and I couldn't contain it any longer. I whirled around to face her; the fire raging in my eyes stopped Bo in mid-sentence. My voice rumbled like thunder. "Sorry?! What are you sorry about?" I demanded. "Could it be for not placing any importance on me or our relationship? Knowing that Dyson got his love back but never saying anything about it? That you and Tamsin kissed and you couldn't be honest? Not respecting my wishes and coming here? Or for being jealous when you have absolutely no right to be? Why exactly are you sorry?"

I could tell from the expression on her face that she was shocked; Kenzi too. They both stood there speechless after my harangue but I didn't care.

I stared at her, unflinching as I waited for a response. When none came, I shook my head sadly; my tone now soft and resigned. "I thought as much. You don't even know."

My outburst took all the energy out of me. After the attack this morning; my injuries; seeing my friend lying in a coma; the shock of Bo being here; and the feelings that she evoked in me, I was absolutely exhausted.

I closed my eyes and tried to calm myself. I knew that Bo's comment about my letter held some merit; she didn't get a chance to express her side because I left. Sighing, I opened my eyes and looked at Bo; and in as soft a tone that I could muster, said, "We'll talk but not today." I put my hand
up to stop her as she was about to respond.

"It's been a really long day, Bo. I will come to you. Please, just respect that and don't push me." I said as nicely as I could. Bo just nodded. In light of everything that had happened today, that was the best that I could do at being understanding. I felt drained and just wanted to curl up in a ball and sleep.

Nayara must have sensed it as she put her hand on my shoulder and gave me a gentle squeeze, bringing me out of my haze. I looked at her and she gave me a sad smile before she walked the short distance to the elevator and pressed the call button, subtly hinting that it was time to go. My energy was depleted as I slowly walked over to Nayara and stood next to her.

I must've been in a trance because one second I was waiting for the elevator and the next thing I knew, I was standing inside it, looking out into the hall with my eyes glued to the floor. As I forced myself to look up, I saw Bo standing there looking at me sadly, her eyes glistening. I slipped on my 'Dr. Freeze' mask as Kenzi would say, refusing to breakdown in front of her.

We both stood frozen in place, watching one another for what seemed like eternity until the elevator doors closed and cut off our view of one another. Finally free to discard my mask, I allowed my tears to escape as my legs gave out under me.

Bo stared at the elevator doors long after they had closed; not saying a word. Kenzi walked up to her friend and gently placed her hand on her shoulder to get her attention. When the brunette looked in her direction, the Goth could see the sorrow written all over her face.

"Let's get outta here." She said softly as she escorted Bo to the elevator. They were both physically tired from the long flight; emotionally stressed thinking that Lauren was seriously injured or dead; and now the incredibly frosty reunion - they definitely needed to get some rest.

Bo was quiet as they made their way back to their apartment and didn't say a word when Kenzi sat her down on the couch.

"I've never seen her so angry before." Kenzi blurted out, breaking the silence.

Bo had a far away look in her eyes but the statement resonated as she nodded in agreement.

"I thought I had seen her cold before but that was nothing compared to this. I think the good ship Bo just collided with Dr. Iceberg."

Bo cradled her face in her hands and sobbed out, "She hates me."

"Oh BoBo, she doesn't hate you. She's just really, really pissed at you." Kenzi said as she sat next to her.

Bo looked up, dropping her hands to her knees. "I fail to see the difference Kenz."

"Hate is forever; pissed is temporary." She said as she patted her friend's arm. "Remember we talked about this? You're supposed to put on your big girl panties and take whatever she throws at you."

Bo groaned and ran her fingers through her hair. "I know she had a hell of a day and just survived an attack. And I know that my surprising her was the last thing that she needed but I honestly didn't expect this." She said in a resigned tone.
"I knew that Lauren would be upset seeing me but that was a whole new level on the Richter scale."
Bo sighed.

"And who was that woman with her? I suppose she would be considered attractive if one were into exotic, fit, tanned, blue-eyed brunettes. But do you think she's Lauren's type? I mean, they seemed really comfortable with each other. You saw that right? And she had her hands all over Lauren! Do you think-"

Without warning, Kenzi slugged Bo in the shoulder, interrupting the Succubus' rant. The Goth's intent was to get her attention and try and halt her now glowing blue eyes.

"Oww! What the hell Kenz?" she exclaimed.

"Focus Bo! Get your Succu-bitch under control. As soon as your blue-eyed jealous self showed up, things went to shit. The Goth paused as she observed Bo's eyes revert back to their chocolate brown colour. "You know exactly at what point too."

"I know, I know. I didn't mean to say it. It just came out and I regretted it instantly." She sighed. "I was just caught off guard… Before coming here, I played a bunch of scenarios in my head for when I would meet Lauren but I didn't…" her voice trailed off, afraid to verbalize her fear.

Kenzi gave Bo some time to formulate her thoughts but when she didn't continue her sentence, she gave her hand a squeeze. "Its okay Bo, just say it." She said softly.

The brunette sighed sadly. "It never crossed my mind that Lauren would meet someone else. I knew she would be really upset but I secretly hoped that she would be waiting for me."

Kenzi nodded her understanding.

"I know it was pathetic and completely unrealistic of me to think that but in my heart, I didn't consider us over and I was really hoping that she felt the same. I just… this is just a horrible surprise." She said disheartened.

"So what if that woman is drop dead gorgeous?" Bo looked at her friend despondently but Kenzi continued with her train of thought. "Look, we don't know if Hot Pants and this chick are playing doctor with each other, so don't jump to conclusions. And as much as it would really suck ass if they were, you're in no position to say anything. You're here to apologize and make things right with her first and foremost. Then you can deal with the rest. OK?"

Bo nodded her head sadly; she felt absolutely dejected but knew that she had no choice - she had to suppress her jealousy. She took a deep breath, exhaled and looked at her best friend. "How do I get her to listen and talk to me Kenz? I'm obviously not her favourite person right now. She can't even be in the same room with me."

"You got that right. You're public enemy number one. She'd probably rather be in a room with Dyson and Tamsin than with you right now."

Bo shot her a look.

"What?! I'm just sayin'." The Goth replied indifferently.

"Just give her time to cool off. She has to be ready to talk, otherwise if you approach her, you'll be going down with the Titanic."

Bo gave her a puzzled look.
"Dr. Iceberg – Titanic – Get it?"

Bo sighed in response; slumping back into the couch.

"My talents are completely wasted here." Kenzi huffed with a fake annoyance.

She took the Succubus' hand in hers and in a serious but gentle tone, said, "Hot Pants said that she would come to you, so that means that you two will talk. Until then, collect yourself and figure out what you want to say."

Bo nodded. She knew that Kenzi was right - she needed to give Lauren some time to calm down; she just found it difficult waiting after all this time apart and so much left unsaid.

Kenzi's voice brought her out of her thoughts. "Now why don't you call Carlos and find out where we can get some Brazilian Rum in this joint."

Nayara walked with Lauren to her apartment. The blonde was lost in her thoughts and the Empath was quietly observing her. Once in her apartment, Lauren didn't say a word, she just made a beeline for the kitchen, opened a bottle of wine and promptly poured two tall glasses for them before taking a mouthful.

Lauren leaned against the kitchen sink, staring into space and absentmindedly ran her finger along the rim of her glass. Nayara picked up her glass and leaned against the kitchen island across from Lauren before breaking the silence "So that was Bo."

"Mhhhm." The blonde responded and took another mouthful of wine.

"Had I known that you liked your women in leather, I would've gone shopping." Nayara said to try to alleviate her friend's tension.

The blonde chuckled and shook her head at her friend's attempt to cheer her up. "It's a package deal with Bo. Not that I'm complaining about how she looks in leather."

"She's a very attractive and passionate woman." The Empath said. It was more of a statement and not a question.

Lauren nodded. "Yes, she is."

Nayara knew that Bo's arrival threw Lauren for a loop and was now forcing her to address her relationship issues before she had intended. "How are you feeling?" Nayara asked, concern showing in her eyes.

"To be honest, I'm not sure… though of the two of us, I thought you'd know." The blonde replied distractedly.

"I've been shielding myself ever since we were in Serena's room. I'd rather know how you feel because you want to tell me, not because of what I can do." The Empath said honestly.

Lauren rested her glass down on the counter and looked at her friend. "I'm sorry Nay, I wasn't thinking. I didn't mean to imply…"

Nayara put up her hand, waving off the comment. "It's alright; its been a long day." The Empath
took a sip of her wine and changed subjects. "Though remind me not to piss you off. I've never seen you so angry."

She sighed as she wrung her fingers together. "I don't think I've ever been that angry before. Everything that went wrong between Bo and I flashed in front of my eyes and … well, you saw."

The Empath nodded. "What are you going to do?"

The blonde felt as all her fight was taken out of her and responded tiredly, "I don't know. I mean, Bo and I will have to talk but … there's just so much that's happened between us… I honestly don't know if it will make a difference."

"Did you ever tell her how you felt before?" Nayara enquired.

"No, we were so caught up with the Kenzi-Kitsune situation; and then Bo's training for her Dawning; and my trying to find an antidote to stop her from devolving. How I felt wasn't important in the whole scheme of things."

The Empath frowned. "Who determined that your feelings weren't important? Bo or you?"

"I… I made that decision." The blonde admitted.

Nayara shook her head at her friend. "Lauren, I don't know if it's because you've been with the Fae too long or if you've always been self-sacrificing, but you need to realize that you matter; don't marginalize yourself."

Lauren wiped at the stray tear that rolled down her cheek and slowly paced within the kitchen. "Nay, you don't know what it's like to be human living amongst the Fae! You don't know what its like to be constantly treated less than; to have nothing; no emotional support; no kindness; no one that cares..." The blonde's voice cracked as she made her admission. "After all these years, I eventually grew to accept myself that way."

Nayara gently grabbed hold of Lauren's arm to get her attention and to halt her pacing. "You're right; I don't know what it's like." She said softly. "But I can tell you this – you are important and extraordinary. I can also tell you how wonderful, amazing and special you are but those words would be empty if you don't believe it."

The Empath peered into the blonde's dark brown eyes. "Lauren, you need to believe in and appreciate yourself outside of your medical skills. If only you could see how much you are appreciated not just by Serena and me but also by the other scientists - and not just for your scientific abilities. If you did, you would never think otherwise again."

Even though Lauren was slowly adjusting to being treated as an equal these past couple of months, she wasn't accustomed to being appreciated - it seemed foreign and was overwhelming. Nayara recognized this and pulled her friend into her arms and held her tightly; she wanted her to know that she meant everything she said. They stood in an embrace for a while until Lauren pulled away, wiping at her tear stained cheeks.

Without saying a word, Nayara grabbed the bottle of wine and guided them both to the couch in the living room. "What do you want the outcome to be? What do you want?" she asked softly.

Lauren laughed sadly. "What do I want? I want to be free. I want for Bo to need and want me and only me. I want to be able to sustain her completely without any harm to myself. I want for Bo and I to get past our issues and for things to be as they were before things changed. That's what I want."
The blonde shook her head despondently; her hair moving about her softly. "But what I want and reality are two different things. I am human and a slave. She's a Succubus. I will always have to share her because I will never be enough for her. And even if I could accept that in my heart one hundred percent, I don't know if I am the one she wants. Between Dyson and Tamsin, I honestly don't know where I stand. I gave her everything and she lied to me. I don't know if I can trust her with my heart again. Even if I wanted to, I don't know if I could."

Nayara squeezed the blonde's hand. "I know a thing or two about emotions - it's kind of my thing." The Empath flashed a dazzling smile at Lauren, causing her to return a thin smile. "In all my experiences, in my many lifetimes; in the many countries that I've lived in and travelled to, I've observed many relationships end and the primary factor in a majority of those breakups was a lack of communication."

The brunette put up her hand to stop Lauren from interrupting. "From everything that you've told me, it seems that at some point, you two stopped talking about the things that mattered. I'm glad that you acknowledged that you need to talk to Bo but you also need to listen to her. The only way to put all of this behind you is for you both to say everything that needs to be said and get everything out into the open. It's going to be difficult however you look at it, so there's no point in holding back. The fact that Bo is here shows that she wants to talk, so ask whatever questions you have and answer all questions truthfully. Only when you have the full story will you be able to move forward as you will have a better understanding of why things happened the way that it did."

The Empath paused to see if what she was saying was registering before she continued. "I know that you're concerned with how things will be when you return to Toronto. All I'm saying is focus on the here and now first – talk to Bo and get the closure you need. Once you do that, I think you'll find that it will be a relief and you'll have a better grasp on your feelings and what you need to do."

Lauren was silent as she considered her friend's words. "I will take all that you have said under advisement." She smiled sadly.

"How about we finish our wine and then get some rest. We've both had a long day." Nayara offered as she stifled a yawn.

The blonde nodded in agreement. Her body ached and her left arm throbbed under the bandages. She was absolutely exhausted and knew that she had to be mentally and emotionally prepared for when she and Bo had their talk. It wasn't something that she was looking forward to but she knew that it was long overdue - they should've had a serious talk when she first felt the strain in their relationship. Now it was inevitable and she was dreading it.

TBC

Chapter End Notes

I know it's taken a little while but our two ladies are back in the same city. This doesn't mean that it will be clear sailing – they will have to get through the storm first.
Lauren woke up exhausted after tossing and turning all night. Now that she was awake, her body reminded her of all her aches and pains, especially her left arm which throbbed under the sterile cloth. As tempted as she was to remove the bandages, she knew that she had to allow the medicinal balm time to repair and regenerate the damaged skin and tissue. An injury such as hers would normally take at least a year to heal but with Fae medicine at her finger tips, her arm would be completely healed within a month or two. After all this time with the Fae, Lauren was still amazed by their scientific advancements over modern human medicine.

Once showered and changed, Lauren bypassed the dining hall knowing that she didn't have much of an appetite and went directly to the ICU. There she found the Ignis sleeping peacefully despite her medically imposed coma. A quick review of Serena's chart showed that all her vitals were stable and according to the nurse's notes, she had an uneventful night.

The blonde sat next to the bed and gently held her friend's hand as she watched her and contemplated how strange life was. In Toronto, she and Serena worked together two or three times at the most but were never social or familiar with one another, however due to circumstances, they were working together in Brazil and had become friends. Of all the Fae that Lauren could have struck a friendship with, Serena was not one that she would've thought would be at the top of the list. Yet they were. Despite her stoic, controlled and regimented nature, the Ignis was very just, loyal, patient and understanding and most importantly, she never treated Lauren differently because she was human, which was something that the blonde respected and liked about Serena.

Lauren owed Serena her life - she and Nayara would not have made it through the jungle past their attackers, if it weren't for her. And even though she and Nayara did everything they could for her medically, Lauren was concerned that they weren't able to stop the internal bleeding in time. Unfortunately, all she or anyone could do was wait to see if the Ignis would wake up and what condition she would be in once she did.

After sitting with Serena for awhile, Lauren made her way to the lab. It was still very early in the morning so she was surprised to discover that she wasn't the first one there.

"Nay, what are you doing here so early?"

The Empath looked up tiredly from her desk. "I couldn't sleep… too much on my mind. You?"

The blonde made her way into her office, "Same. I had a restless sleep."
Nayara stood up and stretched her muscles which resulted in some of her joints to pop loudly. Lauren raised an eyebrow and smirked which caused the brunette to look at her sheepishly. "What? I'm allowed to be a bit creaky. I am over 2,200 years old after all."

"I suppose. You do bring new meaning to the term senior citizen." She said with a big grin on her face.

"Don't you know that you should be respectful of your elders?" Nayara mock pouted as she walked around and leaned against the front of her desk.

"I am respectful. I'm agreeing with you. Besides, you look amazing for an old lady." The blonde replied with a twinkle in her eyes.

Her friend smiled in return and that was when Lauren noticed the dark circles under her beautiful, blue eyes. "How long have you been here?" she asked with concern in her voice.

"All night but before you say anything, I had a nap on the couch." The brunette's head indicated to the leather couch in the far corner of her office. "It's quite comfortable."

Lauren sighed as she stepped closer to her friend and gently tucked a strand of hair behind her ear. "Do I need to regurgitate the same advice that you gave me about being a workaholic?"

"No need. I may be old but my memory is still in tact." They both chuckled before allowing the silence to engulf them. Lauren softly cleared her throat. "I owe you an apology."

"For what?" Nayara replied perplexed.

"Yesterday. I didn't mean to be insensitive talking about Bo especially the way things are between us. I…. her being here just really caught me off guard." The blonde admitted. "But that doesn't excuse my being inconsiderate to your feelings."

The Empath smiled warmly at her friend and shook her head. "You don't need to apologize but I do appreciate it. I'm a big girl Lauren. I've had a long time to contemplate life and who I am. I am very much in tune to my emotions and I have learned to respect all of life's lessons."

Standing up, Nayara softly grasped Lauren's hands and peered directly into her eyes so that she would be able to see and feel the honesty of her words. "There is a connection between us that I know that we can't explore and even though I'm disappointed that we cannot, I've accepted it."

She gently squeezed Lauren's hands and smiled but her eyes were filled with a sadness associated with a lifetime of experience. "Life has a way of happening; of opening our eyes to new possibilities and experiences; and of introducing people that enrich our lives whether it's for a reason, a season or a lifetime. I may be disappointed that we can't pursue things romantically but that doesn't detract from the fact that I absolutely cherish our friendship; that I want to help and support you in any way possible; and that I want for us to continue being a part of each other's lives."

Lauren didn't know what to say; she was moved beyond words and pulled the Empath into a tight embrace. After a few moments she gave Nayara a gentle squeeze before slowly moving out of her arms and linking their hands together. Looking into the brunette's eyes, her voice was filled with emotion, "I'm sorry that my circumstances stopped us from trying for something more but know that I am incredibly thankful to have you in my life. You gave me hope when I had none left and you've enriched my life with your friendship which is something that I have been without for a very long time. You mean more to me than you could ever imagine Nay and your friendship is something that I
Lauren's admission touched Nayara. She hadn't let anyone into her life since she lost her family but knowing that she made an impact upon someone's life and that they valued and cared for her for who she was, made her realize how much she had missed being important to someone. The Empath never thought she would’ve been able to move on from the loss of her husband and child but in that moment, she knew that she was ready and that she wanted to matter to someone.

Lauren smiled softly at her friend as she shook her head. "Though I really don't know how you can be so Zen and understanding about everything."

Nayara chuckled sadly, "It's taken me a long time and many lessons to get here." The Empath looked down at how comfortably their hands fit together before returning her gaze to Lauren's eyes. "I just want you to be happy Lauren."

"I want that for you too Nay." The blonde replied, her voice heavy with emotion.

The Empath smiled sadly. "Well, here's hoping that we both will find happiness."

Both women looked at each other in a comfortable silence; the acceptance of their decision communicated with just a look. After a few moments, Nayara removed her hands and moved back to lean against her desk. "So, I have some good news!"

"Oh, what?" Lauren asked, thankful for the respite from their emotion-filled conversation.

"I received word from the Base Camp late last night. All the samples that we extracted yesterday arrived intact and were not compromised in any way!"

Lauren was pleasantly shocked. "After everything? That's amazing!"

"I know! All our samples, including yesterday's are en route and should be here in a couple of hours." The Empath smiled brightly. "We're going to have a very busy day."

The blonde smiled at the wonderful news. These samples could hold the answer that they were looking for and she couldn't wait to start conducting tests. "How about we get some breakfast? We both haven't had anything to eat and we'll need our energy for the amount of work that we have cut out for us today." Lauren said rationally.

Nayara nodded her concurrence. They would definitely have a busy day ahead of them.

Light Fae Compound (early evening)

Lauren and Nayara checked in on Serena after their long day in the lab and then went to the dining hall for supper. They had spent all day working alongside the lab technicians running tests to ensure that every single sample was processed. It was exhausting, monotonous work but through team work, they were able to get everything completed and the results would be ready in the morning. Now they had the daunting task of waiting and they both knew that they had to prepare themselves. One way or another, they would know if they were on a wild goose chase or if they had found the cause of the epidemic.

Both women were exhausted but their day was far from over as they walked down the hallway.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" the blonde asked the Empath as they came to a halt.
"I'm sure. I wouldn't have offered otherwise." Nayara replied with a smile. "Are you ready?" she asked as she gave Lauren's shoulder a reassuring squeeze.

She gave a thin smile. "Not really but I have to be." Exhaling, Lauren straightened her posture and prepared herself before knocking on the door in front of her.

A few seconds later they heard someone running and an 'I got it' before the door was whipped open. "Hot Pants?!" the Goth said in an almost whisper from shock, her hand gripping the door.

"Hello Kenzi." Lauren said hesitantly; she wasn't sure what type of welcome she would receive as she waited for the young woman's reaction. She realized that this was the first time that she was acknowledging the Goth even though they had seen each other yesterday under not-so-wonderful circumstances.

Lauren didn't have to wait very long as the petite woman swiftly engulfed her in her arms. "I'm so glad that you're not dead." She said softly as she squeezed the blonde tighter, not realizing how much she had missed the doctor until now.

Pulling away gently, Kenzi's smile disappeared and was replaced with a frown as she punched Lauren in her good shoulder.

"Owww!" the blonde exclaimed as she rubbed her arm.

"That's for running off and almost getting yourself killed!" she said in a berating tone before stepping aside and letting the two women into Bo's apartment.

"It's good to see you too Kenzi." Lauren said genuinely as she smiled at the young woman.

"Hey Kenz, was that the door?" Bo was walking in from the Goth's adjoining apartment and stopped in her tracks upon seeing the blonde. "Lauren?" she said surprised, not expecting to see her so soon after their rocky reunion.

"Hi Bo." The blonde said softly as she returned the Succubus' gentle yet anxious gaze.

An awkward silence filled the room as Bo and Lauren looked at each other not knowing what to say.

Kenzi, normally the one to break the tension with a snappy, sarcastic comment, showed restraint as she nervously observed the Succubus' eyes dart between Lauren and her friend.

While everyone was feeling the awkward tension in the room, the Empath dropped her shields and was able to sense Bo's suppressed emotions shift from surprise and joy before switching to nervousness and then finally settling on a mix of jealousy, frustration and anger. Despite knowing that these feelings were directed towards her, Nayara did not react as she had anticipated this emotional reception.

Bo, meanwhile, was doing everything imaginable to stay calm; channelling her anger into her clenched fists and digging her fingernails into her palms so that her jealousy and inner Succubus wouldn't surface.

Lauren finally found her voice and gently said, "Bo; Kenzi, I'd like to introduce you to Dr. Hernandez. She's the Senior Medical Officer here."

"Please, any friend of Lauren's can call me Nayara." The Empath flashed her genuine warm smile at the two women, ignoring the icy glares that they were giving her.
Nayara understood that both women didn't trust or like her and didn't fault them for feeling that way. Being attuned to emotions, it was always easy for her to manage conflict and gracefully manoeuvre through discord by adapting her responses to match that of the personalities that she encountered. In so doing, she was always able to charm her opponents and deflate any awkward or tense situation.

Nayara turned her attention to the Goth. "Kenzi, I know that Carlos gave you a tour of the compound when you arrived but there's a section that I know that you didn't get to see and I think you'd be interested in it."

"What's that?" Kenzi asked in a disinterested tone; what she really wanted to know was why Nayara was there if Bo and Lauren were going to have their talk.

"Our bar, 'Néctar'. There's a section of the dining hall that is kept closed during the day but it opens up after 8 P.M. to serve alcohol. It's a good place to unwind, have a few drinks, play darts or pool and listen to music."

Kenzi didn't respond, instead she just quietly stared at her. The Empath, anticipating the cold shoulder treatment, wasn't deterred and continued to be friendly. "I was told that you were a connoisseur of beverages and seeing that you just arrived in Brazil, I thought that you may be interested in trying my country's national cocktail, Caipirinha."

The Goth put up her hand as a look of disgust appeared on her face. "A Ca-piranha? No thanks! I don't drink anything fishy or that has sharp, pointy teeth in it."

Nayara chuckled at the petite woman; she could see the feisty spirit that Lauren spoke of. "It's pronounced ka-pur-een-ya. It's made with Cachaça, which is a distilled spirit made only in Brazil; it is similar to Rum but it's made from sugar cane juice, not piranhas. The Cachaça is mixed with fresh limes, sugar and ice. It is a very popular drink here in Brazil and quite delicious."

The Goth's curiosity peaked slightly. "Similar to Rum, huh?"

"Yes but better!" the Empath said with a smile. "I would be happy to treat you to an evening of Brazil's culture. Aside from our Carnaval, Brazil is well known for its food and alcohol."

It finally dawned on Kenzi that Nayara was there to get her out of the apartment so that the two women could talk in private. She glanced at Bo who gave a slight nod of her head, letting her know that it was okay. The Goth figured she would play along and also try to learn a thing or two about this woman in the process. "Treat you say?" Kenzi arched her eyebrow. "Well, I do love being treated and especially, when cocktails are involved."

"You won't be disappointed." Nayara promised.

"What the hell, lets try this Caprihorn!" The Goth waved her hand in the air as she started to walk out the door. "Later Hot Pants. Don't wait up, Succubum!"

Nayara gave Lauren a subtle nod before stepping out of the apartment with Kenzi. "It was nice meeting you Bo. Boa noite. Good night to you both."

The door clicked shut behind the two women, leaving Bo and Lauren alone in the apartment with an awkward silence.

"Uh, please have a seat; make yourself comfortable." Bo offered. Lauren made her way to the couch and sat down on the far end, trying to calm her nerves. Bo followed and was in the process of sitting when she quickly changed her mind and stood back up. "Umm, would you like something to drink? I have water and juice." The brunette was uncharacteristically nervous and was trying to collect
herself as she continued to ramble. "Fruit juices must be popular in Brazil because I have a variety
stocked in the fridge."

Lauren offered a thin smile; her nerves had her stomach doing somersaults. "Yes and they are all
quite delicious but water is fine, thanks."

Bo wasted no time heading into the kitchen, thankful for the slight reprieve so that she could
compose herself. Taking a couple deep breaths to calm down, she returned a short while later with a
glass of water, placing it on the coffee table in front of Lauren before sitting down on the opposite
end of the couch.

The brunette didn't know how to start so she decided to begin with some small talk. "How's your
arm?"

Lauren looked down at her arm and then back up, "It's incredibly sore but I'm lucky to still have it,
so I'm not complaining."

"You almost lost your arm?!" Bo said alarmed.

The blonde nodded. "Yes but Fae science is a wondrous thing. And if it weren't for Serena - the
woman in ICU - things would've been a lot worse; Nayara and I could've been seriously hurt or
killed. Serena saved us both."

Bo ignored the 'Nayara and I' comment and maintained her calm exterior. "All Kenzi and I were told
was that you and your team were attacked and there were some fatalities. I didn't even know if you
were alive until I walked into the hospital room and saw Serena lying there. It was the longest day of
my life waiting to find out if you were alive or not."

The doctor wasn't sure what to say, she was so preoccupied with the attack, her injuries and keeping
Serena alive that she didn't have much time to think about how Bo and Kenzi were affected by it all.

The brunette sensed Lauren's hesitancy and continued to speak. "I'm just thankful that you're okay."

Bo was fighting against every fibre of her being, wanting so much to reach out and hold Lauren in
her arms but she knew that it was too soon for physical contact even in the form of a comforting hug.

Lauren wanted Bo to just start talking but she knew that this was difficult for them both. Instead of
prompting her to begin, she waited for her to speak, drinking some water in an attempt to stay patient
and calm.

Bo knew that this would probably be her only opportunity to apologize and to try and make things
right. She was nervous as she didn't want to mess things up more than they already were and knew
that she had to be honest and patient.

Bo looked at the blonde sadly, regret evident in her eyes. "I am so sorry Lauren. I never meant to
hurt you. I haven't stopped thinking about you these past 49 days that you've been away. You've
filled my thoughts and my heart and I can't forgive myself for how much I hurt you…. I was a
horrible girlfriend. I didn't realize it then but I do now. You are the most important person in my life
and I should've shown you how much I love you and how important you are to me but instead I
ended up neglecting you and our relationship."

Bo took a deep breath and wrung her fingers together. "I should've been honest with you about
Dyson and Tamsin. I should've told you that I suspected that Dyson had his love back but I wasn't
sure and didn't want to upset you in case I was wrong. It wasn't until my Dawning when he told me
– that's when I knew for certain; and then he died; and everything went to shit shortly thereafter."
She paused to look for a reaction from Lauren but the blonde sat expressionless in front of her. Gathering the rest of her courage, she continued in an adamant tone. "With regards to Tamsin, I swear I didn't cheat on you with her. She kissed me during my trial in Brazenwood and not the other way around. It was unexpected and it took me by surprise and it meant nothing to me. I didn't say anything to you as I knew you were already upset that I had missed your award ceremony and I was afraid that you would be even more upset and disappointed in me if I told you."

Bo looked deep into Lauren's eyes and said sincerely, "I cannot apologize enough but if you give me a chance, I promise that I will spend every moment of my life making it up to you."

It was the most that Bo had ever said at any one time. Both women sat there looking at each other with Lauren quietly thinking over everything that was just said. The silence was deafening and the lack of reaction from Lauren had Bo growing more and more anxious. "Please say something." Bo implored.

The blonde closed her eyes and took a breath before opening her eyes again. "You've apologized and explained yourself and now what, that's supposed to make everything okay?"

"No, it doesn't make everything okay but I want you to know that I'm aware of where I screwed up and I won't make the same mistakes again. I've changed – not just emotionally but also physically since my Dawning - and a lot of what happened back then happened because of my Dawning, so a lot of our previous problems don't exist any more." Bo replied.

Lauren was started to get irritated; she stood up and took a couple of steps away from the couch. "Previous problems like Dyson? Did his love just disappear again? Will I always have to wonder if you will go back to him now that he has his love back or if you need to heal?"

Bo realized that she expressed herself poorly as she could see the tension in the blonde; standing up she tried to bridge the physical distance between them. "No! Dyson is not even in the picture. He never was. I love you! I'm in love with you Lauren. I told him that you are the only one I want to be with and that all he and I could ever be was friends. And when I promised you that I would never heal with him again, I meant it and I've kept that promise – I haven't been with him."

Lauren was shocked to hear that Bo told Dyson that she chose her over him but she didn't let it show, instead she pressed further. "And he's accepted that you choose a human over him, an alpha wolf?"

The brunette remained calm and tried to keep her voice even; she knew that Lauren was pushing but if they both got upset, this conversation would end badly. "He has no choice but to accept it. You are the one that I'm in love with, Lauren. I don't want to be with anyone else."

Lauren didn't react. She was moved by Bo's admission and she did get some satisfaction that Bo picked her over Dyson but she had to stay focused as she knew that this would be the only time to get the answers to all the questions that plagued her. "And Tamsin?"

"I've told her that I am not interested in her – that I never have been and that you are the only person I want to be with. It's always been you, Lauren." Bo replied honestly.

"You say that it's only ever been me but when did you make this declaration of love to Dyson and Tamsin?" Lauren asked pointedly.

"Three weeks ago."

"I see. So, I had to be out of your life before you would stand up for our relationship then? If I had
never left, would you have said anything to them?" Lauren demanded.

"I don't know, Lauren. To be honest, I didn't think I had to say anything to anyone as I thought it was obvious how strongly I felt for you. I think where I failed was that I didn't say it to you enough. Maybe if you didn't have reason to doubt, this wouldn't have been an issue," Bo said with regret.

Lauren shook her head. "Maybe but I trusted you and I trusted what we had. Your telling me now that you chose me over Dyson and Tamsin doesn't take away the fact that you lied to me repeatedly; you didn't respect me or our relationship because if you did, you would've been honest with me in the first place. I don't know if I can trust you again."

Bo flinched at those words. She stepped closer; her hands outstretched; and her voice filled with sadness. "I know that I've lost your trust and I regret it every day. I was so scared that telling you the truth would hurt and disappoint you but instead not telling you only made things worse. Now we are both paying the price for my cowardice. I promise that I will always be honest with you Lauren. I know that you may not believe that but I will do whatever it takes to earn back your trust and I won't do anything to jeopardize that."

The blonde took a deep breath and asked another question that had been on her mind. "You missed my award ceremony. Why?"

"I was in the midst of doing my trial. I didn't even know that I was in it until it had started and then I was stuck. I couldn't get out of it until it was completed. I honestly thought I could finish it and get to you in time for your award ceremony. I really wanted to celebrate with you and see you get your award." Bo said genuinely.

"Why couldn't you have been honest with me and told me what was happening? Did you think I wouldn't understand?"

Bo waved her hands in exasperation. "That's the problem - I knew you would! I didn't want you to have to understand anything. I just wanted to be there for you and I thought that I could do it all – do my trial and be at your award ceremony. I thought that if I could finish on time, there would be no need for you to be understanding. I tried to rush through it but I still couldn't finish in time and I only disappointed us both."

"Do you even know why that award was so important to me?" Lauren asked; the hurt and disappointment evident in her eyes. "It was an acknowledgement of my efforts and success by my peers and it had nothing to do with the Fae. It was something that I was proud of and I was extremely happy and excited about it. For a brief moment, it represented normalcy in a life that would never be normal and also, a career that could've been if I never went to the Congo. All I wanted was to share this wonderful, most likely never repeatable moment, with you - the person that mattered to me the most. I wanted you to be proud of me and to celebrate with me. But your needs came first yet again and instead a stranger - a fellow scientist - recognized how important it was to me when my own girlfriend didn't."

"But I did know that it was important to you Lauren!" Bo insisted. "I may not have known all that it represented for you but I knew that you were extremely proud and excited about it and I was happy for you. I truly regret missing your ceremony and for not letting you know how proud I felt." She admitted genuinely.

The blonde sighed, her voice almost resigned. "Then why did you say what you said to me? That I only dealt with Petri dishes."

Bo didn't know how to explain that because she didn't understand it herself. "I honestly don't know.
One minute I was walking into Brazenwood and the next thing I knew, I felt as if I had drunk Kenzi under the table twice. The only thing I can think of is that it was all part of my trial."

Lauren's anger flared. "It sounds like just another excuse Bo, you still said it!" She spat out disbelievingly. "I was so upset that you thought so little of me and what I do. Did you forget who made your injections to curb your hunger; who healed Kenzi after she ate the contaminated Aswang soup; who stopped the Dijieiene spider; and who produced the Naga Venom to stop the Garuda? Did none of that matter? Despite all of that, my worth still boiled down to Petri dishes. That statement told me that you didn't know anything about what I do and that you don't respect my abilities even though it is the reason why I'm a slave for the Light – they at least appreciate what I do."

"Of course everything you've done matters!" Bo said raising her voice. Taking a breath to calm down, she continued in a softer tone. "I have always appreciated what you have done for me ever since I learned that I was Fae. Your brilliant mind has helped Kenzi and I and the Fae more times that I can count. You are an amazing scientist and doctor and you love and take great pride in your work. I would never intentionally belittle you and what you do. I really don't know why I said what I said but I didn't mean it Lauren. All I can do is apologize for saying it. I know that I'm sounding like a broken record but I didn't mean to hurt you and I should've let you know how grateful I am for all that you've done for me."

Lauren glanced up at the ceiling as she ran her hands through her hair before returning her gaze back to Bo; her voice tired. "You took me for granted. You were my girlfriend. You were the only person I trusted and who I thought believed in me and wanted to be with me for me and not what I could do or offer. But all I did was give more and more of myself for our relationship and you took it all without a second glance."

Bo couldn't deny it; her shoulders slumped. "You're right." She said embarrassed. "I was so self-involved that I didn't see how selfish I was being. I know that I made our relationship very one-sided and you compromised more than you should have – that was never my intention. I wanted us to be partners in every sense."

The brunette let out a loud sigh. "You were always so understanding and I took what you said at face value – that everything was fine; that you were fine. I should've known that you were just putting me ahead of yourself because you always do that. I take full responsibility for my selfishness – that's on me; but I never asked you to constantly put my needs ahead of your own."

Lauren was surprised by Bo's admission as well as for her calling her out on her own mistake. "No, you didn't. That was my choice." She said softly. "I've put others ahead of myself for the last six years; it's engrained in me. But when I was with you, I wanted you to be happy and I wanted to help you in every way even if it was to my detriment. It's not that I didn't value myself but I should've said something… and I didn't."

The brunette was not expecting Lauren to accept responsibility for her actions and it caught her off guard but more so, it was a relief to know that she was being open to what was being said instead of only being angry. "I really wish you did Lauren." She said gently.

"I read sexual energy not minds. I can't know how you are feeling if you don't tell me and you never told me how you felt or what was bothering you. There were some things that I was absolutely clueless about and should've known but there was a lot that I didn't know and only learnt about in your letter. Things like what it meant for you being a slave to the Fae and what you had to give up; how much your award meant to you; and what Dyson represented for you. I agree that I'm responsible for the things that I was aware of and should've known better about but how can I be blamed for what I didn't know?"
Lauren quietly considered Bo's words. "You're right; I should've told you how I felt. It was difficult because you were the only person that never viewed or treated me as a slave. When I was with you, I felt free, normal and wanted; and I just wanted to enjoy what we had without the reminder of what I was."

She let out a loud sigh before continuing with her admission. "And as much as I've let you in, there were some things that I just didn't talk about. It's not that I didn't trust you; it's just what I had to do to survive. When I first started with the Fae I realized that in order to get through the rest of my segregated life, I had to say goodbye to my past and who I was. Remembering my life before the Congo only made living the rest of my life with the Fae more difficult and torturous, so I had to let go of who I was. I've been living like this for the past six years Bo, sadly, it's become routine."

The blonde released another loud sigh. "As for Dyson... I was embarrassed and insecure because of all the things he could offer you that I couldn't. I know that I let my insecurity dictate a lot of my reactions but I can't change how I feel, especially since... well, everything that we've just talked about."

The brunette tried to not be accusatory and kept a gentle tone. "I wish that you had told me Lauren. It would've given me a better understanding of things and maybe I might've been less of an ass." They both smiled sadly at Bo's comment.

"I guess we're not so great at communicating as we thought huh?" the brunette said recognizing both their shortcomings.

Lauren nodded her head in agreement. "I guess not."

The blonde paused to decide whether she should make this admission and decided that she would in the spirit of honesty and in light of their poor communication in the past. It was a difficult thing to admit without seeming clingy even though she wasn't but she had to be honest for both Bo and herself. Gathering herself, she spoke in a soft tone. "Bo, I lost myself in you and in our relationship. You were the only good thing in my life and that's a lot of pressure to put on someone. I tried not to place that responsibility on you but it was difficult not to - you gave me something to look forward to and for the first time in six years, I had expectations and hope. Even after Nadia, our relationship was the only thing keeping me together and when Tamsin told me that you kissed, implying that you cheated, I just couldn't continue functioning the way that I was. I couldn't function being so angry and disappointed in the fact that I allowed myself to have expectations and that you gave me hope for something better. I was just tired of fighting and surviving and I just couldn't continue being in Toronto when I felt that I had nothing to look forward to."

Bo was emotionally drained but had to make one last attempt to get through to Lauren. "Lauren, you are everything to me and I took you for granted. I was inconsiderate and selfish and you deserved better than that. I know that I've lost your love and trust and I've hurt you deeply but if you give me a chance, I promise that I will make it up to you and you will never doubt how much I love you and how special you are to me."

The brunette's plea was met with silence but she pressed on, needing to know where they stood. "Where does this leave us?"

Lauren shook her head. "I don't know Bo. As difficult as this was, I'm glad that we both have a better understanding of each other now but so much has happened between us. I'm not the same person that I was when we were together. I've changed and things that I was willing to do and accept back then, I won't now. I can't go back to how things were."

Bo understood as she had gone through her share of eye opening experiences. "I've changed too and
I don't want things to go back the way they were. I want you to be happy and to feel amazing. I want you to feel the way that I feel whenever I'm with you.

Just tell me what you need babe. I'll do anything."

Up until now, Lauren was successful at keeping her tears at bay but now they were spilling from her eyes. "I'm so sorry Bo. But I think that I'm always going to be asking from you more than you can give to me. Even though we've put everything out on the table, it doesn't change the fact that you're a Succubus and I'm human; and that I need to be able to function without needing you or anyone else to make me happy. I need time to figure things out. I don't expect you to wait as I understand that you have to do what is best for you, just as I'm trying to do what is best for me. All I can promise you right now is a clean slate and friendship. I know that it's not what you want but it's all I am able to offer at this moment."

Bo's eyes were brimming with tears. This was what she had feared would happen – that Lauren wouldn't want to try again at their relationship but at least she was willing to start over. Bo would take hope from that even though she felt her heart crumble. "I understand. I've always valued your friendship Lauren and I'm glad that I haven't lost that. You take all the time that you need. I'm not going anywhere."

Lauren nodded and wiped away her tears. She was too emotionally and physically exhausted to talk any more. "I should go. It's been a long day and I'm sure we both need to absorb everything that we discussed."

Bo nodded sadly. "Alright. Is… is it okay for me to stop by the lab tomorrow? I'd like to see what you do and what you're working on." She asked hesitantly, unsure if she was asking too much too soon.

The blonde smiled sadly, "I'd like that. Good night Bo."

"Goodnight Lauren." Bo watched Lauren leave the apartment before making her way back to the couch and collapsing; her tears running freely down her cheeks. She didn't think her heart could hurt this much again but at least this time there was some hope. She wouldn't waste this second chance with Lauren.

Chapter End Notes

- This chapter was difficult to write for a variety of reasons but mainly in trying to find the right balance for both Lauren and Bo with their discussion; and to ensure that their issues were addressed fairly and realistically.
- Thank you for reading and following.
A Better Understanding

Chapter Notes

- Lost Girl is created by Michelle Lovretta and produced by Prodigy Pictures in association with Shaw Media.
- Thanks to my Beta, LostGirlz for her suggestions; and to T for all her help and incredible support.

Néctar

Néctar wasn't as large as the Dahl nor did it have that neighbourhood pub feel to it but it was comfortable and surprisingly not pretentious as Kenzi thought it would've been seeing that it was located within the Fae HQ. In fact, as she walked through the door, the Goth thought it was cool to have a bar where one worked, besides, it had all the important necessities: plenty of alcohol, a pool table, music, a small dance floor and as a bonus, it was within stumbling distance to her apartment.

As the Goth continued to look around the bar, she couldn't believe how many humans were there and how social everyone was with one another. It was definitely a culture shock. Back in Toronto, she and Lauren were the only humans that frequented the Dahl; and aside from Trick, Hale, Dyson, Vex and sometimes Tamsin, the Fae in Toronto never once looked at her or said hello. However, as soon as she walked in with Nayara, almost every Fae that she made eye contact with smiled and greeted her. Kenzi had only been there for a few minutes and already the Fae in Brazil were more hospitable than those in Toronto and she had been living amongst them for three years.

Finding a table in the corner, Kenzi made herself comfortable while Nayara went to the bar to start a tab and grab some drinks. The Goth wanted to get information from the brunette and to do so, she knew that she couldn't be bitchy; she had to play it cool and be somewhat friendly towards Nayara. She wanted the doctor to feel comfortable around her and once she was, she would subtly ask her questions and find out type of relationship she and Lauren had. The Goth sensed that there was something more than their being co-workers based on the couple of times she saw them interact. Granted she didn't have any proof - this was a gut feeling - but Kenzi always trusted her instincts as it never steered her wrong.

Nayara seemed nice but Kenzi didn't want to act on first impressions. She was cautious - she saw how the Fae treated Lauren in Toronto; they always wanted something from the blonde and always had some ulterior motive. Besides, if anything was going on between the two doctors, it would mean that Nayara would be Bo's competition and the Goth really wanted her best friend and Lauren to work things out. Kenzi knew that she would have to bide her time and wait for the right moment to strike; until then, she would take one for the team and enjoy the copious amounts of alcohol that she was going to consume on the brunette's tab.

The Goth's thoughts were interrupted when a tumbler containing a clear liquid, some lime wedges and ice was placed on the table before her. Not one to turn down free alcohol, she said, "Bottom's up!" and took a large gulp. The Caipirinha was smooth and left a warm, tingling sensation as it made its way down her throat. "Damn! This is good shit!" she exclaimed in a surprised tone before drinking some more - it was delicious and potent which were qualities that she loved in her booze.

And so the evening began with human and Fae matching drink for drink. The Goth figured that if
she were going to drink Brazil's national beverage then Nayara would drink Vodka, Russia's alcohol of choice. Kenzi had successfully out drank Fae in the past but watching the way Nayara was pounding back the drinks there was no guarantee that it would happen tonight. However, the petite Russian was no light weight; she could hold her own.

The drinks were non-stop all evening. Kenzi had to admire the Empath's tolerance. The collection of empty glasses and the handful of fries scattered on a plate was some indication of how much they had consumed over the last three hours. The petite woman was now drunk and what little tact or filter she normally had when she spoke, was now non-existent.

They were both waiting for the waitress to deliver their umpteenth round of drinks when Kenzi blurted out, "You have the most incredible eyes that I've ever seen." Though the petite woman was leading up to her questions, she hadn't planned on the complimentary remark even though she did think that Nayara had beautiful eyes.

"Thank you." The Empath replied demurely. She knew that the Goth was inebriated and was surprised that it took this long for her to be affected as other humans and Fae would've passed out by now. The Empath, on the other hand, had a happy buzz going and was quite impressed with the petite woman's tolerance for alcohol. Nayara was also aware of the Goth's intentions and had been waiting all night for her to ask her questions.

"You must hear that all the time." Kenzi said a little embarrassed at her unexpected comment.

"I have but I always appreciate compliments when they are genuine." The brunette replied matter of factly, knowing that the petite woman was being honest.

"You're just being modest. Look around…" the Goth's eyes scanned the room as she gestured with her arm, "You have a lot of admirers here."

"I wouldn't call anyone here an admirer." Nayara deflected politely.

"Please! Almost everyone here has been checking you out all night."

"And how would you know?" the Empath enquired.

"I have eyes. I see things."

