

The Hidden Princess At All-Boys Alpha Academy

#Chapter 71 - Read The Hidden Princess At All-Boys Alpha Academy Chapter 71

Chapter 71

"Shit," Luca whispers, staring down at me as he freezes.

The knock comes again, more insistent this time.

"Ari!"

My eyes flare when I hear Jesse's voice outside the door. "Oh no!"

"Ari!" Jesse shouts again, pounding on the wood. "Let's go!"

Luca jumps up, looking frantically around at the floor as I sit up, piling my hair on

top of my head as he bends over and grabs my cap, flinging it at me. Hasty, I shove it onto my head, tucking my hair up beneath it as Luca moves to the door,

his eyes roving over me to make sure that I'm disguised.

"Get up!" he hisses, and I jump to my feet, realizing that I'm still sitting on his bed

Not at all compromising —

Luca takes a deep breath and then pulls the door open, leaning casually against the wall.

"Hey, Jesse," he says, doing his best to keep his voice even and failing, just a little bit. "You change your mind about coming to the party tonight?"

"Nice try, Grant," Jesse says, his voice dry as he puts a hand on Luca's shoulder

and shoves him aside, his eyes landing immediately on me as he looks into the

room. "Oh hey, cousin," he says, baring his teeth. "Whatcha doing here!?"

I scowl at Jesse, crossing my arms and not bothering to pretend that this isn't precisely what he thinks it is.

Jesse just laughs at me, shaking his head and glancing over his shoulder, where

Ben peers into the room.

"I actually am here for the party," Ben says, his voice light as he comes in and closes the door behind him. "Though you..."

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"Come on, Ari," Jesse says, holding out a hand to me. "We've got to get you back

to the room, Rafe's on the rampage —

"Wait," Luca says, frowning at Jesse and looking him up and down. "You're not..."

"Do you want me to flip out and pretend that I'm mad at you for making out with

your mate, Luca?" Jesse says, his voice dry as he rolls his eyes.

Luca's eyes go wide. "Wait, you know!?"

"You guys are mates!?" Ben gasps, staring between Luca and me.

"What did you think was happening?" I ask, frowning at Ben as I finish tucking the

spare strands of my hair beneath my cap.

"I just thought you guys were into each other!"

"You knew too?" Luca asks, staring at Ben now.

"Luca," Ben says, rolling his eyes, "anyone with a pulse knows that you're deeply

into Shrimp Clark."

"That is not my name," I growl, stepping forward with my hands on my hips..

"All right, enough of this!" Jesse says, spreading his hands out and silencing us

all. "God damn it, you're all making me be the voice of reason, and you know I hate that. But Rafe does not know," he says, looking significantly at Luca now.

"And if you want to keep your head on your shoulders, I would suggest that you

keep this a secret. Yes?"

Luca sighs, looking down at the floor as he runs a hand through his hair, clearly

doing the math and trying to decide if he can take Rafe. But we both know that he can't, and that even if he could, it wouldn't be worth the fight.

My mate looks up and over towards me after a moment, sadness and regret all

over his face, and I can't help it — I move to his side, slipping my hand into his.

Ben's face bursts into a smile, but Jesse rolls his eyes. "Look, this is all very sweet, but Shrimp smells like you now so unless we're all in for a much larger fight with a much larger Prince tonight, I think we need to get Ariel back to the room and into the bath. Yes?"

I sigh, looking up at my mate with a shrug. "He's not wrong. This is...not the time

for this. Yeah?"

Alow growl rumbles in Luca's chest but he squeezes my hand and nods, his head hanging. "Yeah, I guess," he mutters, clearly displeased. I feel a sudden

pang of anxiety now which is.... not mine. And my eyes go wide as I realize that...that it's Luca's anxiety, which I can feel pulsing towards me now down... Down a pretty little bond that I suddenly feel between us, shining silver in my soul. A smile bursts onto my face as I realize that I can feel that Luca is anxious that he doesn't want to let his mate away from his side for a second. Even though he knows, obviously, that I'm in good hands with Jesse and Rafe, I'm his mate his to protect. He doesn't want me to leave for many reasons, but a lot of it is that we've recognized each other as our mates now solidified our bond, accepted it, even if we didn't say formal words doing such. And he doesn't want me out of his sight. I experiment a little, sending my own wonder down the bond as well. Luca's eyes go wide and then he laughs in delight, realizing what's happening. We just stare at each other before Jesse groans, grabbing my arm. adorable, and I hate to "Listen, this is very interrupt, but let's.