"I have no doubt. You seem to be a very observant and insightful person." Nayara cocked her head to one side as she looked at Kenzi intently. "And what else do you see?"

"I see how you look at Hot Pants…. umm, Lauren."

"Hot Pants?" the brunette enquired, curious about the nickname.

"Duh, have you not seen her ass?"

The Empath laughed; she definitely found Kenzi to be entertaining. "Understood."

"And how does Lauren react to your nickname?"

The Goth shrugged her shoulders. "She ignores it and rolls her eyes at me." Nayara chuckled at the response as she could easily picture Lauren reacting that way.
"So, what's the deal with you two?" Kenzi pressed further.

"The deal, as you say, is friendship. We respect and care about one another as friends and colleagues." Nayara replied. She didn't lie; there was just no point in saying that they were also attracted to one another but decided to not take things further.

"Riiiight! I saw how you reacted to Bo in the hospital. You were very protective of Hot…errr, Lauren." Kenzi pointed out.

"I could say the same of you – you are very protective of Bo." Nayara said gently. "Is there something going on between you two?" she asked, deflecting the Goth's questions.

Kenzi made a face. "God no! That's just gross! She's like a sister to me."

"You would do anything for her, wouldn't you?" the brunette asked.

"Of course! She's my BFF."

"Well then, she's very lucky to have a friend like you by her side." Nayara said genuinely as she flashed a brilliant smile at the Goth.

Kenzi smiled back; she didn't understand why but she couldn't help but smile when the brunette did. Nayara's smile was like a warm, comforting hug and the Goth found herself feeling very relaxed around her. "That's what I keep telling her." she replied trying to act nonchalant about the compliment and how comfortable she felt around the Fae.

Kenzi didn't realize that she was drawn to Nayara because she was an Empath. The brunette was charming and extremely likeable and it was normal for people to want to be around her.

Nayara leaned forward and clasped her hands together on the table; she was curious about Kenzi's experience with the Fae and how it compared to Lauren's. "It must be difficult being human living amongst the Fae in Toronto."

"Damn straight. I'm a minority just like Hot Pants. Well, not exactly. Bo doesn't own me and because of that I have it a lot easier than Lauren - I don't have to report to an Asshat." She said sadly, having a better understanding of the blonde's situation. "But I also know that if I weren't with Bo Bo, I'd be easy pickings for the Dark."

Kenzi sighed and drained what was left in her glass. "I have Fae friends and they have my back but when things get dicey, they think of me as the puny human that needs protecting or who will only get in the way. I may not have super powers but I can hold my own. I lived on the streets for most of my life… I've seen things… horrible things and I survived when most didn't. That's no easy feat you know." She vented and closed her eyes in an attempt to shut out the images of that life.

Kenzi's feelings of guilt and insecurity were rolling off of her in waves. Nayara sensed the Goth's guilt over how she treated Lauren in the past; her frustration in constantly having to prove herself; of wanting to be helpful to Bo and her friends and to be considered an equal; and for them to believe in and appreciate her abilities.

"I don't know why I'm talking about this." Kenzi was confused as to why she was opening herself up to Nayara. Even though she didn't know the Fae doctor, she felt that she could tell her anything and assumed that it was probably the alcohol loosening her tongue.

The petite woman shook her head vigorously and stood up suddenly. "What are you?! Did you put some kind of Fae mojo on me?" she accused.
Nayara sat back slowly and put up both hands to show she wasn't hiding anything and that she meant no harm. "I swear that I haven't." she said calmly. "I'm an Empath. People are drawn to me emotionally. It's similar to how people react to Bo - they are physically attracted to her because she is a Succubus. The only difference is that people gravitate towards me on an emotional level."

Kenzi mulled over the explanation for a few moments before she sat back down. "Okay. Just don't try anything."

"I haven't and I won't. You have my blood oath." Nayara said honestly, trying to reassure the petite human.

The Goth relaxed at hearing the Empath's promise and nodded her understanding.

Both women were quiet as fresh drinks were placed on their table. Nayara took a sip of her drink and waited till the waitress was out of ear shot before speaking. The brunette looked into Kenzi's eyes so that she could see that she wasn't hiding anything or playing any games. In a gentle tone she said, "With regards to what you said before…. I don't mind listening if you want to talk. I, too, left home as soon as I was able to. My mother died when I was very young and my father was never around. He didn't hurt me physically but he never showed me any love or affection. As an adolescent Empath coming into her power, that was the harshest form of punishment that could ever be inflicted. I didn't want to continue living in that cold, sterile, uncaring environment, so I left as soon as I could."

Nayara paused thoughtfully. "Not that I'm comparing my situation to yours but I do understand the fear of being in a strange, new place and being on one's own with no one to turn to for help or support. I learned to rely only on myself. It was difficult and lonely at first but I eventually grew accustomed to it."

The Goth gave her a sad smile. She didn't peg Nayara to be a runaway and was surprised that she shared her story with her. The Empath wasn't like other Fae who spoke to her in a condescending tone; Nayara spoke to her like an equal and was kind.

The brunette liked the petite Russian - she was strong-willed, spunky, caring, loyal and had a quick wit - all traits that the Empath found endearing. Kenzi and Lauren were so much alike in how they felt living amongst her kind; it saddened her to see these two strong, wonderful women think that they were inferior when that was furthest from the truth.

The Empath wanted to give the Goth some hope and make her feel better. "Kenzi, for what it's worth, I've worked and lived with humans for a long time and I know for a fact that there's nothing puny or inferior about them. Humans are strong, caring and resilient and are capable of so much more than my kind gives them credit for. I see it in Lauren every day and even though I've just met you, I also see it in you. You have a strong spirit and are resourceful – you would have to be in order to survive a life on the streets and with the Fae. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Surprise them by continuing to prove them wrong."

Nayara smiled sweetly at the Goth and all she could think was how wonderful and understanding this woman was – she felt like she was reconnecting with a long lost friend even though she had only known her for a few hours. Kenzi wasn't sure if she felt this way because Nayara was an Empath but in that moment, she realized that it didn't matter, she didn't care why.

Bo's apartment

Bo tossed and turned; she was emotionally drained but thoughts of her talk with Lauren, kept sleep at bay. Staring at the ceiling above her bed, she couldn't believe that she was getting a second chance at
their friendship despite all the hurt that she had caused. It wasn't exactly what she wanted but she was thankful for it even though her heart ached. She had wanted more than anything for Lauren to give their relationship another shot but wishes and reality were two different things and the blonde made it clear that she wasn't ready. It wasn't the idea of being friends that concerned Bo; it was the possibility that Lauren may never be ready for something more than friendship and that if Bo pushed for more, it could cause her to lose whatever tenuous relationship that they had. The brunette knew that she had to be patient and give Lauren time to figure things out. The problem was that the Succubus knew that patience wasn't her forte. However, she would do her best because it was Lauren and this would most likely be her only chance to make things right.

Regardless of the heaviness in her heart, Bo was thankful to be given a clean slate and for another chance at being in the blonde's life. She would make the most of this opportunity to earn back Lauren's trust and work at their friendship despite the fact that she was in love with her and thought that she was the most beautiful woman she had ever seen. Bo meant what she said about not going anywhere and giving Lauren all the time she needed. She would do everything she could to remain in her life in any capacity; the alternative was not an option – these past two months were a testament of that.

Now that all the stress and anxiety of their conversation was behind her, it was like a fog had been lifted and Bo was able to see things that hadn't registered until now - things like how different Lauren was. The blonde seemed more self-aware and confident and she was definitely more assertive than before. The Succubus wasn't sure what caused the change but she liked that Lauren didn't hold back and that she said how she felt as opposed to hiding her feelings. She also could tell that though the blonde seemed happier, there was something troubling her. It hurt and disappointed Bo that she was so self-involved before to not see the signs but she could see them clear as day now. Lauren's aura was muted and this concerned her as one's aura reflected one's frame of mind. Unfortunately, Bo couldn't remember if her aura was this subdued before. All she knew was that she would do everything in her power to help Lauren be happy; if anyone deserved happiness and peace of mind, it was her.

Sighing, Bo accepted defeat, got out of bed and made her way to the living room. Plopping down on the couch, she reached for the remote and started flicking through the channels in the hope that TV would numb her mind and distract her from thinking of Lauren.

Lauren's apartment

Lauren was sitting on her couch, her eyes fixed on the painting that was hanging on the wall; staring at it yet not seeing the colours or brush strokes; nothing registered. Her brain was going a mile a minute, re-playing everything that she and Bo talked about. Sitting there, it all felt surreal as their words and emotions hung heavily in the air between them. Their conversation was difficult but they were able to discuss their issues and she found that she felt relieved to have finally expressed herself. But where did that leave her? She was still heart broken and not ready to be in a relationship with Bo or anyone else; she still felt alone; and she was still stuck in a life that she had no control over.

Lauren ran her fingers through her hair and took a couple of deep breaths willing herself to focus on the present. She knew that she had to prioritize – deal with the immediate matters first as opposed to what was beyond the horizon. The last thing she needed was to stress and overwhelm herself with things that she couldn't control or address right now. She had to look at the positives – she and Bo had their talk and that was a big step; she had friends here that respected and appreciated her; and her work was going to save thousands of Fae in Brazil once a cure was found. She was also being treated well and as an equal, so there was no point in thinking about her enslavement to the Light - she would deal with that once it was time to head back to Toronto.
As Lauren tried to clear her mind, her thoughts kept re-hashing the evening’s intense conversation. She still couldn't believe that Bo told Dyson and Tamsin that she chose her over them. Even though it took their breaking up for it to happen, it still brought the blonde some satisfaction knowing that Bo finally stood up for her and their relationship. Lauren saw the regret and sadness etched on the brunette’s face and heard the sincerity in her voice; she knew that the Succubus was truly sorry and that she recognized how much she had hurt her. This was what Lauren had wanted – for Bo to understand what she had done and to fight for their relationship. But things were different now; she was different and Lauren realized that it wasn’t enough that Bo understood and made her a priority; it was also about making herself a priority whenever possible.

A clean slate and friendship - that's what Lauren promised. This meant that she had to let go of the past if they were going to be friends. It would be tough and she knew that it wouldn't happen over night but knowing that Bo acknowledged her mistakes and that she seemed genuinely sorry, helped ease some of the hurt feelings. She also knew that being friends would be a huge adjustment as they were still attracted to one another - a fact that frustrated her as she couldn't stop thinking about how beautiful the Succubus looked even while they were arguing. Regardless, she would work at their friendship as long as the brunette was willing to try; she just hoped that one day she would be able to trust Bo again.

The blonde was absolutely exhausted but she knew that she wouldn’t be able to sleep with her thoughts in turmoil. Eyeing the guitar in the corner of the living room, she decided that it was as good a time as any to practice. Settling back down onto the couch, she adjusted the instrument in her arms and lap and gently plucked at the strings - best case scenario, it would be a good distraction and worse case, she would be no better off than she was right now. Flipping open the music folder that she kept on the coffee table, she chose a song at random and began strumming.

Bo's apartment

It was a little after three o'clock when Kenzi let herself into the apartment; seeing that all the lights were off, she tried to be quiet so as to not wake her best friend. As she walked past the couch, the table light suddenly switched on, startling the Goth.

"Jesus Bo! Why are you waiting for me in the dark? I don't have a curfew you know."

"I fell asleep on the couch until you woke me with all your clomping." Bo grumbled.

"I don't clomp!" she said offended. "My feet are tiny and oh so, daintee." Kenzi slurred slightly as she flexed the toe of her right boot, stumbling a bit as she lost her balance. "I was even tip toeing so that I wouldn't wake you." Kenzi defended.

"Look at your boots Kenz! There's nothing dainty about them!" They simultaneously looked down at the six inch platform heels, both with a different reaction - Bo glaring and the Goth smiling, admiring its craftsmanship.

"Maybe you thought you were being stealthy but you were actually loud. I heard you swearing when you dropped your keys in the hallway; then you slammed the door shut before you started tip toeing around in those platform boots." The brunette continued to gripe.

"Sorry! I was trying to be quiet." Kenzi sulked.

Bo's shoulders slumped forward. "I know." She said softly. "I'm sorry Kenz, I'm just grumpy… it took me a long time to fall asleep." Bo waved her over. "Come here." The petite woman plunked herself down ungracefully next to the brunette and leaned her head on her shoulder as the Succubus slung an arm around her friend, giving her a gentle squeeze.
"So, how'd it go with Hot Pants? Do I assume from your being out here, that it didn't go well and you have Succubus blue balls?" the Goth asked.

Bo rolled her eyes at the comment and recounted everything to her inebriated friend, sighing loudly once she was done.

Kenzi sat upright and was quiet. She looked pensive as if she was trying to choose her words carefully. "Well, she didn't tell you to go fuck yourself and never talk to her again. A second chance and clean slate is good, no?"

"That's what I keep telling myself. I am thankful at another chance at friendship. I just wanted us to have another shot at our relationship you know?" Bo let out another sigh. "I just need to sleep on it and let it sink in."

The Goth gently squeezed Bo's hand. "Just give her time… eventually you'll wear her down into the good graces of your vag."

Bo shook her head and smiled at her friend. "Anyway, how was your evening out with the blue eyed, tanned goddess." she said sarcastically trying to hide her insecurity and jealousy over Nayara.

Kenzi shrugged her shoulders nonchalantly. "Um, fine."

"How was the Capree uhh… the Brazilian drink?"

"Okay."

Bo knew something was up as Kenzi wasn't rambling about her evening and what she learned about the Fae doctor. "Alright, spill! What happened?"

The petite Russian wouldn't look her friend in the eyes. "Nothin."

"I don't believe you. You're acting weird even for you." The brunette insisted.

Kenzi quickly stood from the couch and took a few steps away. "If I say, you'll get mad." she said sheepishly.

"Kenz, just tell me; I won't get mad." Bo said softly as she stood to face the petite woman.

The Goth steeled herself. "K, my whole plan was to figure out what Nayara's story was and get some free booze in the process."

"I knew that much. And?"

"She took me to the bar and I tried the Caipirinha and it was delish. She then agreed to a cross-cultural booze night and drank Vodka while I drank her country's national beverage. Next thing we're playing drinking games and going drink for drink with one another…. I've drunk my share of Fae under the table but I have to admit that she has some serious stamina." Kenzi smiled proudly at herself and her booze prowess.

"That's great that she can handle her alcohol." Bo said sarcastically. "I don't care if she's a lush, Kenzi. Did you find out anything important?" She was anxious to know what her friend had learned.

"I didn't just fall out of the P.I. tree you know. I got skills." The Goth rolled her eyes.

"Sorry Kenz, I suck. I'm not questioning your skills. It's just that everything with Lauren is hanging by a thread and I'm… I'm just unsure of everything and especially where I stand." Bo admitted.
The petite Russian nodded her understanding. "I found out that she's an Empath...You know how you're a sex magnet for humans and Fae? Well, same thing for her 'cept it's on an emotional level."

"Great! She's Miss Congeniality." Bo said dejectedly. "Were you able to find out if she and Lauren are… together?" Bo asked hesitantly.

"All I was able to get out of her was that they are really good friends and that she cherishes Lauren's friendship. I don't think that's the whole story but for now, Nayara – one; Kenzi – zilch."

"Well, thanks for checking things out for me. I owe you big time for hanging out with her all night. I know that it must've been excruciating."

"It umm, it wasn't that bad. I had fun, surprisingly." Kenzi admitted hesitantly.

"Really?" Bo said disbelievingly.

"She's pretty cool actually." The Russian said honestly. "She's easy going and really nice; she also has a great sense of humour and is easy to talk to. She also has the most amazing pale blue eyes that I've ever seen... it would be easy to get lost in them; and even I have to admit that she has a sexy accent." The Goth gushed.

"Shit Kenz, I'm surprised you didn't go home with her tonight." Bo said jealously as she crossed her arms in front of her body.

"If I were into chicks, I would've. I'd so tap that." Kenzi grinned as she looked at her friend. Given her inebriated haze, it took a little longer than usual for Bo's jealous frown to register. "Umm, but obviously I'm not. Besides, if my Succubus BFF couldn't get me to change sides, no one can." she chuckled nervously.

Bo wasn't blind; she saw how attractive the Fae doctor was and finding out that her personality matched her beauty only irked her even more as she won over her best friend. If that could happen, then the possibility of there being something more between Nayara and Lauren was also high. The thought caused her to be incredibly jealous and frustrated but she knew that there was nothing that she could do about it because she and Lauren weren't together. She had no say in who the blonde was interested in, regardless of the fact that Lauren said that she wasn't ready to be in a relationship.

The brunette sighed; she knew it was irrational to be jealous of Nayara but she couldn't help it. On top of that, she really wanted to hit something right now.

Sensing the change in mood in her friend, Kenzi walked over to her and squeezed her hand to get her attention. "Bo Bo I'm sorry that my liking Nayara upsets you but it doesn't change the fact that you are my best friend and my family. You must know that nothing and no one would ever get in the way of that. It'd take more than a sexy accent, beautiful eyes and a killer bod to sway me."

"A killer bod?!!" Bo exclaimed.

"Are you kidding me!" Kenzi slapped her friend on the arm. "Did you not hear what I said about you being my best friend and family?""

"I heard you." Bo grumbled before smiling and quickly pulling the Goth into her; hugging her tightly. "And you're mine as well." She said as she kissed Kenzi on her forehead.

"I'm glad that we got that sorted out, cuz all this sweetness is ruining my buzz." Kenzi feigned indifference. "Now tuck me into bed, I'm sleepy."
"Anything else? Do you want me to fetch you a bathrobe, bedroom slippers…" Bo said sarcastically as she looked at her best friend.

"Yeah, can you carry me? I'm really tired." Kenzi said as she batted her eyelashes and stretched her arms out in front of her.

Bo just rolled her eyes and picked up the Goth in her arms. As she walked by the couch, she promptly dropped Kenzi onto it before making her way towards her room. "Niiight!" she said grinning back at her.

"Hey!" Kenzi squealed. "Could you get me a blanket?"

Lauren's apartment (morning)

Lauren awoke to the incessant ringing of the apartment's phone. Rolling over and groping around the bedside table she finally found it. "Hello." She said groggily.

"Hi. Did I wake you?" Nayara asked.

"Mhmm… I had to get up anyway." The blonde said sleepily as she rubbed her eyes with her free hand.

"Good. Meet me in the dining hall in 25 minutes. I'm starving!" The Empath said in a very chipper tone before hanging up.

"Nay?" Lauren groaned and hung up the phone before glancing at the clock. It was almost 7 A.M. and she had overslept. Forcing herself to move, she got out of bed and made her way into the bathroom to get ready.

Lauren arrived in the dining hall to find Nayara already seated and surrounded by food. She had scrambled eggs, toast, bacon, pancakes, oatmeal, a large bowl of fresh fruit, a tall glass of water and a cup of tea. "You weren't kidding when you said you were starving."

"Mhmm, hungry." Nayara mumbled between mouthfuls.

"Hungover?" Lauren asked as she sat down with her bowl of cereal and coffee across from her ravenous friend.

Nayara shook her head. "I always have a huge appetite the day after I drink."

"Don't tell me that Kenzi out drank you?" the blonde smirked.

"No but she has quite the tolerance for alcohol. We racked up quite the bill last night… or rather, I did. I suspect that she may be hurting this morning." Nayara chuckled. "But it was fun. It's been a while since I've gone drinking like that."

Lauren smiled, only Nayara could turn an evening out with someone who was suspicious of her, into a night of fun. "I'm glad to hear that you enjoyed yourself. What did you think of Kenzi?" Lauren enquired, curious about her friend's opinion of the Goth.

"I like her. She's spunky, full of energy, funny and very loyal." Nayara replied honestly as she ate some bacon. "The two of you have a lot more in common than you may think."
"Oh? How so?" the blonde asked in a surprised tone.

The Empath chewed on another piece of bacon. "Let's just say that you're not alone in how you feel living amongst the Fae."

Before Lauren could enquire any further, Nayara quickly changed the subject. "So, how did things go with Bo?"

"It was a difficult and emotionally draining talk but we addressed a lot of our problems." She paused before continuing. "She dropped a bombshell... She told me that she was still in love with me and that she told Dyson and Tamsin that I was the only person she wanted to be with."

"Wow! That's huge!" Nayara said stopping in mid-bite as syrup dripped from the pancake that was speared on her fork.

"Yeah, it is." The blonde said with a thin smile.

"Then why don't you seem happy about it?"

"I am. I just wish she would've done it when we were together." She sighed. "But I am glad that she said something to them both. It means that I didn't imagine what we shared; that I mattered to her, you know?" Lauren admitted sadly.

"Of course you mattered to her. I am glad that she recognized that and did something about it." Nayara said genuinely.

"Anyway, I think we both have a better understanding of each other now." Lauren said tiredly.

"So, how did you two leave things last night?"

"Bo wanted another chance at our relationship and I told her that all I could offer at the moment was a clean slate and friendship." She said as she absentmindedly played with her spoon.

"Really?" the Empath was surprised at Lauren's decision. She had assumed that the blonde would've given their relationship another chance seeing that they had their talk. Nayara was impressed that Lauren actually considered her own needs and put herself first. "How did Bo react to that?"

"She seemed to understand. I gave it a lot of thought and even though I wanted us to get back together, I knew that I wasn't ready. There're still some things that I need to sort out for myself plus the fact that I need to be able to trust her again."

"And how do you feel about your decision?" Nayara asked.

"It was difficult to tell her as I didn't want to hurt her but I had to be honest. I know that I made the right choice. I need to focus on me for a change."

"As long as you're happy with your decision, that's all that matters." Nayara smiled proudly at her friend; she was happy to hear that Lauren finally realized that she had to take care of and look out for herself.

"Now I have some pressing matters to attend to – I need more bacon. Be right back." the Empath winked at her friend before making her way towards the meal line.
"Better now?" the blonde asked as the left the dining hall.

"Much!" Nayara grinned broadly but before she could say anything else, her cell phone beeped indicating that she received a text message.

"What is it?" Lauren asked upon seeing her friend furrow her brow.

"It's the lab… the results are taking longer than expected. It'll be another couple of hours before they're ready." The Empath sighed as she put her cell away.

Both women were quiet as they contemplated what this could mean. The samples could have been contaminated or there could have been issues with the testing; it could have been anything. Lauren rubbed Nayara's arm, trying to allay her concerns. "It's probably nothing. We can't do anything except wait so how about we check in on Serena?"

Nayara nodded; Lauren was right, it was best to stay calm and not get worked up. She was just anxious to find out if the results held the answers that they were looking for or if it was another dead end. All these months of her people falling ill and dying; this was the closest that they had been to finding an answer. She would have to be patient for a few more hours. Smiling at the blonde's optimism, she linked her arm in hers as they walked towards the ICU.

They were almost to Serena's room when Nayara stopped suddenly. "What's wrong?" Lauren asked concerned.

The Empath looked up into warm brown eyes and paused briefly before speaking. "Uh, nothing. I just realized that I forgot something in my apartment. Why don't you go ahead and I'll meet you at the lab. I'll visit with Serena later."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course." The brunette smiled, reassuring her. "Go ahead. I'll see you later." Nayara insisted.

Lauren looked at the Empath's retreating form, confused at her odd behaviour before turning and making her way to Serena's room.

The blonde was not expecting there to be anyone in the room much less the leather clad brunette that was sitting next to the Ignis' bed. "Bo?" Lauren said surprised.

The Succubus looked up, startled. "Lauren? Hi." She said as she stood up from her chair.

"Hi. Umm, not to sound rude but what are you doing here?" the blonde enquired gently.

"I… I thought I'd sit with Serena seeing that she doesn't have any family here. I figured it was the least I could do seeing that she saved your life." Bo said slightly embarrassed.

"Oh! Well, that's very … thoughtful of you." Lauren stammered out. She was still taken aback to find Bo there, much less the reason why she was visiting her bodyguard.

"I uh, I could leave." Bo said not wanting to make the blonde uncomfortable.

"No!" she said harsher than she had intended. "No, that's okay. Stay… please." The blonde said in a softer tone.
Bo nodded and returned to her seat as Lauren picked up Serena’s chart. She sat in the chair next to Bo and scanned over the information.

"How is she doing?" the brunette asked as she observed her expression.

"There's no change. She's no better or worse." Lauren said as she flipped through the pages. "Her doctor may prolong her medical coma a little longer in the hope that it will speed up her healing."

"I'm sorry." Bo said sadly; she knew that the blonde was concerned about her friend.

Lauren only nodded in response; she felt helpless that she couldn't do anything to help her friend. All she could do was wait and hope for the best.

After Lauren replaced the chart, both women sat in an awkward silence not sure of what to say to one another. The Succubus decided to break the tension. "Could you tell me about Serena?" she said softly. "I'd like to get to know the woman who put herself in harm's way for you… She's obviously very courageous."

"I'd love to. And yes she is." Lauren smiled sweetly as she held Serena's hand.

This was the Bo that she knew – the kind, caring woman who thought of others before herself. The blonde was more than happy to talk about the Ignis and thought that it was very considerate and sweet of Bo to spend time with her friend especially since she didn't know her. In that moment, Lauren thought that maybe there was some hope for their friendship after all.

TBC
Hope

Chapter Notes

First of all, I'm so sorry for such a long wait – being ill, the holidays and some real life issues have all kept me away. I'm hoping that this long chapter makes up for it.

Secondly, thank you to everyone who has been reading and following, it means a lot to me that you are enjoying 'Time'. And a special thanks for all your reviews – it definitely helps keep me motivated.

Lastly, thanks to my Beta, Lostgirlz for her advice; to FireArcade for her help; and to T for her patience when I constantly bug her to proof read.

Bo's apartment

"Kenzi!" Bo shouted as she walked into her apartment. All she could see from by the door was a hand and a foot dangling off of the couch while the rest of her body was covered by a blanket. "Kenz, wake up!" the brunette said as she closed the distance between the door and her shrouded friend, shaking the exposed foot vigorously until she got a response.

"I'm sleeping here." The Goth grumbled as she waved her hand about in an attempt to swat at Bo but seeing that she was lying on her stomach it only looked like her hand was twitching.

"It's almost 11 and we have to go to the lab." the Succubus persisted, anxious to see Lauren again. Sitting next to the blonde in Serena's room was difficult; she wanted so much to reach out and hold her in her arms. After all these weeks of being apart, it was excruciating being so close and not be able to touch her. Closing her eyes, she could still smell Lauren's lotion – a hint of vanilla; the familiar scent triggering intimate memories and causing her to smile.

The petite Russian groaned from under the blanket stirring Bo out of her reverie. "You mean you have to go to the lab.

"I brought you coffee and muffins." Bo placed the paper cup and bag of treats on the coffee table; she wasn't ashamed to resort to bribery as she knew how much Kenzi hated mornings and even more so after a night of drinking. "Once you're awake, we can go to the Dining Hall and you can have pancakes or a hamburger or both!" she said in an attempt to appeal to her tired and hungover friend.

At the mention of food, there was movement under the blanket. Hands and feet flailed about under the covers as the Goth flipped herself over; once on her back, she quickly pulled the blanket off her face and instantly regretted it. The sunlight streaming through the apartment windows was incredibly bright for her sensitive eyes and caused her to grimace. "You're not going to let me go back to sleep are you?" she asked pouting.

The brunette stood there with her hands on her hips and simply shook her head.

Kenzi relented, releasing a loud, exaggerated sigh, knowing that Bo wouldn't leave her alone. "Fine! I'll go with you but while I'm getting ready you're going to go get my food for me. Capiche?"

"No problem. What would you like?"
"I want two cheese burgers and some fries." Kenzi demanded. "And a chocolate milkshake! Make sure it's super thick."

"Coming right up! But I want to see you standing and in the bathroom before I leave." Before she could protest, Bo continued. "And you know that I'll check to make sure you are actually showering and don't just have the water running while you're asleep on the floor."

"Arrrgghh! You're a pain in my ass!" Kenzi whipped the blanket off and swung both feet off the couch so that they were planted on the floor. She was about to stand but the room started to spin. "What I wouldn't give for Hale and his anti-hangover whistle right now." She mumbled to herself as she ever so slowly stood up and shielded her eyes from the light.

"See! Standing and walking!" Kenzi indicated to herself, making a point to the brunette and wincing at how loudly her voice sounded. "And, no I won't fall asleep in the bathroom." the Goth grumbled softly as she very slowly shuffled towards the bathroom. "Now, fetch me my food!"

Light Fae Laboratory

"Still no word?" Lauren asked as she walked into Nayara's office and sat in the chair across from her desk.

"Not yet." The Empath shook her head.

A comfortable silence filled the room with both women were lost in their thoughts. A couple minutes passed before Lauren spoke. "So did you find what you were looking for?"

"Pardon?" Nayara had a puzzled look on her face.

"You had to get something from your apartment." The blonde reminded her friend.

"Oh that." she said suddenly remembering. "I made that up. I didn't forget anything." The Empath said honestly and without regret.

"You sensed Bo didn't you?" she said in a non-accusatory tone.

"Yes." Nayara admitted. "I figured it was best if I wasn't there. Things are awkward enough between you two without adding me to the mix."

Lauren nodded her head understanding. "You didn't have to but I appreciate it. You know that you don't have to avoid Bo because of me right?"

"I know. It's just that everything is raw for you both right now and I know that my presence irks her." At that statement, the blonde raised her eyebrows but didn't say anything.

Nayara answered the unspoken question. "I don't have to be an Empath to know that she's jealous that we are friends." The brunette had a relaxed smile on her face, letting Lauren know that she was fine with it. "There's no need to worry. I can handle an emotional and territorial Succubus."

Changing the subject she asked, "So, how did things go? And just out of curiosity, why was she in Serena's room?"

"It went well actually. Bo thought that she would sit with Serena seeing that she had no family here." Lauren smiled just thinking of the brunettes sweet gesture. She was relieved when they were able to get past their awkward silence. Truth be told, she found it difficult being around Bo. She was still trying to resolve her feelings and keep her attraction at bay whilst also trying to work on their
friendship. She knew that it would take some time and she hoped that she didn't come across as being cold as that tended to be her modus operandi all these years.

"That was nice of her." Nayara said surprised by the Succubus' thoughtfulness; her voice rousing the blonde out of her thoughts.

Before Lauren could respond, her attention was diverted by a knock on the door. "Hey Docs!" Kenzi greeted the two women as she walked into the office.

"Hi Kenzi." The blonde stood up and smiled at the Goth.

Nayara got up and met Kenzi in the middle of her office where she kissed her on her left cheek, then on her right and back again on her left. "I hope that the Caipirinha was not unkind to you this morning." she said with concern.

"Nothing that a couple of greasy cheese burgers, fries and a chocolate milkshake couldn't fix." The Goth replied, grinning proudly at her ability to thwart hangovers.

Nayara's eyes went wide. "Oohh, milkshake! That would've been great at breakfast." The comment caused the blonde to shake her head and chuckle.

Kenzi gently poked her new found friend in the arm. "And how were you this morning Dr. Feel Good?"

"Fine but famished." The Empath admitted, smiling at the petite woman's nickname for her.

"I didn't think there was anyone who could eat as much as you Kenzi. Nay had at least four plates of food this morning." Lauren said light heartedly.

The Fae doctor had a huge grin on her face. "I can't help it. Drinking makes me incredibly hungry. It's been a long time since I've gone drinking like that but I had a lot of fun."

Kenzi was happy to know that Nayara enjoyed herself as much as she did. "We'll have to hit the bar again, then."

"I'd like that." The Empath said genuinely.

All three women were involved in their conversation that they didn't realize that Bo had lingered a few feet behind Kenzi and was outside the office door. The Succubus jealously watched them interact and was quickly growing irritated at how well the two humans in her life were getting along with the Brazilian Fae doctor. Clearing her throat to get their attention, she made sure that she had a smile plastered on her face before she walked through the door and said hello.

Lauren noticed that the Succubus seemed a bit tense but understood given the circumstances. However, she was glad to see her for the second time this morning and greeted her with a smile. "Hi Bo."

Nayara directed her attention to the Succubus. "Hello Bo." she said politely.

Bo nodded her head in acknowledgement of their greetings. All four women stood stiffly in Nayara's office not knowing what to say. Wanting to dispel the awkward silence, Bo piped up. "Any word on the test results?" she asked. "Lauren mentioned that it would be a game changer."

The Empath appreciated Bo's attempt at civility and replied. "Not yet. We're still waiting."
Kenzi felt bad for what she was about to do to Bo and Nayara but knew that timing was everything. Turning to Lauren she asked, "Seeing that you're twiddling your thumbs, do you have time to do a follow up... umm, post Kitsune injury stuff?"

The blonde was not expecting the Goth's request and was a bit hesitant leaving Bo and Nayara alone. However, being a doctor, she felt obligated to help; besides she didn't want to postpone anything as the petite woman was usually unreceptive to any type of medical treatment. She looked between Bo and Nayara tentatively and then back to Kenzi. "Of course. Follow me.'

Lauren's office

Lauren was in doctor mode as she told Kenzi to sit on the sofa while she turned to apply some antiseptic gel on her hands. "Has there been any pain, itching or anything irregular since-"

The Goth quickly interrupted. "My arm's fine Lauren. I just wanted one on one time with you."

The blonde stilled her actions as she heard Kenzi call her by her name instead of one of the many nicknames she had in her arsenal. She guessed what this conversation would entail but opted to keep things light instead of going on the defensive. "I'm flattered Kenzi. I didn't realize you missed me that much."

"You're a comedian now Doc? Word of advice, don't give up your day job at the lab." The petite woman smirked before becoming serious again. "Can we talk?" She asked softly as she nodded her head towards the cushion next to her. Lauren hesitated for a moment before she made her way to the sofa; her posture stiff as she turned to face the younger woman.

The Goth sorted out her thoughts before looking directly into Lauren's eyes. "I know that we're not the bestest of buds but I think we've come a long way and have moved past the 'will-tolerate-you-because-of-Bo' stage to the 'you're-not-that-bad' stage."

Lauren nodded in agreement and smiled at the younger woman's attempt to be nice yet maintain a tough image.

Seeing the blonde's acknowledgement, Kenzi continued. "I'm not going to try and pull a fast one on you – you know that I'm here to help Bo and you know that I would do anything for her. But I also want to help you. The two of you had a good thing and it went to shit for a variety of reasons and that really sucks because I can see how much you both are hurting. As much as I griped about you in the beginning, I always thought that you and Bo were good together and despite everything, I hope that you two can be friends again."

"Kenz-" Lauren went to speak but the Goth put up her hand, stopping her before she could complete her sentence. "Please hear me out."

Lauren complied and allowed the Goth to continue. "What I'm about to tell you would shame Bo, so I don't do this lightly but I think that if you knew, it would help you understand. All I ask is that you please listen to what I have to say. Okay?"

Lauren sighed. "Okay, I'm listening." Settling back into the sofa, the blonde took a deep breath and exhaled, releasing any negative thoughts that she may have as she prepared to listen with an open mind.

Kenzi was slightly relieved seeing that the doctor was willing to listen. Knowing that she had cleared one hurdle, she braced herself for the big one that was fast approaching. Maintaining eye contact, the Goth spoke with a quiet sadness. "I can only imagine how hurt and alone you felt when you left but I
know that what I can imagine and what you actually went through are two totally different things. With that said, I'm sure that you had some ideas about how Bo may have reacted after you left but I can honestly tell you that whatever you envisioned would be nowhere close to what actually happened because even I couldn't have predicted it."

Kenzi took a deep breath before continuing. "When you left, Bo was devastated. She didn't leave the Shack for the first few days and most of that time was spent crying in her room. When she finally decided to join the land of the living, she threw herself into our P.I. business so that we were working cases steadily every day. At first I figured that she just wanted to keep busy as a distraction but then I realized that it was more than that. She started taking a lot of risks on jobs and got into more trouble than usual. And when I say trouble, I don't mean the odd bruised eye or busted lip – that would be child's play. Nope! Bo always has to go big or go home…. She suffered numerous fractures; was stabbed repeatedly; got her arm flame broiled by some fire wielding Fae; was hit and dragged by a car; poisoned by a Hydra; got a nasty, non-sexually transmitted rash from a Wood Nymph; and was beaten to a pulp more times than I could count. But none of these injuries stopped her from being reckless. She just didn't seem to care about herself."

Lauren furrowed her brow as she heard about Bo's recklessness and many injuries but remained quiet and waited for Kenzi to continue. "But that was just the start of it. When she wasn't working, she spent her time drinking herself stupid which normally led to her starting fights. This was an every day occurrence with me trying to break up a fight or calm her down from starting one. It didn't matter what I said or did, she just continued on her destructive path and eventually, all I could do was make sure she got home safely." Kenzi let out a sigh; the memories weighing heavily on her.

"When she wasn't drinking, she was feeding. I won't lie, she had sex a lot. But just so you know, it was never with Dyson or Tamsin. In fact, we hardly saw or spoke to them after you left. Bo wanted us to focus on our own stuff so we didn't assist with any of the police cases like we would normally do, which I think was her way of not having to bump into them." Kenzi looked out a sigh; the memories weighing heavily on her.

Internally the blonde wasn't happy to hear about Bo's atypical drunkenness and numerous fights, much less her sexual dalliances; however, she did get some satisfaction knowing that Bo wasn't intimate with the two Fae detectives. Lauren recognized that Kenzi could just be telling her what she wanted to hear but she knew without a shadow of a doubt, that the last place the Goth wanted to be was here, sharing the harsh truth about her best friend. Because of this, Lauren knew that she wasn't lying and with that realization, the blonde found herself admitting that she secretly wanted to know what happened while she had been away.

"Every day it was the same thing. All Bo would talk about was our cases, which bar to hit up and needing to feed. It got to the point that even I was concerned about how much and how often she was drinking… that should tell you how bad it was."

At that point, Kenzi hesitated and dropped her gaze from Lauren; conflicted about how much she should reveal. When she decided that it was all or nothing, she steeled herself and continued to speak in a subdued tone. "I don't talk about my past but just know that I experienced my share of self-destruction with my biological family. When I left home, I swore that I would never put myself in that situation again, so, watching Bo hurt herself was beyond difficult; I couldn't bear it."

The Goth choked back a sob as she spoke. "Bo doesn't know about this but it got to the point when I just couldn't take it anymore. I had my bags packed and was planning on leaving but at the last minute, I just couldn't. She's my family and she needed me. Even though it was killing me to see her hurt herself, I knew that my leaving would've pushed her completely over the edge." Kenzi wiped at the tears that streaked down her cheeks and hoped that Lauren wouldn't try and comfort her. She
didn't want sympathy; she just wanted to get through this conversation. To her relief, the blonde simply handed her a box of tissues and gave her some time to compose herself.

Lauren was shocked that the Goth had considered running away. The battle with the Garuda and everything with the Kitsune was terrifying yet Kenzi remained at Bo's side, therefore things had to have been really bad for her to think about leaving. The blonde could also tell that the younger woman didn't want to be consoled despite the apparent pain in her voice, so instead she sat back, quietly observed her and waited for her to continue.

Kenzi took a couple of calming breaths and dried her eyes. "With the way Bo had been acting, I could tell that your break up ate at her and that her recklessness was her way of punishing herself."

Lauren huffed, doubting the Goth's assessment. Kenzi understood the blonde not believing what she just said but she didn't let it phase her. "I know you think I'm making this shit up but feel free to ask Trick or Hale... hell, ask anyone at the Dal or the Carpe Noctem when you get back to Toronto. They'll all tell you that Bo was a ticking time bomb. No one wanted to be around her as they all knew that she would start a fight or end up destroying their property."

"Kenzi, I don't know what to think about this. I don't know what you expect from me." The blonde was at a loss for words and clasped her hands tightly on her lap in an attempt to keep her emotions contained. She was drowning in all this information and didn't know how to process it.

"Lauren, I know Bo hurt you terribly; I'm not trivializing that at all. The reason I'm telling you all of this is to show you that you mean more to Bo than you think. I want you to understand how important you are to her because your break up left her a wreck; and her realizing how much she hurt you, devastated her."

The blonde sighed and gave a slight nod to continue. The Goth saw a hint of something in Lauren's eyes - maybe it was the realization that things weren't as straightforward as she thought or maybe it was a hint of understanding of the situation. Either way, it gave Kenzi hope that Lauren was starting to get a clearer picture. As she prepared herself to tackle the final hurdle, she looked the blonde in her eyes so that she could see her sincerity. "Bo is madly in love with you Lauren and she really missed you these past two months. She also knows how much she screwed up and it kills her that she lost you. I know you may not believe that but I saw it day after day when she would repeatedly read your letter and cry herself to sleep; when she would come home bloody and beaten; and when she would drink till she passed out. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to realize that she wouldn't have reacted this way if you weren't important to her and if she didn't regret hurting you."

Lauren's eyes glistened as she kept her tears at bay. She remembered all those sleepless nights of being depressed; feeling weak; and foolishly hoping that Bo was just as miserable. Eventually, she convinced herself that Bo didn't care so that she would stop giving herself false hope. But now Kenzi was telling her that she did care and that she was a wreck. Lauren didn't know how to feel about this.

The Goth could see that what she was saying was causing a reaction and she pushed on. "Take it from me, I saw her after the Norn took Dyson's love – even though she was upset and depressed, it was nowhere close to the break down she went through after you left. You and I both know that she's a newbie when it comes to relationships - it doesn't detract from what she did to you but it was never done intentionally. She loves you and only you Lauren."

Kenzi had just cleared her last hurdle. "I'll be the first to tell you that Bo is still a mess but she's come a long way these past few weeks. She has learned from her mistakes; cleaned up her act; and has turned herself around. And you are the reason for that, Lauren. When she was being self-destructive, she never spoke about you because she believed that she didn't deserve to have you in her life. Trick and I tried to help and console her but we couldn't get through to her. However once she finally
accepted the truth and accepted responsibility for what she had done, all she could think of was finding you, apologizing and making things right... Lauren, she is trying to be a better person for you. She is trying to be deserving of having you in her life again."

The Goth paused to observe the blonde's body language and could see that her posture was less rigid. She hoped that what she was saying was registering as she was in the final stretch and the finish line was fast approaching.

"I essentially had to beg Hale to give her your location as he wouldn't tell her. But he still wouldn't - Bo had to prove to him that she was no longer an irresponsible, immature, destructive drunk. She had to show him that she had changed; that she had the ability to remain calm and talk through issues instead of using violence; that she was responsible and mature and could stay out of trouble. But most importantly, he had to believe it. Hale would never have told her where you were if he didn't see and believe that she had changed and that she truly wanted to make amends. **You** were the reason that she got better, Lauren. Her wanting to apologize and make things right to you, was and still is her motivation. I know that you don't owe her anything but all I ask is that you give her a chance to show you that she's changed and that she wants to make things right. Please."

The Goth was done. She said what she had to and hoped that it made a difference; she didn't want either of them to continue hurting. While she waited for a reaction or comment, Lauren tilted her head back against the sofa and stared at a point on the ceiling; her mind reeling from everything that Kenzi had told her. Moments passed before she rubbed her eyes with the heels of her hands and exhaled loudly. "I don't think I've ever heard you say so many words at once that had nothing to do with food, alcohol or shoes." she said as she returned her gaze towards the Goth.

Kenzi grinned. "I know. I'm normally paid for my pearls of wisdom but 'cuz it's you, I'll accept Caipirinha as payment."

Lauren gave her a weak smile. She knew that Kenzi was trying to help and she appreciated her telling her the truth but her heart still felt heavy. Even though she had every intention on working on her friendship with Bo; anger, disappointment and a multitude of hurt feelings had permeated her being. She was conflicted. Finding out that Bo was as miserable as she was, made her want to make things easy for her but the other part of her thought that the Succubus deserved to feel that way. The blonde just didn't know how to transition from being hurt and bitter to letting it all go and being forgiving. Lauren just couldn't forget everything that happened and replied in an unintentionally cool tone. "Bo hurt me greatly and she lost my trust, Kenzi… It's hard to get past that."

The Goth looked at her sadly, having some understanding of the doctor's emotional conflict. "I know." The petite woman didn't know what else to say and felt dejected that she wasn't able to do more to help. She had really tried to make the blonde see how important she was to Bo but thought that maybe it wasn't enough.

As soon as the words were out of her mouth, Lauren knew that she hadn't spoken the whole truth. All these weeks of trying to convince herself that she didn't need Bo and that she was better off without her, she had unconsciously known that she still wanted the Succubus in her life in some capacity. It was just a matter of figuring out exactly what that capacity was. The blonde rolled her eyes and sighed; the realization that she just couldn't walk away from the brunette was so overwhelming it was almost stifling. Lauren looked at the Goth and spoke in a soft voice. "I can't promise anything Kenzi but I'll try and give her a chance to prove herself."

The Goth smiled brightly and gave the doctor's hand a gentle squeeze. "Thank you! And for what it's worth, Bo wasn't the only one who missed you. It sucked being the only human around." She said honestly. "I never thought I'd miss your OCD science-y explanations." As soon as the words were
out of her mouth, Kenzi hesitated, realizing what she had said. "But if you ever breathe a word about this, I'll totally deny it!" she threatened.

Lauren smiled. "I missed you too Kenzi. And thanks for telling me." Their relationship had come a long way and the blonde was thankful for that. Ready to change topics, she decided that she would follow through with Kenzi's request. "Well, since I have you here, I might as well look at your arm. Why don't you take off your top?"

The Goth grinned and waggled her eyebrows. "I'm flattered, Doc. I didn't realize you missed me that much!"

Lauren just rolled her eyes. "Either roll up your sleeve or take off your top - one way or another, you're not leaving here till I've examined your arm."

"Sheesh! Bossy much?" the Goth said pretending to be upset.

"Arm!" the blonde ordered with a smirk on her face, causing Kenzi to grin and comply.

Meanwhile in Nayara's office

After Lauren and Kenzi left, both Fae remained standing in the middle of the office in silence. The tension between them was palpable. "Please have a seat." Nayara offered after a few moments.

"I'm fine. I'd rather stand." The Succubus said coolly as she slowly paced and looked around the office. This was the last place that Bo wanted to be. She wanted to be with Lauren but instead she was stuck with doctor Perfect. It just bugged her that Nayara said that she and Lauren were only friends yet the Succubus could plainly see her aura flare anytime she was around the blonde. Everything about this Fae doctor irritated her – she was smart, attractive, fun and even got Kenzi's seal of approval which boggled her mind. But worst of all, she and Lauren were close. It took every ounce of Bo's control to be cordial to her.

"Suit yourself." Nayara said calmly as she walked towards the front of her desk and leaned against it; her hands resting comfortably on top of the desk on either side of her body. She could see the frustration rolling off of the unaligned Fae in waves and knew that anything she said would set her off. The Empath didn't want to instigate anything but at the same time, she was not one to walk on eggshells. Hoping to sort things out with Bo sooner rather than later, she chose to be direct as opposed to their continuing to avoid talking about Lauren. "I understand that you don't like or trust me Bo. I get that but I just want you to know that I care about Lauren and only have her best interests at heart."

Bo instantly stopped her casual inspection of the office's decor. It ate at her that she didn't know the exact nature of their relationship but she was too stubborn and proud to ask. There was no way that she would give this woman the pleasure of knowing how much it bothered her. She was, however, tired of guessing what Nayara's intentions were and decided that it was time to get some answers. Whirling around to face the Empath, and with venom dripping from her voice, she asked, "And what exactly would those interests be?!"

Nayara was patient and was not going to be baited into an argument; however, she was also not going to let Bo steamroll her. She maintained eye contact and spoke in a calm and even tone. "Of all the questions you could've asked, I'm surprised that that's the one you placed the most importance on. I would've thought you'd want to know how Lauren's been since she arrived in Brazil, considering why she left Toronto." The Empath knew that her comment hit close to home when she saw Bo's eye twitch and felt her anger surge. She hadn't planned on angering the Succubus but she couldn't deny the guilty sense of satisfaction she got from eliciting a reaction.
Bo almost growled; Nayara just rubbed her the wrong way and now she was beyond irritated. "Sounds like an evasive answer from someone who has something to hide." She said agitatedly.

"I have nothing to hide." Nayara replied in a placid tone.

"Right! The Fae *always* want something from Lauren." The Succubus accused with a rumble in her voice. Knowing how the Fae had treated and manipulated the blonde over the years, Bo didn't trust Nayara or her clan.

"Lauren has always known that we needed her help and expertise to find a cure for this epidemic. That has never been a secret." The Empath replied matter of factly.

Bo only glared at Nayara. "And what do you want from Lauren?"

"Nothing." She said calmly.

The Succubus scoffed as she gestured haphazardly. "I find that hard to believe."

Nayara's focus never wavered from Bo's steely gaze. "I don't want anything from Lauren that she doesn't want to give freely."

"And what's that supposed to mean?" Bo was angry and the Empath's calm and peaceful tone only infuriated her further.

"Lauren has had enough taken from her these past six years. She has offered me her friendship freely which I am very grateful for. However, what I'm more concerned about is what I can give back to her in the form of respect, trust, consideration, appreciation and friendship... all things that she has been denied for so long. Considering the amazing woman that she is, it's a very easy thing to want to do." The Empath said honestly.

"I don't believe you." The Succubus spat out; her jealousy and insecurity guiding her reactions.

"I don't care what you believe. I only care what Lauren believes." Nayara said honestly and without spite. "I've already proven myself to her. *You* are the only one here that has to prove something to her. When are you going to start doing that?" she asked wanting to know her intentions. Nayara thought that Bo was extremely lucky that Lauren gave her another chance but from what she could see so far, the Succubus had a poor attitude and seemed to be squandering her opportunity. The last thing she wanted was for her to hurt her best friend again.

Bo faltered. When it came to Lauren she was so unsure of herself; it was such an unfamiliar feeling as she was normally very confident. This doubt was like a knife twisting in her gut and it made her feel weak and helpless. Not wanting to give Nayara the upper hand, she quickly composed herself. "I'm here because I'm concerned about Lauren and her well being."

Nayara stood abruptly and took a step towards Bo, looking directly into her eyes. "Then act like it! Instead of being focused on Lauren and me, perhaps you should focus on your own relationship with her. Haven't you learnt by now that words are empty and meaningless if they aren't followed with appropriate action?" The Empath's tone wasn't harsh but it was direct and to the point. The meaning wasn't lost on Bo however Nayara was the last person that she wanted advice from regarding her ex-girlfriend.

Bo was furious at the Empath and at herself because there was truth in what she said, however she didn't know who exactly she was angrier at. Her inner Succubus growled and her eyes flashed blue but before she could say anything, Nayara's telephone rang, interrupting their stand off and
distracting them both.

Just as the Fae doctor made her way around her desk to answer her phone, Kenzi walked in. "Hey BoBo!" The smile on her face quickly disappeared and was replaced with concern. "You okay?" Kenzi asked, seeing her blue eyed friend.

"Yeah, peachy." She replied sarcastically as she tried to calm herself down.

When Lauren walked through the door, she got a glimpse of Bo’s blue eyes and was instantly on alert. Immediately she looked to Nayara and was relieved to see that she was okay and was talking on the phone. By the time she glanced back at the Succubus, her eyes had reverted back to chocolate brown. Sighing, the blonde decided to let it be and that she would find out what happened later.

The Empath got off the phone and looked at Lauren. "That was the lab in São Paulo; the courier is en route with the test results."

Lauren gave her a slight nod; her mind racing as she plunged her hands into the pockets of her lab coat. Bo and Kenzi could see that both doctors were visibly anxious as a lot was riding on these results.

Everyone's attention was directed back to the Empath as she spoke. "Please excuse me, I have to brief my staff and get them ready. Lauren, I'll let you know when the courier gets here."

A few seconds after Nayara had left, the blonde had still not spoken; lost in her thoughts. "Lauren, you okay?" Bo asked bringing her out of her daze.

"Sorry. I'm just thinking. This is the only lead that we've had. If these results can shed any light on what's causing the epidemic then we will have a starting point to work from. But if the results are inconclusive then we're right back at square one with no idea what's causing this illness; and the more time that passes, more Fae will die." The blonde explained frustrated.

"Well, I hope you all get the answers you need. If there's any kind of link or clue, I know that you'll be able to figure it out." Bo said softly, trying to be supportive.

"Thanks." She gave Bo a faint smile. "You're both more than welcome to stay here if you wish, thought I don't think I'll be able to spend much time with you... whatever the test results are, everybody will be incredibly busy today."

"That's okay. It's probably best that we stay out of everyone's way due to the circumstances. How about meeting up for supper later and letting us know how things went?" Bo asked hopefully.

"I don't think I'll be able to." The blonde said apologetically.

"You have to eat sometime Lauren." The Succubus tried again, knowing that the blonde tended to forget to eat when she got caught up in her work.

"I know." She said gently. "I will eat, I just don't know when. I'll most likely sneak away for a quick bite during a break in testing or research. It's just that I can't give you an exact time and I don't want to keep you both waiting." She said trying to be considerate.

"I understand." Bo was trying to hide her disappointment but felt that that Lauren was giving her the brush off. "Well, we should get going before things get busy."

"Okay." The blonde said, trying to understand the sad look that quickly flashed across Bo's face as she turned to leave.
Kenzi, meanwhile, had been standing back, observing both women and let out a silent groan as she shook her head; watching both women tip toe around each other was exhausting.

Seeing the Goth's reaction, Lauren quickly realized how her response may have been interpreted and rolled her eyes at her own social awkwardness. The blonde promptly called after them, stopping them before they had exited the lab. As she bridged the distance between them, she directed her question to Bo. "How about meeting me at the gym instead?"

"The gym?" the brunette reiterated as she cocked her head to one side.

"Yes, the gym." Lauren said smiling. "Serena has been teaching me to box and I've been going a few times a week. With her in ICU… well, I don't have a sparring partner at the moment."

A smile broke out on Bo's face as she realized that the blonde wanted to spend time with her. "Sure!"

"How about 8 o'clock?"

"Sounds good. See you then." The Succubus replied with a bright smile on her face.

Both women were making their way back to their apartment and with every couple of steps, Kenzi would cast a sideways glance at her best friend.

"What?!"

"Could your grin be any bigger?" the Goth smirked.

The brunette just shrugged the comment off. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Do you want me to get you a mirror to show you the huge shit-eatin' grin on your face?"

"Whatever!" Bo said ignoring her best friend's attempt to poke fun at her. "So, what was with your secret meeting with Lauren anyway?"

"You know, doctor-patient confidentiality stuff." Kenzi said nonchalantly.

"Riiight! You're not going to tell me are you?" Bo enquired further.

The Goth simply smiled in response.

"You do realize that you left me alone with that emotion sucking vamp! I wanted to rip her head off!" the brunette complained. "I really don't know what you see in her."

The petite Russian stopped and placed a firm but gentle grip on Bo's forearm, stopping her from walking any further. "What'd I tell you about getting your Succu-bitch under control?"

"I know! I just don't trust her or this Fae clan but mostly, she just irritates the shit out of me!" The brunette said, gesturing wildly with her free hand.

"You gotta deal with it Bo! Nayara is Lauren's friend and you don't dis' the friend of the person that you are trying to make amends with!" Kenzi exclaimed as she tried to get her point across.

In a calmer tone, she explained, "Look, just think how you would feel if the person who was trying to reconnect with you was hatin' on me. Would you think that they were really trying if they can't even try to be nice to your friend?"
Bo pondered on her friend's words and slumped her shoulders as Kenzi's point sunk in. "Probably not." She said meekly.

"All I'm saying is keep your cool when it comes to Nayara. You don't have to like her; just be civil and make sure not to flash your baby blues." The Goth said in a soft tone.

Bo huffed and rolled her eyes. "Fine! Though trying to be nice to her will be harder than trying to abstain from sex."

Kenzi couldn't help but chuckle and shake her head at her best friend. "Okay, Sister Mary Isabeau, how about we take baby steps?" Taking her friend's hands in hers, she looked into Bo's eyes and spoke in a serious but gentle tone. "First step is to work on being nice or at least respectful to Nayara, which I know you can totally do. Next, you need to realize that there are people and Fae out there - outside of you and me - who care about Lauren. You can't let your paranoia and jealousy scare off what few friends she has - it's not fair to her. This is about you making amends and proving that you deserve to be in her life, so how about showing her that you can, by respecting her decisions and the people she cares about."

Bo bowed her head and she let out a deep sigh. When she looked back at Kenzi, her eyes were filled with sadness. "You're right." She said softly. "I'm jealous of Nayara. I'm jealous that Lauren trusts and confides in her and that they are so close… It just eats at me that there is something more between them because I can see how brightly Nayara's aura glows whenever Lauren is around. But more than that, I hate knowing that I had what Nayara now has and it's my fault that I don't anymore."

Kenzi squeezed her best friend's hands. "I know Bo Bo but you're here in Brazil and Hot Pants hasn't told you to go to hell. In fact, she asked you to meet her in a few hours – just the two of you. So focus on that; focus on this opportunity to show her that you've changed and that you can be there for her regardless of who else she has in her life. Show her how awesome it will be having you as a friend… and I speak from experience."

The brunette pulled Kenzi into her and held onto her tightly. "Thank you for being my voice of reason and telling me like it is." She said softly into Kenzi's hair as she squeezed her tighter.

After a few moments, the Goth pulled away gently and smiled. "Always… Now feed me! Imparting all this awesome and incredibly sage advice is tiring work and I'm starving!"

Bo just smiled and put her arm around the younger woman's shoulders as they altered course and made their way towards the dining hall.

**The Gym (later in the evening)**

Bo was anxious to see Lauren and arrived at the gym early. She wished that she could spend every second with the blonde even though it was unrealistic given why the doctor was in Brazil. She had less than three weeks to make amends and repair as much of their relationship as possible and even though she feared that it wasn't enough time, she was determined to make every moment with Lauren count. Despite this determination, her nervousness still reared its ugly head and she decided to shower and wash her hair before leaving for the gym. Kenzi, of course, made fun of her the entire time.

While Bo waited for Lauren, she gave herself a pep talk, reminding herself to keep her cool, not talk about their relationship unless Lauren brought it up and to keep things casual. Pacing back and forth, the brunette repeated it over and over in her head like a mantra, all the while releasing a nervous chuckle at how un-Succubus-like she was being. She never would've thought that she'd revert back
to her insecure high school self for anyone. Granted, Lauren wasn't just anyone.

The blonde was running late. She had a quick bite to eat and returned to the lab to follow up on one thing which ended up multiplying. Now she was sprinting to the gym and cursing herself for losing track of time. She didn't want to miss her sparring session with Bo especially after she made her feel that she didn't want to spend time with her.

As she entered the gym, it didn't take long to spot Bo by the heavy bag, hitting it as it swung towards her. Lauren's body instantly reacted to seeing the brunette. Bo's hair was pulled back in a pony tail, swaying as she moved gracefully around the bag; her blue tank top left nothing to the imagination; and her black shorts hugged her hips and ass. Bo was always breathtaking and seeing her dressed simply without the distraction of leather, lace and thigh high boots, reminded the blonde of how naturally beautiful she was.

A couple of seconds passed before Lauren realized that she was nibbling her lip while ogling her ex. Shaking her head, she chastised herself as she knew that if Bo happened to look in her direction, she would see her desire glowing like a neon sign in the night. Thankfully, the brunette was too busy with the heavy bag to notice anything. Taking a couple of deep breaths, she suppressed her lust and gave her libido a mental cold shower before making her way over to the Succubus.

Lauren stopped across from Bo and waited till she saw her. "Hey." she said as casually as possible when the brunette looked up.

"Hi." Bo smiled when she saw the blonde. The doctor was wearing gym clothes, which was a look that was unfamiliar to the Succubus as Lauren only wore casual clothing and the odd formal wear. Not that Bo was complaining; she was definitely enjoying the view. The blonde had her hair back in a high ponytail displaying her long, elegant neck and jaw line that Bo loved to kiss. And though her white t-shirt and navy blue shorts were not snug, they softly clung to her in all the right places, showing off her pale, soft skin; toned arms; and long, lean legs. Lauren had definitely been working out and Bo liked what she saw as her eyes blatantly roamed over the blonde's body while she unconsciously licked her lips.

Lauren understood Bo's Succubus nature and tried her best to not get flustered over her open perusal. "I'm sorry I'm late. I lost track of time at the lab." She said, feeling badly for keeping her waiting.

"It's okay, I kept myself busy." Bo said with a smile. She was relieved that Lauren had arrived as she was beginning to think that she wasn't going to come.

"I can see. Impressive footwork." The blonde complimented.

"Thanks." The brunette said as she wiped her glistening forehead with the back of her hand.

As they approached one of the empty boxing rings, Bo asked, "Before we start, are you sure it's okay for you to be boxing?"

"What do you mean?" she asked confused.

"Your injury." She replied as she pointed to the blonde's arm.

Lauren looked at her bandaged left arm and shrugged her shoulders nonchalantly. "I guess I'll find out."

Bo gave a lopsided grin and poked the blonde in her good arm. "What'd you do with Lauren 'play by the rules' Lewis?" This was the first time that Bo had touched her and though it was only a split
second, it instantly caused goose bumps to form on her skin.

Despite her physical reaction, Bo's playfulness made the doctor chuckle; the sound of which was like music to the Succubus' ears, knowing that she was able to make her laugh. "It's been a hectic and mentally exhausting day. I really need this, so I'm willing to risk it." Lauren said.

Bo nodded her understanding and stretched the ropes apart so that Lauren could enter the ring. Once they were both inside, the doctor put on her boxing gloves and Bo secured the pads to her hands.

Lauren slowly rotated her neck and shoulders and started bouncing lightly on her feet to loosen up. This was yet another instance of the blonde being different - she seemed more comfortable and at ease with herself instead of her normal restrained self. Seeing this side of her intrigued Bo; she wanted to get to know this Lauren and more than anything, she hoped that the blonde would let her. Remembering her mantra, Bo aimed to keep things casual. "I have to be honest. I was surprised when you said that you boxed."

"I know it's not an activity that anyone would associate with me. When I arrived here, I fell into my usual work routine and it was noticed. Serena suggested boxing as a means of releasing stress and to get my mind off of…. things." She said, averting her eyes momentarily.

Bo had an idea of what things Lauren meant but hid her reaction. She wanted to continue their light, casual conversation so she pressed on. "I'm not surprised that you continued to live and work in the lab here but I am shocked that you wanted to box."

"I never said that I wanted to box!" she laughed. "I didn't want to have anything to do with it but Serena was very insistent and I knew that she wouldn't let it go." She admitted. "I thought that if I tried it once, she would leave me alone afterwards but then it turned out that I actually enjoyed boxing. And then the next day when I was able to appreciate the benefits, I decided to stick with it. Serena never questioned anything; she just kept training with me." She said smiling at how astute and patient the Empath was.

"Well, I'm glad that you found something that you enjoy. It's obvious that it's working for you. You look great." Bo smiled genuinely. It was an honest compliment with no hidden sexual innuendo; however it still made Lauren blush. Before things could get awkward between them, the brunette smirked and slapped her hand pads together, making a loud thwaping sound. "Let's see what you got Lewis."

The Succubus started at a slow pace as a warm up but also to assess Lauren's abilities. However, she quickly ramped things up when she realized that the doctor knew what she was doing, that she had good form and followed through with each punch. Bo called out various combinations of jabs, crosses and uppercuts and had the blonde moving around the ring so that she wasn't just working on her punches but also on her footwork. It didn't take long for them to start sweating; Lauren especially as she was expending more energy.

Bo didn't realize it at first but her eyes were drifting – moving from the blonde's hands to other parts of her body. Lauren, however, was too busy concentrating on her punches to notice. The brunette found it difficult being this close to the doctor and tried to bury her desire. Initially it worked as she focused on observing Lauren's technique - impressed by her footwork and the force of her blows. However, as time passed, her eyes would roam over her body; first travelling up the blonde's arms, admiring the definition in her biceps and triceps; then to her neck and chest, observing the sheen of perspiration as her skin flushed from the physical activity; and then downwards, enjoying the view of her sweaty, white t-shirt that clung to her sports bra and tight abdomen. Bo swallowed hard and nibbled on her bottom lip as she thought about how much she wanted to rip Lauren's t-shirt off to see and feel her hot skin against her fingertips. As soon as she realized what she was doing and how her
Some text here
like - high continuous fever, headache, fatigue, dizziness, muscle and joint ache and overall weakness. As these symptoms intensify, patients experience nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain and eventually, bleeding appears as tiny spots of blood on the skin called Petechiae and in larger patches of blood under the skin called Ecchymoses. Further bleeding can occur from the mouth, nose, eyes, ears and in their stool. Pneumonia is also common and Myocarditis or inflammation of the heart may develop. In the final stages, delirium and shock occur before the patient quickly slips into a coma where their internal organs and the nervous system fails and eventually, death.

The brunette screwed up her face in response to the horrific symptoms. "Damn, that's brutal!"

"Indeed." Lauren said seriously. "There's still some testing to do to determine if my hypothesis is correct but I think it is."

"I knew that you would figure it out!" Bo said proudly.

The doctor gave a lopsided smile and shook her head. "It's not that simple. There is no known cure for Dengue Fever and DHF – even with mankind's medical and technological advances, all that can be done is to treat the symptoms. In addition, the treatments used on humans may not work for Fae but of course we will try these known solutions first and go from there."

"I'm certain you'll be able to create an antidote. It's just a matter of time." Bo said confidently.

Lauren chuckled. "You make it sound easy."

"It is because I have complete confidence in your brilliant mind." The brunette said matter of factly; causing Lauren to smile shyly at the compliment.

"Enough about me. Kenzi mentioned that your Investigation business has been doing well. Any interesting stories or cases you could share?" the blonde asked, wanting to take the attention off of her.

Bo just grinned playfully. "I don't know…. client confidentiality and all."

"I'm sure you can change up the names to protect your clients' identities." Lauren insisted.

The brunette smiled, "Well, there was this one case…."

Before they realized it, they had spent an hour sitting on the floor talking. It felt natural and comfortable and both women didn't want to leave their but Lauren had a very long day ahead of her and needed to get some sleep. Neither wanted the evening to end but both were content with how things went so before they said goodnight, they agreed to meet for breakfast in the morning.

As Lauren walked back to her place, she couldn't help the smile that was forming. She had initially asked Bo to meet her at the gym as it was the first thing that came to mind without sounding like a lame excuse. But seeing how well things went between them, she was very glad that she had. Boxing gave them time together without the distraction of work and friends. It also kept them occupied so that they didn't think or talk about all the things that caused tension between them. It was such a simple activity but it gave them the chance to be on neutral ground with each other.

Lauren didn't want to have any expectations but tonight gave her hope that their friendship could actually work. She could see the change in Bo. She was charming but not in her usual suave, sexual way; tonight, Lauren saw and talked with Bo the person and not the Succubus. She was funny, considerate and attentive and she seemed genuinely interested in her job here in Brazil. It had been a
long time since the brunette had shown any interest or pride in anything that Lauren did and she couldn't help but feel happy about that. Yes, she didn't want to get her hopes up but after this evening, it would be difficult not to.

Bo almost had a skip in her step as she walked back to her apartment. She was ecstatic about how the evening went and that they made plans to have breakfast together. She couldn't get over how much she and Lauren talked and laughed all night and how comfortable they felt with one another.

The brunette knew that she had to work on her desire for the blonde so that she wouldn't slip into Succubus mode but she was proud that she was able to maintain control. When she did, she realized that she was then able to focus on Lauren the person and not Lauren the ex-girlfriend and in so doing, was able to push her insecurities to the background. Bo was able to relax and be herself without any pressure or stress; she was able to concentrate on Lauren and enjoy the moment. The entire evening also gave Bo a much needed confidence boost. She could see that Lauren was trying and wasn't pushing her away as she had feared would happen. This gave her a renewed hope that their friendship could work and she couldn't be happier.

TBC
I’d like to start by saying a huge thank you for all those still following and reading "Time". Unfortunately, my situation hasn’t changed but whenever I had a free moment, I was able to put my thoughts down. It took a while but this is the end result. I hope you enjoy.

This is un-Beta’d so all mistakes are my own. Special thanks to FireArcade for her helpful and greatly appreciated ‘brain dump’.

Bo’s apt (late morning)

Bo walked into her apartment with a smile on her face, a cup of coffee in one hand and a bagel in the other for Kenzi who was most likely still asleep. She had spent the last couple of days having breakfast and supper with Lauren, as well as planned impromptu check in’s at the lab. The Succubus was ecstatic that she and Lauren were spending time together and that they were making serious headway with their friendship.

Bo closed the door behind her. “Yo, Kenz!” she yelled.

There was no response for a while before the quiet was broken by the shuffling of feet. “Must you be so loud?” the petite woman grumbled as she staggered out of her apartment in her pajama’s and fuzzy animal slippers; rubbing her eyes and forehead as she made her way towards Bo.

“Don’t tell me you have a hangover?” the brunette asked as she tried to supress her smirk.

“K, I won’t.” she replied sarcastically.

Bo shook her head at her friend’s antics. “What time did you and Dr. Perfect leave the bar?” she asked, making a face as she referred to the Fae doctor.

Kenzi cocked her head and gave her a fixed look.

“Fine!” the brunette said as she rolled her eyes. “What time did you and Nayara leave the bar?”

“Sometime early this morning… And you should totally appreciate my stealthy, ninja-like skills as I didn’t wake you when I came in.” Kenzi said, smiling proudly at herself as she walked over to the sofa and flopped down ungracefully. Blinking a few times to allow her eyes to adjust to being awake, she finally noticed the permanent smile on her friend’s face. “And why do you look like you swallowed a canary? Oh wait, let me guess… you just had breakfast with Hot Pants.”

The brunette refused to give her friend the satisfaction. “Wrong! I just finished chatting with Hale for my obligatory daily Delegate update.”

“Say that three times fast.” The petite Russian joked before concern washed over her face. “Wait! You and the Doc didn’t have breakfast? Did you have a fight?”
“Why do you assume the worst?” Bo smiled widely. “I just came from the security office for my video conference call with Hale but before that, Lauren and I had breakfast together… it’s turning out to be my favorite meals of the day.”

“Ugh… Eto slishkom rano dlya igry v slova.” Kenzi groaned out in Russian.

“Huh?”

“It’s too early for word games.” The Goth sighed out. “Now, where’s my coffee?” she demanded as she made grabby gestures with her fingers.

The Succubus quietly thrust the warm cup of java into her friend’s hands and placed the bagel on the coffee table in front of her. She watched as the younger woman sat up and cradled the cup to her lips, smiled and closed her eyes as she inhaled its rich aroma. After a few sips, Kenzi sighed contentedly and tucked her feet under her so that the long ears from her fuzzy, animal slippers were sticking out from under her legs.

“Better?” Bo asked as she sat next to her friend.

“Much! Thanks.”

“Well, it’s to my benefit as well. You tend to grunt like a caveman until you have coffee.”

“I’m not fully awake yet so imagine me making a witty, smart ass remark and direct it at yourself.” She mumbled as she took another sip. Her eyes instantly went wide as she noticed the bagel for the first time. “Ooohh, food!” she squealed as she leaned forward and grabbed it from the table.

A few minutes later with crumbs scattered over her shirt and lap, Kenzi was more awake and sated. “I didn’t realize how hungry I was. Speaking of which, how’re you doing? Any rumblings in your umm, Succubus tummy?”

“I’m good Kenz. Couldn’t be better!” Bo said smiling from ear to ear; the improvement in her relationship with Lauren had her floating on cloud nine.

“And I’m guessing that has something to do with uh, what now, your third, non-date breakfast in a row with Hot Pants?” the Goth asked as she nudged the brunette with her elbow and wiggled her eyebrows.

Bo couldn’t stop the huge smile from growing on her face. “Things are going well… really well. It’s comfortable and not awkward or tense like before. And I can tell that she’s really trying...” The brunette hesitated and her smile dropped slightly.

“I sense a ‘but’. Talk to me chica.”

She let out a small sigh. “Lauren’s still holding back. I mean, I completely understand why. I just wish we were past all of this so that she could be herself with me one hundred percent.”

“It’ll take time BoBo.” Kenzi assured her.

“I know I’m being impatient.” The brunette sighed out. “I’m trying not to be but the fact that we will be leaving in two weeks is not helping.”

The Goth nodded her understanding. There was something that she was curious about and in typical Kenzi fashion, she showed tact and restraint. “Do you sense anything when she’s around you? Like does her aura blaze like a million suns for your sexy vag?”
The brunette shook her head but couldn’t suppress the small grin that was forming. Kenzi could always make her smile. “I swear Kenz, the things that come out of your mouth.”

The younger woman had a mischievous glint in her eyes. “Well, we make quite the team - the things that come out of my mouth and the things that go into yours.”

The Succubus swatted her best friend’s arm in jest as they both started chuckling. Once they sobered up, Bo’s tone became serious. “Lauren is a master of controlling her feelings. Since we’ve arrived, I’ve only ever seen her peak at an eight once and then immediately dropped to a two; since then she’s been a constant four with me.”

“Well, you and I both know that the Doc is a pro at masking her feelings. If she can control her feelings, she can most likely control her desire, right? And if she can control her desire, then wouldn’t it affect what her aura looks like? Anyway, I wouldn’t read too much into it Succubum.” Kenzi tried to provide a positive, possible explanation for it all, which made Bo’s eyes light up with hope.

Not being able to restrain her curiosity, she asked, “Is she the same with Nayara? Is there any difference?”

Bo flinched at hearing the Fae’s name but held back her biting remark. “She’s about a four with Nayara as well.” She replied tersely.

“See!” Kenzi exclaimed.

“I’ve seen Nayara shine so brightly around Lauren that I needed to wear shades so it’s not really reassuring Kenz.” She grumbled.

“Recently?” the petite Russian asked hesitantly.

Bo looked up not focusing on anything in particular as she thought back to her observations of the two doctors. “Well… no, not recently. When we first got here she was easily an eight around Lauren but these past few days, there hasn’t been much of a glimmer.”

Kenzi smiled and poked her friend in the ribs. “That’s a good sign then Chiquita.”

The Succubus nodded and returned the smile; her eyes brightened as she thought about Lauren. “I’m just really glad that we are spending more time together.” Bo’s expression became contemplative as she continued to talk. “Lauren’s changed. I don’t know if it’s because she’s away from everyone and everything in Toronto or if it’s because her time here has affected her but she’s… different.”

The younger woman was curious. “Different how?”

“She’s more confident… I’m not talking about Lauren, the scientist; I mean Lauren, the person. She carries herself differently outside of the lab like she’s more sure of herself. She also doesn’t work all those crazy hours like she used to and actually has three square meals a day which blows my mind. I think back to all those times I had to pry her away from the lab or bring food in for her because she’d forget to eat… so, this is definitely a good thing.”

The brunette paused to catch her breath from talking excitedly. “She’s also trying new things like boxing. To be honest, I didn’t think she would be into such a physical and aggressive sport but she surprised me. She’s pretty good. And I have to say that Sporty Lauren is seriously hot!” Bo instantly imagined the blonde’s long, lean legs in shorts as she bounced lightly on the balls of her feet and then a sly smile broke out as she envisioned other body parts that bounced.
Shaking herself out of her reverie, she continued her ramble. “She has some sexy muscle definition happening and she can throw a mean punch. She’s also not afraid to push herself past the point of physical exhaustion and get a good sweat going…” Bo’s voice trailed off and her eyes instantly glaze over imagining Lauren’s naked body glistening from perspiration; her arms and legs wrapped around her; and her back arched as her muscles tense and squeeze her tightly.

Kenzi snapped her fingers in front of her friend’s face. “Earth to Bo!”

“Huh? Sorry. Mental image.” She said with a lascivious grin on her face. “Where was I? Umm, she’s more relaxed and she speaks her mind instead of staying silent and I think she’s actually trying to take better care of herself.” Bo rambled excitedly. “I don’t know what caused these changes but I really like it.”

“Oh, I know what it is about Hot Pants that you like.” Kenzi laughed at her friend.

Bo shook her head at the younger woman and leaned against her. “There’s nothing you can say to spoil my mood Kenz.”

The Goth just smiled and rested her head on the brunette’s shoulder. She knew that Bo was happy and head over heels in love with the doctor and she hoped for both their sakes that things would work out. She couldn’t deal with a broken hearted Succubus again. “I imagine we’ll be going to the lab later so that you can make googly-eyes at the Doc. Are you gonna take me out for lunch before that? You know that I can’t take all that sciency stuff on an empty stomach.”

“You can’t take all that sciency stuff on a full stomach or with alcohol.” Bo corrected.

“Whatev’s! I need food!” she demanded.

“Yes, your majesty.” Bo mock bowed before gently pushing her away. “Go get changed so we can feed your tapeworm and then head to the lab.”

Kenzi grinned and kissed her friend on the cheek before she bounded off the couch. Bo chuckled; she was beyond happy. She was sober, healthy and stable; she and Kenzi were closer than ever; and things with Lauren were going well. The only way it could get any better was if Lauren wanted to give them another chance – something which she hoped for more than anything.

Lab (a couple hours later)

Bo and Kenzi walked into what seemed to be organized chaos. There was a flurry of activity with every lab station occupied, people hustling about from one piece of scientific equipment to the next and almost everyone had tablets or pages of data clutched in their hands while they participated in discussions about their various experiments. Over the past few days of visiting the lab, Bo had noticed a pattern to the noise level where most times only the hum of the electronic devices could be heard before a smattering of conversations erupted and quickly ramped up as numerous discussions added to the din, making it so loud that Bo didn’t know how anyone could think. But just as quickly as it began, it would abruptly end as if everyone simultaneously recognized that the noise levels were too high.

Not wanting to get in the way, both women quickly stood back and observed the hustle and bustle around the laboratory. The Succubus didn’t know much about the lab equipment being used except that Lauren looked sexy as hell when she was using it. She didn’t have to be a rocket scientist to see that everyone was working diligently to come up with an antidote.
As she looked around the lab, Bo spotted Lauren in her office talking with two scientists. The Succubus smiled as she observed her from afar, watching as she would occasionally gesture excitedly with her hands during the discussion. She was so caught up with Lauren that she was oblivious to everyone and everything around her until she felt a sharp pain on her forearm. “Ow! What the hell?!”

“I’ve been talking to you for the past couple of minutes but you’ve been in a Lauren-trance.” The Goth complained.

“Have not!” Bo replied indignantly, rubbing at the sore spot on her arm where Kenzi had pinched her.

“Oh please! You rushed me through my lunch to get here so that you could zoom in on her like a heat seeking missile and then when you finally lay eyes on her, you’re practically drooling. If you weren’t my bestie, I’d call you a stalker.” The younger woman teased.

“First of all, I don’t drool.” Bo said slightly annoyed that her friend had caught her red-handed.

“Do too!” Kenzi sing-songed.

“Do not!”

“Do too, infinity!” the younger woman exclaimed with a big grin.

“Real mature.” The brunette grumbled.

The Goth chuckled. “I never said I was. You’re too easy Succubabe.”

“Yeah, yeah. I… I just enjoy watching Lauren work.” She admitted. “I mean, look how they are around her. They all go to her for advice and for her opinion. She’s the expert and they all seek her guidance.” Both women watched as the scientists left the blonde’s office only to be replaced by a few more waving clipboards and sheets of data.

Bo smiled with pride. “She’s good at what she does. It’s great to see her be respected and appreciated. She deserves it.”

“Yes she does.” The younger woman said genuinely as she watched the doctor. “So, are you going to stand here ogling Hot Pants all afternoon or are you going to talk to her?”

The brunette’s smile only grew bigger at her friend’s remark. “I’m just waiting for the break in the procession of people.”

A few minutes passed and just as it looked like the revolving door to Lauren’s office had finally stopped, Nayara walked in. Bo stiffened instantly. Kenzi didn’t have to be a mind reader to know that her friend was still struggling when it came to the Fae doctor. The Succubus watched how easily both women interacted and how closely they stood to one another without physically touching - they had a camaraderie that she was envious of and it made her jealousy rise. Taking a deep breath, Bo closed her eyes and forced her green eyed monster down knowing that she couldn’t let her emotions get the better of her.

Moments later Kenzi roused the brunette out of her meditation. “Hey BoBo. Here’s your chance – the Doc’s alone.”

The Succubus’ eyes blinked open as she watched Lauren run her fingers through her beautiful, wavy hair before sinking into her leather chair and rested her head back, seemingly enjoying the peace and
quiet. Bo loved watching Lauren when she didn’t realize anyone was looking for the simple reason that it was in these moments that the blonde was herself – there was no doctor mask; no walls in place; no pretenses - just Lauren. Bo quickly collected herself and walked over to her office.

“Hey.” She said gently as she knocked on the door.

Lauren looked up and smiled brightly at her visitor. “Hey yourself.”

“You’ve been quite the social butterfly with a never ending line of scientists through your office.” Bo said light heartedly.

“Maybe a science butterfly would be more accurate.” She smiled shyly.

“Lauren, everyone here knows that you’re brilliant. That’s why they’re flocking to you for advice. They respect your opinion. They respect you.” Bo said genuinely, causing Lauren to blush at the compliment.

Bo smiled sweetly at the blonde and the fact that she still had difficulty accepting compliments. Deciding to let her off the hook, she changed subjects. “So, how’re you holding up?” the brunette asked as she walked closer and half sat-stood on the edge of the desk and faced her.

“Not bad. Everyone has been working non-stop trying to find a cure. It’s exhausting but exciting at the same time.”

“I don’t doubt that but I was asking about you. I know that you’ll put a lot of stress on yourself until a cure is found.” Bo said slightly worried.

Lauren smiled at the brunette’s concern. “Really, there’s no need to worry, I’m okay. I’m not in the same situation as I was in Toronto. Back there, everything was on me. Here, it’s a team effort - everyone is working towards a common goal. So, yes even though I do place some additional pressure on myself, it’s actually a burden that is shared by everyone in the lab.”

“Okay.” Bo said simply not wanting to push. “Well, I won’t take up any more of your time, I know you’re busy. I just wanted to see how you were doing.”

Lauren didn’t think she could smile any brighter but she did; it was reflexive when it came to Bo and especially that she was concerned about her. “Are we still on for boxing tonight?” she asked.

“Definitely.” Bo grinned brightly and her eyes came alive. “I’ll see you at eight.”

\textbf{Gym}

Lauren made sure to arrive early as she didn’t want to be late again but that was only part of the reason; what she really wanted was to spend as much time as possible with Bo. Training together seemed to be the only time that they could be alone – to be away from the lab and everyone else - and she was looking forward to it. Trying to distract herself from setting any false expectations, Lauren started her warm up. Unfortunately she found her plan was quickly thwarted as her wandering mind imagined Bo flashing her trademark dimpled smile at her and wearing gym gear that showed off her assets perfectly.

As Lauren cleared her mind and concentrated on her stretches, she recognized that working on an antidote had occupied her every waking thought and didn’t leave her much time to process everything that had happened between her and Bo. The blonde knew that she was initially hesitant to open herself up again but since Kenzi told her what happened after she left Toronto, she found herself slowly lowering her guard around Bo. Lauren felt as if a weight had been lifted now that
they were trying to get to know one another again without the physical aspect of their relationship clouding things. She could tell that Bo was trying and that gave her the encouragement she needed to do the same.

It wasn’t much longer before Bo strutted into the gym wearing a broad smile, a pair of shorts that would put Daisy Duke to shame and a t-shirt that Lauren was envious of as it clung to her in all the right places. Lauren instantly stopped what she was doing and swallowed hard as she saw the brunette. Reining in her emotions, she quickly took a deep, cleansing breath to slow down her heart rate and regain her composure before Bo noticed.

After some hellos and nervous smiles they started their boxing drills; both anxious to finish training so that they could get to the hanging-out part of their evening. Bo had set a good pace and was slowly ramping things up when Lauren suddenly screamed out in pain and stumbled back against the wall, clutching at her left arm. “Lauren! Are you okay? What’s wrong?” she asked in a panic.

The blonde hissed and took a couple calming breaths before she spoke. “I’m… alright. I just felt an incredibly sharp pain run through my arm.”

Noticing that she was still a bit shaky as she leaned against the wall, Bo moved in closer in case her legs gave out. “I know that you enjoy boxing but maybe it’s too soon after your injury.” she said with concern in her voice.

Lauren cradled her arm. “Perhaps you’re right Doctor Dennis.” She said in an attempt to make light of the situation as well as distract herself. Though the intense pain had subsided, it was difficult to ignore the spasms travelling through her arm.

The brunette gave her a thin smile. “I'll take you back to your apartment and help you with your arm.”

“It’s okay, I can manage.” Lauren insisted as she tried to focus on her breathing instead of the discomfort.

“I know you can but you are a bit unsteady… besides, I wasn’t giving you an option.” The Succubus said in a determined tone.

The blonde knew that when Bo had her mind made up, nothing would deter her so she smiled in resignation. “Well, when you put it that way, how can I refuse?”

It was the first time that Bo was in Lauren’s apartment and under normal circumstances, she would’ve been ecstatic to have been invited in however at this moment all she was concerned about was taking care of Lauren.

The blonde made her way to the couch, cradling her arm. “Could you get my First Aid kit while I take off my bandages? It’s in the bathroom on the counter.” Bo nodded and left giving Lauren some time alone. The doctor didn’t want Bo to see her like this but she knew that she couldn’t hide her injury forever.

The brunette quickly found the bathroom and immediately returned with the kit in hand and as she sat on the coffee table across from the doctor, worry was etched on her face. Lauren was quiet as she willed herself to focus on her arm and not on Bo. It took a few seconds to remove the cloth dressing and as she unravelled the last of the material, she steeled herself for the reaction.

Bo’s eyes opened wide when she saw the extent of the wound. “Jesus Lauren!” The blonde had a long, jagged scar that ran half way down her tricep, criss-crossing over the lower part of her bicep
and down to her forearm just past her elbow. Bo instinctively reached out to touch it but stopped herself; her hand hovered in mid-air before she pulled it back and instead covered her mouth in shock.

The brunette silently stared at Lauren’s perfect skin that was now marred by this long, pink, raised scar and blinked away the tears that were starting to form; the realization of how serious the attack actually was, staring her in the face. The wound looked extremely painful and Bo felt anger surge through her as her eyes turned electric blue; her inner Succubus wanting to cause extreme suffering to whoever attacked Lauren. Closing her eyes momentarily, she took a couple of deep breaths to control her anger and to force her eyes to return to their regular colour.

After an uncomfortable silence, the blonde spoke hesitantly. “It looks worse than it is.”

Bo was angry that Lauren was hurt and blamed herself for her injury - she knew that it was because of her that the blonde ran to the jungles of Brazil and was placed in harm’s way. She was also upset that Lauren was pretending that what happened wasn’t serious. Her frustration registered in her voice as she stared directly into the blonde’s eyes. “Don’t downplay this Lauren. I know that you said that you could’ve lost your arm but I didn’t think anything more of it because you were so nonchalant about the whole thing…. I had no idea it was this bad.” She said as she gestured to her injury.

The blonde didn’t know what to say and instead remained silent; she intentionally hid the extent of her injury as she knew that it would upset Bo and despite how shaky things had been between them, she didn’t want her to worry.

Bo took a deep breath and swallowed her frustration; she was lashing out which wasn’t her intent; her main concern was Lauren. “I’m sorry.” She breathed out. “Do you want to talk about what happened?” Bo asked softly.

The blonde hadn’t had an opportunity to talk about the attack because so much had happened since she returned. It wasn’t that she was trying to keep it a secret; she just hadn’t had time to think about it much less talk about it. Lauren clasped her hands in her lap; taking a deep breath, she exhaled loudly and began to recount what happened.

“There was thick smoke everywhere from the attack and all I could hear was screaming and explosions. Serena immediately pulled Nay and I away from the path and directed us away from the ambush site. We ran… I can’t remember for how long, it just seemed like it took a while. When we stopped we found ourselves in a section of the jungle that we had never been in before. It was heavily overgrown with brush and vines which made it difficult to hike through.”

Bo’s eyes were trained on Lauren as she took in every word and observed every facial expression. She was sitting absolutely still, not wanting to distract or interrupt the blonde; the only movement being the twitching of her jaw as she involuntary clenched and unclenched it.

“To make matters worse, the dense trees kept the smoke from dissipating so it instead travelled outwards, making it hard to breathe and to see more than ten feet in any direction. We managed to put significant distance between us and the attack zone when suddenly there was an explosion. I don’t know what struck me but whatever it was, ripped right through flesh, muscle and bone.”

Lauren unconsciously rubbed her wound gently as she spoke. “There wasn’t much keeping my arm attached.” She admitted with a shaky voice. “I was in extreme pain and shock was setting in but Nayara was able to stop the bleeding and keep umm, everything in place. Serena kept watch for whoever attacked us while Nay put my arm in a sling. It only took a few minutes for her to take care of my arm but it seemed like forever. Fortunately, no one appeared and nothing else happened, so as
soon as my arm was wrapped and secured, Serena ordered us to run ahead of her and to not look back.” The blonde paused to collect her thoughts; talking about the attack while her arm throbbed was almost as if she was re-living the moment.

Bo remained silent as her eyes roamed over the hideous scar and imagined the pain that Lauren would’ve gone through. The thought of which made the brunette ball her hands into fists so tightly that her fingernails left crescent shaped indentations in her palms. Shaking her head and the thoughts away, she looked at Lauren with concern and waited for her to continue.

“The forest was unusually quiet and being in a part of the jungle that we hadn’t ventured in before didn’t help ease our fears. Even though we had taken the long way around, our GPS indicated that we weren’t far from Base Camp. We thought that the worst was behind us but then there was another loud explosion and everything around us shook. Nayara and I ducked for cover and when the smoke and debris cleared, we couldn’t see Serena. We circled back and eventually found her slumped against a tree, unconscious; her body mangled. She had a punctured lung, had a cracked skull and her leg and two arms were broken. Fortunately, the trees provided us with ample cover so we were able to stay out of sight while we did triage. Once we stopped her bleeding, mobilized her broken limbs and got her as comfortable as possible, we decided that I would stay with Serena and monitor her while Nayara would run to the Camp as she was faster and had no injuries. Fortunately, a security detail was dispatched to investigate the explosion so Nay didn’t have to go far for help. They quickly came for us and brought us to Base Camp where we stabilized Serena for transport here.”

Bo released the breath she didn’t realize she was holding. “Did you ever find out who attacked you?” she enquired softly.

Lauren shook her head. “Those who survived the ambush never saw who attacked them. As for us? We had the unfortunate luck of being in the wrong place and came across a couple of the remaining mines left over from the Great War between the Light and Dark. Apparently, the vast majority of these traps have been found and disarmed but there are still some hidden in obscure areas of the jungle. And the reason we weren’t briefed about it was because we normally would never be in these areas.”

There was a moment of silence as the weight of Lauren’s words sunk in and Bo realized how close she came to losing her. “How’s your arm right now?” she asked softly, her voice cracking slightly.

Lauren shook her head. “It’s throbbing but the pain has subsided significantly. The ointment that I’m using has already healed the bone and a good percentage of muscle tissue and tendons in a very short period of time. Fae medicine really is amazing!” The doctor was constantly fascinated by Fae technology and their medical advances and couldn’t hold back the hint of excitement in her voice.

“My healing is progressing at an incredible rate however the ointment doesn’t eradicate the pain associated with the muscles and tendons growing and knitting together… if anything, it’s more intense as the recuperation period is accelerated. I just hadn’t experienced pain to this extent before.” She explained. “And before you say anything, it does help to keep my muscles moving but perhaps boxing may have been a bit much.”

“You think?” Bo said sarcastically.

The blonde rolled her eyes in response and smiled. “With time and continuous use of the balm, my arm will heal completely and the scar will disappear. I will be as good as new in a few weeks.”