1. go.
Ariel!"

I snap my attention back to Jesse, even though I can't stop grinning. "Fine fine," I say, but then I stand on my tiptoes and tilt my head back, looking up at Luca, who obliges me by pressing a kiss to my mouth. Visit to read full content. Please bookmark site to read latest content. If you want to read please visit to read fastest content.

. er . " "-

Ben gives a satisfied little "aww" just as Jesse groans, which makes me burst out laughing as I follow Jesse to the door. But I pass a feeling along the bond to Luca, urging him to meet me in the dream state. He just grins and nods to me, letting me know that the message is received. The content

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And then, before I realize it, I'm out
the door, being hauled along the
corridor by my anxious Alpha cousin.
Ben stays behind with Luca, perhaps
indulging in their night of drinking, as
he said he would. Or, maybe just
giving Luca someone to talk to after
finally connecting with his mate, only
to have her ripped from him so soon.

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I barely notice as the hallway passes before us, so lost am I in my haze.

Before I

know it, though, I'm back in the room and Jesse is bizarrely tugging at my
shirt.

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"Get in the bath, Ariel," he murmurs, frantic.

"Jesse!" I gasp, swatting at his hands. "What are you doing!?"

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Baby cousin," he says, dropping his
hands from my clothes and slapping
both hands on my cheeks so that my
face is pressed between his palms —
not hard enough to hurt but certainly
sharp enough to get my attention.
uw) Nh

You're killing me here. Your brother
is coming back any second now —
and you smell disgustingly of your
mate. Okay? So unless you want to
break this news to him tonight- The
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"Okay okay" I say, tearing my face from his hands and striding for the

bathroom.

"Leave your clothes just inside the door!" Jesse calls after me. "I'll send them down in the dumbwaiter, tell Rafe you....spilled something on them at Daphne's, or whatever."

"You're the best!" I say, grinning at him as I start to close the door.

"You owe me!" he calls after. "One date with Daphne, that's the price for my secrecy!"

I just laugh, shaking my head as I press the door shut and start to strip down. Even as I do, though, I can't help the little squeal of joy that breaks from my lips

as I do a little dance. around the marble floor.

Because I have a mate! And he's really cute! And he knows I exist!

And we have a date tonight in the dream state.

God, I've never been so excited to go to bed.

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Unfortunately, that night when I go into the dream state, Luca isn't there.

Anxiety whirs in me as I turn around in the birch forest, looking for him, but it's...

definitely just me by myself. I frown, trying to feel him...is he just...not asleep? And there's..certainly something there. It's almost like I can...feel him sleeping down the bond. There's a deep rest there, and a stillness, but...

I don't know. It's almost like he's not dreaming, not at all.

I sigh, working very hard not to take it personally, and then I will the dream to end. I wake up for a moment in my little nook, frowning, wondering ridiculously if I

should just...go downstairs and knock on his door, make sure that he's okay.

But no — Rafe was really upset when he came back to the room. And not just pissed that I didn't follow the plan to the letter, but genuinely worried for me.

His

shoulders had been trembling when I had come out of the shower and he had wrapped me in a big hug, scolding me but holding me close nonetheless.

He'd heard about Wright attacking me in the hall, of course, and of Luca punching him out and pulling me into his room where I'd be safe. Jesse exaggerated how quickly he got there, suggesting it had only been minutes

later.

Rafe, thank god, hadn't been suspicious.

Because I don't really need to answer my big brother's questions, right now, about why I'm making out with Luca Grant while my mate, Jackson McClintock,

lives only a few doors down.

I sigh now, looking towards Rafe's big bed where I can hear him snoring softly,

wishing he didn't take my safety so personally. He just loves me, I know, and I love him right back but it's not his life's duty to keep me safe like this.