Bo smiled at the good news. “That’s a relief.” She sighed out. “How about we get your arm looked at? How can I help?”
“I just have to clean it; rub some of the balm over the scar and then bandage it.”

“I can do that.” Bo said quickly. “Uh, are you okay with me touching you? I mean, umm, will it hurt when I clean your arm and put the ointment on?” she asked, careful to not overstep any boundaries.

“No, it’ll be okay – you won’t hurt me.” Lauren said softly, appreciating and finding Bo’s trepidation endearing.

The brunette leaned forward and tentatively touched the scar with her index finger, not wanting to apply too much pressure and hurt her. Focusing on the task at hand and under Lauren’s direction, Bo gently wiped the entire wound with a cotton swab soaked with Hydrogen Peroxide and allowed the area of skin to air dry. Dipping two fingers into the container, she scooped out some of the balm and noted that it had a Vaseline-like texture and that it radiated a soothing warmth. Resting one hand on Lauren’s shoulder, she applied the ointment with her other hand and made sure to administer it all over the scar and the surrounding flesh.

Bo was very aware that she was touching Lauren’s skin but more importantly, Lauren was letting her. Her heart raced from being so close to the blonde and it took every ounce of willpower that she had to not lean in the remaining distance, pull Lauren into her and kiss her hard. Instead she concentrated on what she was doing and forced herself to not look up into Lauren’s chocolate brown eyes.

Both women were quiet as the brunette focused on applying the ointment. Lauren found it difficult to look anywhere else. This was the first time since Bo arrived in Brazil that they were in close proximity of one another without it being an angry or awkward situation. Lauren couldn’t help but gaze at Bo. Her eyes travelled over her beautiful face, observing the crease that formed between her eyes while she was concentrating before moving down to her full lips – those same lips that had touched, kissed and tasted every inch of her body intimately. She quickly turned her head to avert her gaze and her thoughts but instead her eyes inadvertently fell upon the plunge of her t-shirt’s low cut neckline, giving the blonde an unobstructed view of Bo’s neck and cleavage. Lauren inhaled sharply and immediately got lost in the brunette’s scent. She was quickly losing control and her heart felt as if it would beat out of her chest. Everything fell away - there was no pain; no sound – the only thing that existed was Bo’s strong but gentle fingers on her. It had been a while since she had felt Bo’s touch and she had forgotten how much she missed it; how much she had missed her. Lauren knew that it would be very easy to lose herself in the brunette’s arms and what worried her was that she was actually considering it. Taking a deep, cleansing breath, she exhaled slowly and opened her eyes in an attempt to control her desire.

In the meantime, Bo was concentrating on what she was doing. She was well aware of her body’s reaction from being so close to Lauren. Her senses were on overload as her fingers travelled over her skin – she loved how wonderful and soft Lauren’s skin felt and the urge to touch and explore more of her body was overwhelming. Out of her periphery vision, she could see the rise and fall of Lauren’s chest as she breathed and saw her aura flare brightly. The Succubus was happy that she still had an effect on the blonde and instinctively nibbled on her bottom lip. Any doubts about Lauren’s lack of desire for her was no longer in question but despite this positive reaction, Bo wanted more - she wanted to earn Lauren’s love and trust back and she didn’t want to ruin any chance of that by acting on her needs.

Taking a deep breath and exhaling, Bo decided to not prolong things. She quickly finished applying the balm and sat upright, instantly increasing the distance between them.

Both women immediately missed being out of each other’s personal space and used the slightly
awkward moment to recover. Lauren quickly shifted into doctor mode and explained to Bo how to apply and secure the dressing around her arm. It took a couple of tries but the brunette was finally able to wrap the bandage so that it was snug but comfortable. “Not too shabby.” Lauren smiled as she appraised her handy work.

Bo smiled proudly. “Thanks for giving me the chance to prove myself as a doctor’s assistant. I may seek your help if I ever decide to change careers.”

“Of course! I’ll give you a glowing reference.” Lauren bantered back.

Bo leaned forward and rested her forearms on the top of her thighs as she wiped the ointment off of her hand. Bo’s demeanour suddenly grew serious as her eyes fell on the blonde’s freshly bandaged arm. She had suppressed her feelings while she tended to Lauren but now that the task was completed, she no longer had a distraction to keep her emotions in check. Tears spilled freely and her voice sounded broken and distant as her eyes remained fixed on Lauren’s injured arm. “I thought that I had lost you that day… that I would never see you again.” She said tiredly; thinking back to when she was told that Lauren was attacked. “We were told that your group was ambushed and that there were many injuries and deaths… with communications down, no one could give us any more information. My imagination went into overdrive. All I could picture was you alone, afraid and hurt or worse. Dead. There was nothing I could do and not knowing was torture. I never felt so scared and helpless in my entire life.”

Bo looked up into the blonde’s eyes as tears meandered down her cheeks; not caring if it made her look weak. “I would’ve given anything… done anything…for you to be safe. For the first time since I ran away from home, I prayed… I prayed for you to be alright; to be out of harm’s way; and to get back here safely. All I could think was that you would never know how important you are to me; how much I regret ruining everything between us and for hurting you; and that you would never know that I have never loved anyone as much as I love you.”

The brunette didn’t plan on making this declaration but her feelings took over and before she knew it, the words had escaped and it was too late to take it back. Bo quickly averted her gaze thinking that she had said too much, too soon and realized that she had laid herself emotionally bare in front of Lauren - something that she had never done with anyone before. Squeezing her eyes shut, she silently chastised herself for moving too fast just when things were starting to get better between them.

Bo’s words washed over the blonde, got under her skin and resonated deep inside, causing her heart to swell with emotion. Bo had told Lauren that she had loved her before but it was never with such a raw, emotional intensity. She hadn’t expected Bo to be so open and vulnerable; there was no pretence or Succubus bravado, only honesty. In that moment, she finally understood how Bo felt but more importantly, she believed her without a shadow of a doubt.

“Oh, Bo…” she said as she finally found her voice only to stop herself knowing that there were no words to express what she wanted to say. There were no words that were adequate enough to console Bo or that would accurately convey the mass of emotions whirling about inside. Lauren was tired of fighting her feelings and of thinking rationally and instead allowed herself to react. Standing abruptly, she grabbed Bo’s hands, pulled her up into her arms and held her tightly; instantly becoming suffused with Bo’s scent and the feel of her body against her.

The brunette was caught off guard but quickly got over the shock and instantly melted in Lauren’s embrace. Burying her face in long, wavy hair, she held Lauren tightly as tears cascaded down onto the blonde’s neck.

It wasn’t lost on either of them that this was the first time since Lauren left Toronto that they had any
physical contact and shown each other affection. Time seemed to stand still as both women became lost in the sensation of being in each other’s arms and of the comfort it provided.

Being in Bo’s arms felt right - she felt comfortable, safe and reassured. Lauren had always wanted to know that she had mattered to Bo and now the brunette was vocalizing it. Even though they were no longer together, Lauren appreciated her honesty and the weight that her words held. She also recognized that the ‘old’ Bo would’ve had difficulty communicating how she felt but this ‘new’ Bo was trying and that strengthened her faith and hope for them.

The blonde wanted to remain in Bo’s arms and have all their troubles disappear but such thinking was irrational; the recognition of which, forced Lauren’s emotions to retreat and the logical part of her to step forward. Things were too familiar and she knew the danger of falling back into old practices and in giving in to the physicality of their relationship. Reluctantly, Lauren pulled away; their fingers entwined for one last brief second before their hands fell uselessly to their sides. Lauren looked at the brunette tenderly, trying to convey her appreciation for Bo’s honesty in her eyes as she gave the brunette a shy, sweet smile.

Bo was disappointed when their embrace ended but understood why Lauren pulled back. Using the moment to compose herself, Bo wiped at her tear stained cheeks. Lauren, meanwhile, took a step back and quickly changed subjects. “Umm, so, we will probably be heading into the field once we have an antidote. How do you feel about being immersed in humidity, trees, wild animals and bugs?”

“Can’t wait!” Bo said sarcastically with a grin.

“Do you and Kenzi have appropriate clothing for the field? You know, long sleeved shirts, hiking pants and boots, et cetera.”

Bo had a perplexed look on her face. “What are these long sleeved shirts you speak of?”

The blonde chuckled. “I know it’s a foreign concept for you but you can’t take any chances having your skin exposed - you will be susceptible to the virus.”

Bo became serious. “To be honest, being in the jungle never crossed our minds, so we didn’t pack anything.” Shrugging her shoulders, she said, “ Granted, I don’t think we own a stitch of clothing that is not geared for the city.”

Lauren quickly sought out a solution. “Okay, I’ll ask Nayara if she could take us all shopping, that way you both can get your gear and also see a bit of Brazil. Plus, I know you’ve been cooped up in the compound since you arrived.” Lauren said with a smile.

The brunette was looking forward to being anywhere with Lauren and getting away from the compound was perfect, regardless of the fact that the Fae doctor would be with them. “Great! It’ll definitely be good to see something other than this building. Besides, Kenzi would love any excuse to shop… even if it’s for khaki’s.” Both women chuckled as they envisioned the Goth trying to find designer hiking gear.

Bo was thankful that she didn’t upset the blonde and that she accomplished the opposite of what she feared would happen. The Succubus knew that she had her job cut out for her to regain Lauren’s trust and because of that she didn’t take offence when the blonde didn’t respond to her emotional outpouring - she was simply relieved that Lauren didn’t freak out. Bo knew that she had a long way to go to repair things between them but she realized that putting her pride aside and being completely honest seemed to be a big step in the right direction.
Even though she didn’t want to leave the apartment, Bo wanted to end things on a high point, so reluctantly, she decided to call it a night. “Well, I should get going so that you can get some rest.”

“Okay.” The blonde said as she got up and walked Bo to the door. “See you at breakfast?”

“Definitely.” The Succubus said enthusiastically as she lingered in the hallway.

The blonde smiled sweetly. “Thanks again for your help.”

“Anytime.” The brunette said softly as she looked into Lauren’s warm, brown eyes.

Both women silently gazed at one another; neither wanting to look away nor in a rush to say goodbye; both lost in the moment and in the comfortable connection that they had rediscovered. Bo didn’t know how much time had passed except that after a few seconds, she realized that she hadn’t moved from in front of Lauren’s door. Adjusting her posture, she cleared her throat and reclaimed her confidence by finally saying goodnight, all the while grinning from ear to ear.

Closing the door behind her, Lauren leaned against it and couldn’t help the huge smile that formed. Even though she was trying to keep her emotions in check, it was very difficult to ignore her body’s reaction to the brunette. Her erratic heartbeat, sweaty hands and butterflies in her stomach were all symptoms of the nervous excitement that she felt around Bo and as much as it scared Lauren to feel this way, it stirred something within: forgiveness. For the first time since leaving Toronto, Lauren realized that she could see herself forgiving Bo – something she never thought was possible.

She knew the moment things shifted: when she found Bo in Serena’s room. It was then that she started to feel her walls crumble. Lauren knew without a shadow of a doubt that it was just a matter of time before she was able to reconcile everything between her and Bo and just knowing that it was inevitable, gave her a sense of peace that she hadn’t experienced in some time. Maintaining her smile, she pushed off from the door to get ready for bed. Lauren had had a long but wonderful day and she couldn’t wait to see what tomorrow would bring.

Chapter End Notes

I still intend on plugging away at “Time” but I don’t know when next I will be able to post. I promise to deliver and I hope that you will continue to be patient with me.

Thanks again.
I apologize for the long gap in between posts, my RL situation hasn't changed and has been taking up all of my time. I can't say when next I will be able to post but know that I'm not giving up on this story and will work on it whenever I can.

I appreciate your patience and hope that you will continue to read and follow "Time".

A big thank you to FireArcade and Spcecadet for all their encouragement and suggestions; and special thanks to T for being uber-patient with all the (too numerous to mention) revisions that I put in front of her.

Nayara had been quietly observing Lauren the past couple of days. The blonde was definitely happy and wore a permanent smile on her face even when she was busy examining and testing samples under a microscope. She knew that Bo was the reason for her best friend's good mood and she prayed that the Succubus wouldn't hurt and disappoint her again.

"Hey. How're things progressing?" Nayara asked as she walked into the blonde's office.

Lauren looked up from her notes with a smile. "Hi! Really well! We are half-way through day two of the samples injected with serum 'Lima-109' and so far, the effects of the virus have halted and the sample seems stable." She said in an upbeat tone as she handed over her file to Nayara.

The brunette gave a faint smile. "If the samples are able to maintain stability past the 72 hour mark, we will be able to trial it." Nayara said as she scanned through the sheets of data.

"I'm trying not to get too excited but I have a good feeling about this Nay." The blonde said optimistically.

"I'd so love for you to be right." Nayara said as she looked up at Lauren. "But I suppose all we can do right now is monitor the samples and wait." she sighed out as she resumed her perusal of the data.

Lauren nodded in agreement. There were numerous serums currently being trialled by staff but thus far, hers was the only one that yielded any positive results. She had well over a hundred test serums fail before this and hoped that this would be the one that would remain stable. "Seeing that we are playing the waiting game, would you be able to do me a huge favour?" she asked hesitantly.

"Sure. What do you need?" the brunette asked slightly distracted by the data she was reviewing.

"Can you take Bo, Kenzi and I shopping?" she asked in a quick breath. "They don't have any gear for the forest and we'll probably be heading there soon." Lauren scrunched up her face knowing that she was asking her best friend to help the one person who was less than pleasant to her. "I know Bo has been difficult but could you? Please."

Nayara chuckled. "Okay but I'm only doing this for you and Kenzi." she said smiling. "Anyway it'll be a good break for all of us. I don't know about you but I'm getting cross-eyed from all the time I've been clocking in front of a microscope."
Lauren smiled. "Thanks Nay. I really appreciate it and they do too. When would be a good time?"

"How about early this afternoon?"

"Great! I'll let them know. We could go to the same place that you took me...that way, we know that they'll find what they need."

Nayara nodded in agreement just as her cell phone rang. After a few one word replies, she abruptly ended the call.

"Serena's awake and she is asking to speak to you!" she said excitedly.

Serena had been in a coma for nine days and as each day passed, the odds of her waking diminished further. However, the Ignis was a fighter and the medically imposed coma did as it was intended and helped accelerate her healing. But now that she was awake, her body was very aware of how broken it was; she was in extreme pain and the Fae morphine in her I.V. was the only thing dulling it. Serena had one leg and both arms in casts; her head was bandaged; and it hurt to breathe. Her body felt like one massive bruise; her head throbbed; and everything under the casts itched. To say that she was incredibly uncomfortable and grumpy would be an understatement.

Once the surprise of waking up in pain and discomfort passed and she was aware of her surroundings, it didn't take long for reality to sink in. Serena quickly got a hold of a nurse and instead of asking about her medical situation, she enquired about Dr. Lewis and was relieved to find out that she was alright. However, that relief was short lived as she remembered that she didn't tell her about the Succubus.

The Ignis stared up at the ceiling, groggily replaying what she failed to do. Serena had always tackled life like she did her job. She was never one to harbour regret – if something went wrong, she learned from it and moved on. She never dwelled or lingered on an issue as lingering led to hesitation and in her line of work, hesitating could get someone hurt or killed. This, however, she couldn't let go. In her mind, she failed to follow the Ash's orders and didn't prepare Dr. Lewis for the fallout that was bound to occur when Bo Dennis arrived. But what really bothered Serena was the possibility that the doctor thought that she didn't care about her welfare as she kept the truth from her.

Normally, Serena would never have formed an attachment to her client, however, once they were out of their normal environment and it was just them - stripped down to who they were and not what they were - they quickly formed an unspoken friendship. The Ignis was always a loner and didn't care what anyone thought of her as it was always about the job. Dr. Lewis was an exception. She valued the doctor's opinion and respected her so thinking that she may have disappointed her, weighed heavily upon the Ignis. Not wanting any more time to lapse without being able to make things right, Serena had one of the nurses contact her.

Lauren and Nayara rushed over to ICU as soon as they got the call and was promptly greeted by a nurse who provided them with an update on the Ignis' condition. They were relieved to find out that the swelling around her brain had receded and hadn't caused any permanent damage; and though she had extensive injuries, she would make a full recovery in a few weeks.

With her concerns over Serena's health alleviated, Nayara returned to the lab giving Lauren and her bodyguard some privacy. Entering the dimly lit room, the blonde was greeted by the soft hum of medical equipment which was offset by Serena's slow and laboured breathing. Careful not to wake the sleeping Ignis, she sat down quietly and gently took her hand in her own.
It took a while for it to register but somewhere in her subconscious, Serena felt the contact and forced her eyes open, groaning herself awake. The sound caught Lauren's attention and she smiled in relief. "Hey!" she said softly. "Welcome back to the land of the living. You had us all worried."

Serena managed to produce a thin smile but found herself unable to speak, her parched throat turning her words into an unintelligible croak. Sensing this, Lauren picked up the glass of water by the bed and placed the straw near her mouth. After numerous long sips and her thirst quenched, she rested her head back on her pillow and nodded her thanks.

Regaining her voice, Serena asked Lauren to fill in the gaps about the explosion as well as her own medical situation, to which the doctor answered honestly, explaining all the possible issues that could arise during her recovery.

"It's hard to keep an Ignis down." she rasped, once she had absorbed all the information that the blonde had given her, causing them both to grin.

Lauren quickly grew serious as she looked directly into her bodyguard's eyes. "There are no words to express how thankful I am to you. You put your life on the line to protect Nayara and me and you almost died in the process."

"I was just doing my job." Serena responded humbly.

The blonde shook her head, disagreeing. "You and I both know that it was more than that. I will never forget what you-"

"Lauren." Serena said quietly, interrupting the doctor.

It was one word but it was enough to halt the blonde in mid-sentence. The Ignis had never called her by her first name before and it got her attention.

"I owe you an apology." The Ignis said softly as she maintained eye contact. "I was supposed to tell you about the Succubus and her friend coming here but I didn't want to upset or distract you from your work. I thought it would be better to wait till you were done and we were on our way back to Camp but then we were attacked and now it's too late." Serena said regretfully. "I'm sorry that I didn't tell you."

Lauren was surprised and touched by the Ignis' unexpected apology. "You have nothing to apologize for." she said gently.

"I let you down!" she said agitatedly; her failure eating at her. "Before we left for the jungle, the Ash told me they were coming. I knew that the Succubus' presence would be an issue for you and instead of telling you the truth, I allowed you to get blindsided." She wheezed and grimaced as her chest contracted in pain against broken ribs.

The doctor was surprised that Serena was more concerned about her feelings than the fact that she just woke from a coma. Lauren smiled sweetly and gave her bodyguard's hand a reassuring squeeze. "Serena, never apologize for trying to be considerate of my feelings. You're my friend and that's what friends do." She said genuinely. "It means a lot that you were looking out for me."

The words sunk in and relief washed over the Ignis' face as she realized that Lauren wasn't upset or disappointed. "So, we're good?" she asked tiredly; exhaustion suddenly tugging at her.

"Yes, we're good." The blonde reiterated gently. "Why don't you get some rest? I'll sit with you till you fall asleep."
"Okay." she mumbled as she gave in to her exhaustion and closed heavy-lidded eyes. Lauren continued to hold Serena's hand as she quickly drifted off to sleep with a faint smile on her face, thankful for the comfort and company of a friend.

**Shopping district in Brasilia (early afternoon)**

Nayara dropped the women off at the shopping outlet and arranged to meet them in a few hours after she completed her errands. She had told Lauren of her intent so that the three women would have some time together and when they were ready, Lauren would call her. Bo was more than happy with this arrangement as it meant that she would finally be alone with her two favorite people.

Kenzi was giddy and almost skipping from store to store. She didn't like being cooped up and was ecstatic to be out of the Fae compound and in normal civilization; getting a glimpse of Brasilia; and most importantly, shopping. Bo knew that the Goth was bored at the compound so it made her happy to see her enjoying some aspect of this trip. Lauren, meanwhile, was amused by the younger woman's energy and enthusiasm as she excitedly prattled on about the different stores, clothes and shoes.

The trio talked and laughed as they walked through the sprawling shopping complex searching for appropriate clothing and footwear for the jungle. Bo quickly found everything that she needed whereas Kenzi was holding out for the perfect outfit which she said would *call out to her* when she found it. Of course, the Goth had other ideas about what was considered appropriate and Lauren had to be the voice of reason on more than one occasion, explaining that wearing four inch platform heeled leather boots and all black clothing would not be practical in the jungle. In each instance, Kenzi grumbled about a certain doctor's *vanilla taste* and reluctantly replaced the fashionable items.

A couple hours had passed and the sun was beginning to set, casting beautiful hues of orange and gold against the buildings. Bo found her energy waning as she fell behind the two women who were talking and laughing while they shopped. She couldn't understand why she felt so lethargic until it dawned on her that it had been a while since she had taken care of her Succubus. She had never forgotten to feed before but with all the excitement and stress of making her way to Brazil, Lauren being attacked and their trying to work on their friendship, she had simply forgotten.

For the past few days Bo had been staving off severe headaches but didn't think anything of it, however, once she calculated that she hadn't fed in ten days, everything made sense. Despite her being able to go long stretches without chi since her Dawning, this was by far the longest Bo had gone and she knew that she had exceeded her limit. Recognizing this made her feel incredibly foolish for not seeing the signs and she chastised herself as her hunger intensified - she felt weak, her headache was turning into a migraine and her abdominal spasms were growing more frequent.

Bo just wanted to enjoy her time with Lauren and Kenzi but instead it was taking everything she had to not lose control. She wanted to be strong and fight her nature but more than anything, she wanted to be respectful of Lauren. Despite her extreme discomfort, she was adamant that she would endure until Kenzi got her shopping done and once back at the compound, she would slip away and take care of her hunger.

Thirty minutes passed and Kenzi still hadn't found anything she liked so Bo continued with her charade and paced back and forth restlessly. Unfortunately, time picked at her resolve and her blue-eyed Succubus would appear whenever a customer or sales clerk caught her attention. In each instance, Bo quickly reined herself in and averted her gaze or blinked her eyes shut before anyone noticed.
Kenzi and Lauren tried on various clothes and joked around with one another, all the while recognizing that Bo had grown unusually quiet and distant but neither knew why. All their attempts to involve her only resulted in her temporary participation and subsequent return to her silent, brooding self, so they eventually just let her be.

Bo knew that she was being anti-social but it was taking all of her focus to keep herself together. With her pain and irritability increasing, it was becoming more difficult to hide her discomfort so she opted to remain quiet in order to avoid saying something that she could regret later.

Three quarters of an hour later, Kenzi purchased the last of her gear and Bo instantly felt relief knowing that they would leave soon. Waiting for the Goth to find what she needed had tested Bo's willpower and she resorted to imagining herself being back at the compound feeding from random Fae. That and her silent mantra to hang on a little longer, were the only things keeping her together. Closing her eyes and taking deep breaths to subdue the gnawing ache, she tuned out everyone and everything around her.

"Bo, are you hungry?" Lauren asked breaking the brunette out of her meditative state.

The brunette's eyes shot open. "Sorry, what?!" she asked as her heart beat rapidly in her chest.

"I was telling Kenzi about this Churrascaria restaurant nearby that serves the most delicious barbequed food." The blonde explained. "I called Nayara and she's going to meet us there."

"Umm, sounds good." Bo stammered, relieved that she was able to hide her hunger from Lauren but at the same time, felt frustrated and miserable now that relief was no longer in sight. Trying not to grimace, she took a couple more deep breaths to suppress her pain.

"Are you alright?" Lauren asked as she moved in closely and gently touched Bo's arm.

The Succubus stiffened slightly at her touch; her hunger making her hyper aware and sensitive to everything. "I… I just have a headache." Bo said, downplaying her situation and casually stepping out of the doctor's reach.

Before the blonde could say anything, Kenzi piped up drawing both women's attention. "Maybe it's a hunger headache Bo Bo. I always get a headache when I'm hungry." she said casually. Tilting her head to one side, she added thoughtfully, "Or maybe my headaches are from a lack of alcohol?"

The Goth was in too much of a good mood to see how close to the truth she was about her best friend. "But on to the business at hand!" Kenzi said, changing the conversation to one that was near and dear to her heart – food. "Alright Doc, how good is the food at this joint? Is it just meh or will it rock my world?"

Lauren smiled brightly at the younger woman. "The food is amazing! You won't be disappointed. Their meat is tender and full of flavour. You will be in meat heaven!" the blonde exclaimed excitedly.

The Goth's eyes twinkled and the corner of her mouth quirked. "I didn't think you were into meat."

Kenzi let her playful comment sink in before shaking her head. "I dunno Hot Pants, we have different tastes. This is probably my only chance to go to a restaurant here and I don't want to waste it at this Chewbacca place."

Lauren rolled her eyes at the younger woman's double entendre and for doubting her taste. Normally the blonde would've let the comment pass but she felt slighted and compelled to defend herself.
"Chewbacca is a character from Star Wars. This is a Churrascaria—"

Kenzi raised her hands in the air and huffed, "Chewyrassaca. That's what I said!"

"It's pronounced Chew-ruh-scare-ee-uh. And I'm so certain that you will love the food there that I'm willing to bet on it!" she blurted out boldly, surprising both herself and the Goth.

The younger woman raised her eyebrows in shock, accompanied by a sly grin of anticipation. "Oh really?!

The doctor simply nodded confidently and smiled.

"Alright Lewis, you're on! Loser pays up when we're both back in Toronto."

"Agreed!"

"If I don't think the food is to die for, you're buying me beverages… lots of beverages! You have to match me shot for shot and as long as I'm drinking, you're drinking. There will be no tapping out Feather Weight." Kenzi said smugly as she rubbed her hands together in glee. She was confident that she was going to win and couldn't wait to rub that fact in Lauren's face all night long. The Goth honestly didn't think that she and the doctor shared the same taste in food and figured that even if the meal was okay it would be easy for her to pretend that she didn't like it. Kenzi could con anyone and knew that this was going to be an easy score. Unable to suppress her grin, she added arrogantly, "And cuz I'm totes considerate, you can pick the bar."

"Deal!" Lauren said as she quietly considered what would mortify the young woman. A few moments passed before a glint appeared in her eyes and she smiled widely. "When you start salivating and asking for second and third helpings, just know that I told you so. To cement that momentous occasion, we will go to a bar where you will publically declare to Bo and myself, that I..." the blonde indicated to herself with her thumb for emphasis, "was right and that you trust my taste… in food. You will then sing a song of my choosing and you cannot lip synch or complain about the song." Lauren said smirking. "And to show how considerate I am, you can choose which bar we go to."

"You're on!" Kenzi said before spitting in her palm and shaking Lauren's hand vigorously to seal the deal.

"Bo, you're our witness!" the Goth exclaimed; she was enjoying herself thoroughly and looked forward to getting the doctor drunk out of her mind.

Even though she was in a lot of discomfort, the Succubus clearly heard Lauren include her in the plan to go out once she was back in Toronto. Her saying this was an indication that Lauren still wanted her in her life. It was a little thing but Bo couldn't help but smile at this fact, as well as the wager that both women had agreed upon. She knew that Kenzi could never back down from a bet but what really surprised her was seeing this playful and mischievous side of Lauren. The brunette knew that whoever won, it would be very entertaining to see the loser pay.

Spending the entire afternoon and evening shopping worked up their appetites and as the women opened the doors of the Churrascaria they were greeted by the delicious aroma of barbequed meat that made them salivate. The restaurant had a warm and inviting atmosphere and the murmurings from various conversations merged into one loud, unintelligible sound that filled the dining room and filtered out into the waiting area. It wasn't much longer before the women were guided to a table for four where Bo made sure to sit across from Lauren.
By the time Nayara arrived and sat next to the blonde, Lauren had already explained how the Passadores would stop by with various selections of meat on long skewers and that the double sided coasters on their table – one side green for 'yes' and the other side red for 'no' – was a visible indicator of whether the meat waiters should continue to bring food to them. While they waited for their meals, Kenzi talked excitedly and explained their bet to Nayara. Bo, meanwhile, remained quiet as her level of discomfort and mood worsened.

The quartet sipped at their beer and watched waiters zip around tables as plates of rice, beans and sweet potato were placed in front of them. It wasn't long before the first Passadore stopped at their table with barbequed pork ribs followed shortly by another with juicy strips of beef sirloin. Their attention immediately shifted to the sizzling cuts of meat offered to them and as the waiter left there was no delay in diving into their food.

They had only taken a couple mouthfuls when a loud, contented groan sounded. Kenzi was devouring her meal with fervour and releasing satisfied grunts between bites. She was so preoccupied with the food in front of her that she didn't realize that her companions had stopped eating and were grinning at her. By the time she was aware that she was the centre of attention, it was too late to fake-hate her meal. Slapping her forehead, the Goth shook her head in disgust at how quickly and easily she had lost the bet and to Lauren of all people.

The blonde couldn't hold back her smile; it had been a long time since she had this much fun and winning a bet against the Goth was icing on the cake. "From the way you just cleaned your plate, I'm guessing that you enjoyed your meal." Lauren said with a twinkle in her eye and laughter laced in her voice. "I'm relieved that I didn't waste your only opportunity to eat at a Brazilian restaurant. Just know that I can't wait to see your performance."

Kenzi's clean plate was proof of how much she enjoyed the food and she knew that there was no escaping her fate. Shrugging her shoulders, she grabbed the green coaster and waved it enthusiastically in the air to get a waiter's attention. If she was going to accept defeat and pay the price, she might as well make the most of it and right now, she wanted seconds.

Bo had enjoyed her meal but it didn't do anything to quell her hunger. She tried to participate in the dinner conversation but all she could think about was feeding. It was one repetitive, obsessive thought that was driving her crazy and which tested her control over her Succubus. The brunette's patience was growing short and her foul mood was further exasperated by her jealousy whenever she observed Lauren and Nayara interact.

The doctors were simply enjoying their much needed break away from the lab after countless days of trials and though they were trying not to get their hopes up, it was difficult to not celebrate a little over serum 'Lima-109'. Any rational person could see this however, with the Succubus' hunger in high gear, logic was non-existent. In the her mind, Nayara and Lauren were blatantly flirting in front of her under the guise of innocent smiles and laughter; and her belief that they were in a sexual relationship fueled her anger and jealousy.

After flipping the coaster over to red for the fifth time that night, Kenzi plopped back in her chair and groaned happily while rubbing her stomach. "Uhhh, I think I'm going to explode. Spill Hot Pants! How did you find this heavenly place?"

Lauren chuckled at the younger woman. "Well, we were getting ready to head out into the field for the very first time when I realized that I didn't have any gear for trekking through the forest. I asked Nay if she would take me shopping and afterwards, she brought Serena and I here." The blonde smiled at the memory.
"It was my first time out of the compound since arriving in Brazil so it was my first opportunity to experience the people and culture. It was also the first time in a long while that I had gone sightseeing or shopping. I had forgotten how much fun it could be." Lauren looked over at Nayara as she spoke and their eyes met. "I had a wonderful time that evening." she said smiling. Everything about that night came flooding back and in that instance, their thoughts wandered to the moment they shared, inadvertently causing their auras to flare.

It only took Lauren a split second to compose herself and move past the memory and the emotions they evoked, however, Bo saw what transpired and it spurred her jealousy over the edge. The Succubus had been quiet most of the evening but couldn't bite her tongue after seeing the desire between both doctors. "Sounds like a night of *firsts* for you Lauren." she said as she fake-smiled through the double meaning of her words.

The blonde wasn't sure what to make of Bo's comment - if it was just a simple statement or if there was negativity hidden behind it. All she knew was that it would be very easy to overreact and that was the last thing that she wanted to do. Not wanting to jump to conclusions, Lauren responded with a faint smile and instead initiated a conversation with Kenzi, who was oblivious to what had just occurred.

The drive back to the compound was relaxing for everyone but Bo. The Succubus was seething as she replayed the doctors' reactions to each other. She had always sensed that there was something between them and seeing their auras flare corroborated her gut feeling. It just irked her that Lauren hadn't said anything especially since she had been completely open about how she felt. Stewing in her anger, the brunette remained silent during the drive, averting her eyes periodically whenever they flashed blue.

Upon their arrival at the compound, the Succubus offered to walk Lauren back to her apartment; her possessiveness and desire to be alone with the blonde trumping her immediate need to feed. It was obvious to Kenzi and Nayara that they wanted some time together so after they said good night, they made their way to Néctar for a post-shopping celebration.

Lauren's apartment

The blonde was humming softly to herself. It was a wonderful end to a wonderful day - her test serum was looking promising as a viable antidote; Serena woke from her coma; she had a fun afternoon and evening with people she cared about; and her relationship with Bo was progressing better than she could have imagined. For the first time in a long time, things seemed to be going her way and Lauren was happy.

"Would you like something to drink? I have beer, wine and juice." Lauren offered as she walked into her kitchen.

"Surprise me." Bo said as nonchalantly as possible, closing her eyes briefly when she felt them turn. Regaining control, she walked around the apartment to distract herself and spotted a guitar in the corner of the living room. "Do you play?" she asked, indicating to the instrument as Lauren handed her an ice cold beer.

"I used to years ago and decided to pick it up again. Surprisingly, I'm not as rusty as I thought I would be." The blonde said with a smile.

The brunette turned back to look at the guitar. "Yet another thing I don't know about you." she muttered under her breath.
Lauren had just barely heard the comment and was taken aback. It was definitely not the reaction that she had expected. "Sorry?" she said, thinking that she had misheard.

The Succubus grew inexplicably angry and whipped around to face her. "I said it's just another thing that I don't know about you. What else are you keeping from me!?"

"What are you talking about?" Lauren asked as she furrowed her brow in confusion.

"You and Nayara!" she accused. "What aren't you telling me?!

Lauren's confusion was rapidly receding and turning to frustration. "What does Nayara have to do with anything? She's my friend."

"Your auras say otherwise!" the brunnette spat out as she raised her voice.

Lauren clenched her jaw and stared at Bo in disbelief; she couldn't understand why she was being so confrontational when things were going so well between them. Turning away she placed her beer on the coffee table and took a calming breath, realizing that Bo must've seen her reaction at dinner. Looking back at the brunette, she purposely kept her voice even and calm. "Yes, we are attracted to one another and we had a moment where we kissed but it never went any further because we didn't want to ruin our friendship."

"Friends! Right!" Bo said incredulously. "Kenzi is my friend and you don't see me kissing her!"

Lauren couldn't remain calm any longer; she was tired of Bo's jealousy and was disappointed that she had believed she had changed. "True, you don't kiss your friends - you only have sex with them to heal!" she said, raising her voice in retaliation. The comment caught the brunette off guard and her inner Succubus growled. "Dyson has nothing to do with this!"

"Yes, just like he had nothing to do with any of the problems in our relationship." The blonde said sarcastically. "I can't believe that you have the gall to be angry that I kissed another woman when we weren't together but I can't be upset that you had sex with your ex while we were a couple?" she retorted as she took a step back; the physical and emotional distance between them widening.

"I was hurt and had to heal!" Bo yelled in response. "For someone who always said that they would never judge me for what I am, you're very comfortable throwing my being a Succubus back in my face."

You could've healed with anyone. It's not your Succubus nature that I am questioning but rather who you chose to heal with!" Lauren raised her hands in disbelief that Bo still didn't understand. "You chose Dyson even though you knew how insecure I was about him and your history together." she said dejectedly.

Lauren's argument and emotion-filled voice instantly took the wind out of the brunnette's sails and deflated her anger. She rubbed her hands over her face and exhaled loudly as she regained control over her raging Succubus. "This is always going to be between us isn't it?" Bo asked softly, regret etched on her face.

The blonde massaged her temples. "Look, I'm sorry I brought it up. I'm really trying to let it go but it's difficult." she sighed out. "But what the hell, Bo? What's with demanding to know if I'm in a relationship and questioning who my friends are? I am not your possession!" Lauren declared.

The blonde had run the gamut of emotions and felt drained. In a tired, sad voice, she asked, "Is it
really so hard to believe that someone other than you, would find me attractive or want my friendship?"

Lauren's words made impact and the brunette's tone and attitude softened. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be possessive." She said apologetically. "And no, I don't find it hard to believe that Nayara finds you attractive. You are an incredibly beautiful, caring and brilliant woman. Anyone would be a fool to not want to be a part of your life." Bo stated honestly. She was ashamed of her behaviour and didn't know how to convey how sorry she was or explain that her hunger caused her to act like an immature, jealous teenager.

Lauren's voice interrupted Bo's self-depreciating thoughts. "Nayara is a wonderful woman. She's been extremely supportive, understanding and caring and has been a great friend to me… something that has been lacking in my life."

"I've always been your friend… I still am." the brunette defended.

"Are you saying that I can't have more than one friend? You are surrounded by friends and family: Kenzi, Trick, Dyson, Tamsin and Hale. Is my very limited social life only supposed to revolve around you and your social network?"

"That… that's not what I meant." Bo stammered. "They're your friends too Lauren."

"Please!" the blonde said disbelievingly.

"You have Kenzi, Hale and Trick in your corner. And you have me." Bo said softly, trying to convince the blonde that she wasn't alone.

"Don't tell me what I have!" Lauren snapped; her anger and frustration rumbling in her voice. "I'm a slave! I have no freedom, belongings or relationships. All I have is the work assigned to me. Everything belongs to the Light Fae in Toronto… even my life. So, trust me, I am perfectly aware of what I have."

Bo stood there stunned, not knowing what to say. Lauren's words echoed in her head and churned in the silent tension that was growing between them.

Lauren took a deep breath and exhaled slowly in an attempt to control her rising emotions. She wanted Bo to understand which meant that she had to be completely open and honest. Casting aside her fear and insecurities, she spoke in a soft but tired voice. "Apart from work, you were all that I had that meant anything to me. And when I lost you, I lost the only thing in my life that brought me any happiness-"

"But you didn't lose me!" Bo interrupted, taking a step closer trying to bridge the distance between them. She couldn't stand the fact that Lauren felt so lost and alone.

The doctor looked directly in Bo's eyes and the brunette could see the hopelessness reflected in her brown orbs. "In my heart, I lost you. How was I supposed to go back to a life of complete emptiness after experiencing joy? That was my reality and I just… couldn't."

Bo's heart broke at Lauren's admission. The brunette went to comfort her but Lauren stepped back and out of reach; she couldn't say what she had to if she was being held.

The doctor wrapped her arms around herself and took a steadying breath. "I came here to help but it was also an opportunity for me to try and recover from everything that went wrong between us. I didn't come here looking to form new relationships – that just happened."
"I cherish Nayara's friendship. She is the one thing that I have that is completely independent of the Light Fae in Toronto and of you and yours." There was no malice behind Lauren's words, only the truth of what she felt. Looking into the brunette's eyes, she said warily, "Can you understand how important that is to me, Bo?"

Bo nodded; she was speechless as she absorbed the weight of Lauren's words. It was the first time that the blonde had ever directly expressed how she felt about being a slave to the Light and how isolated she felt. Even though Bo always hated that the Fae controlled her life, she never really comprehended the extent of Lauren's situation but what was worse was that she never asked or tried to understand. The realization of which made the brunette feel incredibly selfish and guilty for being oblivious to what Lauren had been enduring.

"So to answer your question, despite what happened between Nayara and I, we are good friends and nothing more. You just have to accept that."

The brunette sighed, her shoulders hunched forward under the weight of her mistakes and immaturity. She had allowed her Succubus to act out of anger, destroying any progress that they had made and now she could only hope that Lauren would allow her to make amends. "You're right. Who you're attracted to and who your friends are, is none of my concern." she said meekly. "And I know it doesn't excuse my horrible behaviour but I am sorry for being such a jerk. I just see how much Nayara is attracted to you and it drives me crazy." she admitted, embarrassed by her jealousy.

"Now you know how I felt when Dyson was around you." Lauren explained. "It upset me that he was a part of your life but I had to accept it."

"But you didn't accept it!" Bo said, unintentionally raising her voice in frustration at this never ending issue between them.

"I haven't because you ripped the chi out of Kenzi and I without giving us a second thought! I felt insignificant while you treated Dyson like he was all that mattered." Lauren yelled back in reaction to Bo's outburst.

The brunette rubbed the nape of her neck and reined in her frustration. In a softer tone, she said, "I don't know how many times I can say this. I would've done the same if it were you or Kenzi that was lying there. There was no special treatment because it was Dyson." Bo said, hoping that Lauren would believe the truth of her words.

The doctor clenched her jaw in an attempt to contain her exasperation but was failing. "You still don't get it! It's not that you saved Dyson's life; it's the fact that you didn't seem to care that you could've killed us in the process. You never checked on Kenzi or I afterwards when we collapsed. You never asked how we were or if we were hurt. And you never even acknowledged what you did, which was take our chi without permission - something that you never would've done before. Your only concern was Dyson."

Lauren's words echoed in Bo's mind as she stood there mute with her head bowed. She had always feared that there may have been some resentment or hurt feelings for taking Lauren's and Kenzi's chi and now that fear was a reality. Bo knew in her heart that she did what she had to in order to save Dyson but the shame of it still ate at her.

The awkward silence grew between them. Both women were exhausted from arguing and from re-opening their emotional wounds. Lauren sighed tiredly and broke the lull. "I let Nayara feed from me." she said in an almost whisper. She continued to stare at a point on the wall behind Bo, her voice cracking as she spoke, "My heart was broken and I just couldn't function. I couldn't take it anymore so I asked Nayara to feed from me."
Bo was on an emotional roller coaster – she felt her heart constrict when she heard the pain in Lauren's voice; followed by guilt knowing that she was the reason for it; and then a myriad of other feelings upon hearing what the blonde said. "You did what?!" she exclaimed as her head snapped up with her eyes flashing blue.

The brunette immediately squeezed her eyes shut and didn't open them until she was back in control. She didn't know how to feel about Lauren's revelation. A part of her was angry that the blonde allowed herself to be fed upon even though she understood why; and the other part of her was sad. Lauren trusted Nayara with an incredibly intimate and personal act that she and Lauren had shared only on the rare occasion. Those moments were special and now the blonde had experienced something similar with Nayara. The whole situation represented how far their relationship had fallen and even though she couldn't fault Lauren for it, it was upsetting nonetheless.

The doctor was tired of hiding her feelings and tip toeing around their problems; she just wanted everything to be out in the open. "Every day here was a struggle and I felt like I was drowning. I threw myself into my work but I couldn't think or focus because I was depressed." Lauren's shoulders tensed at the memory. "Nayara didn't want to feed from me. I had to beg her to take my emotions away just so that I wouldn't feel any more pain. And even though it was temporary, it was worth it because when she fed, it was warm and comforting and afterwards, I felt happy and at peace."

Bo hated hearing about Nayara feeding from Lauren. She gently rubbed the inside of her nose bridge as her migraine intensified. "Why are you telling me this!?" she asked in a wounded voice.

"I don't tell you this to hurt you, Bo. I am telling you because you wanted to know the truth and because I'm tired of hiding. You need to know that when you took my chi to save Dyson, I felt my life force being ripped from me. I was terrified that I was going to die and I felt helpless to stop it." Lauren unconsciously wrapped her arms around her torso at the memory. "Nayara didn't want to feed from me. I had to beg her to take my emotions away just so that I wouldn't feel any more pain. And even though it was temporary, it was worth it because when she fed, it was warm and comforting and afterwards, I felt happy and at peace."

"If Nayara is so wonderful and you're attracted to each other, why are you only friends then?! Why are you even here with me?!" Bo shouted in retaliation. She was hurt and upset to hear how amazing it was when Nayara fed from Lauren and how terrifying it was with her.

"Because I'm still in love with you!" Lauren yelled, unable to hold back the truth any longer. "Even after everything that has happened between us." she sobbed.

Bo turned away as she her eyes brimmed with tears; she was happy and relieved to know that Lauren was still in love with her but at the same time, she also felt incredible shame and regret. When she turned to face Lauren again, the blonde was surprised to see remorse reflected in brown eyes instead of an angry, blue-eyed Succubus.

"There are no words to express how sorry I am." Bo breathed out as tears rolled down her cheeks. The brunette looked into Lauren's eyes as she spoke and hoped that she could hear the truth in her voice. "When I saw Dyson lying dead on the ground, I couldn't control her and my Succubus side took over… Not that it matters what side of me was in charge… I take full responsibility for what I did. I don't regret saving him but I do regret how I went about doing it and how I reacted afterwards."

The brunette hugged herself as she spoke in a soft, sad voice. "I knew that I stole your and Kenzi's chi but at the time, I didn't realize the extent of what I had done. I just couldn't believe that I had actually brought Dyson back to life. I was so happy and relieved that he wasn't dead and when the shock of that moment wore off, that's when it hit me that I could've killed you both."
Looking down, she wiped the tears from her eyes. "I was ashamed that I took from you both and I was frightened by what could've happened but I didn't know what to do so instead, I focused on Dyson." Bo admitted. "There's no Hallmark card for saying *Sorry for almost sucking the life out of you. I hope you're okay.* Everything I wanted to say was insignificant compared to almost killing you both." She confessed.

Terrified of the answer but needing to know the truth, Bo asked hesitantly, "Are... are you afraid of me because of what I did?"

"No, Bo. I'm not afraid of you. I never have been." Lauren said gently, aware of the brunette's belief that she was a monster.

Despite the relief from Lauren's answer, it didn't alleviate the regret that she felt. "I don't expect you to forgive me when I can't even forgive myself. I am genuinely sorry for what I did and for making you think that I didn't care about you."

As a doctor to the Fae, Lauren appreciated their biology and even understood how Bo's Succubus' side would've taken control, however as her former lover, the entire situation was a tough pill to swallow. Despite her hurt feelings, Lauren saw the sincerity in Bo's eyes and heard it in her voice. In her heart, she knew that the brunette's actions were not done out of malice and even though she had felt hurt and insignificant, she couldn't hold the Succubus' actions against her. So with a nod of her head and a faint smile, she accepted the brunette's apology.

Bo was thankful that Lauren found it in her heart to forgive her but she knew that they had a very rocky road ahead. Both women didn't know what else to say after they had dragged out everything that they had repressed, into the light and dissected into a million pieces. After what seemed like an eternity of silence, Lauren broke the stillness. "I need to call it a night. I'm beat and I have a long day at the lab tomorrow." she said tiredly.

The brunette had always been passionate and impulsive but never in the declaration of her feelings, however, since her arrival in Brazil, she had been completely honest with Lauren and more forthcoming about how she felt. Because of this, she was incredibly disappointed that her insolent behaviour had just sabotaged whatever headway they had made.

As they walked the short distance to the front door, Bo's stomach plummeted, fearing that she was on the verge of losing everything. She wasn't one for begging but at this point she didn't care if she seemed desperate or pathetic; all she wanted was to make things right with Lauren. As Bo opened the door, she hesitated and turned to look into the blonde's eyes; a mix of emotions playing on her face. "Please..." her voice cracked with anxiety and sadness, "don't give up on me."

Bo's statement, *Don't give up on me* was humbling and though it seemed a simple request, it was anything but. It carried multiple connotations: it was Bo's request for another chance; it was about accountability and her desire to correct her mistakes; it was the hope that things weren't beyond repair; and it was her acknowledgement that the decision rested solely with Lauren.

The blonde knew that they were at a pivotal point and that the ball was completely in her court but she took no satisfaction from it. "Just give me some time to process everything okay?" she said trying to provide some positivity despite her disappointment and the heaviness in her heart. She didn't want things to be final between them but she was also at a loss as to how to continue from this point. Bo had apologized and seemed genuine but Lauren didn't know if it would be temporary like the last apology. She was tired of their turbulent ebb and flow and just wanted to move forward.
"I'll see you tomorrow." Lauren added in an attempt to give them both some hope.

Bo nodded and said good night before leaving the apartment. She had no idea of where she stood with the doctor but knew that she couldn't push things further. She had no other option but to wait for Lauren to make a decision and one way or another she would have to accept her choice. With a heavy heart, Bo walked down the hallway lost in her thoughts.

Lauren shut the door and leaned against it; placing her face in her hands and sighing loudly before running her fingers through wavy hair. Resting her head back against the door, she wondered how things could've taken a turn for the worst so quickly. She had a wonderful day and it was only yesterday that she felt giddy and excited around Bo and what their future could hold. But now, everything was eclipsed by feelings of disappointment, doubt and confusion. Lauren wasn't one to be negative but for some reason it seemed that every time they took a step forward, they countered it by taking two steps back.

It was late and all Lauren wanted was to go to bed and not think or feel. Pushing away from the door, she made her way to her bedroom to retire for the night. As she collapsed onto her mattress, sleep quickly took hold and she began to drift off, unsure of what tomorrow would bring.

_TBC_
Truth and Consequences - part 1

Chapter Notes

I apologize for the HUGE gap in between posts. My RL situation has let up but only slightly so unfortunately my free time is still impacted. I don’t know when next I’ll be able to post but I assure you that it won’t be anywhere near as long as this last drought.

I can’t express how much I appreciate your patience and all the friendly reminders and well wishes that I’ve received. I realize that an ungodly amount of time has passed but I do have a plan in place for this story all the way to the very end.

To those of you who have decided to stick with "Time", thank you so much. And finally, thanks to T for enduring my endless questions and multiple revisions - I owe you big time!

Bo strode into Néctar with a purpose and was surprised to find that it was fairly busy with most of the tables and chairs occupied. Being with Lauren had lulled her hunger momentarily but now it was back with a vengeance and unbearable. Her eyes were constantly switching from brown to blue and back again and it was taking all of her effort to remain in control and from doubling over in pain. The Succubus scanned the room till her gaze fell upon the woman at the bar. Keeping an eye on her target, she weaved through the crowd and strutted towards her.

The brunette had just placed her order and as she turned away from the bartender, walked straight into the Succubus. “Omph! Desculpe.” Nayara said before realizing who she had bumped into. “Bo? What are you doing here?” The doctor asked, surprised to see her at Néctar and Lauren nowhere in sight.

Assuming that she must be looking for her best friend, she said, “If you’re looking for Kenzi, she’s in the midst of that group over there.” Nayara pointed to the far corner of the room to where Kenzi was surrounded by approximately 20 Fae and human lab personnel; all drinking, laughing and talking. “Not only did she talk my staff and I into doing shots in order to unwind but she somehow got us to pay for hers… hence my turn at the bar.” The Fae doctor chuckled.

“Kenzi can be very convincing.” Bo said, smiling at her friend’s antics. “But I was looking for you.”

“Oh?”

Despite all of Kenzi’s advice with regards to Nayara, it took her argument with Lauren for Bo to finally understand and get past her jealousy. She had fallen back into old habits and couldn’t see how she was making a mess of things which was exactly what Kenzi was trying to help her avoid. Now she was hoping to make things right. Taking a deep breath, she released it and looked into the doctor’s eyes. “I want to apologize.” Bo said sincerely. “I’ve been a complete jerk towards you since I got here… I was jealous and I lashed out at you repeatedly and you didn’t deserve that. I am truly sorry Nayara.”

“Don’t forget to add that you were a proud, immature ass.” Nayara said in a firm tone while maintaining eye contact.
The Succubus clenched and unclenched her jaw at being called her out on her poor behaviour. “You’re right.” She sighed and gave her head a slight nod, accepting the truth. “I have been a complete and total ass but I’ve banished my childish Succubus self… never to return.”

The Empath took a long, hard look at Bo as she quietly assessed her – the Succubus standing in front of her was definitely not the arrogant, petulant woman that had been rude from the moment she arrived in her country. Instead, she saw a dejected, humbled woman before her; her brown eyes filled with sadness and shame.

Bo’s fear that she couldn’t repair things with the Fae doctor grew the longer that Nayara remained silent. However, after a few more moments, the doctor leaned in and smiled genuinely, “Apology accepted.”

Bo wrinkled her brow. “Just like that?!” she asked surprised.

“Yes, just like that. Unless you didn’t mean it?”

“No! I mean, yes, I meant what I said. It’s just… I was a real bitch to you. I guess I didn’t expect to be forgiven so easily.”

Nayara shrugged her shoulders and maintained her smile. “Life is too long to hold grudges, Bo.”

The Succubus was still taken aback that Nayara had forgiven her and all she could do was simply nod her head quietly. She knew that if the shoe were on the other foot she most likely would be a little resentful but she was very thankful that the Empath didn’t share the same sentiment. The brunette knew that she still had a ways to go to be the bigger person and wasn’t quite finished swallowing her pride. “I also wanted to say thank you. I’m glad that Lauren has you on her side, looking out for her. She values your friendship greatly and after everything that she’s been through… well, it says a lot about how important you are to her.”

Nayara smiled brightly at her sincerity. “I cherish Lauren’s friendship as well and would do anything for her. But I appreciate your saying.”

Bo gave Nayara a soft smile, relieved at being able to make things right with her. But now that she had accomplished what she had set out to do, there was nothing keeping her distracted from her hunger. It had been an extremely long day of fighting off her appetite and she hadn’t realized how much it had taken its toll until her vision blurred and she staggered backwards.

It was only Nayara’s hands on her arm and waist that kept her from falling. “Bo, are you alright?” she asked as she steadied and guided her towards a nearby stool.

“I’ve been… better.” she said in an attempt to downplay her condition.

Nayara watched Bo’s eyes change from blue to brown and observed her link her shaking hands together on her lap. “You’re hungry aren’t you?” she asked in concern.

Bo ducked her head in embarrassment and released a heavy sigh. “Starving, actually.” she admitted in a quiet voice, relieved to not be hiding the truth anymore. “It’s been a long time since I fed and my hunger took me by surprise. I’ve been fighting it all day and was planning on feeding once we got back here but—” Bo stopped in mid-sentence and released a sad chuckle instead. “Well, let’s just say that I’ve done a shitty job of keeping it together.” she said regretfully.

When Nayara didn’t respond and simply looked at her, Bo realized that she had just confessed to her ex-girlfriend’s best friend that she needed to feed and panic quickly set in. “I mean, I don’t have to have sex to feed.” She quickly blurted out in an attempt to explain herself. “I can siphon chi instead
but because it’s been awhile since I’ve fed I will need multiple umm, sources, to get my fill and to avoid hurting anyone.”

Nayara continued to look at Bo contemplatively causing the Succubus to feel even more uneasy than she already felt but after a few seconds, the doctor quirked her eyebrow and gave Bo’s hand a quick pat. “I think I can help. Wait here.”

Bo was a bit confused – not just from the disorientation from her hunger but also at what had just transpired with Nayara. She couldn’t understand why the Empath would want to help or more importantly, what she could even do to help. Dumbfounded by the situation, she simply nodded her head and remained seated as she watched the doctor walk towards her group.

In that same moment, Kenzi caught sight of Bo and rushed over, flinging her arms around her neck and placing a very sloppy kiss to her cheek. “Bo! You’re here!” Kenzi said excitedly before proceeding to talk without taking a breath. “You’re just in time, we’re doing shots! But you’re going to have to catch up cuz I have a killer head start. The Fae here are uber generous with paying for drinks. I could totally move here if Trick takes away my free drinks for life.” Pausing to look around, she asked, “Oy! Where’s Hot Pants?”

Before Bo could respond, Kenzi put her hand up to interrupt her. “Shit, hold that thought, I gotta break the seal!” she exclaimed as she made a dash for the washroom.

Bo stood and turned her attention back to Nayara. Even though she couldn’t hear what was being said she quickly figured out that she was the topic of conversation when in one synchronized movement, all heads turned and looked at her. Bo normally enjoyed capturing a room’s attention but in this situation, she felt uncomfortable under their scrutiny. Fortunately the awkwardness didn’t last as they quickly returned their focus to the Empath.

A couple of minutes later, the predominant sound in the bar was that of screeching chairs as the entire group pushed away from their tables simultaneously, drowning out all other noise in the room. As they walked past Bo, numerous pairs of eyes glanced at her; some smiled; some gave her a polite nod; and others looked away shyly. Nayara walked up to Bo and waited till her staff had left the bar. “Follow us to the lab. They have all agreed to help you feed.”

Bo was astonished. “Why are you doing this?”

The Empath smiled warmly. “Why not? Aside from the fact that I’m a doctor and a healer, I’m also Lauren’s friend and I know that she would not want you to starve. Besides, I’ve experienced unbearable hunger and I understand.”

Bo closed her eyes momentarily and exhaled in relief. “Thank you.” she said genuinely as she looked back at Nayara and gave her a crooked smile. “I’ll meet you there. Just give me a few minutes to grab Kenzi.”

Bo watched Nayara walk out of the bar and shook her head regretfully. “I’m such a dumbass.” she muttered as she thought about how immature she’d been. Sighing, she leaned against the bar and prepared herself for the lecture she knew she was going to get from her best friend.

Lab (short while later)

Bo had given Kenzi the shortened version of why they were going to the lab which earned her a frown. “You should’ve told me what was going on!” the Goth chided her in frustration.

The brunette ducked her head to avoid seeing her best friend’s glare. “By the time I realized, we
were already out shopping. You and Lauren were having fun and I didn’t want to ruin it.”

Seeing Nayara and the entire group that she was drinking with, in the inner lab, Kenzi lowered her voice. “You should know by now that we wouldn’t want you to starve.” she said gently.

“I know. I was just trying to keep myself together. I was in a lot of pain. I still am. I just… I just didn’t want to mess things up with Lauren. And I didn’t want to make things awkward by feeding in front of her you know?” She said dejectedly, letting out a heavy sigh, “But it doesn’t matter now, I still fucked things up.”

“Oh BoBo. I’m the one who’s sorry.” Kenzi said sadly as she reached out for her friend’s hand. “I should’ve known something was up with the way you were acting. I was just excited being out of Faeville and getting my shopping freak on-”

The brunette quickly silenced her friend by placing her hands on her shoulders and giving them a gentle squeeze. “Don’t be sorry. I’m a big girl and should’ve been able to take care of my own hunger.”

Kenzi nodded her understanding before asking the question that was burning in her mind. “So what happened with Lauren?”

Bo dropped her arms, took a step back and shook her head sadly. “I was just really shitty to her Kenz. I screwed up big time and I don’t know if…” She stopped herself and sighed again. “I don’t want to get into it now. I’ll tell you later ‘kay.”

“Okay,” she agreed. The Goth respected her friend’s request, deciding that now was not the time to push the subject further but knew that she would continue this talk.

Looking over to the inner lab, Bo watched Nayara smiling and laughing with her staff. “It’s just ironic that the person that I was a total bitch to is the one helping me.”

“I told you she was cool.” Kenzi said as she elbowed her friend gently in the ribs.

“I know. You were right.” Bo said distractedly as she continued to observe the Empath.

“What was that?” Kenzi asked as she cupped her ear with her hand. “I didn’t quite hear you.”

Returning her attention to her friend, Bo rolled her eyes and acquiesced. “I said that you were right.” she purposely mumbled before nibbling on her bottom lip to keep herself from smiling.

“Annnnd?” Kenzi drawled out.

“And… I was wrong.” Bo said quietly.

“See, that wasn’t so hard. Now lemme make a note of this historic moment in my calendar.” Kenzi bragged as she pulled out her cell phone and skillfully avoided a playful swat from her best friend. “Now, if you don’t mind, I’ll just wait out here while you get your Succubus groove on.”

Nayara approached Bo as she walked into the inner lab. “I explained your situation to everyone and they are willing to help. They have never experienced a Succubus feed and though curious, are understandably hesitant as they are concerned about their safety.” Nayara paused to let the weight of their apprehension sink in before continuing. “Scientists are all about facts and data so if you wish to proceed, it would go a long way if you were honest with them; explain what will happen - what you’re going to do and what the after effects will be - and assure them that no one will get hurt.”
Bo gave the doctor a warm, comforting smile. “Please know that I appreciate their wanting to help me. I will talk to them and I promise, no one will get hurt.”

“I will hold you to that promise, Bo.” Nayara said seriously.

Bo nodded her understanding and maintained eye contact. “Thank you, Nayara. For everything.” she said sincerely.

The Empath gave her a thin smile. “I’ll be outside with Kenzi.” she said before turning to leave.

Taking a deep breath and releasing it, Bo directed her attention to the group in the centre of the room and smiled seductively. “Let’s do this.” she said under her breath before strutting over to them.

Next Morning

A hand quickly shot out from under the covers silencing the loud and annoying alarm clock. Lauren groaned and rubbed her eyes with the heels of her hands. She had spent the entire night tossing and turning, failing to stop herself from replaying the evening’s events and from supressing the multitude of emotions and questions that plagued her. It was only until the early morning hours that her thoughts had finally quieted down and sleep claimed her but with only two and a half hours of rest, her body was screaming for more. All she wanted was to stay in bed and savour the peace and quiet but unfortunately, she did not have that luxury.

Today was the day. If her test serum continued to produce successful results into the 72 hour mark tonight then they would be able to start trialing it on patients tomorrow. The doctor knew that it would be one of those hurry-up-and-wait days comprised of checking data, confirming results and ensuring that every iota was recorded. Even though it was mundane, a great deal was riding on it.

Sighing, Lauren dragged herself out of bed and slowly made her way to the bathroom, splashing water on her face in an attempt to wake up. As she stared at her reflection, thoughts of Bo snuck back into her mind, putting an end to the temporary lull. “I should’ve known.” Lauren whispered sadly as she leaned forward with her hands against the sink for support. She was frustrated and disappointed at Bo but mostly at herself for allowing hope and expectations into her heart again.

Lauren believed that things were getting better between them and couldn’t understand what happened to cause Bo’s attitude to change. The thought that maybe she was wrong crossed her mind as last night’s events proved that things were not copasetic. Whatever confidence she had in them was now replaced with doubt and all she could think was that she had read too much into their progress; that perhaps her hopefulness had skewed her perception of their situation.

She had always prided herself on being a very logical person but she couldn’t deny that every major life decision she made in the last few years was fuelled by emotion. Bringing Nadia to the Congo; enslaving herself to the Light Fae in order to save her; and trying to keep Bo from danger while also following the Ash’s orders were her top three big ones. These decisions impacted her greatly and despite all her good intentions, she regretted them immensely. Aware of her struggle between rationale and sentiment, she found herself at an impasse as to whether to protect her heart or take another chance with Bo.

Pushing away from the sink, she physically shook her head to clear her brooding thoughts. Taking a deep, cleansing breath, Lauren chastised herself for allowing her emotions to take over when she should be mentally preparing herself for what had to be done in the lab today. She knew that she had to be alert, clear headed and professional and that she couldn’t allow anything to interfere with that today, of all days. Re-directing her thoughts, the blonde focused on getting ready for work.
A short while later, Lauren found herself a quiet, unoccupied table tucked away in the corner of the dining hall. Even though she didn’t have much of an appetite, she knew that she should eat as it was going to be a long day. Despite knowing this, she couldn’t help but be distracted as she played with her food.

The blonde had unintentionally picked a table with a clear view of the entrance and every time someone walked in, she would look up from her meal to see who it was. After a few minutes of constantly glancing up from her food, she finally realized what she was doing and pushed her plate away in frustration. For the past few days, she and Bo had been meeting for breakfast and Lauren was expecting the brunette to make an appearance but as the minutes moved past their normal meet time, it became obvious that the brunette was not going to show and the doctor grew irritated.

If Lauren had to provide a friend with relationship advice, she would rationalize that Bo was probably keeping her distance in order to give her friend time to sort out her thoughts and feelings. However, being the one experiencing the relationship problem, it was difficult to see this logic. Lauren had expected her ex to be her normal impulsive self and show up for breakfast. When Bo didn’t make an appearance, the blonde felt disheartened and then annoyed because she realized that despite everything, she still wanted to see the brunette.

The doctor released a sad chuckle recognizing that she was an emotional, conflicted mess and that her plan to be alert and clear headed was quickly crumbling. Cradling her head in her hands, she closed her eyes and took a deep breath to collect herself. She knew that she had to get her mind back on track as countless lives depended on her to be professional instead of being distracted by her personal problems. She may not be able to figure out what to do or how to feel when it came to Bo but she would be damned if she let it get in the way of finding a cure for this epidemic. After taking another cleansing breath, Lauren stood up and grabbed her coffee, deciding that there was no point in delaying her arrival at the lab and that focusing on work would be exactly what she needed.

Meanwhile…

Bo woke feeling wonderful and energized, quickly whipping the sheets off her body and hopping out of bed. She felt completely sated as the chi rippled under her skin, danced behind her eyes and thrummed in her ears. Her entire body hummed and the amount of energy coursing through her made her feel as if she were levitating. Memories from the previous night quickly flooded her mind as she remembered the exact moment that she inhaled chi from Nayara’s staff, putting an end to her pain and hunger.

However, her euphoria was instantly cut short as thoughts of Lauren came rushing in. Bo felt as if she were punched in the gut, causing her to gasp for air and stagger back to sit on her bed. Every hurtful word that she said to Lauren echoed in her ears and immediately crushed her chi high. Leaning forward, she rested her forearms on her knees and wrung her hands together worriedly. Bo had known without a shadow of a doubt, that Lauren was her soul mate. It had taken losing her in Toronto to realize this and when she had, it was like a fog had lifted and she could see clearly. Everything—going back to when they had first met—finally made sense: how quickly she had fallen for her; how she had held her to a higher standard and expectation than anyone else; and why the doctor was the only one who could bring her back whenever her Succubus took over. That’s why when Lauren had lied to her, it hurt more than she could ever have imagined - more than when Dyson had - and she lashed out. Bo felt horrible for how she had treated her after the whole spy-bang and Kitsune situation but understanding how she felt about the blonde, helped her understand why she reacted the way she had.

With this awareness, Bo only wanted to make things right with Lauren but with last night’s
disastrous sequence of events, she was very aware that if the shoe were on the other foot, she would have serious concerns about their relationship. Knowing that she felt that way, how could she expect Lauren to feel differently?

Any hope that Bo had for their relationship died with that realization. All along she had been preparing for a worst case scenario of unrequited love if all Lauren wanted was friendship but she hadn’t considered that the blonde may not want her in her life in any capacity until now.

Bo desperately needed a plan. She always took pride in being able to think outside of the box as it helped her solve cases and find a way out of many predicaments but now, she found herself stuck with no solution in sight to fix things with Lauren. Knowing what the horrible outcome was going to be and not be able to avoid it was unbearable.

Glancing at her watch, she noted the time and without thinking, automatically made her way to the front door, stopping just as her hand gripped the door knob. Every fibre of her being wanted to run to the dining hall to meet Lauren but she had to force herself to respect the blonde’s wishes and give her some space. Turning abruptly, she wrapped her arms around her torso in an attempt to keep herself from falling apart and began pacing.

When Kenzi shuffled into the living room a couple hours later, that’s how she found Bo – walking back and forth across the living room, pausing sometimes to distractedly look out the window before resuming her pacing. Sitting on the couch, the younger woman stretched her arms above her head and sat back, her gaze never leaving her friend.

“There must be a coffee shortage in Brazil cuz I don’t see a hot cup of java anywhere.” The petite woman said, trying to keep the mood light while trying to ascertain how bad things really were.

Bo stopped in front of the window with her back to Kenzi, letting silence settle between them for a while before replying with a sigh. “I didn’t go to the Dining Hall for breakfast this morning.”

Raising an eyebrow, the Goth asked, “Too busy pacing?”

“I’m giving Lauren space.” Bo said in an almost whisper, her shoulders slumped.

Kenzi already knew that Bo’s mood had something to do with the blonde but was tired of wondering what had transpired. “Bo.” she said firmly to capture the brunette’s attention. “Sit down and talk to me.”

Bo felt sick to her stomach; she knew that it was her fault that things with Lauren were coming to an end and she felt useless. Sighing, she forced herself away from the window and moved to the couch; sitting next to Kenzi, she grabbed a throw pillow and hugged it to her chest. She was quiet for a while as she sorted out her thoughts but when she started talking, everything tumbled out –what she said and did in her jealous Succubus hunger-rage; how Lauren reacted; her regret; and waiting for Lauren’s decision.

Kenzi listened quietly, absorbing every word. She still couldn’t believe that she was so clueless about Bo’s hunger and felt badly for not seeing the signs. As she sat there, she wondered if the two women would be able to get back on track but what really worried her was Bo’s frame of mind. Seeing Bo hit rock bottom when Lauren left Toronto was something that Kenzi didn’t want to see her friend go through again but she couldn’t help but feel déjà vu watching Bo look so forlorn clutching the pillow.

Bo looked and was acting, defeated. Kenzi needed to give her friend some hope - she needed her to
believe that it wasn’t over and that she could still salvage things with Lauren. Prying the pillow out of her grip, she took the brunette’s hands in hers and gently squeezed them to give her some reassurance. “You need to tell Lauren the truth. Tell her that you were starving for chi and needed to feed and that you weren’t yourself because of your hunger.” she said firmly.

Bo shook her head dejectedly. “After everything, why would she believe me? She’s given me so many chances and I fucked them all up.”

“Because she’s Lauren and because she deserves to know the truth.” Kenzi said resolutely. “You said that you needed a plan. I’m giving you one. Tell her! What other choice do you have? Do nothing and watch her walk away from you forever? Is that what you want?!”

“No! That’s not what I want.” the brunette yelled out, unable to stop her tears from falling. “I love her.”

Kenzi looked at her friend with soft eyes. “Then tell her the truth.” She repeated in a firm but gentle tone.

Bo ran her fingers through her hair in frustration but when she opened her mouth to speak, there was only silence. Shaking her head sadly, she looked away and gazed at the window, trying to come to terms with her emotions.

The Goth gave the brunette’s hands a gentle squeeze to let her know that she was there for her and wasn’t judging her. It was a simple action that spoke volumes and was all the encouragement that Bo needed.

“I… I’m ashamed to face her Kenz. I was an asshole and I hurt her. Again. Part of me believes that I deserve whatever I have coming even if it means Lauren not wanting me in her life.” She whispered as she wiped at her wet cheeks.

The Goth felt her heart break at her friend’s admission. “Oh Bo, what you deserve is to be happy. You both do.” she said as she pulled the brunette into a tight embrace. Kenzi’s words ripped through whatever defences Bo had remaining and began to sob. The petite woman continued to console her friend and once the brunette stopped trembling against her, she pulled back slowly and gently wiped her tear stained cheeks.

“I owe you an apology, Kenz.” Bo said in a small voice as she looked into her friend’s eyes.

“What for?” the Goth asked, puzzled.

“For taking your chi to save Dyson and almost killing you.” Bo said sadly. “I didn’t mean to hurt you or Lauren. I was just trying to bring Dyson back and by the time I realized what I had done, I didn’t know how to face either of you. I’m so sorry.”

Kenzi looked at her friend with kind eyes. “I admit I was a little scared but I knew that you’d never intentionally hurt me. I understand why you did it. It’s all good Bo.” the petite woman said genuinely as she squeezed her friend’s hands.

The brunette wiped her bloodshot eyes and gave her friend a sad smile in response.

“How about we get cleaned up and get something to eat? We’ll both feel a little better with some food and coffee in our stomachs and then we can work on a plan. Okay?”

Bo felt drained and all she could do was nod and comply.
Kenzi helped her friend up from the couch and watched her walk to her room, all the while hoping that telling Lauren the truth would make things right between them.

*TBC*
Truth and Consequences - part 2

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the long delay, life has a way of throwing unexpected curve balls.

A very special thanks to T for her endless support and patience; and to DinahWas for her numerous revisions, helpful suggestions and for helping me stay on track.

Disclaimer: Lost Girl isn’t mine; I’m just borrowing their characters.

ICU (early afternoon)

Serena was patient when doing certain things like stakeouts; monitoring clients for hours on end; or escorting VIPs from one location to the next, day in and day out; but convalescing did not fall into her list of things that she had patience for. She didn’t do lying idly in bed; she didn’t do recuperating; and she didn’t do twiddling her thumbs even though they were restricted in a cast. If the Ignis could will herself to be a hundred percent better, she would. She would do anything and everything she could to hasten her recovery and be discharged so that she could return to work.

Having no choice but to remain in bed, the Ignis watched television and read magazines as a distraction but it didn’t work. She couldn’t stop thinking about the forest – replaying her actions and decisions and whether there was anything that she could’ve done differently; but mostly her thoughts were of concern for the doctor. It was just a matter of time before the blonde would return to the forest and she knew that she wouldn’t be well enough to accompany her to ensure her safety. The Ignis let out a low growl. She felt useless and unable to do the one thing she was sent to Brazil to do.

Before she could continue berating herself, her thoughts were interrupted by a knock at the door. Looking up, she was surprised to see the Succubus standing there.

“Hi.” Bo said quietly. “May I come in?”

Serena nodded and watched the brunette make her way to the chair next to her bed.

The brunette introduced herself. “I’m Bo.”

“I know who you are.” The Ignis said curtly as she eyed the Succubus carefully.

“Of course.” Bo said with a soft smile, ignoring Serena’s abruptness. “How are you feeling?”

“Annoyed at being stuck in here.” the Ignis snarked as she raised both arm casts in disgust. Even though her breathing was less laboured and her head no longer ached, she was still frustrated as she felt she wasn’t healing fast enough. Realizing that she should be appreciative for being alive, she added in a softer tone, “But feeling better than I did yesterday.”

“Glad to hear.” Bo said as she met Serena’s gaze. “I just wanted to thank you for keeping Lauren
safe… you’re the reason she made it back alive.” The word ‘alive’ quavered as it stumbled out of her mouth. Everything came rushing back as Bo remembered the overwhelming fear, worry and hopelessness she felt in not knowing whether Lauren was alive or dead. “I don’t think I could’ve handled it if she didn’t make it.” she said in an almost whisper with a faraway look in her eyes.

Clearing her throat, Bo quickly collected herself and re-focused on the Ignis. “I won’t forget what you did. If you ever need anything, just say the word.” she said resolutely.

All the Ignis knew of the Succubus was that she had a reputation of causing trouble wherever she went. But having Bo Dennis show her gratitude and inadvertently admit that she cared for the doctor was a big surprise that threw her expectations out the window. “I will always look out for Dr. Lewis and do everything within my power to protect her.” Serena said once she recovered from the Succubus’ sincerity.

Bo smiled appreciatively at Serena’s declaration of loyalty. “You know, I was worried about Lauren being in Brazil but now, I’m relieved. I know that she’ll be safe because you have her back.”

The bodyguard nodded her head slightly. “Yes and if anyone were to hurt or try to harm her, I would hunt them down and make them pay. That’s a promise.” Serena stated while staring icily at Bo.

Neither woman broke eye contact as the weight of Serena’s words washed over them. Bo understood the meaning behind the Ignis’ statement and accepted the threat without retaliating, grateful that she was protective of Lauren. “I’d expect nothing less.” she said simply.

Deciding that she should leave before she outstayed her welcome, Bo stood up slowly. “Well, I should go so that you can get some rest. I hope you feel better soon.”

Serena had been assessing the Succubus ever since she walked into the room and it impressed her that Bo kept her cool despite being threatened. However, it was Bo’s words and following Lauren to Brazil that stood out as it showed that she cared about the doctor. Serena also knew that the Ash would never have approved the Succubus’ visit if he doubted her intentions or if she couldn’t prove herself.

The Ignis wrestled with her thoughts before calling out Bo’s name and halting her exit. “Look out for her.” she said softly. “She’ll be heading back to the forest soon and it’ll be dangerous. I would go if I could but...” her voice trailed off, figuring that there was no point in stating the obvious.

“I will. I promise on my life that I’ll keep her safe.” Bo swore to her. For the first time in 24 hours, Bo didn’t feel hopeless and was thankful that someone within Lauren’s inner circle trusted her with her safety. That reassurance gave her some glimmer of hope that if Lauren’s friends were able to see how much she cared then maybe the blonde would also see and believe it too.

The Ignis gave her a conciliatory nod. Even though Bo Dennis was impetuous and stubborn, the doctor would be in good hands with her and this realization brought Serena some peace of mind.

Lab (a few hours later)

Nayara knocked on the office door and walked in but there was no response. “Lauren.” she called out but there was still no reaction from the blonde who sat at her desk, deep in thought, scribbling on a pad of paper. Walking over to the desk, Nayara gently placed her hand on Lauren’s shoulder and inadvertently startled her.

“Gods!” Lauren exclaimed as she jumped in her seat, dropping her pen in the process. “You scared
Nayara shrugged her shoulders apologetically, “I knocked on the door and called your name. Are you alright?”

“Just pre-occupied.” the blonde admitted.

The brunette wrinkled her brow, “About your test sample?” she asked before glancing at the page filled with doodles.

“No,” she sighed, “…about Bo.”

The Empath took Lauren’s hand, forced her to stand and led her over to the couch where they could both sit down comfortably. “What happened?” she asked as they angled themselves to face one another.

Lauren rubbed her forehead and upon releasing a deep breath, proceeded to tell Nayara everything. The brunette listened and was shocked at how things had deteriorated between the two women. However, after hearing Lauren’s side of the story and thinking back to how despondent and regretful Bo was, everything started to make sense.

“I just was so tired of all our half-truths and leaving things unsaid.” she said in frustration as she ran her fingers through her hair. “I decided that I needed to be honest about everything, so I told her that we kissed and that I asked you to feed off of me.”

“Oh! How did that go?” Nayara asked, surprised.

“Not well.” Lauren admitted as she looked down at her feet. “It came out harsher than I intended.” She closed her eyes in an attempt to gather her thoughts but the respite only caused her emotions to bubble to the surface agitatedly. “She just infuriates me… treating me like a possession! I get that from the Fae in Toronto.”

“I just didn’t expect that from her.” Her voice was brittle as she wrapped her arms around her torso and shook her head with regret. “I thought that she had changed so I let her back in.”

Lauren let out a weary sigh as the hurt and disappointment took its toll. “She gave me hope. I should’ve known better…. expectations only lead to disappointment.” she said softly as she swallowed her tears.

Nayara’s heart felt heavy as her friend vented her frustrations. She thought that if Lauren talked about how she felt, her mood might improve but instead she saw Lauren rebuild all the walls that she had torn down. Leaning forward, Nayara gave the blonde’s knee a light squeeze, “Don’t give up hope, Lauren. Things aren’t always as they seem.” concern laced her voice.

The blonde remained lost in her thoughts and didn’t reply so Nayara continued to speak. “You should know that Bo came to see me last night.”

That statement got Lauren’s attention. “What?! Why?”

“She wanted to apologize to me for being a jealous and immature ass – her words, not mine. Then she thanked me for being your friend and looking out for you.” the Empath said matter of factly.

Lauren opened and closed her mouth wordlessly, experiencing difficulty coming to terms with a humble and apologetic Bo moments after she had shown herself to be very selfish, jealous and possessive.
“I know that she said things that hurt you but I really don’t think she meant it-”

“Then why did she say it then?!” Lauren interrupted angrily.

“If I had to guess, I’d say that it probably had something to do with her needing to feed. She told me that she had gone without chi for a long time.” Nayara divulged.

“Why wouldn’t she feed?” the blonde asked, perplexed by this revelation.

“I honestly don’t know. You would have to ask her.” the Empath said delicately. “All I know is that she must’ve been starving. It took the chi of fifteen of my staff last night to quell her hunger.”

“Fifteen? What?!” Lauren exclaimed as she stood abruptly; shocked that Bo allowed her hunger to get to such an extreme point.

“That was my idea actually.” Nayara admitted. “Long story short was that Kenzi and I were at Néctar with some of the other scientists and lab techs when Bo came looking for me. After she apologized, she almost fainted and confessed that she needed to feed. She said that she just needed to siphon chi but as it had been some time since she had last fed, she would need to feed from many.”

The blonde stood still and silently listened as Nayara continued to relate the events. “I asked if anyone would be willing to help and those that wanted to, came with me to the lab. In order to alleviate any fear or concern, Bo told them what she was going to do and what would happen. Once consent was given, she sucked their chi. Kenzi and I watched from the outer lab - no one was hurt and Bo felt better afterwards.”

Lauren didn’t know what to say as she looked at the far wall, lost in thought. Her mind raced as pieces of the puzzle started to fall into place: Bo’s strange, anti-social behaviour; her moodiness; her irrational anger and jealousy; her possessiveness – it all began to make sense.

The blonde shook her head in disappointment. “How could I have not seen the signs?” she muttered.

“None of us saw it, Lauren. Not you, me or Kenzi. Bo didn’t let on that she needed to feed plus I think we were all distracted with finally being able to relax that we didn’t pick up on the signals.” the Empath said reassuringly.

“I know but still, I should’ve-”

“Lauren.” the Empath interrupted, “Why would anyone assume that Bo needed to feed when she knows how to take care of her hunger?” Nayara said trying to be the voice of reason.

Lauren was about to blame herself but couldn’t refute the logic. She instantly felt relief knowing that she hadn’t imagined her and Bo’s re-connection, however, that feeling was fleeting as disappointment and frustration returned.

Nayara saw a range of emotions flit across Lauren’s face and knew that she had to stop the blonde from shutting down even more. “Bo didn’t tell me what happened between the two of you last night but I knew that something was wrong by how she was behaving. At the time I thought that maybe it was her hunger but honestly, she seemed really sad.”

“This doesn’t change anything Nay.” the blonde said disappointedly. “I’ve been trying to trust her but how can I if she can’t be honest with me?”
The brunette shrugged her shoulders. “I’m not excusing her actions but maybe she had her reasons. And for your own peace of mind, you need to hear them… from Bo.”

Lauren shook her head, not wanting to give in again; she hated feeling this weak when it came to Bo.

“Look, all I can say is that Bo surprised me last night. She was mature, humble and remorseful. Then when she admitted to me – of all people - that she was starving; well, it put her in a very vulnerable position.” Nayara stated honestly. “I knew then that she had to have been in a great deal of pain. I imagine that trying to manage her hunger all day only prolonged her suffering.”

The blonde’s shoulders drooped. Part of her was so hurt and angry at how Bo treated her and the other part felt guilty for feeling that way if Bo’s hunger had indeed dictated her actions. “I’ve been slowly letting her in since she arrived here. Everything was going well but last night was a reminder of how easily she can hurt me.” Lauren divulged.

Nayara sensed that Lauren was holding back and decided that she needed a little push to force her to accept the truth of her feelings. “You always knew that Lauren, what exactly are you afraid of?”

Lauren let out a heavy sigh. The weight of her fears felt heavy on her shoulders and she was so tired of holding on to them. Sitting back down, she crumbled. “Here in Brazil, I have you and Serena and my work is meaningful. It’s the most normal my life has ever been with the Fae. I try not to think about it but I know when I return to Toronto, I won’t have you anymore and Serena will return to her regular job. I will be back to being alone and a slave with only whatever work and research is cast upon me.” she admitted despondently.

Leaning back, Lauren tilted her head up and stared at the ceiling. “Everyone there thinks I’m a workaholic. The truth is that I didn’t work long hours because I wanted to; I did it because I needed to. I did it to keep myself sane. Working distracts me from thinking about everything that I’ve lost and the life that I will never have again. I dread having to return to that emptiness.” the blonde confessed.

Lauren let out a shaky breath as she looked over at Nayara. “It would be so easy to get lost in Bo again. But I’m afraid of that now. I’m afraid of being engulfed by that joy as it becomes the only light in my dismal world. I’m also afraid of that light being extinguished. It’s just not healthy to have one person be my entire source of happiness.”

Nayara leaned forward and captured the blonde’s hands in her own and gave them a gentle squeeze. “Lauren, you are one of the strongest people I know. I really don’t know how you survived as long as you have because I know for a fact that I couldn’t. You are so much stronger than you think.” the Empath said resolutely. “I want more than anything for you to be happy and it kills me that I can’t do anything for you there.” she added in a worried voice.

Lauren gave her friend a weary smile and squeezed her hands in return. “I know, Nay. It’s okay.” she said softly.

The blonde felt hopeless. “I just don’t know what to do. It’s like being able to see the future and knowing that it’s going to be bleak but being helpless to change it. I try not to think about it but I know it’s inevitable.”

“First of all,” Nayara’s soothing voice piped up breaking Lauren out of her dejected thoughts, “you haven’t lost me and you never will. I will always be here for you.” she said honestly, her voice steamed with emotion. As soon as she made her declaration, she immediately closed her eyes and hoped that her deeper feelings hadn’t betrayed her. Quickly recovering, Nayara continued on her
mission to reassure her friend. “Secondly, there is no way that Serena will ditch you once you are both back in Toronto – she is beyond loyal. And last but not least, you are not the same person that you were before you came here, Lauren. You are more confident; you take better care of yourself; you are aware of your not-so-healthy habits; and you have hobbies outside of work that you enjoy. I’m not saying that your life will now be a walk in the park but I think all these changes will make life a lot more bearable and perhaps, easier.”

The blonde gave a subtle nod of her head as she maintained eye contact and listened to the Empath. She knew that her friend was making sense but fear held onto her tightly and she was finding it difficult to pry its fingers loose.

Nayara treaded carefully as she continued to use a logical approach to break through Lauren’s walls. “As for relationships, you are more than aware that another individual - whether it’s with Bo or with someone else - can’t be your everything. You need to trust yourself, Lauren. Trust your instincts and let yourself experience happiness whenever you can. If you keep your walls up in order to protect yourself, it’s a sure fire way of also keeping happiness at bay.”

The Empath could see both women’s perspectives and it saddened her that after all this time, their relationship was still driven by pride and miscommunication. “Lauren, you believe in facts. You look at all the information presented before coming to a conclusion.”

Nayara paused to watch the blonde process her words. As Nayara looked at Lauren she couldn’t help but think how amazing she was and how easily the blonde had made her way into her heart. The Empath had believed that she would never find love after the tragic loss of her family and after eons of being resigned to this belief, Lauren appeared; opened up her heart; and gave her hope again.

Nayara knew that if circumstances were different, she and Lauren would be more than friends. This fact was difficult to accept but she understood Lauren’s situation and wanted to be respectful, unfortunately, it was more difficult for her heart to be so accepting. Nayara wished that she felt differently but no matter how much she tried she couldn’t change her feelings, so she did the only thing she could - she hid them. She knew that her heartache would eventually recede but until then she would persevere as she didn’t want to jeopardize her friendship with Lauren.

The Empath released a soft sigh. It would be so easy to look the other way and not push the subject further but she couldn’t. It wasn’t who she was. More importantly, Nayara hated seeing Lauren suffer - all she wanted was for Lauren to be happy even if it meant being with another.

She returned to the task at hand. “I know that you don’t want to open yourself up to further heartache but do you know for certain that last night’s situation was because Bo hasn’t changed and that it had nothing to do with her hunger?”

Nayara observed Lauren’s crinkled brow and pensive eyes and knew that she was getting through as she delivered her final point. “You know that I’m not in Bo’s fan club but don’t you think you deserve to hear what she has to say before you make a decision you might regret?” Lauren nibbled on her bottom lip as she considered Nayara’s words. She knew that she couldn’t argue with her friend’s rationale and realized that in her attempt to protect herself, she was being obstinate and proud. Releasing a heavy sigh, the blonde knew what had to be done. “You’re right.” she said resolutely. “I need to have all the facts before I can make a decision about our relationship once and for all. I’ll hear Bo out.”

Lauren knew that there was a good chance that her emotions would dictate her actions again so she decided that it probably would be best to be more analytical when talking with Bo. She was tired of
all the back and forth, as she imagined Bo was as well, and knew that they both needed to have an open, honest and conflict-free discussion before things could be resolved.

Turning her attention back to her friend, Lauren smiled warmly. “Thank you for your patience and guidance and for helping me see reason. I was too caught up in my stubborn emotions.”

“Anytime. That’s what friends are for.” Nayara smiled weakly as she looked away.

Lauren quickly bridged the distance between them and pulled Nayara into a tight embrace. “I don’t think you know how important you are to me. You’ve given me more than you could ever imagine and I will forever be grateful. Thank you.” she said gently in Nayara’s ear. The Empath’s heart crumbled when she heard Lauren’s words and felt the warmth of her body against hers. Blinking back her tears, Nayara knew her voice would betray her so she remained silent and continued to hug Lauren who was oblivious to her emotional turmoil.

After an hour of wandering around the compound thinking, Lauren knew that she couldn’t delay things any longer. Making her way to the residential area, she stood in front of Bo’s door with eyes closed and both hands closed in loose fists, repeating her mantra. “Stay calm, stay logical; stay calm, stay logical.” she exhaled in a low, breathy whisper.

Lauren hated feeling vulnerable but knew that she had to push through it if she wanted to know the truth. Releasing a deep, cleansing breath, she opened her eyes and lightly rapped on the door.

“Lauren? Hi.” Bo managed to choke out; surprised to see the blonde standing at her door.

“Hi.” Lauren said evenly despite the tension she felt.

Bo wasn’t expecting to see Lauren and fidgeted slightly as she held the door open for her. “Please, have a seat.” the brunette said, indicating to the couch.

As Lauren sat, she couldn’t help but recall all the times they had spent on Bo’s tattered couch talking, laughing and cuddling. Reminiscing about these happier times made her miss Bo’s tenderness and the contentment she felt with her. These memories instantly generated feelings of unbearable loss and doubts of whether they could ever get back what they had. Needing to collect herself, Lauren avoided eye contact and took in her surroundings, clearing her throat and adjusting her posture as she did so.

Bo didn’t want to add to Lauren’s obvious discomfort and purposely sat an arm’s length away as she blamed herself for the emotional chasm between them. As an awkward silence engulfed them, her thoughts drifted to happier times of lazy mornings cradled in each other’s arms and rare instances of domestic bliss spent cooking in her rickety kitchen. These were the little things that Bo took for granted and her heart felt heavy faced with the possibility of never having those moments again.

“So-”; “How are-” they blurted out simultaneously.

“Sorry, you first.” Bo insisted.

However, before Lauren could speak, a very enthusiastic Goth barged into the living room, capturing everyone’s attention.

“Yo, BoBear! “Who was at the-” Kenzi asked before halting in mid-sentence. “Oh, hey Hot Pants.” she said as casually as possible.

“Hi Kenzi.” Lauren replied, trying to keep the exhaustion out of her voice.
It didn’t take a rocket scientist to see the tension between both women. Not missing a beat, Kenzi turned her attention to Bo and gave her a subtle wink. “Just wanted to let you know that I’m heading off to that thing so don’t wait up.” she fibbed as she made a hasty exit from the apartment.

Bo used Kenzi’s interruption to collect herself. “It’s really good to see you.” she said honestly despite her concern of receiving terrible news.

Lauren gave her a faint smile as she braced herself for the brunette’s response. “What happened yesterday, Bo?” she asked delicately as she steadied restless fingers on her lap. “Nayara spoke to me but I’d like to hear your side.”

“What? That I acted like an immature, jealous ass? That’s common knowledge.” Bo said glibly, trying to diffuse some of the tension.

“No. Please.” Lauren pressed, keeping her voice steady.

As much as Bo welcomed the opportunity to tell her side of the story, she also dreaded it. Releasing a shaky breath, she blurted out her admission. “I hadn’t fed in a while and needed chi. Badly. Everything that went down yesterday was because I was an idiot and I was starving.”

Lauren remained silent as she processed this information but the brunette could sense the questions whirling about in her head. “It wasn’t on purpose. It’s just that with your attack and thinking you were dead; the tension between us; and our working on our friendship – feeding wasn’t my priority and I just kept putting it off. I know it sounds lame but it’s the truth.”

“How long did you go without feeding?” the blonde asked, ensuring that her tone was not accusatory.

Bo bowed her head, unable to look at Lauren and replied feebly. “Before I flew out here… about 10 days.”

“10 days! Bo-” Lauren exclaimed.

The Succubus raised her hand, stopping the blonde from continuing her sentence. “Trust me, there’s nothing you can say that I haven’t already told myself. I screwed up.”