Regardless, as tempting as the idea to go down to knock on my mate's door is,

I'm not risking Rafe waking up to find me alone. So instead I turn over and close

my eyes, letting myself drift off into a nice, restful sleep. I have the other dream

again the one that I had before, of running along the moonlit cliffside in my wolf

form, another wolf at my heels. It fills me with a great deal of peace and joy, running in the night.

I'm happy when I wake up, stretching my arms over my head as my brother and

my cousin call their morning greetings to me. But there's anxiety alongside it because where had Luca been? Why hadn't he come?

He's not still mad at me, is he? I thought we left that all behind...

I'm distracted from the issue, though, by the insanely rigorous workout that Jesse

and Rafe put me through. Saturdays, apparently, have brunch instead of breakfast in order to allow cadets to rest and catch up on some reading. But Jesse and Rafe, because they are athletic maniacs, use the opportunity to make

me run five miles and then do so many sets of pull-ups that my arms feel like jelly.

"Why do you....hate me...." I gasp as I pull my chin up over the bar.

"Incorrect, Shrimpito," Jesse says, sitting on the floor next to the bar and flipping

through a textbook, taking notes. "It is love that makes us give you pain."

"This is what they say in abusive relationships," I say, dropping from the bar and

panting with my hands on my knees while Rafe pats my back.
“Your upper body's your weak point,” Rafe says. “We're just getting you strong for the Examination. What if they ask you to climb something.”
“I'll just melt it,” I mutter, making Jesse laugh. “With my mind.”
Rafe smirks too but claps his hands together. “Two more sets, baby touble! Let's go!”
Rafe carries my backpack to brunch because it aches when I set it on my shoulders, though he carries it as lightly as any of mom's purses. I scowl at him, jealous of the passive ease with which he does hard things, but my scowl is instantly wiped from my face when we walk into the Hall and I glance towards our table.
I burst into a grin because instantly, instantly I have an answer to why Luca didn't come to the dream state last night.
Both Luca and Ben are sitting at our table with full plates of food in front of them, their faces green. Ben rests his head against his folded arm and gives up halfway through giving us a wave of greeting. Luca just sits with his eyes closed, massaging his temples and looking like he's going to vomit at any minute. But his eyes fly open when Ben murmurs his hellos.
Luca is instantly on his feet, passing Rafe and moving directly for me. Before I can stop him, he takes my face in his hands, looking down into my eyes with such sorrow and regret that my mouth falls open.
“I am so sorry,” he murmurs. “We*
“Would you cut it out!?” Jesse hisses, hitting Luca hard on the forearm and knocking his hands away. Luca jumps a little and steps back, looking guiltily towards Jesse and then to Rafe, who thankfully had his back turned.
But my heart goes out to Luca, whose emotions I can feel down the bond such guilt, and worry, and the idea that he let me down
I just shake my head at him, smiling, passing feelings of calm and content down the bond. Because I get it — it was a mistake. He and Ben got caught up drinking
it's really not a big deal.

"Wow," Rafe says, laughing as he looks first at Ben and then at Luca as we all take our seats, me by Luca's side as usual. "You two...you look like crap."

"Thank you," Ben says, smiling half-heartedly at Rafe, "for your kind words. I am

far from crap. I aspire to be crap. I am...much much worse."

"What the hell were you drinking?" Jesse asks, helping himself to the full carafe

of coffee on the table and pouring me and Rafe a cup as well.

"Vodka," Luca sighs, as if the very word pains him. "At least, they said it was vodka. One of the older cadets probably made it in their bathtub that's what it tasted like."

"Ew," I say, grabbing a blueberry muffin from the basket on the table.

"Will you eat one of those for me?" Luca asks, longing at the muffin longingly.

"They look so good, and I'm so hungry, but even the idea of food..." He exhales

sharply, his cheeks puffing out as he shakes his head.

"Poor baby," I murmur, taking a big bite and chewing with relish. "It's your own fault, rule breaker."

"Oh please, little miss sanctimonious," he murmurs, low enough to get away with

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feminine address but making me sit up sharply anyway.