Without thinking, Lauren leaned forward and rested her hand on Bo’s forearm. “Are you alright? How are you feeling now?” she asked, her voice gentle and laced with concern.

Lauren’s heart fluttered. Feeling Bo’s skin under hers instantly brought about feelings of comfort and longing, making it difficult to deny how much she had missed the brunette. Knowing that it would be very easy to get lost in the emotion, Lauren forced herself to slowly retract her hand and lean away.

Bo immediately missed the warmth of Lauren’s hand and swallowed her disappointment, recognizing that Lauren had every right to be apprehensive. “I’m okay thanks to Nayara. I imagine she told you what she did?”

The blonde nodded. “I just don’t understand why you would go an extended period without feeding.”

The Succubus rubbed at the tension growing at the back of her neck. “Normally, I wouldn’t go so long without feeding but since my Dawning, I’ve been able to hold on to chi for longer periods of time. It’s like I can tap into it when I need to so I don’t have to feed as often.” she explained.
Lauren’s eyes grew wide at this information. “That’s amazing Bo! This means that you’re even more in tune with your Succubus nature.” she gushed. “I told you that you were a perfect biological specimen of your kind!”

For one brief moment, it felt like old times having the doctor geek out over her Fae abilities and Bo couldn’t help but grin when she saw Lauren’s cheeks redden at the realization.

Clearing her throat, Lauren quickly regained her composure. “But that doesn’t explain why you didn’t feed when you knew you had to. Why hide it?”

Bo averted her eyes momentarily. “Everyone was having a good time and I didn’t want to spoil that. But mainly, I didn’t want to feed in front of you after everything we’d gone through. I thought it’d be insulting.”

“Oh.” Lauren breathed out in surprise, not expecting that response. She was bracing herself for a worst case scenario of Bo intentionally lying or hurting her but instead it was the complete opposite - Bo was trying to be respectful and considerate. This revelation left the doctor speechless.

Bo didn’t know how to read Lauren’s reaction and panic quickly settled in as she rambled nervously. “We were starting to get comfortable around one another again and I didn’t want my first time feeding to be so… blatant. I figured I could hold out and feed when we got back to the compound but as the evening went on, it just got worse.”

Lauren quickly gathered her thoughts and looked into Bo’s eyes. “I appreciate that you were trying to be considerate but you should know that I would never want you to starve or go against your nature.” she said gently as she lightly patted Bo’s arm. “I know.” The brunette said quietly, aware of the sudden rush of heat in her cheeks the instant Lauren touched her.

“Is that why you were so anti-social and… grumpy?” Lauren asked tactfully, removing her hand in spite of her desire to comfort Bo.

Bo lowered her gaze. “You can say it Lauren, I was a total bitch.”

When Bo looked back at her, Lauren saw the shame hidden in her chocolate brown orbs and the blonde felt guilty for allowing her anger to get the better of her.

Unable to contain her regret any longer, Bo crumbled. “I’m so sorry, Lauren. Hurting you was the last thing that I ever wanted to do. I was just so incredibly hungry and miserable and I lashed out. I wasn’t myself and I didn’t mean any of those horrible things that I said.”

Lauren silently processed the Succubus’ words as she tried to ease her conflicting emotions. Her hurt and frustration were like a fire that was suddenly doused with water: smoke and steam replaced flame but there were still some burning embers. Even though she knew the truth, damage was still done. On the one hand, she felt relief knowing that everything they had been working towards had been real and not imagined but on the other hand, she felt disappointed that she opened herself up only to be hurt again. “I appreciate that you didn’t intend on hurting me Bo. I really do. But you need to understand something.” she said as she looked into the brunette’s eyes.

“I’ve changed.” Lauren said in an unwavering voice as she leaned in slightly towards Bo. “Being here has been incredibly rewarding not just professionally but also personally. I’m making a difference as a doctor, which before things went to hell in the Congo, I never thought I’d experience again. I also have friends and co-workers who respect me and treat me as an equal.” she explained with a warm smile. “But as wonderful as this is, it’s going to be even harder to give it up knowing that my life in Toronto is going to be the exact opposite.”
“Lauren-”

“Bo, please, let me finish.”

“The reason I’m telling you this is because I’ve realized that I need to depend on me and I can’t have any one person be my only source of happiness. I want to be as independent and as happy as I can given my circumstances.” Lauren looked away briefly, steeling herself for the possibility of another fight but knowing that Bo deserved to know the reason for her motivation.

Sitting upright, she peered into Bo’s eyes. “When we were together, you were the only good thing in my life. But after Nadia’s death and everything that happened with us…” Lauren took a second to breathe in deeply and compose herself; rolling her shoulders back before continuing. “I just don’t have the strength to deal with the possibility of having my heart broken as well as having to adjust to being a slave again.” she admitted as she instinctively wrapped her arms around herself.

Bo moved closer to the doctor. “I know I sound like a broken record but I won’t hurt you again Lauren. I’ve changed. Things are different.”

The blonde’s voice unintentionally rose in pitch. “That’s the thing, Bo, things are different. Here. In Brazil. It’s like going on vacation and being away from one’s family, friends, responsibilities and problems. Everything is wonderful and different and freeing.”

Lauren felt herself getting agitated. Standing abruptly, she crossed the room, took a steadying breath and turned to face Bo; her tone calmer. “The thing with vacations is that it eventually comes to an end and one has to go back home… reality comes rushing in and routines resume.”

“The freedom I’ve had here in Brazil can’t be the last I’ll ever taste, Bo.” she said as she unconsciously rubbed her forehead. “When I return, I plan on talking to Hale in the hopes that he would allow me more autonomy with research and treatment especially if it means that the Light will benefit from it. This is something that will give me a sense of accomplishment and purpose.”

Bo appreciated the fact that Lauren was no longer being secretive but was concerned that she was setting herself up to be disappointed. “I’m not trying to dash your hopes but what’s to stop Hale from being an Ass-hat again or the Fae Elders getting in the way?”

“I know that’s a possibility. I’m not naïve. Hale has shown that he will support me when he can, mainly if it’s something that the Elders won’t fight him on. I know this and hope to use it to my advantage. I have no choice but to try.” she said adamantly.

This plan had only existed in the shadows of Lauren’s mind but when she vocalized it and brought it into the light, she realized how much she wanted it to happen. “Coming here, I’ve realized what’s been missing from my life. So much has happened since the Congo that I never thought I’d feel this way again… I have a purpose! My work means something. I can’t go back to the way things were before I left Toronto.”

Bo saw the spark in Lauren’s eyes and heard the determination in her voice and knew that she wouldn’t give up. It had been a while since she had seen that passion in the blonde and she hoped with all her heart that her plan would work out. “Things won’t be the same as before. It will be better.” Bo said reassuringly.

“I really hope so.” Lauren said wistfully as she paused and switched her focus away from work. There was another issue waiting for her in Toronto - one of a personal nature and which ate away at her confidence. “And Dyson and Tamsin?” the blonde asked shakily, trying to keep the hurt out of her voice.
Bo looked into Lauren’s eyes as she stood and quickly bridged the distance between them. “I know what I want and it’s you, Lauren.” she said resolutely as she faced the blonde and took her hands in hers. “No one else.”

Lauren’s eyes were glistening as she kept her tears at bay. As she regarded their entwined fingers, she released the breath she was holding and looked back into Bo’s eyes before divulging her fear. “I’ve missed you so much Bo but yesterday was a reminder of how easily you can hurt me… I have to be one hundred percent certain. I need to see how things will be when we are both back in Toronto and life resumes its normal pace, post-vacation.”

Lauren was moved by the sadness reflected in Bo’s eyes but knew she had to be steadfast. “Trust takes time and because of that friendship is all I can offer. I just don’t know how long that will take.”

“I understand.” Bo said heavy heartedly as Lauren slowly unlaced her fingers from the brunette’s.

Bo was disappointed in herself. She knew that there would be consequences to her actions and right now she was neck deep in it. However, despite it all, she was relieved that Lauren hadn’t given up on her. That gave her some hope and Bo was going to hold on to that for all she had.

Armed with a renewed sense of purpose, she maintained eye contact as she made her vow. “Time is something that I’ve got plenty of and I will do whatever it takes to earn back your trust, Lauren. I don’t want to lose you or your friendship.”

The doctor gave her a faint smile. “All I ask is for you to be honest with me as I promise to be honest with you.”

“I will. I promise.” she swore.

Bo was up to the challenge to win over this ‘newly changed, more self-aware’ Lauren but there was one thing she needed to address and she knew that it was risky to do so. Shaking her hands out at her sides, she adjusted her posture as she came to her decision. “We can’t do a clean slate if you’re afraid of me. I know that trust takes time but this won’t work if you’re afraid that I will hurt you.” she stated calmly despite the churning in her stomach.

Lauren dropped her gaze as she considered Bo’s words. Meanwhile, Bo fidgeted as her anxiety and the silence in the room, grew.

After a few moments, Lauren’s voice broke through the stillness. “A clean slate is…” she paused; took a deep breath; and as she looked at Bo, she smiled warmly. “You’re right. A clean slate is just that – a fresh start. I promise to have an open mind.” she said genuinely.

Though relieved, Bo still felt lost and needed clear direction. “Where do we go from here?” she asked hesitantly.

The doctor was emotionally drained but felt calm and reassured now that they had cleared the air. “We’re friends.” she said simply.

“Friends…” Bo reiterated softly as she looked at her feet to hide her confusion and intimidation on how to proceed. The last thing she wanted was to make the wrong move and wreck what was undoubtedly her last chance with Lauren.

“And friends can have breakfast together right?” Lauren asked shyly, pulling Bo out of her thoughts.

Bo gave her a huge, dimpled smile as her concern was averted. “Friends do that all the time. I
would love that!”

Before Lauren could respond, her cell phone beeped indicating a message. After reading the text
from Nayara, the doctor looked up at Bo with a beaming smile on her face. “Well, it will have to be
a very early breakfast.” she said excitedly. “I’ve gotten the go ahead to proceed with my antidote!
We leave for Mata Atlantica tomorrow morning.”

“We?” Bo asked in confusion.

Lauren paused and took in Bo’s hesitation. Stepping closer, she placed a soft hand on the brunette’s
elbow. "Yes, we. This could be one of my most important discoveries yet. Why wouldn't I want you
there with me?”

The doctor took in the brunette’s confused look and thought that maybe she was being
presumptuous. “I mean, I’m not forcing you to come. You don’t have to if you don’t want to.” she
said gently, not wanting to guilt Bo into anything.

Bo’s puzzled expression was instantly replaced with a massive grin. “Of course! I wouldn’t miss
this for the world.” she said happily. “Good! Now go get Kenzi and pack your bags.” Lauren said,
smiling.

TBC
I apologize for the wait between chapters but my RL situation hasn’t let up. As promised, I haven’t given up on “Time” and have every intention of completing it; I just am not able to post often.

Thank you to all those that are following and have left kudos and reviews – it means a great deal and has helped with my motivation especially when time and circumstances don’t allow for it.

Special thanks to my awesome Beta, DinahWas for her recommendations, unlimited patience with my multiple edits and for pushing me to make this better; and always to T for her unending support and for helping me find Kenzi’s voice.

Disclaimer: I don’t own Lost Girl; I’m just borrowing their characters.

Lauren was excited and anxious. They were heading back to Mata Atlântica. This was what she, Nayara and her team had been working towards all these arduous weeks and now they were on the precipice of determining if they had a viable antidote. And then there was Bo. The Succubus was accompanying her to the jungle as a supportive friend and upon Serena’s insistence, her bodyguard. Lauren knew that their relationship was in unchartered territory and that simultaneously excited and terrified her.

Blinking away her thoughts, Lauren allowed her gaze to fall upon Bo and Kenzi who sat across from her and she couldn’t help but smile. The helicopter afforded them a spectacular bird’s eye view and both women were looking out in awe, gawking and pointing excitedly at the panoramic scene of lush green forests, mangroves, mountains and winding rivers.

When Bo turned to look out Kenzi’s window, she was surprised to find hazel eyes regarding her softly - the tenderness mirrored in them, made Bo’s heart flutter. The brunette knew right then and there, that she would gladly suffer through any further tension or awkwardness to have Lauren look at her that way again. Smiling, she adjusted her headset mic, “The view is absolutely amazing Lauren!” she gushed as she kept her eyes on the blonde.

“Breathtaking isn’t it?” Lauren agreed as she gazed out her window, taking in the sight. After a few moments, she looked back at Bo. “Thank you.” she said softly.

“For what?” Bo asked, puzzled.

“I love seeing the jungle from this vantage point but now I get to appreciate its wonder again through fresh, new eyes. Yours… and Kenzi’s.” the blonde said genuinely.

Bo was practically beaming at Lauren’s comment. Her smile shone in her eyes and resonated in her heart as she felt the sincerity of Lauren’s words as well as the shift in attitude towards her. She felt it in her bones that they had turned a corner and for the first time in a long while, she genuinely believed that there was hope for their relationship. Not wanting to push the moment with an emotion-filled response, she turned her attention back to the beautiful landscape below; her grin locked in
Mata Atlântica

Bo and Kenzi disembarked from the helicopter and instantly staggered back, the heat intense. Bo actually thought she heard Kenzi whimper. However, before either could comment about the humidity or take in their surroundings, they were greeted by armed guards, quickly shuffled into ATVs and escorted to the Base Camp.

It was a fast fifteen minute drive over bumpy terrain as the vehicles whizzed past lush, green vegetation and dense trees, leaving clouds of dust swirling in their wake. Stepping out of the ATV, the brunette was amazed at what she saw in the Base Camp but more importantly, what she felt as she noticed that it was considerably cooler within the high, log wood barricades. Bo didn’t know what magic, science or technology caused the climate control nor did she care; all she knew was that whoever came up with such a brilliant idea was a genius.

Slinging her back pack over her shoulder, Lauren turned to the two women. “Why don’t you grab your gear? I’ll show you to your tents and give you a quick tour afterwards.”

Both women nodded as they collected their bags and followed the doctor. They walked in silence amidst the myriad of tents and heavy duty equipment, astonished at their surroundings. “This isn’t what I expected.” Bo said, thinking it was going to be more rustic.

“I know. I was also surprised my first time out. It still amazes me how much they’ve done in their fight against this epidemic.” Lauren said as she stopped in front of a grey tent at the rearmost row. “Kenzi, this one’s yours,” the blonde said, pulling aside the flap, “and Bo, you’re right next door.”

As soon as the words were out of Lauren’s mouth, Kenzi immediately rushed past, dropped her bag and flung herself on to the cot, sighing contentedly as she nuzzled her face into the pillow. Bo and Lauren stood outside the tent, chuckling at the young woman; each sneaking a shy glance at the other. Within moments their laughter sputtered as they observed the Goth’s body relax and a soft snore escape her lips.

“How can she pass out in a matter of seconds?!” Lauren asked, envious that it normally takes her thirty minutes to fall asleep.

“Kenzi doesn’t do early mornings.” Bo stated simply.

“Unfortunately we’re going to have to wake her as we have a briefing in 15 minutes.” the blonde explained as she looked at her watch.

“This isn’t going to be pretty.” Bo said with a grimace, knowing how difficult it was to wake her best friend once she was comfortable. Lauren understood and instinctively took a step back as the brunette walked into the tent and placed her bag on the ground.

Stooping next to the cot, Bo gave Kenzi’s shoulder a gentle shake. No response.

“Kenz, wake up.” she said softly as she gave her a longer nudge. This time the Goth unconsciously swatted the air as if she were shooing a buzzing insect, just missing Bo’s face.

“We gotta go.” Bo’s tone was almost pleading and her voice slightly louder as she shook Kenzi’s shoulder a little more vigorously. Smack! “Ow!” The brunette hissed as she rubbed her cheek; watching as Kenzi tucked her offending hand under her chin. The Succubus knew she had no choice but to resort to more drastic measures. “I’m sorry Kenz.” she said through gritted teeth before picking up the slumbering Goth in her arms, jolting her awake in the process. Kenzi’s eyes instantly shot
open and a slew of Russian expletives spewed out of her mouth causing Bo to wince and Lauren to choke back a snicker.

After a minute of non-stop swearing, the petite woman eventually reverted to quiet grumblings and it was only then that Bo thought it safe to put her down. “I promise I’ll get you coffee and something to eat.” The brunette said in an attempt to placate her friend.

“Unless you have a double Americano stowed in your bra chica, I am not amused!” Kenzi grumbled, pouting dramatically.

Lauren couldn’t help but smile at their camaraderie however a quick glance at her watch told her that they had to hustle. “Sorry guys but we don’t have much time. I’ll have to shorten the tour so that we can make the briefing.” Lauren said as she ushered them away from their tents and began walking at a brisk pace, talking and pointing along the way. “Those structures we just passed are the showers and wash places… and this is the Fire Pit area where everyone hangs out in the evenings.” she said, pausing briefly at the large stone fire pit area and surrounding benches.

The blonde knew that Kenzi would be sluggish from just waking up so she continued to guide them through the Camp quickly. “This is the Lab where we conduct sample testing and the dark green tent next to it, is Quarantine. Everyone,” she emphasized the word for Bo’s benefit, “goes through decontamination procedures whenever venturing outside these log walls.” Lauren stopped to let them peek inside before resuming the tour, pointing to a tent near the entrance of the Camp. “Over there is security and finally, this large white tent is the meal tent where we eat and where briefings are held.”

“You had me at meal, HotPants.” Kenzi piped up for the first time since she was rudely awakened. “You should’ve started the tour from here. Food!”

Lauren simply rolled her eyes in response.

Bo and Lauren made their way through the crowd looking for a place to sit and in the process found themselves separated from Kenzi. Taking a quick glance around for the young woman, they saw Nayara at the front leaning over some paperwork while everyone around her chatted idly. It was soon after they found seats that the Goth plopped down on the chair beside them clutching a handful of muffins and sporting a crumb-eating grin.

The Empath waited a couple of minutes before she stood up, took a quick head count and cleared her throat. She was the epitome of grace and authority and effortlessly captured everyone’s attention. Chatter immediately ceased and anyone who wasn’t seated quickly grabbed a chair. “Good morning. As you are aware, we may have found a cure for this epidemic.” Loud cheers and applause erupted, interrupting her in mid-speech; a smile escaping as she saw the excitement reflected on the faces in front of her. “All trials have been successful but in order to progress to the next level we need all hands on deck to implement it which is why both scientific teams are here at Base Camp. Has everyone been briefed on ‘Lima 109’?”

Everyone nodded in unison.

“Excelente! Time is of the essence so we need to work quickly and efficiently. On the tables in front of you are maps with four villages highlighted. These villages are in close proximity to rivers and swamps and will be our focus over the next ten days. The plan is to spend one day at each village to take medical and personal information; collect samples; and provide everyone with the trial vaccination before returning to Base Camp each night. Once all four villages are inoculated, we will return to each village to conduct further tests and check for any symptoms and progress. This
schedule will allow for two spare days at the end for unforeseen circumstances and additional testing – time that we will most likely need. It will be an incredibly busy timetable but the payoff will be worth it. Are there any questions?”

At this point, Bo tuned out the multitudinous questions from the scientists and instead sat back and stole one of Kenzi’s muffins while she patiently waited to get the show on the road.

Day 1 – en route to Village #1

As soon as the group departed Base Camp, Bo never left Lauren’s side. The image of the doctor under attack and in excruciating pain from her shattered arm was etched in her mind. Bo took her bodyguard duties seriously – there was no way that she would allow Lauren to be harmed. “Not on my watch.” she murmured as she kept the blonde in view.

Being in the jungle was unlike anything that Bo had experienced in Toronto and it was a glaring reminder that she was in unfamiliar territory. Even the air was foreign, carrying a combined scent of vegetation, soil, decaying plants, leaves and wood; but more notably, it was dense and incredibly humid. Bo had gotten accustomed to the more comfortable environment inside the wooden walls of the Base Camp that she had forgotten how hot it actually was until they all started hiking through the forest. The warm, sticky air was suffocating and having to wear mosquito netting, made it even more unpleasant.

The brunette thought back to right before they departed the Camp and she couldn’t help but smile as she recalled Lauren explaining the various safeguards that she had to follow.

“Clear as mud.” she had said with a wink.

“Are you sure? I think you zoned out.”

“How would you know if I zoned out?” she asked playfully.

“You get that glazed look in your eyes whenever I spout scientific and medical terminology.”

“Trust me, there was no zoning.” she insisted with a smile to hide the fact that the glazed over look was from arousal and not boredom.

“Just promise me that you won’t take off the mosquito netting until you are within the safe confines of this Camp.” Lauren implored.

She was overjoyed at how science-y and concerned the doctor was being. She would do anything that Lauren asked. Truth be told, the blonde was the only person who could make her take such annoying safeguards without protest. “I promise.” she answered, nibbling on her bottom lip.

Bo immediately blinked away her thoughts, not wanting to be distracted by the humidity or her daydreaming. Instead, she focused on getting her head back into the game and doubled her efforts to concentrate on Lauren and their surroundings.

The brunette’s senses were on overload as they made their way through the jungle. Her eyes flicked from one large tree to the next and scanned the shadows in between; a task made difficult as the dense canopy of leaves and branches caused the forest floor to be dimly lit. As she moved over moss covered rocks and through dense ferns, her ears strained to listen for sounds outside of the buzzing of insects and the chatter of birds.

Bo could handle being waist deep in Toronto’s sewer system; navigating abandoned industrial
warehouses; and tracking Under Fae through dark, dank, urine infused alleyways. This however, she had concerns; she felt out of her element and completely on edge. It also didn’t help her mood that Kenzi was complaining incessantly - once the excitement from being in a helicopter had faded, her whining about the ‘intolerable heat’ and the ‘blood sucking insects’ began.

“Did you see that?! That bug was as big as my fist and it had fangs!” the Goth moaned for the millionth time as she swatted wildly at the air. When that didn’t generate a reaction, she amped up her grumbling. “This is ridiculous! Why aren’t we driving or at least using a horse, camel or some four-legged creature to get there?”

Looking straight ahead, the brunette tried to suppress her annoyance. “Kenz, for the last time - we can’t get to this village by vehicle so we have to hike in.”

The young woman mumbled something under her breath and when Bo didn’t react, she jabbed her in the ribs with her finger. “Look at this! This heat is brutal!” she complained as she pulled a thick strand of incredibly frizzy hair away from her uncharacteristically un-coiffed head.

The Succubus rolled her eyes for the umpteenth time; her frustration and discomfort overwhelming her as she stopped abruptly. “Look, gross doesn’t even begin to express how I feel. I am covered from head to toe in a mosquito net causing me to sweat from every single pore on my body but I have to wear it so that I don’t get sick and die. So please, cool it with the drama!”

As soon as the words left her mouth, she regretted it - she knew that Kenzi felt out of place in the jungle and was missing the city and all its comforts. Softening her tone, Bo looked at the petite woman and gently grabbed her hand, preventing her from walking away. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to snap at you. I just feel disgustingly sweaty and I’m on edge knowing that there are literally a million and one places that we could be attacked from.”

“It’s okay.” Kenzi murmured dejectedly as she looked down and absent mindedly kicked at a moss covered outcrop with the toe of her boot.

“Hey.” Bo said softly, getting the younger woman’s attention. “I know that all this,” she gestured at their surroundings with her free hand, “is making you miserable and that you’re doing this for me. And in case I haven’t told you lately, thank you for being such an awesome friend.” She said sincerely as she gave Kenzi’s hand a gentle squeeze.

The Goth’s frown instantly turned into a smile and Bo couldn’t help smiling along with her.

“Besides, things could be worse. You don’t have to parade around in this!” Bo said as she carefully plucked at the mosquito netting that was stuck to her clammy skin. “You’d think they’d design it to look better. If there is a possibility I could die, I’d like to die in style, you know? No one can make this look good.”

The petite woman canted her head to one side and quirked an eyebrow in response. “Puh-lease. I can make anything look good.” she said before suddenly releasing Bo’s hand. “No offense Bo-Bo but you’re sweating all over me. Gross!” Grinning, Kenzi exaggeratedly wiped her hand against her pants and hastily walked away, ensuring she was out of the Succubus’ reach.

The one and a half hour hike felt a lot longer due to the extreme humidity and uneven terrain but they finally made it to the village. Once Bo conducted a reconnaissance and deemed everything safe, she gave Lauren some breathing room and watched as the blonde doctor and Nayara greeted the village elder before joining the other scientists to set up their equipment.
The brunette was pleasantly surprised to see well-groomed trails running from one end of the village to the next, connecting the public areas like the market, main hall, school, and medical hut to the individual thatched covered huts on the far end of the village. Beautiful flowers and gardens bordered each structure providing a stark contrast against the wood grains; and bright cloth weaves and wood carvings hung on the outer walls, adding a personal touch to each home.

As she took in her surroundings, she was astonished to see the villagers wearing everyday casual clothing instead of grass skirts and feathers; and was shocked to learn that were friendly and spoke perfect English when they greeted her. Every time she was approached, she found herself growing more and more embarrassed by her assumptions.

Bo walked up alongside Lauren and leaned in, whispering, “This is not what I expected.”

“What do you mean?”

The brunette felt her cheeks grow warm. “Umm, I guess, destitute, half-naked people who don’t speak a lick of English, sleeping on straw mats and living in stick huts?”

Lauren smiled at her but before she could respond, she was interrupted by some scientists in dire need to her expertise. “Sorry. We’ll talk later okay?” she said apologetically as she was pulled away.

An hour later…

The Succubus gave Lauren space to deal with her patients but remained nearby just in case. As Bo watched her care for the villagers, she recalled Lauren telling her how she was treated by her Fae patients in Toronto. It had surprised her how detached the blonde seemed as she explained that they never looked her in her eyes; never paid her any attention; kept conversations to an absolute minimum; and that she received grunts of acknowledgement instead of basic common courtesies. Bo didn’t know how Lauren had endured this daily treatment for so many years yet she did so without complaint, brushing it off as ‘that’s just how it was’.

The irony wasn’t lost on her that it took being in a jungle thousands of miles away from home to be able to see things clearly. “I’m such an idiot!” Bo muttered to herself, feeling ashamed.

Observing Lauren with the village children and adults, it was obvious that the blonde had discarded the cold detached persona that she had relied on in Toronto. Here she interacted freely with her patients, carried on conversations, smiled, laughed and even received grateful hugs. Bo was genuinely happy for Lauren and loved seeing her being treated with the respect and gratitude she deserved.

As she continued to watch the blonde, her smile slowly disappeared as realization sunk in. “I get it now.” she whispered sadly to herself, understanding why Lauren dreaded returning to Toronto.

It had been a very long and productive day with the group returning to Base Camp just before sunset. By the time everyone completed quarantine procedures and had supper, it was after nine with most of the team retiring for the night and the remainder congregating at the fire pit, talking and laughing while stoking the roaring fire. Lauren was exhausted but she couldn’t stop thinking about the day’s events and the various ways she could tweak her antidote if needed. Knowing that she would have to quiet her thoughts if she wanted to get any sleep, she found a spot at the rearmost part of the fire pit area, sat with her back and elbows resting against the table and directed her gaze heavenward. The stars sparkled brightly in the clear night sky and she quickly became enthralled with the spectacular view; distracting her from her thoughts, the campfire discussions and the distant chatter of tree frogs and monkeys.
The blonde was so engrossed with the stars that she didn’t hear Bo approach. “Hi. Mind if I join you?” the brunette asked, startling her out of her trance. Lauren turned her head towards the voice to find herself staring at a freshly showered Succubus, her damp hair slicked back and cascading down her shoulders. The glow from the fire illuminated her features perfectly and highlighted every contour of her body; her snug V-neck tee shirt and leggings leaving nothing to the imagination. Bo looked fantastic and Lauren couldn’t help but stare, dumbstruck by her beauty.

“Uhh. Hi… sure!” she said once she was able to form words. Feeling the heated blush on her cheeks, she turned her head away and scooted over to make room on the bench, hoping that Bo hadn’t seen her ogling.

Bo waggled her eyebrows and grinned broadly at Lauren. “Sooo, come here often?” she joked, eliciting a chuckle and a relieved smile from the doctor.

“Actually, I do whenever we come out to the jungle. It’s not often that we get to see the stars in Toronto so I take every opportunity to enjoy them when I can.” the blonde confessed.

Bo looked towards the sky. “Yeah, with all the smog and light pollution, I sometimes forget that there are even stars there.”

Lauren nodded in agreement before looking over the brunette’s shoulder. “Where’s Kenzi?” she asked, expecting to see the younger woman.

Bo turned her attention back to the doctor. “She inhaled her supper and grumbled about her tired, delicate feet before heading to her tent to sleep. She officially hates the jungle by the way.” she said with a smirk.

“It was a very long day and it’s quite the adjustment from being in the city. I’m not surprised that she’s tired.” Lauren said thoughtfully. “What about you? You must be exhausted.”

“I am but I’m still wired.” the Succubus admitted.

Lauren gave her an understanding smile. “So, earlier today… you were in the middle of telling me your impressions about the village before I was whisked away.”

Bo looked at her feet and cleared her throat, feeling embarrassed. “Well, it wasn’t what I imagined it would be – the village, the tribe… I guess I thought that they would be more primitive… simple. I didn’t expect them to be clothed much less speak English. To be honest, I feel pretty stupid for thinking that way. It was very ignorant of me.”

“Don’t.” Lauren said softly as she reached over and gave the brunette’s knee a reassuring squeeze. “The average North American wouldn’t know a thing about how tribes live in the jungles of Brazil much less a Fae tribe. There’s no way you would’ve known. The important thing is that you know now and have a better appreciation of them.”

Bo glanced over at her ex, appreciating her comforting words. “I blame television and movies for my education.” she said jokingly causing the blonde to chuckle. “But seriously, they’re knowledgeable and cultured and very aware of the world around them – why would they live like this?!”

“Living away from civilization and modern technology allows them to be more in tune with nature which is a belief that has been passed down from generation to generation.” Lauren explained. “They are happy. They choose to live their life this way.”

Lauren knew her words resonated with the brunette as her pensive, furrowed brow slowly relaxed and she released a loud sigh.
“Of all people, I should understand that.” Bo said in a low but clear voice. “I chose to be unaligned because I wanted to live my life, my way. I didn’t make the decision lightly but I made it knowing that it was best for me regardless of what others thought.” Looking directly into Lauren’s eyes, Bo’s voice softened, “Just like you did what was best for you.”

“Bo-” The blonde’s voice cracked and she had to avert her eyes as a lump formed in her throat. She never thought her ex-girlfriend would understand why she ran away. Regardless of all her reasons, Lauren still felt guilty for leaving her but now that the brunette understood, she felt relieved as if a burden had been lifted off her shoulders.

The Succubus looked at her tenderly, her voice gentle. “You don’t have to say anything Lauren. Really.”

Both women sat in silence as they watched the fire crackle and flare, sending sparks showering in every direction and dark smoke billowing up into the night sky. Any residual tension they had, receded in the shadows as the glow from the fire inched towards them, illuminating their faces. Lauren allowed herself to relax as her eyes lazily followed the trail of smoke, watching it merge and disappear into the sky. She didn’t know how much time had passed before her reverie was interrupted by the sound of Bo fidgeting - a telltale sign that the Succubus had something on her mind.

The blonde didn’t have long to wait before Bo spoke. “It was good seeing how thankful the villagers were of you.”

Lauren wasn’t sure why the brunette brought this up but responded anyway. “After all these months of illness and death, this is our first break with the epidemic. Everyone is incredibly hopeful so it’s only natural for the villagers to be appreciative of what we’re doing.” she said unselfishly.

“No, I meant, it was good seeing Fae patients being grateful to you…treating you with respect.”

“Oh!” was all the blonde could say, astonished by Bo’s comment. Lauren always felt that Bo didn’t take their relationship seriously and often felt overlooked, unappreciated and not given any consideration. For the Succubus to make such an observation was a huge shift from her norm and took the doctor completely by surprise.

After a lapse of silence, Lauren finally found her voice. “It’s been a while since I’ve been treated normally or respectfully by others.” she said softly as she relaxed her posture. “It means more than I can say.”

Bo’s voice shook. “I’m so sorry that I wasn’t more understanding of how you were being treated. I should’ve done something… anything to make life easier or better for you.” she said ashamed.

This was the second time that Bo made Lauren speechless. Clearing her throat, she collected her thoughts. “I… I appreciate that Bo but you can’t change thousands of years of Fae mentality towards humans.”

“The Fae here have. It could happen in Toronto.”

“A fatal epidemic forced them to realize how valuable humans are – it completely changed their way of thinking. Trust me, I would love the Fae in Toronto to adopt the same ideology but I wouldn’t wish death to thousands to achieve that.”

Bo nodded her understanding and dropped the subject, silently vowing to do whatever she could to make Lauren’s life better once back in Toronto.
A comfortable stillness fell between them while they looked up at the brilliant night sky. After a few minutes, Bo’s voice broke through the quiet. “I didn’t take you for a star gazer.”

Lauren maintained her vigil as her voice took on a nostalgic tone. “I used to all the time when I was younger. My dad would take me out every night and show me the various stars and constellations through his father’s telescope just as his dad had done with him when he was a child. Almost every night mom would yell at us to come in before scolding dad for keeping me up late on a school night but she never stopped us from going out each night. Mom knew that we both loved spending time together and that astronomy was our thing.” The blonde paused, smiling fondly at the memory.

“I remember handling that telescope reverently. It was old and treasured and it worked amazingly well. I didn’t want to drop it or cause it to break and as silly as this sounds, I thought it was magical.” Lauren chuckled. “When I looked through that telescope, it brought everything into focus, making distant celestial objects seem as if they were right in front of me and within arm’s reach. When I grew older, astronomy took on another meaning. Everything fell away when I looked at the stars. It helped put things into perspective - it made me feel that any goal I had, was attainable and any problem I had, was insignificant.”

Bo smiled adoringly at the blonde. She couldn’t help it. This was a side of Lauren she hadn’t experienced before - sharing details of her life without being prompted or without imminent danger or death around the corner. But most importantly, she felt honoured that Lauren had trusted her.

“I kinda felt the same when I was younger and living with my folks. Well, the everything falling away part when it came to looking at the stars.” Bo said, wanting to share a part of her past with the blonde. “I used to go out to our barn at night and look out at the sky - it was the only place that was quiet and peaceful and where I could be alone for a few minutes every day without being told how I had offended God or sinned in some way.” the brunette sighed out. “I used to wish upon the stars for a better life. I would gaze upon them and imagine that that if I lived in the city, I would see the same stars and for that brief second, it felt as if I were actually somewhere else looking up at the night sky and not stuck in a barn in the countryside of a back end hick town.”

Lauren felt her heart grow heavy thinking of how bad things had to have been for the brunette to want to escape. “I’m sorry.” she said tenderly, knowing that her words were inadequate.

“It’s okay. That was another life time ago.” the brunette said with a sad smile. “But from what you just told me, even though we didn’t know each other or live close to one another, we probably looked at the same stars each night.”

“We probably did.” Lauren agreed.

“You know, that’s the most we’ve ever told each other about our past. I’m glad that we did.”

The blonde smiled warmly. “I’m glad too. It’s interesting hearing about little Bo.” Something caught Lauren’s eye and she couldn’t help but grin as she pointed to a region of the sky. “Do you see that star over there? It’s the Corona Borealis!”

“The what now?” the brunette asked as she tried to focus on what Lauren was showing her.

The blonde leaned in towards Bo with the intention of pointing out the star when she was instantly overcome by the scent of the brunette’s soap and shampoo. Bo’s aroma flooded her senses; washing over and through her – triggering memories of intimate moments they spent in and out of the shower. Lauren involuntarily closed her eyes as a shiver ran through her body, causing goosebumps to form despite the warm night air.
Composing herself, Lauren opened her eyes and extended her arm, pointing to the central section of sky. “Umm, that one with the small arc of bright lights… kind of like a U-shape? It’s Corona Borealis, the Northern Crown.”

“Okay, I see it now. Beautiful.” Bo said as she glanced over at the blonde.

Their faces were so close and Lauren knew that it would only take a split second to bridge the distance between them. Time seemed to stand still as she grappled with wanting to kiss Bo regardless of the consequences and not wanting to complicate things between them.

Lauren knew that Bo was being respectful of her wishes and of their friendship so she in turn, wanted to be respectful of her ex-girlfriend’s feelings. Making her decision, she took a cleansing breath to calm her heart rate and leaned back to increase the distance between them.

Bo closed her eyes briefly and also took a deep breath to calm her libido. “Well, I should turn in. It’s going to be another long day tomorrow and I’ll have a grumpy Kenzi to deal with.” She said trying to lighten the awkwardness between them.

“Okay. Have a good night Bo.” Lauren said softly.

“Don’t stay up too late. You need your rest.” The brunette said with concern as she stood.

“I just want to enjoy the stars a little bit longer. I promise I won’t stay out long.” Lauren said with a smile.

“Okay, good night. I’ll see you in the morning.”

“Bo!” The blonde called out, stopping the Succubus in mid-stride. “I, umm, I enjoyed hanging out tonight. We should do it again… if you want.” she stuttered.

Lauren watched Bo’s face light up with a brilliant smile, easing her doubts. “I had fun too. And I’d love to! Tomorrow night?”

“Tomorrow night sounds good.” The blonde said smiling; her grin firmly in place long after Bo had walked away.
Chapter Notes

I apologize for the disgustingly long period of time between posts and offer you this extra long chapter to make up for it.

Full sentences in italics represent internal thoughts; while single words in italics are for emphasis.

Special thanks to: T for always believing in me and for her unlimited patience. And to my wonderful Beta, Dinahwas for her amazing insight and recommendations and for helping me make ‘Time’ better.

Disclaimer: Lost Girl and her characters aren’t mine; I’m just borrowing them. A little inspiration was taken from S2 E8.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

**Chapter 24 – "Into the Jungle - part 2"**

**Day 4 – Village #4**

This was their fourth day in the jungle and Bo and Kenzi had quickly fallen into a routine. The past few days had been monotonous with each day finding them travelling to a different village either on foot or by SUV; setting up their equipment; inoculating the villagers; packing up the equipment; and returning to Base Camp. Because of this continuous exposure, the forest wasn’t as foreboding to the Succubus and not as annoying to the Goth - it didn’t mean that they were thrilled to be in the jungle, just that they had gotten used to it.

Despite the comfort of routine, it was the evenings that Bo looked forward to – after decontamination and supper – Bo and Lauren would meet up at the Fire Pit. Both women would look at the stars and talk about their day, their past or just sit in comfortable silence enjoying each other’s company. It was during these moments that they learned more about one another - Bo about Karen Beattie and Lauren about a young Beth. Though Bo wished that their relationship was more romantic than platonic, she could honestly say that she was very happy with the progress that they had made with their friendship and that she knew more about Lauren now than she did when she was in Toronto.

Today the team was headed to the fourth and final village. Even though it was going to take a little over an hour to drive there, Bo and Kenzi were just thankful that they didn’t have to hike. The trip there was quiet with each woman doing their own thing: Lauren reviewed notes; Kenzi slept with her head resting against Bo’s shoulder; while Bo stared out at the scenery and periodically, at the blonde.

When they arrived at the village, Bo noticed that Lauren seemed excited and was practically beaming, causing her to give the blonde a questioning look.

Lauren explained, “I’ve been here before - they are very welcoming. Plus, there’s someone that I’d like you to meet.”
The Succubus silently wondered who was so special that made the doctor smile so openly. Lauren was normally guarded and because of that, very few got to see how beautiful and radiant her smile was - one that Bo hoped would be directed at her again someday.

As they got out of the SUV and started to take out their gear, Bo heard a shout. She looked in the direction of the sound and caught sight of a cute, skinny, little boy around eight years of age with brown hair and dark olive complexion. He sported a huge smile and was almost tripping over his own feet as he ran towards them.

“Dr. Lauren! Dr. Lauren!” he shouted enthusiastically before he leapt into her waiting arms.

“Luc!” The blonde had an elated grin on her face as she spun him around in the air; both giggling as she did so. When she put him down, she cradled him into her and noticed that the top of his head was now meeting her stomach. “You’ve gotten taller!” She exclaimed as she gently combed wavy, brown tendrils out of his face to get a better look at him. “And your hair has gotten longer too. I like it!”

He beamed from ear to ear at the compliment. “I grew a couple of inches since you last saw me!” He said excitedly, out of breath.

“I can tell. Before I know it, you’ll be as tall as me!” she gushed as she tussled his hair.

Lauren turned away from the little boy and came face to face with Bo who was observing them with interest. “Luc, these are my friends Bo and Kenzi. They are visiting from Toronto.” She gestured to the brunette and then to the Goth who had just sidled up to them. “This is Luciano, he’s my personal assistant whenever I visit.” She smiled as she placed her hand on his shoulder and gave him a gentle squeeze.

“Hey little man.” Kenzi gave a subtle wave of her hand.

Bo bent forward and stretched out her hand. “It’s very nice to meet you.”

Luciano noticed how close the brunette was standing to the doctor and frowned slightly. “Bo. That’s a strange name.” he replied as he shook her hand vigorously.

The brunette smiled at the little boy’s bluntness. “I get that all the time. It’s my nickname. My name is Isabeau but all my friends call me Bo. What about your name?” she asked politely.

“My friends call me Luc but my family name is Luciano Vicente Jamil Ferreira Juarez, son of César Cristian Juarez who is Chief of this village.” he declared in the most official voice he could muster.

“That’s a very impressive name.” she smiled sweetly at him.

“Family names are important.” He puffed out his little chest as he carefully recited what his father had taught him. “I’m not allowed to use nicknames unless I know you a long time. Father says it’s out of respect.”

“Your father sounds like a smart man.” the brunette agreed. “But you can still call me Bo.”

Luc furrowed his brow as he deliberated quietly. “One day I will be Chief. But father says not until I’m ready… when I know how to act like a gent-tell-man.” He formed the word slowly.

“That makes sense.” The brunette responded but uncertain of what the little Fae boy was getting at.

Straightening his posture, he peered into the Succubus’ eyes. “We just met. I can’t call you Bo. It
wouldn’t be prop-pur.”

All three women smiled subtly and thought Luciano was very cute as he tried to act older than he was.

The little boy was oblivious as he continued to explain himself. “When we know each other better, we can use our nicknames. For now, I will call you Isabeau. And you shall call me Luciano Vicente Jamil Ferreira.” His tone was serious as his name rolled off his tongue rapidly.

Bo’s smile instantly disappeared, no longer finding the situation funny or Luciano cute. She was stunned by his audacity and glanced at Lauren for guidance who simply shrugged her shoulders as she tried to hide her smirk. The Succubus didn’t understand why this little boy was giving her attitude but before she could respond, he abruptly turned away from her, grabbed the doctor’s hand and smiled. “Come Dr. Lauren! I know my parents would like to see you.” He said as he started to pull her towards the village.

The doctor looked over her shoulder at Bo and mouthed ‘sorry’ to her as she allowed herself to be dragged away.

Bo blinked a couple of times as she tried to process what just happened. “Did that twerp just-”

“Yup!” Kenzi interrupted. “You were shut down by a little boy.”

“Wow!” Bo muttered under her breath, confused by what had transpired.

“It’s okay, I won’t tell anyone that a kid dissed you…” The Goth gave her a cheeky ‘there there’ pat on her back. “for a price!”

“Gee, thanks Kenz.” Bo replied sarcastically as her eyes followed Lauren and the young boy.

“Anytime BoBolicious. Though I have to be honest, you’re seriously losing your touch if you can’t charm a little boy.” Kenzi gave her a mischievous wink.

“Whatever.” Bo mumbled as she made her way towards Lauren while ignoring her best friend’s laughter.

Just like the other villages, the doctors and scientists set up in the Main Hall as it was the best location to administer the injections. Bo stood back to give Lauren and her patients some privacy, allowing her eyes to roam in order to study everyone and her surroundings. With all the conversations, it tended to get loud in the hall but the brunette had learnt to tune out the noise, focusing instead on the blonde doctor and those around her. She watched as the villagers – young and old - patiently waited in line, talking and laughing with one another to pass the time as they gradually inched forward.

Bo noticed how the doctor and the boy interacted: how she chatted with him in-between treating her patients and the way he laughed and hung on to her every word when the doctor answered question after question. Her fondness for Luc warmed Bo’s heart. She had never seen Lauren so carefree, happy and unguarded as she interacted with all the children. She hoped more than anything that the blonde might be that carefree when they returned to Toronto.

They had been there about an hour when Bo noticed that the noise level in the hall had risen. As she looked around to determine the cause, she witnessed approximately eight older women descend upon Kenzi. Bo saw panic in her eyes as the Goth searched for her, mouthing the words ‘save me’ when their eyes met.
The Succubus moved swiftly to intervene but halted in her tracks when she realized that her friend wasn’t in danger. With Kenzi’s tiny frame, the elderly women thought her to be malnourished and took it upon themselves to help her as they ushered her to the far corner of the hall. There, they forced her to sit at a table and the seniors fussed over her like a mother would a child, gently pinching her cheeks and squeezing her skinny arms. Heaping plates of food were placed in front of her and the appetizing aroma instantly silenced Kenzi’s protests. A broad grin quickly replaced the alarm on her face as she rubbed her hands together gleefully. Bo smiled as she watched her friend dive into her bounty of food before turning her attention back to Lauren.

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Bo was keeping an eye on Lauren when Luciano walked up to her. They stood in silence with the brunette watching the doctor and the little boy watching Bo. A few moments passed before she heard his voice. “You like her, don’t you?”

“Sorry?” The Succubus looked down at him, puzzled.

He made a face, slightly annoyed that he had to explain himself. “Dr. Lauren. You like her.”

Bo smiled automatically at the mention of Lauren’s name and knelt down so that she would be at his eye level. “Very much.”

“You should know, when I’m old enough, I’m going to ask her to marry me.”

“You are?!” Bo acted surprised and suppressed her grin. “May I ask why you want to marry her?”

The little boy smiled broadly at the question. “Because she’s wonderful! She’s beautiful and smart and makes me laugh… she’s also trying to save us, which makes her very brave. And she has really, really nice hair!” he gushed.

“Those are all good reasons to want to marry her.” Bo agreed. “But suppose she has other suitors, what would you do?” She asked gently, trying not to crush the little boy’s dreams but rather, wanting to know how serious he was.

“What are soot-oars?” He asked, frowning.

“A suitor is someone like you, who knows how amazing Lauren is; and like you, may want to marry her someday.” Bo explained trying to keep her emotions out of her voice. Marriage was never something she had ever considered as a Succubus but after Lauren left, she realized that life was meaningless without her - the blonde had her heart. She knew that no one else could fill that void or make her feel the way Lauren did. At that moment, she understood ‘mate for life’ and let herself imagine being married to the doctor.

“Oh! There can be more than one soot-oar?” Luciano asked as his shoulders slumped slightly.

Bo nodded her head and felt a little guilty about bursting his bubble. He stood quietly staring at the ground and she could tell that he was considering her words.

A few moments passed before his head jerked up and his index finger shot in the air. “I know! I will prove myself. I will show Dr. Lauren that I am the best soot-oar and then she will choose me!” he said excitedly.

Bo smiled sadly; in a matter of moments this little boy came up with the same plan that took her weeks to stubbornly figure out. She closed her eyes and sighed. “To be worthy of her love.” she whispered, unintentionally vocalizing her thoughts.
Luciano heard her comment but didn’t understand. “Huh?”

Bo looked back at him with regret. “To be worthy. It means that you will do everything you can to show how much you love her - every day. Not just with your words but also what you do… by being the best person you can be to earn her respect and love.”

Luciano nodded his head excitedly. “Yes! I will do that. Make myself wur-thee.”

Bo smiled sweetly at the little boy. “If you do that, you will definitely be ahead of all the other suitors. Dr. Lauren is definitely worth the effort.”

Luciano had a huge grin on his face, proud of coming up with a good plan. “Yes, she is! Dr. Lauren is wonderful.” However, before she could say anything else to him, a woman who Bo assumed was his mother, called him away. The brunette turned her attention back to Lauren and felt butterflies in her stomach just from gazing upon her. “Yes, she is.” she whispered.

It was the end of another long day as Lauren knelt down and started putting her equipment away. She was exhausted but happy with what they had accomplished in the past four days and now they had to wait and see if the trial antidote worked.

The blonde’s thoughts were soon interrupted by a familiar voice that automatically made her smile. She glanced up just as small arms enveloped her, almost toppling her over. Laughter resonated in her voice as she returned the embrace. “What did I do to deserve such a wonderful hug?” she asked.

“I have to go to bed now. I won’t see you leave.” Luciano mumbled into her hair as he squeezed tighter. “I’m going to miss you.” He sulked.

Lauren rubbed soothing circles on his back before pulling away slightly to look into his eyes. “I’m going to miss you too but you know what?”

“What?” he asked in an almost whisper.

“I will be back in four days and we will be able to spend time together. You can tell me all about your adventures.” She said sweetly.

“Really?!” his eyes opened wide; a grin now replacing his pout.

She nodded with a smile. “Really.”

Luciano hugged her again and Lauren felt her heart swell as she held him. She gave him a kiss on his cheek and told him goodbye before watching him run off. Sighing happily, the blonde resumed her task of packing up.

“You’re really good with him.” Bo announced as she emerged from a far corner of the Hall, startling Lauren.

“Gods, you scared me!”

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to.” she smiled sheepishly as she knelt down to help the blonde.

“Luc’s a wonderful boy.”

“Well, he’s wonderful to you because he has a huge crush on you.”

Lauren’s hands stilled and her eyes dropped to the ground as she exhaled softly. “I… I suspected but
I wasn’t sure.”

Lauren’s hair had fallen forward hiding her face and Bo had to fight her desire to gently brush away her soft, blonde locks. “Luciano told me that when he’s older, he’s going to ask you to marry him.”

“He did?!” The blonde’s eyes opened wide as she regarded Bo searching for any sign that she was kidding.

The Succubus grinned slightly and nodded her head. “He told me that you were beautiful, smart, funny and brave and had, I quote ‘really, really nice hair’ end quote.”

Lauren couldn’t help the shy smile that escaped. She had grown quite fond of Luciano and even though it was a little boy’s crush, it endeared him more to her.

Bo’s smile quickly faltered. In revealing Luciano’s crush, her conversation with him came rushing back and was suddenly overcome by her emotions. She felt a lump form in her throat and almost stumbled over her words as they came rushing out of her mouth. “I asked him what he would do if you had other suitors.”

Bo looked away momentarily and nibbled on her bottom lip. She hadn’t planned on this but she was a slave to her impulses and right now it was compelling her to vocalize her feelings. Steeling herself, she gazed into Lauren’s eyes and spoke from her heart. “He said that you were wonderful and could see why others would want to be with you. So, he would prove himself to you… every day… to show you how much you are loved and wanted – through words and actions; and by being the best person possible in order to earn your love, respect and trust. To be worthy of your love.”

“He said that?” Lauren was moved by the tenderness in Bo’s eyes and the emotion in her voice. Her pulse quickened as a solitary thought buzzed in her head - Bo was talking about herself.

Bo averted her eyes and mentally kicked herself. Now she had to quickly decide what to say next. Looking back at Lauren, she answered lightheartedly and shrugged it off. “Well, I summarized. You’re lucky that he’s eight otherwise he would’ve proposed already.” Bo joked.

Lauren held her gaze and studied her silently. Her instincts told her that Bo wasn’t being completely honest but at the same time she wasn’t ready to pursue it. As difficult as it was to keep herself at an emotional arm’s length, she did so to protect herself and to salvage their friendship.

Bo, meanwhile, wasn’t sure if the blonde believed her but knew if she didn’t put a quick end to the conversation, she would probably buckle under the scrutiny. She gave Lauren’s arm a brief but gentle squeeze. “Don’t worry, he’ll grow out of his crush eventually.”

The doctor sighed, sensing that Bo wasn’t going to cop to her own feelings yet, she appreciated her reassurance. She cared about Luciano and the last thing she wanted to do was hurt him.

Both women instantly dropped the subject and resumed packing, working in a comfortable silence as they picked up the various vials of medicine and placed them in their protective containers. They were almost finished when their hands collided reaching for the same bottle. Bo and Lauren immediately felt the spark – the same one that always existed between them – causing their hearts to race and their skin to become heated and tingle as if electricity were coursing through their veins.

They silently watched as their fingers lingered and slowly drifted closer before linking together naturally. No words were uttered as they observed their now joined hands; both women lost in the comfort and intimacy of the moment.
Bo thought her heart would pound out of her chest, thrilled that Lauren was intentionally holding her hand. “I’ve watched you around the kids. You’re a natural with them; not just with Luc.”

The doctor smiled shyly. “Thanks.”

When Bo saw how amazing Lauren was with the children, she couldn’t help but picture them together with their own but promptly squashed those thoughts knowing that all their problems had to be fixed before that could be a reality. Regardless, she knew how much Lauren wanted children and she really hoped that she would have that chance. As she gazed into the blonde’s eyes, she felt compelled to tell her. “You would make a wonderful mother, Lauren.” Bo said tenderly.

Lauren was caught off guard, moved by such a beautiful compliment. She had once divulged to Bo that she already had a boy’s and girl’s name picked out if she ever had children. Now, at what seemed to be a lifetime later, she was surprised that Bo had remembered the importance of that revelation. It was moments like these that reminded her of the woman that she had first fallen in love with – thoughtful, kind, understanding and caring - and she couldn’t help the radiant smile that emerged.

She felt the familiar tug at her heart; the one she always felt when she found herself getting lost in Bo. Whenever she was with her, Lauren had felt special, happy and free in spite of her servitude; and even though she was a pro at masking her emotions, she was easily incapacitated by the Succubus’ beauty, charm and compassion.

Lauren had treasured these days in the jungle as it was the most that she and Bo had talked, laughed and learned about one another. She was pleased that they were more comfortable and open with each other but was finding it difficult to keep her thoughts and feelings platonic as they continued to repair their friendship. Lauren knew how important it was for her to focus on her own personal growth and happiness and to not jump back into familiar habits but after all the wonderful things Bo had just told her, coupled with the intensity in her eyes and the longing she felt from just holding her hand, the blonde felt her resolve fading fast.

Every fibre of her being wanted to connect with Bo – to lean forward the few inches and kiss her. But not a simple ‘peck on the lips’ kiss. She wanted it to be more; she wanted it to be hungry and passionate and to take her breath away. Lauren wanted to grab her by the back of her neck and capture her mouth; suck on her tongue; bite down on her bottom lip and tug on it with her teeth before sucking on it to soothe the sting. She wanted to kiss Bo so badly that it terrified her.

Lauren felt her control slipping and knew she had to rein in her emotions as too much was at stake. Squeezing her eyes shut, she released the breath she didn’t realize she was holding. When she opened her eyes, she immediately looked away and gently extricated her fingers to pick up the last vial, effectively breaking their connection. She instantly missed the warmth of Bo’s hand but knew that she had made the responsible decision.

“Looks like we’re all done.” Lauren’s voice shook as she locked the case and stood.

Bo stifled her groan and let out a quiet exhalation to recover. She had observed Lauren’s aura glow brightly before it gradually diminished to a flicker. The doctor’s self-control was admirable. Lauren had doubts—that much was clear; and if she wasn’t ready to take things further, Bo wouldn’t push. She learned that lesson and would give Lauren all the time she needed.

As Bo composed herself, she realized that what she had said earlier made Lauren happy as the blonde had flashed her thousand watt smile at her - the same beautiful, radiant smile that she never thought would be directed at her again. Grinning gleefully from ear to ear, Bo stood and leisurely swept her arm out in front of her. “After you Dr. Lauren.”
Lauren chuckled in relief and also at the brunette’s goofiness. “Thank you, Isabeau.”

Day 5 – Village #1

The dark, ominous sky was incentive for the team to pick up their pace with the hope of beating the rain. Unfortunately, they were less than thirty minutes away from the village when the sky erupted assaulting everything within its path with heavy, fat droplets of water. The entire team was soaked within seconds as they sloshed through muddy trails. However, much to Bo’s and Kenzi’s surprise, the rain was warm and refreshing against the humidity and annoying bugs.

But as quickly as the downpour started, it ended. It was as if a switch was flipped, instantly shutting off the water and causing the clouds to disperse; revealing clear, blue skies. Within moments, the fresh, clean smell of the forest permeated the air and the birds, insects and jungle creatures once again resumed their chatter as if they had woken from a brief slumber.

By the time they arrived at the village, the sun was blinding and the blistering heat had returned causing steam to rise from the damp soil. Despite being drenched, everyone was in a good mood; chit-chatting and laughing; and focusing on removing the water from their clothes and footwear before getting started on their day’s work.

Kenzi silently grumbled about having something else to hate about the forest as she lamented about her hair being plastered to her head. Bo, on the other hand, was oblivious to everyone around her. She only had eyes for Lauren who stood a short distance away in her cargo pants, hiking boots and tank top while she wrung the rainwater out of her khaki shirt. The Succubus licked her lips as she continued to stare at the doctor’s slicked back hair and water slowly dripping down her long neck and bare shoulders. Bo followed the outline of her torso and growled low at the sight of the wet, see-through tank top as it clung to every inch of Lauren’s slender body.

Kenzi, who was standing next to her, gave her a swift elbow to the ribs. “Keep it in your pants Bo!” she hissed quietly so that no one else could hear.

The painful nudge broke the Succubus out of her trance and caused her to release an expletive. When she turned to face her friend, her eyes were glowing blue and she was scowling at the interruption.

The tiny woman took a small, reactionary step back. “Woah there, Succubum. Remember me? Your bestie.” She pointed her thumb at herself.

Squeezing her eyes shut, the brunette took a couple of cleansing breaths to control her inner Succubus; when she opened her eyes a few seconds later, they were back to their normal hue.

“Better?”

“Yes.” Bo mumbled. “Sorry.”

The Goth accepted the apology with a subtle nod of her head. “Perhaps you are a little peckish?”

Bo gave her a sideways look and frowned. “I’m fine! You just surprised me.”

Kenzi raised her hands in mock surrender. “I’m not judging.”

Bo turned her attention back to Lauren who was now talking to Nayara. “She’s just so damn sexy. And wet. So. Very. Wet.” The brunette nibbled on her bottom lip as she stared.

Kenzi rolled her eyes. “Riiight! Keep telling me how not hungry you are.”
The brunette sighed. “Fine! But even if I weren’t slightly hungry I’d still react this way ‘cuz it’s Lauren.”

“I get it Bo. But, it’s been a few days since you had the all-you-could-suck buffet in the lab. Maybe topping up will help take the edge off?”

Bo let out a groan as she ran her fingers through her damp hair. “Maybe you’re right. I see some of the technicians from that night. I’ll go talk to them.” Looking back at her friend, she released a sigh. “Thanks Kenz. Watch Lauren for me, ‘K? I’ll be back in a bit.”

The doctor glanced over at Bo while she chatted with Kenzi. Even though she was being discrete, it was difficult not to stare at the Succubus who was wet from head to toe. Lauren noted that her clothes clung to her like a second skin and was in awe of how beautiful she looked with her exposed skin glistening in the sunlight. She watched entranced, as Bo combed her fingers through her wet hair, freeing the tangles and letting it cascade down her neck and back – the simple act caused shivers to travel throughout her body.

“Sorry. What?” She jumped as a voice snapped her out of her Bo-daze.

“You zoned out.” Nayara said knowingly after following her friend’s gaze.

Lauren feigned ignorance, embarrassed about being caught. “I was just thinking.”

“About a certain Succubus perhaps?”

The blonde considered protesting but knew that Nayara would see right through her. Releasing a heavy sigh, she confessed, “I don’t know what I’m doing Nay. I know what I have to do… what I should do… but I’m struggling.”

“Maybe instead of fighting yourself, you should do what your instincts tell you.”

“Which instincts? My rational or my emotional one?”

“The one that knows what you need.” the Empath replied supportively.

“Were you this frustrating when you were a psychiatrist?” Lauren griped.

Nayara gave a playful wink to her friend and smiled broadly. “Only if your definition of frustrating means fantastic? Then yes!” Receiving an eye roll in response, the Fae doctor chuckled, linked her arm in Lauren’s and steered her towards the Main Hall. “Come on Grumpy, we have work to do.”

Day 8 – Village #4 – early afternoon

Lauren hummed contentedly as she gathered soil and plant samples. She had become a doctor to help others and this was the first time since the Congo that she felt she was making a difference. She had forgotten how satisfying that felt. They had come such a long way since the outbreak started as the follow up visits were confirming what their initial tests had proven - the inoculations were halting the symptoms. Even though she had hoped it would be the cure, she knew that it was only a matter of time before they determined the right adjustment to the antidote in order to put an end to the epidemic once and for all. Until then, it was a relief to know that they at least had stopped the plague from claiming more lives.

In addition to her feeling fulfilled professionally, things with Bo were going remarkably well. Bo had proven herself to be incredibly patient, considerate and respectful of her wishes – all of which were a
huge relief and surprise. Bo’s tolerance of Luc impressed Lauren too. She had been a good sport, abiding by his decision to use their proper names; and the blonde couldn’t help but think that she would be a loving and patient mother if she ever had children. However, she suspected that the brunette intentionally mispronounced his name a couple times just to tease him. Lauren chuckled remembering how Luciano grumbled when Bo butchered his name and how he called her Isabeau every chance he got.

And Luc - she was surprised at how fast the little boy had made his way into her heart. She enjoyed spending time with him and making him laugh; she found that she had missed him when they were apart; she loved his curiosity and eagerness to learn new things; and was more than happy to answer his questions. Lauren couldn’t help but wonder that if she felt this strongly for a child that wasn’t her own, how intense would her feelings be for her own son or daughter?

The blonde promptly shook all thoughts of having children from her head knowing that there was no point in fantasizing about what could never be. Instead, she watched Luciano from her perch at the top of a slope fifty feet away. He had insisted on helping her collect water and plant samples at the river’s edge and was currently poking his tongue out between his lips in deep concentration. Cupping her hands around her mouth, she shouted down to him. “Luc! Be careful along the water!”

“Okay!” He yelled back and gave her a thumb’s up.

Lauren shifted her gaze over to Bo who was about thirty feet away from him along the river’s bank. She was chatting with Kenzi and from the Goth’s wild gestures the blonde guessed that she was complaining about the heat, bugs, some aspect of the forest or all of the above. Lauren knew the younger woman was only enduring the jungle for her friend and couldn’t help but smile as she wondered about all the ways Bo would have to re-pay Kenzi once they were back in Toronto.

Happily, Lauren turned her attention back to collecting samples. She glimpsed something moving from the corner of her eye - a disturbance. She glanced over her shoulder at Luc and what she saw chilled her blood. “LUC! RUN!”

The little boy looked up in the direction of her voice and although he didn’t hear exactly what was said, he picked up on Lauren’s panicked tone and understood that something was wrong.

Bo heard the scream and looked in Lauren’s direction only to see her scrambling down the embankment, yelling. Turning her attention towards the river, she was quickly filled with dread at what she saw behind Luciano. A long, U-shaped snout attached to an incredibly large reptilian head was on the surface of the water. Without turning to look back at Kenzi, Bo tore off towards Luc.

The beast surged out of the river and released a loud, deep roar. Bo had seen alligators at the zoo before but those were puny in comparison. This one was massive. Its armored body and muscular, flat tail made it at least eighteen feet long; its dark almost black, scaly skin gave it an even more terrifying appearance; and when it opened its mouth, Bo could see its razor sharp teeth.

Bo’s lungs burned as she pushed herself to run faster but the soft, marshy ground made her movements more laboured as her feet sank in with each stride. By the time she got to Luc, it was too late. The gargantuan beast had slipped back into the muddy depths with the little boy in its maw; his screams silenced by the water. Without hesitating, Bo swiftly unsheathed her dagger, took a deep breath and plunged in after them.

“Nooo!” Lauren screamed. She had seen the entire situation unfold while she was running down the slope. The insides of her stomach twisted as she stood helplessly at the river’s edge; a large ripple travelling along the surface of the water, the only indication of what had just transpired.
Kenzi arrived moments later, panting. “What the Fae was that!? Was that an alligator?!”

“Black Caiman.” The doctor responded shakily as she continued to stare out at the river. “Think of it as an alligator on steroids. They are the predator in the Amazonian waters.”

The Goth paled. God!” she murmured as she covered her mouth with shaky hands.

Lauren released a deep breath and pushed down the panic that was rising in her gut. “Kenzi, I need you to go get help.”

The younger woman’s focus was on the water and her fear of what was happening beneath its surface. When she didn’t respond, Lauren grabbed her arm. “Kenzi! Get help. Now!” The physical contact and the urgency in Lauren’s voice jolted the Goth out of her distressed daze and with a quick nod of her head she took off running towards the village.

Lauren turned her attention back to the river; her eyes scanning every inch of it as she paced anxiously along the shore. Everything around her was quiet except for her heart thumping loudly in her ears. Each second that passed without any sign of Bo or Luc felt like an eternity, filling her with dread. “Come on!” she whispered, willing them to surface. “Bo killed the Garuda. She can handle a Caiman.” Lauren reasoned, trying to reassure herself.

An explosion of water disrupted the eerie tranquility. The beast surfaced casting spray in every direction, with Luc trapped in its jaw like a rag doll and Bo draped on its back - her legs wrapped around its scaly body and one arm clutched tightly around its thick neck. Lauren looked on in shock as the monstrous reptile thrashed about wildly trying to free itself from its unwanted hitchhiker. Yet Bo held on undeterred, repeatedly stabbing at it with her dagger.

It felt as if time had slowed down to a snail’s pace allowing Lauren to observe the horrifying scene in detail. She saw the fear in Luc’s eyes and heard the bloodcurdling scream that came out of his mouth. Bo looked worse for wear – the physical strain was evident in her face; her clothes were ripped and bloody; all the muscles in her arms and hands were tightly corded; and there were cuts and abrasions on her exposed skin. It was agonizing seeing Bo and Luc in peril but before she could react, the Black Caiman submerged abruptly, taking both Fae back into the murky depths.

Lauren felt as if her heart was being constricted, making it difficult to breathe. There was no noise or movement as she looked out frantically at the river.

Seconds later a small body floated to the surface. “Luc!”

Without thinking, Lauren dove in, swimming as fast as she could to get to him. He was face down in the water and she knew that she had to get him to shore right away. “I have you Luc. You’re okay. You’re safe.” She cradled his unconscious, limp body against her chest and started to swim back to the river bank, trying not to think as to what else could be in the water.

By the time Kenzi returned with Nayara, some guards and a handful of villagers, Lauren had Luciano a safe distance away from the water and was performing CPR on him.

“Lauren!” The Empath called out as she ran towards her.

The blonde looked up at her friend while she continued chest compressions. “Breathe for me!”

Nayara kneeled down by Luc’s head opposite Lauren and together they worked in sync - the blonde giving thirty compressions and the Empath following with two breaths. “Come on Luc! Breathe!” the blonde urged.
Kenzi alternated her attention between what was happening with Luc and then out at the water, scanning for Bo. Her heart beat in her throat.

At this point, word had spread and more villagers had arrived with the majority showing their concern for Luciano and the remainder down at the river’s edge with the guards to keep a look out for the Succubus.

With another compression, Luciano coughed and sputtered and the doctors immediately turned him on his side to keep him from choking. “You’re okay Luc, you’re safe.” Lauren said gently as she covered him with a blanket that a villager had handed her.

Luciano looked up at the blonde wearily; his voice weak. “Dr. Lauren?”

Lauren stroked his cheek tenderly, relieved that he was conscious. “I’m here Luc. You’re safe. You were very brave.”

Lauren heard shouting and turned to see Luciano’s father making his way through the crowd. “He’s okay César. He has some cuts and bruises but he’s okay.”

“Bo!” Kenzi screamed. “Over there! I see her!”

At Kenzi’s shout, a handful of guards dove into the river. Lauren automatically turned to see where the Goth was pointing and gasped when she saw Bo and the Caiman floating lifelessly on the water.

Kenzi’s eyes were brimming with tears and her voice quavered as she looked over at the blonde. “She’s not moving!”

Nayara spoke to César. “Please take him to the Medical Hut so that I can look over his injuries. I will meet you there shortly.” With a nod, the Chief picked up his exhausted son in his arms and carried him away.

The Empath took Lauren’s hand and helped her stand. “Stay. I’ll take care of Luc.”

Not trusting her voice, the blonde simply nodded appreciatively. With everything that had just happened and not knowing the extent of Bo’s injuries, her anxiety and emotional stress was high.

Nayara gently squeezed Lauren’s hand to get her attention. “Bo’s a fighter. She’ll be okay.” she said assuredly as she looked into brown eyes.

Lauren squeezed the Empath’s hand back in response and watched as Nayara hurried towards the village. Looking back towards the river, her eyes focused in on Bo’s unconscious body floating on the water - everything around her blurred and the cacophony of voices became one indecipherable noise that blended into the background. Thoughts that Bo could be brain dead due to lack of oxygen or that she may have sustained a fatal wound from the Caiman rushed through her mind and she instantly felt nauseous.

“Pull it together!” She chastised herself as she wiped clammy hands against her pants. Lauren shut her eyes and took a deep, calming breath. The doctor would not let fear and anxiety overpower her, not with Bo’s life at stake and right now, Bo was her only priority. She steeled her mind and her emotions and released a cleansing breath as her eyes fluttered open. “I can do this.”

Lauren was composed as she went through a mental checklist of things to look out for and do. Springing into action, she grabbed a couple Fae that were nearby. “You two - go to the medical hut and bring back a stretcher and a blanket now!” She then turned to the guards that were carrying a bloody and unconscious Succubus and pointed to the spot that Luc had been just moments earlier.
“Lay her down here. Carefully!”

Kenzi ran up to her and grabbed at her shirt. “Tell me that she’s going to be all right.”

Lauren saw the fear in her eyes and softly placed her hand on top of Kenzi’s. Her voice was gentle. “I’m going to do everything I can for her but you have to let me assess her injuries and treat her, okay?”

The blonde was thankful when Kenzi released her grip and took a few paces back. She was also vaguely aware that the guards were keeping the small yet growing crowd away to give her room. Lauren instantly tuned out everything around her while she did a rapid assessment of the brunette’s injuries starting with her breathing and then checked for wounds and fractures under bloodied skin. Thankfully, she found no damage to Bo’s neck and spinal cord so she immediately began performing CPR, counting the chest compressions under her breath.

“…and-six-and-seven-and-eight-and-nine…”

“C’mon Bo breathe!” The Goth whispered as she stood off to the side. She had seen Bo wounded and hurt before but this was the first time that she had seen her unconscious and so close to death. Kenzi didn’t know if the blood covering Bo was hers, the Caiman’s or Luc’s. It took everything she had to keep herself together and not crumble under the weight of her concern.

“…and-twenty two-and-twenty three-and-twenty four-and-twenty five…”

“Breathe Bo, breathe!” the Goth murmured as she looked on and wrung her hands. She hated that she was standing on the sidelines, unable to help in any way. Time seemed to slow down to an agonizing crawl and as unbearable as it was, Kenzi knew that only thing she could do was wait.

The young woman watched Lauren lean forward and blow two puffs of air into Bo’s mouth. She observed her friend’s chest rise with each breath but still there was no movement or reaction. Fear squeezed at her heart as she prayed. “I promise I’ll clean the shack and do laundry for a year… two years even! Just wake up, please.”

“…and-eleven-and-twelve-and-thirteen…”

With the heat and the physical exertion from swimming and performing CPR on Luciano and now on Bo, Lauren’s muscles were cramping and a sheen of sweat had formed on her brow. “Fight Bo, fight!” she pleaded as she ignored her physical discomfort and continued her steady pace of strong, even compressions. “I can’t lose you.” she thought, holding on to hope.

All of a sudden, the Succubus’ eyes shot open and she coughed out water. “It’s okay Bo. You’re okay.” Lauren said gently as she promptly turned her onto her side. Relief flooded the doctor’s entire body as she watched the brunette spit out water and take huge mouthfuls of air. “Take it easy, Bo - slow, steady breaths.”

“Quick! Place the stretcher under her and bring me that blanket.” Lauren instructed the nearby guards.

“Lauren?” The Succubus wheezed as she looked up at her.

“I’m here, Bo. It’s okay.” She gave her a soft smile as she brushed wet hair out of her face.

Bo scrunched her brow. “Luc?”

She gave the Succubus’ hand a gentle squeeze. “He’s safe. Rest now.”
Kenzi rushed to her friend’s side. “Bo!”

“Step back a second Kenzi, we have to lift her up.” Lauren stated as she tucked the blanket under her.

The Goth did as she was told and watched two guards take both ends of the stretcher and lifted Bo off the ground.

“Kenzi, come with us. We have to take her to the medical hut so that I can look over her other injuries.”

The waiting area wasn’t very large so even though Kenzi wasn’t paying attention, she still caught snippets of what Nayara was telling César and his wife, Maria.

“…Luciano is going to be fine… “…no infection from the bite…” “…cuts and bruises…” “…rest…”

The Goth paced anxiously while she waited for Lauren to emerge from Bo’s room. It had been over ninety minutes since the blonde disappeared with her friend and she had no idea what was happening. Her concern intensified with each second that passed without an update.

With her mind plagued with worst case scenarios, Kenzi didn’t notice when Nayara ushered Luc’s parents into his room or that Lauren was now standing next to her. “Shit doc! Ninja much?” she yelped. Once she felt her heart rate slow, she asked, “How’s Bo?”

Lauren gave her a faint yet tired smile. “Bo’s doing well. I had to perform CPR again as she still had fluid in her lungs and stopped breathing. But her lungs are clear now and she is breathing normally. She has some cracked ribs and numerous cuts, gashes and bruises all over her body but luckily she didn’t get a concussion or break any bones. Once she gets some rest and is a little bit stronger, she will be able to feed and heal. She’s very lucky.”

“Can I see her?!” Kenzi asked anxiously, wringing her fingers together.

“She’s sleeping right now but you can sit with her. She took a beating today so until she feeds, she will need a lot of rest. Don’t be surprised if she drifts in and out of consciousness, okay?”

Kenzi nodded and smiled broadly before pulling the doctor in for a fierce hug. “Thank you Lauren.”

The blonde returned the embrace and watched as Kenzi entered Bo’s room. Lauren realized that not only was she alone but that this was also her first free, quiet moment since the attack. With no more adrenaline and fear to keep her going, her fatigue quickly took over. Collapsing into one of the chairs, she leaned forward with her forearms on the top of her thighs and clasped her hands together. Within seconds, her head dropped and she closed her eyes, allowing herself a short respite. She was emotionally and physically spent but couldn’t give into it until she knew Bo was a hundred percent better.

She must’ve dozed off as she didn’t notice Nayara enter the room or sit next to her until she heard her voice. “How are you holding up?”

Lauren’s eyes popped open and she instantly sat upright. “I’m fine.” She fibbed.

“Really? You look exhausted.”

Lauren rubbed her eyes. “I’m fine.”
“You look like sh-”

“Hey now!” Lauren interrupted.

The Empath looked at her knowingly. “I’m not going to tell you to take a break because I know you won’t.” She stated softly. “I was just going to suggest that while Bo is resting, you change into dry clothes as you’re still wet from getting Luc out of the river. Then you could grab some food and bring it back here. I can monitor Bo while you’re gone and if anything were to happen, I’ll let you know A.S.A.P.”

Lauren was about to protest when Nayara raised her hand and stopped her. “And before you try to come up with some excuse, you know that you would be no good to Bo if you were cold, hungry and exhausted.”

The blonde couldn’t dispute her logic and huffed knowing that Nay was right. “Fine! But only because I’m too tired to argue.”

The Empath smiled broadly and batted her eyelashes for effect.

Lauren pretended to be cross but a low chuckle escaped her lips. She gave Nayara’s forearm a gentle squeeze before standing. “All right, I’ll be back in a bit.”

As the blonde reached for the door, she stopped and looked back at the Empath. “Thank you for looking out for me.”

“Always.” Nayara replied with a soft smile.

Kenzi sat quietly by Bo’s bed and observed the slight rise and fall of her chest as she slept. Her eyes roamed over the plethora of cuts, gashes and bruises that covered Bo’s arms, face and neck and guessed that there were more injuries hidden under her Johnny shirt. In that moment, she knew the truth: Bo almost died. Deep down she had known that Lauren had glossed over how bad things were as she had heard it in her voice and saw it in her face but Kenzi didn’t want to recognize it.

“Unghh.”

The Goth was startled out of her thoughts. “Bo?”

She heard the low groan again. “BoBo!” Kenzi shot up and smiled exuberantly. “How’re you feeling Sleeping Beauty?”

“Like I was run over by a mutant alligator.” Bo coughed out.

Kenzi poured some water in a cup and brought it to Bo’s lips. “It’s called a Black Caiman. Lauren said that they’re like the King Kong version of gorillas.”

“Figures.” She mumbled before drinking eagerly.

The Goth refilled the cup and placed it on the table within Bo’s reach before training sad eyes back on her friend.

“What’s wrong?” Bo asked when she noticed her silence.

“What’s wrong?!” Kenzi exclaimed in disbelief, her eyes glistening with unshed tears. “You’re a jerk! I should kill you for scaring me like that.”
“Then your life would be boring without me.” The brunette teased.

A faint smile appeared on the Goth’s face. “True but you’re still a jerk.”

Bo reached out and grabbed Kenzi’s hand. “I’m sorry I scared you but I couldn’t let that monster eat Luc.”

“I know. It’s just…. you dove in after it and disappeared. You were gone for a long time and the next time I saw you, you were unconscious and covered in blood.”

Bo squeezed Kenzi’s hand. “It had Luc in its jaw. I remembered seeing something on ‘Jungle Jeeves’ about alligators – that they don’t eat their prey right away. They hold on to it to drown it; lodge the body under a rock or tree root; and then come back for it later. When I dove in, I thought if I annoyed it enough, it would release Luc but I couldn’t get my blade through its scales. I was also having a hard time holding on because it kept rolling and bashing me against rocks under the water. I was starting to run out of air when I managed to stab it in the eye. That’s when it released him. So I kept attacking its eyes. I don’t remember anything after that.”

“You must’ve killed it before passing out because you were both floating on the surface.” Kenzi mused out loud. “When the guards fished you out, you weren’t breathing… Lauren did CPR on you by the river. I didn’t think you were going to make it.”

“But I did make it.” She gave Kenzi’s hand another reassuring squeeze. “You know me, I’ll be good as new in no time.” she said downplaying her near death experience.

Before Kenzi could respond, there was a knock on the door and Lauren poked her head in. “Sorry to interrupt but are you up to having a couple more visitors? There’s someone who wants to see you.”

Bo nodded, unable to trust her voice. She wasn’t prepared for the sudden wave of emotions that hit her when she looked at Lauren. After almost dying, she realized how precious time was - limited and fleeting - and that she had so much to make up for. Fate was giving her another chance and she didn’t want to waste it.

Kenzi helped Bo prop herself up as Lauren ushered in César, Maria and Luciano. The blonde made her way to the furthest corner of the room so that Luc’s parents would be able to stand by Bo’s bed. Maria smiled with tears in her eyes as she touched the brunette’s hand. “There are no words to express our gratitude, Bo. We are forever in your debt for bringing our son back to us.”

“I’m just glad I was able to help.” The brunette replied humbly.

César rested his hands on Luc’s shoulders. “You were willing to give your life for our son. We will never forget your courage.” He gave her a toothy smile. “Tomorrow we will hold a feast in your honour.”

Bo really didn’t want any special treatment and attending a feast was the last thing she wanted especially with the pain she was in. “Oh, there’s no need to go through the trouble.”

“We insist.” His tone was succinct and authoritative.

Bo cast a subtle glance at Lauren and saw that she was trying to suppress a grin. Realizing that she couldn’t refuse, the brunette conceded. “Then, I’d be honored. Thank you.” She had noticed that Luc was quietly standing in front of his parents and was looking at her. “How are you feeling Luciano Vicen-”

“Luc.” He interrupted before she could finish saying all his names. Luciano smiled and gave her a
subtle nod of his head, hoping that she would understand.

Bo was shocked at his change in attitude but quickly recovered and gave him a dazzling grin. “How are you feeling Luc?”

“I’m okay, thanks.” He responded politely. “How are you, Bo?” He asked shyly.

The brunette was surprised at the use of her nickname but was pleased knowing that she had earned Luc’s trust. “Sore but feeling a lot better than the Caiman.” she joked causing everyone to chuckle.

Lauren watched the brunette and Luciano interact and was happy that the two people she cared about were safe and finally getting along. Bo was lucky to be alive. The blonde hadn’t realized how stressed she had been when the Succubus had stopped breathing. It was only when Bo was finally stable that Lauren felt the tension leave her body and she recognized the truth: she wanted and needed Bo in her life.

She was drawn out of her internal musings when she observed Bo stifling her yawns and fidgeting. She knew that the brunette was tired and in pain and was about to suggest that they call it a night when Luciano’s voice broke through excitedly. “Want to see my scars?!”

Lauren interjected not wanting him to interfere with his bandages. “Luc, how about you show Bo another time? It’s been a long day and you both should get some rest.”

Disappointment flashed across his face when his father took his hand and his parents said their goodbyes.

“We will compare scars Luc. I bet it looks cool.” Bo piped up.

Luciano’s frown turned into a huge grin as he waved. “Okay! Bye Bo!”

Kenzi hung back while Lauren escorted Luc and his parents out of the room. “All right BoBo. Get some sleep and I’ll see you in the morning.”

The brunette yawned loudly. She hadn’t realize how tired she was until everyone started to leave. “You aren’t headed back to Base Camp today?”

The young woman shook her head. “First of all, you know I wouldn’t leave without you and secondly, everyone is invited to the feast tomorrow. César arranged for beds to be set up in the Main Hall so that we could sleep comfortably. It saves us from hiking back tonight and returning tomorrow.”

Bo yawned again. “Won’t you be bored tonight?”

“You know me; I always make my own fun.”

Kenzi grinned when Bo quirked her eyebrow at her. “I discovered that the village brews their own Cachaça - which is similar to rum. A few of us are going to sample their stock.”

Bo chuckled at her friend and grimaced when the movement sent a jolt of pain through her body. “Ouch! Enjoy!”

“So Luc can come home with us?” His mother, Maria asked.

Lauren looked at the little boy who couldn’t stop yawning. “Yes, he needs a good night’s rest and that would be best achieved if he was comfortable in his own bed. Just make sure the bandages stay
on and bring him by in the morning so we can take another look at the bite. We want to make sure that it doesn’t get infected.”

“Thank you so much Lauren.” César said appreciatively.

Before the blonde could respond, Luc reached over and tugged on her hand. “Dr. Lauren?”

She knelt so that she was at his eye level. “Yes Luc?”

The little boy wore a heartfelt expression and stretched his arms out wide. Lauren didn’t hesitate and pulled him into a tight embrace. Her distress about the attack and relief that he was safe and alive churning inside her and she realized in that instant how much she needed to hold him.

“Thank you for saving me.” He whispered into her ear.

Lauren felt a lump form in her throat and couldn’t speak; instead she kissed the top of his head and held on to him for dear life. After a few moments, she pulled away and caressed his cheek before wishing him and his parents a good night.

The blonde shut the door behind them and allowed her tears to fall; she was running on fumes and her emotions were high. Leaning against the door, she released the sobs that she had been holding back as she wrapped her arms around her shuddering body.

Exhausted, Lauren wiped at tear streaked cheeks and made her way to the bathroom. As she squinted into the mirror she released a weary sigh seeing red, tired eyes staring back at her. Knowing that she had to compose herself before checking in on Bo, she splashed water on her face and hoped that it would remove any evidence of her crying.

Upon hearing the door, Bo jerked awake; the sudden movement causing her to hiss in pain. She had been waiting for Lauren to return and hadn’t meant to fall asleep.

The doctor rushed to her side and helped her sit upright against her pillows. “Are you okay? What are you doing awake?” she asked gently.

“I’m fine. I was waiting for you.” She murmured as she tried to focus drowsy eyes on Lauren.

She rested her hand on Bo’s shoulder. “You shouldn’t have. You need to rest.”

“I can’t when I know you’re upset.” Bo rasped.

The doctor wasn’t prepared for Bo’s concern and after breaking down over Luc, she didn’t have the strength to suppress her emotions. She staggered back and looked away in an attempt to calm herself.

“Lauren, are you okay?” Bo asked, concern etched in her voice.

Lauren’s head whipped back towards Bo, her voice unintentionally raised. “Okay? Of course I’m not okay! You and Luc could’ve died. In fact, you almost died. Twice! What you did was reckless!”

Lauren glanced down and took a deep breath; when she faced the brunette again, her expression was tender. “But incredibly brave.” she said softly. Lauren struggled to hold back her tears as she peered into Bo’s eyes. “Because of you, Luc is alive. His parents have their son and they will forever be grateful to you… just as I am.”

Bo hated seeing the tears in Lauren’s eyes and desperately wanted to comfort her. Ignoring her injuries, she cast aside the thin sheet and swiftly swung her legs to the side so that they dangled off
the bed. Gritting her teeth, she cradled her ribs and sought out Lauren’s eyes. “I didn’t mean to scare you. I just couldn’t let him die.”

Lauren’s gaze never strayed from the brunette’s. She promptly bridged the distance and placed her hands on Bo’s knees to still her movements, preventing her from injuring herself further. “I know. It’s who you are and it’s one of the reasons that I—”

Lauren stopped herself. She almost said how she felt which would’ve gone against her decision to keep things platonic. “Bo almost died!” reverberated in her mind. Lauren squeezed her eyes shut. She was so tired of maintaining control; of being rational; of being self-protective. She took a cleansing breath and when she opened her eyes, everything seemed clearer. In that moment - standing in front of the woman she almost lost and looking into her warm, brown eyes - there was only one thing she wanted.

The blonde surged forward and crashed her mouth into Bo’s, cradling her face in her hands. Soft lips melded together. Lauren’s heart raced as her fingers dug into the nape of Bo’s neck, pulling her closer; her mouth muffling Bo’s surprised gasp. Teeth, tongues and lips clashed; their kisses, wanting, insistent and hungry. A low groan escaped and Lauren couldn’t tell if it came from her or Bo but she didn’t care; all that mattered was the immense relief, joy and longing that she felt.

Bo was elated; all pain, forgotten. The only thing she could feel was the sensation of Lauren’s lips and hands as they left a trail of fire on her mouth and skin. Bo thought she would combust from the happiness and desire she felt. In the back of her mind, she was always afraid that Lauren would never trust her like she used to but with the blonde kissing her – connecting with her emotionally and physically – she felt more hopeful.

The air was electrified. The sound of wet, eager kisses and low moans filled the room as fingers grasped at hair and gripped skin. However, like a wave crashing against the shore - powerful, wondrous and breathtaking – it’s quickly pulled back to sea; the moment, fleeting.

When Lauren pulled away and hesitantly caressed her cheek, Bo knew that something had changed. Lauren’s eyes had transformed from being dark with desire to sad and unreadable. The doctor’s brow was creased in silent contemplation causing Bo’s heart to hammer painfully in her chest. Shock, joy and doubt swirled through her as she wondered what Lauren was thinking and feeling and what their kiss meant to her.

Lauren couldn’t concentrate - her thoughts were loud and her emotions raged. “You should get some sleep.” Her voice was distant.

The Succubus was dumbfounded by the shift and simply nodded as she laid down carefully. Her eyes stayed fixed on the blonde, observing her. Bo remained silent, unsure of what to say and afraid that her words would only make things more awkward than they were. The brunette realized that whatever happened, it was obvious that Lauren wasn’t ready to talk about it.

The room suddenly felt confining and Lauren thought she wouldn’t be able to breathe if she stayed there longer. “I’m sorry.” tumbled out of her mouth in an almost whisper. “I have to finish my notes for the day so I’ll check in on you later.” she said hurriedly.

The brunette let out a heavy sigh as she watched the doctor make a hasty retreat. Bo stared at the door as her fingers ghosted along her lips – lips that were still tingling from kissing Lauren. She was still confused as to what brought about the change with the blonde and wrestled with herself to not jump to conclusions.

Now that there were no distractions from her pain, Bo felt her entire body ache. Knowing that there
was nothing else she could do at this moment, she closed her eyes, stilled her thoughts and let her exhaustion claim her. Tomorrow, she would talk to Lauren and figure things out; but tonight she would dream of the blonde and the mind blowing kiss they shared.

Chapter End Notes

Have no fear; Luciano was not harmed in this chapter. He had a professional stunt double stand in for him during the attack scene. As well, no Black Caimans were hurt or killed in the writing of this chapter – they too, had a stand-in.

For the First Aid scene, I used Google, so please do not take what I wrote for performing CPR, to be the end all and be all. Before you jump into a body of water to rescue a gorgeous, busty brunette and/or a cute, little boy from drowning, please call 911 first.

And finally, please leave a comment. I have to pay the stunt doubles for their time and payment is based off the number of reviews I receive!
A thousand apologies; life got exceedingly more challenging since I last posted. I cannot promise when next I will post; I can only promise that I will continue until this story is finished which should be another three or four chapters.

Thank you for all your wonderful reviews, kudos and for your continued patience. You guys are awesome.

A wonderful thank you to my amazing Beta, Dinahwas. Thank you for pushing me with this chapter even though I had to re-do it completely. It's much improved after the re-write. Thank you for your time, patience and fantastic recommendations – you've made this chapter so much better.

And a special thank you to T for always believing in me and for enduring all my requests to constantly proof read 'one last time'.

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**Chapter 25** – "An Emotional Goodbye"

**Day 8 – Village #4 – late at night**

Lauren raced through the medical hut. She needed air. The walls felt as if they were closing in on her and her heart was beating so rapidly she thought it would explode. Bursting out the door, the fresh, night air washed over her, immediately waking her senses.

Inhaling and exhaling deeply, she ran her fingers through her hair and paced outside the hut. "What were you thinking!?” she muttered. Yes, she wanted to kiss Bo but she hadn't intended on actually doing it. She shook her head in frustration. Even though she couldn't deny how much she had missed kissing Bo, she knew she just made things more complicated.

Lauren released a weary sigh. She was so tired of this internal battle; of the push and pull between logic and emotion. She wasn't blind to the irony of her situation - that it was Bo that had made her feel again after years devoid of emotion. Bo had awakened her passion; opened her heart to love again; and gave hope to her hopeless life. And yet, she found herself intentionally suppressing her feelings.

Lauren didn't make that choice lightly. Looking back, she realized that all her major life decisions were made with her heart and she suffered the consequences because of it. It was so ironic that she staunchly applied logic to her work but when it came to her personal life, she was resolutely sentimental. Lauren often wondered what she would do differently if she could do it all over again. She knew without a shadow of a doubt that she would still do everything she could for Nadia and Bo but believed she would give more attention to all other options instead of going with kneejerk reactions.

The doctor shook her head to physically clear her mind. Thoughts of ‘what if’ and ‘if only’ were futile. She couldn't go back in time; she couldn't change the past. Shaky fingers wiped away tears as
her exhaustion tore at her. The conflict raged inside her and she knew she had to get her feelings under control. Stilling her movements, she closed her eyes and forced herself to take slow, deep breaths. Each exhalation calmed her racing heart and once her pulse rate steadied, she opened her eyes.

Lauren stared off into space; not really seeing anything as her thoughts dominated her senses. Taking a few more deep breaths; her mind gradually quieted and her vision came into focus as blurry lights slowly morphed into bright, twinkling stars.

Normally, the beauty and wonder of the constellations would loosen the tension in her shoulders but tonight it wasn't working. Releasing another sigh, she dropped to the ground and sat cross legged with her forearms resting on her thighs. Lauren looked out past the village and into the dark recesses of the jungle and replayed all the reasons for her decision. She couldn't refute the logic behind it but it still didn't ease the ache in her heart. "Guess that's why tough decisions are tough." she murmured to herself as she stared out into the shadows.

Bo was on the brink of consciousness but found it difficult to pry her eyes open. Her body felt as if it were hovering in mid-air; her thoughts were jumbled; and her limbs hung from her body, heavy and sluggish. As she waited for her body to wake, her senses kicked into gear and a feeling of dread filled her.

Her eyes flew open upon realizing that she was submerged in the murky river and couldn't see past a couple of feet in any direction. "How did I end up here?"

The fear of the unknown caused an uneasy feeling to grow in the pit of her stomach. Something suddenly brushed against her and she flinched not knowing if it was a plant or an animal. She didn't understand how or why she was in the river but at that moment, it didn't matter. She was running out of air.

The urge to breathe overpowered her and it took every ounce of willpower to fight the instinct to take a breath; and by doing so, inadvertently swallowing water. She swam in the darkness, disoriented, not knowing if she was even moving in the right direction. Her muscles ached. She couldn't reach the surface and the lack of oxygen only drained her energy further.

Her lungs screamed for air. Each second that passed, the pain worsened. Her anxiety grew despite all attempts to stay calm and as her vision gradually narrowed, she knew that time was running out. "I can't die! I have to make things right with Lauren. And who's going to look out for Kenzi?" she thought in disbelief as she faced certain death.

Bo was moments away from losing consciousness. Her instincts kicked in and she took an involuntary breath. The terror and agony were instantaneous as water filled her throat and burned a painful path to her lungs. Her body thrashed and spasmed violently as the water muted her screams.

"Bo!"
"Wake up!"

The brunette coughed and sputtered as she gasped for air. Her eyes were wide with fright as she flailed her arms. The fear and panic she experienced in her nightmare still surged through her, causing her heart to beat erratically.

"You're okay Bo. It was just a dream." Lauren assured her as she avoided the Succubus' swinging
arms before grasping her hands firmly to keep from being hit.

"Not… real?" The brunette asked between gasps for air.

"You were dreaming. You're okay now." she said calmly as she gently rubbed the hands trapped in hers. Once Bo relaxed her limbs, Lauren quickly released her and carefully helped her sit upright. "Take slow, steady breaths."

Bo's heart pounded loudly in her ears. She barely heard Lauren's voice while the adrenaline coursed through her.

The doctor suppressed her concern and moved in closer, placing her right palm against Bo's chest. "Can you feel my hand?"

Bo felt a gentle pressure – solid and firm but not crushing – and gave a faint nod as she clutched on to the blonde like she would a lifebuoy to keep from drowning.

Lauren remained calm despite the death grip on her wrist and forearm. "Breathe into my hand Bo." she encouraged. "Breathe in. Feel your chest rise with each breath… feel yourself push against my hand. That's it! Now breathe out slowly." She inhaled and exhaled along with her; guiding her.

"I'm right here with you, Bo. Focus on my hand when you inhale. Feel its weight and force it up slowly." She instructed soothingly. "And exhale."

After a few minutes Bo's ragged breathing started to subside. She found that her heart beat wasn't echoing loudly in her ears and she could actually see what was happening around her. She was suddenly aware of where the doctor's hand was resting - on her breast bone. Normally, she would've made some kind of sexual overture but her she had just woken from a terrifying dream. However, she knew that it wasn't just the proximity of Lauren's hand and the physical contact that affected her; it was the comfort that it provided. Lauren's body heat radiated out through her palm and fingers - it seeped through the thin layer of her clothes and sunk into Bo's skin; the soothing warmth spreading through her. Regardless of everything that had happened between them, it gave her hope that Lauren still cared and that gave her solace.

Lauren smiled softly. "That's it, Bo. You've got it. You're doing great."

The Succubus started to breathe steadier and her vision was no longer blurry. With her panic extinguished, she relaxed her grip and for the first time since she woke, she was able to focus on the blonde. Lauren appeared worried and tired. She had dark circles under her eyes; and her hair and clothes were tousled but to Bo, Lauren was still the most beautiful woman she had ever seen.

The doctor didn't look away despite the intensity burning in Bo's eyes. She was just relieved that Bo was no longer in distress. Once she was confident that her breathing was back to normal, Lauren gently extricated her hand and slowly stepped back. Tucking her hand down out of sight, she subtly flexed and shook out her wrist and fingers. "How do you feel?"

Bo tried to respond but a raspy croak came out instead.

"I'll get you some water." Lauren said as she grabbed the empty pitcher next to the bed. Exiting the room, she let out a shaky breath. She was thankful for the reprieve from being in 'emergency' mode and allowed herself to relax in the mundane task of filling a jug.

Bo blinked a few times hoping it would dispel the lingering haze of her dream. As she looked around the room she noticed two chairs in the far corner positioned together with medical files strewn over one of the seats. It took a few moments for her brain to piece it all together but when she did, she
couldn't stop the smile from appearing. "Lauren was watching over me."

The sound of footsteps drew her attention back to see Lauren stop next to her bed with a pitcher and a glass of water.

Bo instantly chugged back the contents of the glass. "I guess you were thirsty."

The brunette simply nodded as she wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and slowly leaned back into her pillows, releasing a sigh.

Lauren took the empty glass and placed it next to the water jug on the side table. "How are you feeling?"

Bo cleared her throat before attempting to speak again. "Like I'm one huge, aching bruise." She ground out with a chuckle and immediately groaned as every movement sent a jolt of pain.

Lauren was sympathetic. "I know that you're in a great deal of discomfort but unfortunately, you weren't in any condition to heal yesterday. However, now that you've gotten some rest, you can."

Bo looked down feeling self-conscious about discussing her healing especially since it was a delicate topic for them.

Even though the doctor felt a bit awkward, Bo was still her patient and she would never let her feelings get in the way of a patient's health or well-being. Steadying her emotions and her voice, she presented the Succubus with an option. "If you would like to feed like how you did back at the Compound's lab, I can talk to the Chief and coordinate something similar. Or you can um, make your own arrangements… whatever you prefer of course." she said without averting her gaze.

Bo looked back at the blonde shyly. "I'd prefer if you could talk to him, thanks."

Lauren nodded and tried to ease any lingering doubts. "I don't think there will be any issues especially since you saved his son's life."

Bo gave her a faint smile and grew silent; the effects of her nightmare still lingered and had unnerved her. She looked down at her lap as her fingers nervously played with the bedsheet.

"Did you dream about the Caiman or drowning?"

Bo's head jerked up and she grimaced from the sudden movement. "How'd you know?"

Lauren shrugged. "Good guess." She understood what Bo was going through and tried to allay her fears. "For what it's worth, it's normal for people who've had a traumatic experience, to dream about it."

"Great!" Bo replied sarcastically. "Like I need to be reminded."

"What I'm trying to say is that it's a typical psychological reaction to a traumatic event. I didn't want you to think that there was something wrong with you when it is a normal reaction. Well, as normal as something like this is. With time it will be less intense and it will pass."

"It felt so real. I thought I was drowning." Her voice cracked on the last word. "How can you be so sure it will pass?" she asked worriedly.

"I just know." Lauren stated simply. She clenched her jaw as her thoughts automatically drifted to her tour in Afghanistan and the many times she was 'disciplined' in the Fae dungeons. Releasing a
silent sigh, she looked directly into Bo's eyes. "I promise, it will get easier."

Bo felt some relief from Lauren's words and waited for her to elaborate but she gave no further explanation. The silence hung heavily between them however, Bo fought her curiosity and chose not to pursue it, knowing that it wasn't the right time.

Lauren wasn't in the frame of mind to talk about her past. She had been up all night thinking about their situation and what to say but with Bo waking up with an anxiety attack and having difficulty breathing, all her thoughts were turned on its end. Lauren was more nervous than ever but despite this, she knew she couldn't put it off any longer.

The blonde moved to the foot of the bed. She needed the distance to think and say what she had to, as well as to brace herself for the fallout she knew would occur. Her hands were clammy but despite her nerves, she looked into Bo's eyes and kept her voice even. I'm really sorry about last night." she said sincerely. "With both you and Luc almost dying, I was very emotional and I kissed you. It was a mistake. I'm sorry for sending you mixed signals."

Bo's exhaustion quickly gave way to frustration and annoyance. "How can you say that!?!" she asked, offended. "You were burning brightly for me last night... all week in fact! Now you're telling me that kissing me was a mistake!??"

Lauren kept her voice steady, not wanting to aggravate the brunette's condition. "It's not that I didn't want to kiss you. The mistake was that I shouldn't have."

The Succubus gave her a perplexed look.

Lauren placed her hands along the sheet at the foot of the bed and absentmindedly smoothed it with her palms. Maintaining eye contact, she explained, "We've always been attracted to one another, Bo. That's not a secret. The physical aspect of our relationship was never something that we needed to work on. It was everything else."

Bo's lips instantly morphed from a thin line into a suggestive grin. "For what it's worth, I always enjoyed working on the physical aspect of our relationship."

"I did too." Lauren smiled genuinely but it disappeared as she grew serious again. "I really want us to be a part of each other's lives Bo but I can't go back to how things were… I can't." she said solemnly as her hands dropped to her sides.

Bo tried to sit up straighter but gave up when her throbbing ribs warned her to stay put. "I get that but how can we try to repair us if you don't give us a chance? I thought we agreed on a fresh start?"

"We did!" Lauren balled her hands into fists, failing to contain her frustration. "But there's only so much that we can fix here in Brazil."

The brunette grew irritated again. "How can you say that? A fresh start is just that – it's a complete do-over!"

Lauren clenched her jaw. She was annoyed that she wasn't expressing herself properly. "I know that you're frustrated about this. I am, too. But being in Brazil isn't the same as being in Toronto. Our relationship is not subjected to the same issues here as we would have there. I am not subjected to the same issues here as I am there. That's why I couldn't promise you anything more than friendship. I know my kissing you crossed that line… I won't let that happen again." She explained as calmly as she could.

Bo felt dejected. "Have I not proven myself?"
"Yes, you have." Lauren replied tenderly as she leaned forward against the bed.

Bo heard the emotion in the blonde's voice and grew emboldened. "Then why make this more complicated than it has to be? I love you and you love me. We can get through anything together. Just let me be there for you."

Lauren was exhausted and her emotional fortitude had waned. "Because love is not enough! The Fae here don't treat me like shit beneath their feet!" she yelled as she pushed away from the bed, startling the brunette in the process. "You can't be around me 24-7 to make my life better, Bo. That's not possible." she said as she wrapped her arms around her torso.

The doctor was exasperated by her situation. She looked down and took a deep breath to compose herself. After a few moments, she regarded Bo; her voice cracking as it broke through the strained silence. "Do you know how unbearable it's going to be to adjust to that life again after experiencing freedom and respect here? And then to have to deal with Dyson and Tamsin pining over you and telling me how inadequately human I am?"

Bo's tone softened upon hearing the cops' names. "I will continue to say this till you believe me, Lauren. All I want is for you to be happy. I will do everything that I can to make sure that you are. You are all that I need. You are the only person I want to be with."

Her faith in Bo had been shaken to the core and Lauren didn't know how to respond.

Lauren's silence ate at Bo's self-assurance. The brunette had never felt so vulnerable but she knew that she had to keep trying. "What more do I have to do to prove myself? How many hurdles must I jump? Just tell me and I'll do it." Bo implored and immediately cradled her side, scowling at the pain.

Lauren shook her head sadly. "I don't mean to hurt you but this isn't about you or us. It's about me. I know that you've changed but it doesn't negate the hurdles that I will have to face in Toronto. I need to see how things will play out there before I can make any decisions about anything in my life."

The emotional roller coaster finally took its toll on the Succubus and she snapped. "Just say it, Lauren. You don't trust me! What you really mean is that you want to see how things will play out with Dyson, Tamsin and myself."

Lauren didn't flinch at the accusation; instead her voice remained calm and steady. "I trust you with my life Bo and I want to be able to trust you with my heart but I don't know if I can"

Bo squeezed her eyes tightly to stem the flow of tears. Lauren's lack of trust was a festering wound that wasn't healing and she knew she was the reason for it. Taking a cleansing breath, she opened her eyes and looked into hazel orbs. "I can't apologize enough for hurting you. I regret it every day and I want more than anything to make things right between us. But Lauren, I almost died. Life is short. We shouldn't waste it."

"Don't you think I know this?!” Lauren bellowed in frustration as she gestured wildly. "I didn't realize how much I took my life for granted before the Fae… regular, everyday things like talking to my parents and having coffee with a friend; or the simple act of going to work without fear of segregation, humiliation or punishment. My life and happiness – or lack thereof - are consequences of my decisions. Decisions made with my heart instead of my head." Lauren steamrolled on. "My sacrifices for you and Na-". She took a deep breath but it was too late. Even though she didn't say Nadia's name outright, she might as well have: the rage in Bo's eyes told her so. "What I mean to say is, I've realized that I need to adjust the way I make decisions. That's why I have to be logical about this."
Lauren rubbed her temples as she reined in her emotions. When she looked back at Bo, she had a sad but determined look in her eyes and her voice was calm. "You've been incredibly patient and respectful of my wishes and I appreciate that. But I need to stay focused. Until I can see for myself how things are in Toronto — not just with Dyson and Tamsin but being back as a ward of the Light - I can only offer you my friendship. If you still want it. I don't expect you to wait for me and I know that I could lose you but I can't see any other way to do this."

Hurt flashed across Bo's face. She had bared her feelings to Lauren but it didn't seem to make a difference. She had made huge strides in proving herself but it was all for nothing. Lauren had made her decision and she couldn't convince her otherwise. She felt dejected for being so hopeful. She was also annoyed, sad and frustrated but mostly, her heart and pride had been ripped to shreds. Bo hastily started to rebuild the walls that she had torn down around her heart; she was done talking. "I'm tired. I need to sleep." Bo said abruptly, effectively putting an end to their conversation.

Lauren had been bracing for some sort of reaction so she wasn't caught off guard by her curtness. However, when Bo struggled to move the pillows propped up behind her, she couldn't stop herself from offering to help.

"Don't touch me!" the brunette snapped as she moved away from helpful hands and grimaced while wrestling with the pillows.

Lauren felt the sting from the Succubus' snub and stopped in mid-stride. Straightening her posture, she put her cool, detached doctor persona back into place and suppressed the fact that she was upset. "Very well. I will talk to César and make arrangements. Get some rest."

Bo turned her head away and didn't respond. Lauren looked at her sadly and tried to think of something to say to make things right but nothing came to mind. Dejected, she quickly picked up her files and left the room.

Day 9 – Mid-morning

Lauren waited in the lobby for the last of the volunteers to leave. César had been eager to help Bo and had personally spoken to the twenty-four villagers who had agreed to assist with the Succubus' healing. The blonde wasn't looking forward to Bo's gruffness but she needed to check on her. Besides, her concerns would only be alleviated by examining Bo herself. Releasing a deep breath, Lauren steeled herself before she knocked and entered.

"Hi. How are you feeling?" she asked politely as she stood uncomfortably near the door. The empty bed represented the great divide between them. Bo was on her feet and paced on the other side of the room.

The brunette didn't even glance at her and instead responded bluntly. "I'm fine. Can I leave?"

Lauren remained composed and didn't react to her abruptness. From where she stood, she saw that Bo had regained colour in her cheeks and was moving about without pain. "I'd like to perform a quick examination first if you don't mind." she said as calmly as possible.

Bo stilled her movements and put her hands on her hips defiantly before looking over at Lauren. "There's no need. I'm good as new." she said impatiently, her tone barely concealing how rattled she felt from being together in the same room.

Lauren kept her voice neutral despite the anxiety that churned her stomach. "I know that you're upset Bo but I'm just trying to help."
"You want to have a quick look? As you wish. But will you be able to remain professional, doctor? You don't want to be sending mixed signals now." Bo's tone dripped with sarcasm. The brunette promptly lifted her shirt long enough for Lauren to observe her flawless skin before twisting at her waist to show the ease of her mobility. "See?! My ribs are fine. I'm fine!"

Lauren restrained herself from lashing back. Instead, she suppressed her frustration and forced a tight lipped smile. "I'm glad that you're fully healed. I won't keep you." However, watching the brunette make her way towards the exit, she knew that she couldn't leave things as they were. "Bo, can we-

"I can't. I have to find Kenzi." Bo interrupted, keeping her tone clipped and detached.

Lauren held back her tears as she watched the door close behind the Succubus. The moment and the emotions all too familiar.

Medical Hut – noon

The Empath opened the door to the room and found Lauren hunched over some files scattered about the bed. "Hey, there you are! I was looking for you."

Lauren looked up, slightly distracted. "You found me. Where have you been anyway? I haven't seen you since last night."

Nayara sauntered up to the bed. "I just got in. I had to return to Base Camp last night to make sure everything was ready so I didn't get much sleep. What's your excuse though? You still look like crap."

Lauren ignored her friend's observation. "That's right, I completely forgot. Is everything set?"

"Everything's good to go. There shouldn't be any hiccups. Anyway, quit avoiding my question. What's up?"

The blonde slumped her shoulders. "Oh, the usual."

"Bo," Nayara said as a statement and not a question. "I just saw her with Kenzi. I'm surprised you two aren't joined at the hip after everything that happened yesterday."

Lauren looked at her friend, tiredly. "Well, that would be awkward seeing that she's ignoring me."

"What!? Why?"

She released a heavy sigh and leaned against the bed for support. She was about to speak but instead, burst into tears and burrowed her head in her hands.

Nayara quickly made her way over to her friend and pulled her into her arms. "Hey now, it's okay." she whispered comfortably as she hugged her tightly. "What happened?"

Lauren hiccupped through her tears. "I made a mess of everything."

Meanwhile…

Bo stood staring out at the river while Kenzi cradled a cup between her hands. The younger woman observed her friend as she sipped at her coffee. She noticed Bo was strangely quiet. "Why are we here?"

"Hmm?" the brunette murmured distractedly.
"Thinking of taking up hunting alligators instead of Under Fae?"

The question broke the brunette out of her contemplation and she cast a puzzled look at her friend. "What?!"

"Just wondering why we're standing near the spot where you almost got killed battling a ginormous alligator."

Bo let out a loud sigh as she looked back at the river. It was so still and quiet that the surface glinted like glass under the sun. Despite her nightmare and the dangers that existed beneath its waters, the Succubus found it strangely peaceful and mesmerizing and was thankful for the temporary distraction it provided.

Kenzi's concern grew. A quiet, contemplative Bo was not a good sign; the last time she was like this, Lauren had just left Toronto. Gently grabbing her arm to get her attention, she pulled her friend towards her. "You're scaring me Bo. What's wrong? Are you still peckish? Do you need me to scrape up a chi snack for you?"

"I'm fine. I told you, I healed this morning."

"Then what's wrong?"

"I just don't feel like being around anyone. The Main Hall is the only place to hang out till the feast starts and everyone is there."

"When you say anyone and everyone do you mean Lauren?"

Bo glanced down at her feet. "We had a fight."

"Ha! I knew it!" Kenzi excitedly threw her hands in the air.

Bo furrowed her brow as she looked back at her friend. "I mean, I knew something was up 'cuz you were all sulky and quiet and shit. Anyway, what happened?"

The brunette turned her gaze back to the river and tried her best to be objective as she told Kenzi about the argument. However, the more she vented, the more irritated she grew. It wasn't long before she started to pace and gesture wildly.

"I poured my heart out to her. And you know what her reply was? Love wasn't enough! And that I couldn't make her life better. Then she had the nerve to say that she didn't expect me to wait for her even though she knew she could lose me! What the hell?!

When she looked back at Kenzi, she was almost vibrating from her anger and frustration. "Everything I've done has been for what!?! It doesn't matter what I had to do to get here or how much I changed or how well things were going between us. Apparently, being here in Brazil doesn't count. Lauren wants to wait till she's back in Toronto to see how things go. She probably wants to see all the different ways I'll disappoint her and screw up! Forget about feelings… she wants to be logical! All of this has been for nothing! And how I feel means nothing!"

When she looked back at Kenzi, she was almost vibrating from her anger and frustration. "Everything I've done has been for what!?! It doesn't matter what I had to do to get here or how much I changed or how well things were going between us. Apparently, being here in Brazil doesn't count. Lauren wants to wait till she's back in Toronto to see how things go. She probably wants to see all the different ways I'll disappoint her and screw up! Forget about feelings… she wants to be logical! All of this has been for nothing! And how I feel means nothing!"

The Goth stepped in Bo's path to stop her from pacing and gave her hand a comforting squeeze. "I'm sorry Bo. I really thought that after yesterday's epic battle, Hot Pants was personally going to look after your healing."
Kenzi's thoughts ran a mile a minute. She had enough experience with the Bo-Lauren dynamic to know that talking wasn't their forte and that she shouldn't second guess the doctor until she had all the facts. The trick was to guide Bo towards that same path. "Maybe you just need to give Lauren a little more time to figure stuff out. Things have been good for her here. She's got to be scared about going back to the Light Fae in Toronto, right?"

Bo's dejection and disappointment overwhelmed her anger. Her voice, expression and posture were all crestfallen. "All I know is that she still doesn't trust me. I don't know if she ever will, Kenz. And without trust, there's no us. Maybe she just doesn't love me like she used to. Maybe she doesn't need me anymore."

Kenzi leaned into her friend. "Oh BoBo, Lauren still needs you and she definitely lurves you. You said that she didn't expect you to wait for her even though she could lose you, right? That tells me that she's still thinking about you… that she knows that it wouldn't be fair for you to put your life on hold while she's getting her shit together. If that's not love, what is? Just give her some time to get settled back in Toronto and sort out her stuff and she'll come around. Before you know it, I'll be complaining about all the sexy times you both will be having at the Crack Shack."

"She already told me that love wasn't enough." The brunette spoke dismally. Bo wiped at a stray tear; talking about her failed relationship with the love of her life was only upsetting her further. "We should head back. The feast is going to start soon and we can't be late."

"Okay but we're going to continue this talk later." The younger woman conceded not wanting to push her friend. They had only taken a couple of steps when Kenzi's eyes widened and she excitedly gripped Bo's arm with both hands. "Oooh! Do you think they're gonna have a giant roast pig on a spit like in the movies?!"

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Bo and Kenzi were directed to the west side of the village to a huge, flat clearing covered in soft, green moss. The area was surrounded by tall, lush trees whose canopy of leaves acted like an umbrella protecting the space from the harsh sun. There, in the middle of all the greenery, sat an incredibly long, rectangular, wooden table - long enough to accommodate all the village residents and guests. The length of the table was lined with wooden benches and a carved, wooden chair was placed at one end. Each place setting had waxy fig leaves for plates and every inch of the table was covered with a vast array of food: vegetables, potatoes, rice, fruit and a bounty of barbequed meat. Kenzi's mouth watered at the sight and from the delicious aroma.

Both women were ushered to their seats. César sat on the ornate chair at the head of the table with his wife on his right and his son on his left. Bo was placed next to Maria and Lauren, next to Luc. This seating arrangement had the ex-lovers directly across from one another with both Kenzi and Nayara next to their best friends and the rest of the scientific team and villagers filling the remaining seats.

Loud conversations and bouts of laughter filled the air. César waited till everyone was seated before he stood to address everyone.

"I will keep this brief as our guests have to leave after the feast. We are here today to celebrate and give thanks." He turned his attention to the Succubus. "A very special and personal thank you to Bo. If not for your incredible courage and bravery, my son, Luciano would not be here today. Words cannot express how grateful Maria and I are to you. We will forever be in your debt."

The Chief waited till the applause died down before turning to the blonde doctor. "Thank you also to Lauren. Your quick medical response kept my son alive and placed safely in my arms. Maria and I cannot thank you enough."
César paused to let everyone at the table clap for Lauren before continuing with his speech. "And last but not least, an incredible thank you to Nayara and her entire team for their unyielding efforts to combat the epidemic. Because of you all, our families, friends and loved ones have a chance to survive. Our entire village, as well as all the other villages, are in your debt. Obrigado!"

All the villagers stood and shouted "Obrigado!", applauding Nayara and her team. After a minute, everyone sat back down and the Chief continued with his speech. At this point, Kenzi's attention waned and she immediately became fixated on the food laid out in front of her. To her relief, César didn't talk for much longer and as soon as he sat down, he clapped his hands once and four villagers appeared. Together, they carried a large wooden plank with a massive roasted boar resting on it; fruit was flowing out of its mouth and garnish decorated the length of its body. Kenzi's eyes sparkled with glee as she gave Bo an excited nudge with her elbow.

The Goth was in gastronomic heaven despite the tension between Bo and Lauren. "Another awesome meal checked off of my bucket list." she thought happily before turning her attention back to the ex-lovers. Bo was engaged in conversation with César and Maria while Lauren and Luciano chatted. At a quick glance, no one would suspect that there was an issue between them, however, when they weren't talking to their hosts, both women kept their heads down and quietly picked at their food.

Kenzi let out a frustrated sigh seeing them sneak subtle glances when the other wasn't looking. Their stubbornness and pride infuriated and saddened her. "I can't deal with a depressed-drunken-sexed up-brawling Bo again." She thought grimly. "I have to do something." At that moment a villager placed another helping of roast boar, potatoes and vegetables in front of her and she couldn't help but smile happily. "Later. I can't work miracles on an empty stomach."

After everyone had their fill two or three times over and it seemed like no one could chew another morsel, everyone got up and mingled. Bo was immediately swarmed by villagers all wanting to talk to her. She answered numerous questions and patiently endured polite conversations. However as soon as she was able to slip away, she ducked out of the clearing and hurried away from the crowd. The brunette desperately wanted to be alone and found herself walking towards the opposite, far end of the village in order to escape. She continued on the meandering path past the last section of huts and as she rounded the corner, she stopped abruptly.

There, stretched out on a large, wooden rack laid the monstrous skin of the Black Caiman that she had battled. She knew it was large but with the frenzy of water and adrenaline pumping through her veins, everything was distorted and she didn't have a true appreciation of its size. However, seeing it in front of her now, unobstructed, she understood why Kenzi had freaked out. Bo's eyes scanned over its immense length and gauged that its armored hide was about twenty feet long from the tip of its snout to the end of its tail. Even though it was dead and missing its teeth and claws, it still looked very imposing. Bo approached and trailed her fingers along it, feeling the rough scales beneath her fingertips. The sensation immediately catapulted her to the moment she was on its back. She could feel its scales dig into her flesh through her clothes as it rolled her repeatedly over sand, rocks and other debris on the river bed. Her arms and thighs twitched just thinking about how tightly she had held on.

Her feet moved of its own volition until she faced the creature. A shudder travelled through her as she looked into the dark hollows where its beady eyes once existed. She hadn't admitted to Kenzi or Lauren how terrified she was when she was battling this beast but looking into its empty eye sockets, she couldn't believe how lucky she was that it didn't kill her. When she was fighting it, she couldn't pulse or sway it nor could she suck its chi for fear of inhaling water. It was her versus the creature
and she had felt severely outmatched.

Bo couldn't take her eyes off of the husk of the animal. It was a visual reminder of what she went through and that she very easily could've died. Fear, sorrow and regret struck her like a sucker punch to the gut and her legs buckled.

As she sat and stared at the Caiman, she replayed her argument with Lauren. The walk and time alone had helped clear her thoughts so she was now able to analyze it calmly and gauge it with a cooler head and heart. Her words to the doctor echoed in her mind: "Life is short. We shouldn't waste it." However, this time she applied those words to Lauren instead of herself. It didn't take long for understanding to set in and her stomach churned in response. "Fuck! I made a mess of everything." she groaned out as she buried her face in her hands.

Lauren scanned the crowd that had moved from the clearing and had congregated just outside the Main Hall. She couldn't find Bo however, upon spotting the Goth, made a beeline towards her. "Kenzi! Hey!" she exclaimed when she got close to the younger woman. "I saved you both a seat in our SUV. However, we have to head out soon before the rest of the team as Nay has some things she has to oversee at Base Camp."

"Um, I think we already have a ride lined up, Doc." The younger woman felt guilty fibbing but knew that her best friend wasn't ready to be around Lauren.

"Oh, okay." The blonde tried to keep the hurt out of her voice but knew she had failed miserably. "I guess I'll see you back at Base Camp then."

Kenzi watched her walk away dejectedly and instantly felt horrible. "Dammit Bo! Why do I keep getting dragged into your relationship shit?" After muttering some Russian expletives under her breath, she called after the doctor. "Hot Pants! Wait!"

The Goth jogged after her. "Look, I know things suck between you two right now but just give Bo a little time to sort out her feelings."

"I understand that she's upset but she's not the only one hurting."

"I get that Doc. Just hang in there, okay?"

Lauren nodded her head and was about to walk away when she remembered something. "Oh, I don't know if anyone told you but there's going to be a memorial service tonight for those we lost in the attack. It'll be at sunset at the fire pit. As well, we'll be flying out shortly after breakfast tomorrow so make sure you're both packed tonight."

"What time do you consider breakfast? Ten-ish?"

The blonde rolled her eyes but the smirk on her face betrayed her amusement. "Seven-thirty."

"Ugh! Really?! Why don't you grab me some breakfast? You know what I like." the Goth flashed her best toothy grin. "And don't forget coffee!"

Lauren let out a low chuckle. "I'll see you at the memorial, Kenzi." she said as she walked away.

"Think about it!" The Goth yelled after the doctor's retreating form.

Bo was on the far side of the crowd and had made her way back in time to see Kenzi and Lauren
walk away from one another. She then watched as Luciano lunged towards Lauren and wrapped his arms around her waist. Seeing them talk and laugh reminded her of the first time she saw her with Luc and the other children – it was rare seeing her so happy and carefree.

Bo watched as Lauren knelt in front of Luc and listened intently to his story. The little boy gestured animatedly as he spoke and when he ended his tale, he pointed to the bandage on his arm. She caringly kissed above it and immediately burst out laughing when he pretended to swoon in her arms. Bo's heart swelled at the sight and she couldn't stop the genuine smile that formed. She knew how much Lauren loved Luc and that she would miss him terribly when she returned to Toronto.

A blow to the arm promptly brought the Succubus out of her musings. "Owww!" she exclaimed before noticing her best friend standing next to her. "What was that for?!" she asked as she rubbed her shoulder.

Kenzi agitatedly poked her with her index finger. "You owe me BoBo! Lauren saved us a seat in her SUV and I had to lie for you. I told her that we already had a ride."

"Thanks." She replied sheepishly. "I'm not ready to talk to her."

The Goth frowned. "You know you can't keep avoiding her, right?"

"I know that! I was an asshole to her Kenz. How am I supposed to face her?"

The younger woman pressed the back of her hand to Bo's forehead checking for a fever. "Who are you and what have you done with my bestie?!"

The brunette playfully swatted her friend's hand away before she grew serious again. "I'm an idiot. I was too busy feeling sorry for myself that I didn't hear what Lauren was telling me. Instead, I lashed out at her."

Kenzi was stunned; she thought she was going to have to pull Bo kicking and screaming to come to this conclusion. "How come the sudden change of heart?"

She looked at her friend. "I realized that life was short and I shouldn't waste it. You'd think almost dying would make that obvious, huh?" Bo was annoyed with herself. It was yet another mistake in a whole slew of mistakes that she had made with Lauren. "But things weren't going my way so I did my usual - I got defensive and shut her out. I couldn't see the bigger picture." she said regretfully.

The Goth held Bo's hand and gave her a comforting squeeze. "And now?"

"Now, I have to make things right. We're heading back to Toronto in a couple of days and I can't leave things like this."

Fifty minutes later

Lauren had been silent during the ride back to Base Camp, keeping her gaze fixed out her window. She was exhausted; her head and heart felt heavy and she longed for the ache to cease. "You're staring," she said quietly.

The Empath's voice held a gentle, soothing timbre. "I'm concerned."

Lauren gave her a faint smile. "I know but there's nothing you can do."

Nayara reached across the seat and patted her friend's hand comfortably as Lauren tilted her head back against the headrest and sighed. "I just don't understand why it has to be all or nothing. Why
does it have to be my happiness at the expense of my relationship or vice versa? Why can't Bo see that this isn't easy; that I'm not intentionally trying to hurt her? I'm just trying to get some sort of control of my life in whatever limited capacity it is."

The Fae Doctor looked at her sympathetically. "Maybe it's not your goal that she is upset about but rather the route you're taking to get there?"

Lauren wrinkled her brow as she contemplated the Empath's words. "Perhaps… but I need to stick to my decision if I want to make changes to my life and to my situation. This will be my only opportunity while Hale is the Acting Ash."

Nayara didn't reply. She knew that once Lauren had made up her mind, she wouldn't change it.

Silence fell over them again as Lauren looked ahead through the windshield. "We're almost there. How can I help? There must be some odds and ends that need to be sorted out before the memorial starts."

Nayara shook her head sadly. "It's fine. It's my responsibility."

Lauren heard the sorrow in the Empath's voice and immediately turned her attention back to her friend, observing closely. "Nay, you know what happened wasn't your fault right? No one could've predicted that."

"I know but they were still out there because of me… they were following my orders." She sighed out.

This time it was Lauren's turn to provide comfort as she gently grabbed Naraya's wrist, pulled her close and kept their hands linked. She hoped that she could get her friend to see reason. "That's true but you forget that they wanted to be there. They all wanted to help their people and make a difference. And they did."

Nayara gave her a melancholy smile, appreciating her reassurances. "Thanks. Anyway…there's not a whole lot left to do."

"Are you sure?" Lauren was more concerned about her friend than with the preparations. She should've known that Nayara would've automatically blamed and held herself responsible for the deaths of their teammates and felt badly for not realizing this sooner.

Nayara nodded. "I'm sure. Besides, you should get some rest; you didn't get much sleep last night."

The blonde looked into her friend's eyes and studied her closely before conceding. "Alright. But will you wake me if you need help?"

"I will." She nodded.

Lauren bumped her shoulder with hers. "No, you won't."

The Empath chuckled heartily. "You're right. I won't. But I will wake you before the memorial starts."

Fire Pit

Nayara was putting the final touches to the large mural that had been erected next to the stage. Affixed to the wall, were six 8.5 inch by 14 inch framed photos of the scientists and security personnel that had died. She gazed sadly at each photo and let out a shaky breath. She knew them all
well as she had handpicked each and every one for the team and had worked alongside them for months.

The Empath normally didn't attend memorials or funerals due to the intensity of emotions at such events. It had been far too many years since she had been to one; the last one being her own family's. She felt the heaviness in her heart and was concerned as to whether she would be able to block out everyone's grief while also dealing with her own.

Taking a cleansing breath, she tried to clear her mind and her emotions. Nayara knew she had to hold it together as the service wasn't about her; it was about the six men and women they were going to honour.

It was almost sunset when Bo and Kenzi reached Base Camp. Theirs was the last SUV to arrive so by the time they made it to the Fire Pit they got the last two end seats in the back row. The brunette had been cursing her cowardice during the entire ride and wished that she had driven back with Lauren instead. She had been marinating in her regret and immaturity and really wanted to apologize. And upon seeing the pictures of Lauren's dead teammates, she now had a strong desire to comfort her.

Bo scanned the sea of heads for Lauren but with the fading sunlight and being seated at the very back, she couldn't see her. "Kenz, do you see her?"

"No but the super nerd that she is, she's probably sitting up front." The Goth said without even looking.

Before Bo could reply, the person next to her, handed her two candles – one for her and the other to pass to Kenzi. Glancing about her, the Succubus noticed that everyone now held a taper and there was a person standing at the start of each row of seats including their own. Just as Bo was about to enquire about the candle, Nayara took the stage and all conversations and murmurings immediately ceased.

Nayara addressed the crowd with a gentle smile. "Boa noite. Good evening. It's rare but wonderful to have both shifts here at Base Camp. We've all been through a great deal these past months… We've worked hard and played hard; we've seen extreme illness and death but also witnessed extreme joy, kindness and courage; and together, we have all committed to the same, common goal. Because of all these experiences, we're more than just a team. We're a family."

"Normally a concert is held on the last day in the field to celebrate life; to show appreciation for what we have; to honour and remember who and what we've lost; and to recognize the importance of Fae and humans working side by side as equals."

The Empath turned towards the mural. "We are here to remember six individuals. They were our co-workers and friends… they were our family. They've left behind husbands, wives and children; mothers and fathers; brothers and sisters."

Nayara looked at the faces before her and took a steadying breath as she felt their emotions grow. "On that fateful day thirteen of us left Base Camp but only seven returned. We cannot ignore the void of their absence nor can we ignore the pain of their loss. Only time can heal these wounds."

"Tonight we celebrate and pay tribute to the family we've lost by showing our appreciation for who they were and by honouring and remembering what they accomplished. Their dedication, decency, professionalism, love, friendship and sacrifice will never be forgotten… just as they will never be forgotten."
"Join me in lighting a candle in their memory so that they will forever shine in our hearts, our minds and our spirits."

Nayara lit her candle and started to sing a slow, melancholy song. This cued the staff standing at each row, to light the candle of the person in the chair closest to them. They in turn, lit the taper of the person seated next to them; this continued on to the right until every candle in each row had a flame. Everyone listened with rapt attention as Nayara's haunting voice enveloped them like a blanket, providing comfort and warmth. With the photos of their fallen comrades, the Empath's heartfelt speech, her beautiful voice and the meaningful song, there wasn't a dry eye at the gathering.

Once Bo's candle was lit, she turned her attention back to the stage. After listening carefully, she realized that Nayara was singing in Portuguese and despite not understanding the words being sung, she appreciated that it was a beautiful song. "Of course Nayara can sing." she muttered before adding admiringly, "Really well."

Despite Bo's slight lingering jealousy to the Fae healer, Kenzi knew that she was working on getting past her insecurities. Not trusting her voice, she nodded in agreement and subtly wiped at damp cheeks.

Bo leaned in and whispered to her friend. "Are you crying?"

The Goth shook her head. "I have an eyelash in my eye." She replied lamely.

Meanwhile, Nayara struggled. She was quickly unravelling from the sorrow over her friends; the memory of her own family's funeral; the poignancy of the song she was singing; and the outpouring of grief from her colleagues. The emotions were too strong for her to keep at bay and her voice cracked in mid-note. The audience watched with sympathy as she immediately stopped singing, bowed her head and covered her eyes with a trembling hand.

The Empath was drowning in a sea of emotions and fought to keep her head above it all. It was only when she felt fingers travel up her forearm and take a hold of her hand covering her eyes that she was able to come up for air. Warm brown eyes found her own, offering her strength and comfort. Lauren held her hand firmly and continued to look into her eyes as she started singing from where Nayara had left off. The Fae healer smiled at her friend gratefully and after taking a cleansing breath to collect herself, she joined the blonde; their voices complimenting each other beautifully.

Kenzi looked over to Bo in astonishment. "Woah! Did you know Hot Pants could sing? And in another language!?"

Bo shook her head, completely speechless and captivated by Lauren's voice. She wasn't surprised when the blonde had gotten up from her seat and went on stage to help Nayara as Lauren would do anything for the people she cared about. However, this level of help was definitely unexpected. Bo breathed out in wonder, "She's full of surprises."

The audience quickly recovered from seeing their leader overcome with grief and instantly stood and sang along with the two doctors. Their voices were passionate, loud and unabashed. Slowly, they made their way out of each row and in single file, formed a procession of lights as they walked towards the mural. It was a beautiful sight to see –flames dancing in the darkness and casting a soft glow on each face. One by one, tapers were planted in the containers of sand beneath the framed photos, creating a warm spotlight on those that they lost. By the time the song ended, candles lined the length of the mural and everyone was hugging one another with tears streaking down their faces; their grief, lessened in the moment.

Bo and Kenzi were moved by everyone's sorrow and respectfully remained out of the way. The
Goth nudged her friend with her elbow when she noticed her gazing at Lauren. "Why don't you go talk to her?"

"I don't want to intrude on their emotional moment." she explained.

Bo turned her attention back to the Lauren. The two doctors were hugging and when they pulled apart, both had tears flowing down their cheeks. They managed to smile reassuringly at one another. The brunette was about to walk towards them but stopped when various members of their team joined them on stage. Even though she understood that this was an emotional time for everyone, she couldn't help but grow more nervous and anxious the longer she had to wait for a private moment with Lauren. It terrified her that she might not get another chance and that she didn't have much time before leaving, to make things right.

Lauren felt horrible seeing her friend break down. She had been so strong for the entire team and hadn't once let her feelings show. That she has been too preoccupied with Bo and her own grief to even consider how the service would've affected Nayara, intensified her guilt. "I'm sorry. I'm a horrible friend. I should've known that this memorial would've been hardest on you. I don't know how you were able to power through your own emotions, as well as everyone else's."

Nayara let out a sad chuckle as she wiped damp cheeks. "I didn't."

"You know what I mean." Lauren said as she also dried her eyes.

The Empath shrugged nonchalantly. "It's my gift and my burden… besides, I'm better now, thanks to you."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. It was a lot of intense emotions all at once but now that the memorial is over, it's no longer overwhelming."

Lauren's scientific curiosity grabbed a hold of her and was about to ask Nayara a question about her abilities when she saw Bo walking towards them.

The Succubus greeted them. "Lauren, Nayara... I'm very sorry for your loss."

She acknowledged her with a tight smile and clenched her jaw as she prepared herself for a fight but none came. Instead, Bo addressed the Empath politely. "It was a very moving service. Everyone was touched by your words. I'm sure their families would've appreciated it."

"Thank you. That's nice of you to say." Nayara said as she observed them awkwardly avoid each other's gaze. The Empath knew that they had a lot to talk about. "Lauren, thank you... you helped more than you could ever know." She said warmly as she took the blonde's hand in hers and gave it a quick reassuring squeeze. "Now if you both would excuse me, there's a matter that I need to attend to."

Lauren stood on stage uncomfortably after her friend left. She was emotionally exhausted from the last couple of days and even though she was surprised that Bo sought her out and seemed willing to talk, she didn't have the emotional or physical energy to handle more stress today.

"How are you?" Bo asked nervously after an uneasy silence.

"I'm fine." Lauren said curtly, unintentionally using the same term that the Succubus had used on her earlier. She was trying not to be abrupt but she couldn't help being guarded around her. "What do
you want, Bo?" Her heart was racing as she crossed her arms across her chest and braced herself for whatever her ex-girlfriend was about to say.

The brunette looked into her eyes. "I want to apologize. I was too busy being an immature jerk to hear what you were saying. I felt hurt, rejected and frustrated and I lashed out at you instead of talking with you. You didn't deserve that."

Bo bit her lower lip nervously before continuing with her apology. "I know I can be slow at seeing the big picture but I get it now. Life is short and you're tired of things being the way they are. You want to change things; to make a better life for yourself using the time that you have... I'm sorry that I was too self-involved to see that. What I should've said yesterday was that you'll never lose me because I'm not going anywhere and I very much want your friendship if you're still offering it."

Lauren observed her silently. She was very surprised to hear her heartfelt apology. However, as much as she was thankful that Bo was finally communicating, she was still upset about how she had treated her. "After everything that has happened between us, give me one good reason why I should forgive you."

"I don't have one." Bo replied honestly. "I was an asshole to you and I'm really surprised that you haven't told me to fuck off."

"That's not a reason."

Bo's eyes glistened with unshed tears. "Don't you think I want you to forgive me? I do! But even I wouldn't forgive me."

Lauren remained quiet; her steely gaze never drifting. Bo assumed that her fears had come true and quickly crumbled under her silence. Demoralized, she turned to leave however the doctor's voice stopped her before she stepped off the stage.

Lauren was surprised that she sounded calm despite her rapid heartbeat. "It was never my intention to hurt you. I am sorry for that. But that didn't give you the right to treat me the way you did. I only let you lash out because I knew you were hurting. But know that I will never let you treat me that way again. I've been treated with disrespect, belittled and snubbed by the Fae; I won't accept that from what few friends I have. I would rather walk away from them and be alone."

Bo hung her head in shame.

The blonde pressed on. "When I said that all I could offer you was my friendship it was because I didn't want you to wait for me for however long it would take to sort things out. It wouldn't be fair to you. I wasn't rejecting you; I was trying to be considerate. I'm also sorry that you felt that I didn't appreciate your efforts because I do. I know that you've been trying and that you've been patient... it's just that my focus has to be on my plan to make my life better. I need to think about myself and my future. You may not agree with the way I want to handle things but I ask that you respect my decision."

Bo looked into Lauren's eyes. "I get that now. And you're right, I don't agree with how you want to tackle your plan but it's your life and your decision and I will support you any way I can."

Lauren had been angry but after telling Bo how she felt, it was as if a heavy weight had been lifted off her chest. She felt lighter and was no longer bogged down and distracted by those negative emotions. Now she could focus on what was important. She had heard and felt the sorrow and regret in the brunette's voice and was relieved to know that Bo finally understood her point of view. "I'm glad that you feel that way because I can't do this alone. I need you, Bo. I need our friendship. But
we have to work on our communication and our insecurities with one another for us to work. I'm willing to give it another shot if you are."

Bo couldn't hold back her grin as tears rolled down her cheeks. She had assumed that Lauren wouldn't forgive her and was incredibly happy that she was wrong. "I am!"

Lauren smiled and it shone in her eyes.

The Succubus fidgeted nervously. "Um, can I hug you?"

Lauren didn't reply and instead, stepped into her personal space. Bo didn't hesitate to wrap her arms around her. All the anger, stress and worry immediately drained away, leaving only joy and relief as they quickly fell into a relaxed embrace. All sounds and activity around them disappeared as they got lost in the sensation of being in each other's arms. The blonde nuzzled her face into the Succubus' neck while Bo buried her nose in her hair. Lauren was content having Bo in her arms; it felt comfortable; it felt right.

Bo held her tighter. "I just want you to be happy." she said in a tone barely above a whisper.

The blonde smiled tenderly against her. "I want the same for you too."

~ TBC

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