"What?!" I ask, laughing.

"Don't try to pretend you weren't drinking red wine last night."

I gasp, sitting up straight, because...how did he know!?

"Ari was what?" Rafe asks, frowning between Luca and I.

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Drinking," Luca says, pointing at me with an accusatory finger and ratting me out. I gasp again at the betrayal.
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Wherever he was before I found him in the hallway about to get

: "

murdered? He had wine.” The content is on ! Read the latest chapter there!

Rafe narrows his eyes at me. “Seriously, Ari? Wine, with Daphne? You’re risking it all for a glass of wine?”

“No one was ever going to know!”

“Who’s Daphne?” Luca asks, suddenly desperately interested.

“My girlfriend,” I snap, glaring at him, which makes him burst into laughter. Visit to read full content.

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Don’t play with fire, Ari,” Rafe says, still disappointed in me, and I sigh and nod, silently making a sibling promise between him and I that I

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won’t do it again. The content is on ! Read the latest chapter there!

But then I glare at Luca, who just laughs at me, teasing. I just shake my head, wondering how the hell he knew that...

But then words echo in my head, clear as day, in Luca’s voice: I could taste it on

you, he murmurs, a caress in my mind.

And I gasp despite myself, delighted and a little scandalized at once.

Mind-to—mind!? We can speak mind—to—mind!?

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I grin at my mate, and he smiles back with a wink. But then he flinches like even that hurt him in his hungover state, and I laugh, thinking that he deserves it for telling on me. The content is on ! Read

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Chapter 73

The rest of the day passes lazily and well. Ben and Luca come back to the room

with us, and we light a cozy fire. Ben stretches out in front of the hearth with his

head buried in a pillow, and even though I insist that he go sleep in my little nook

for a bit he protests that he's fine. So I settle for spreading my pretty green blanket over him to keep him cozy.

Ben murmurs his thanks, and the rest of us get to work.

Well, the unhangover amongst us get to work, Rafe and Jesse settling into their

chairs with books. Luca just lays his long body out on the couch, his open textbook resting on his chest, his eyes closed as he breathes peacefully.

"Budge over, couch hog." I say, smacking at Luca's foot.

"No," he murmurs.

I laugh, hitting him harder, and he sighs as he cracks one eye at me, his dimples

deepening as he pulls his legs up to make just enough room for me, groaning like

it's the hardest thing he's ever done. I laugh harder as I sit down in my spot.

"How did you ever become a championship boxer," Jesse murmurs, one eye on

Luca, "when you're such a baby?"

"Sheer talent," Luca mutters. "Also, meaner friends you guys are really letting me

go soft."

"Don't blame us for not being your jailers and your coaches," Rafe murmurs, his

eyes still on his work, "we have to do enough of that with Ari —"

"Hey!" I protest, glaring at him. He raises his eyes to me, quirking an eyebrow, and I just scowl. Because he's...right.

As soon as I get settled on the couch Luca stretches out his legs again, draping

them over my lap this time. I protest, but he ignores me, so eventually I just prop

my chemistry book up on his shins and get to work.

Because honestly, I don't mind it — I like the nearness of him, the casual touch.

Joy thrums through me and I know that it's half mine, half his. Because even though he's sick as a dog.

there's clearly no place either of us would be than on this couch together, casually touching. just...living our lives together.

I can't keep the smile off of my face the whole time I study.

When Jesse gets up a few hours later to stretch and take a break, he frowns at

Luca anew. "Seriously, Luc," he says, clasping his hands above his head and bending back and forth to stretch out his arms. "I'm not trying to pry, but are you

keeping in shape? Especially with this prize fight coming up over winter break —"

"What?" I ask, shocked.

"Prize fight," Jesse says, shifting his eyes to me. "You didn't read about it before we left?"

"I was a little distracted before we left," I say, my voice dripping with understatement, and Jesse grins, remembering how frantic I was before planning

my wedding. Plus I stayed completely away from news and tabloids, which all spent many pages speculating on what I was going to wear.

"It was conditional upon me getting accepted to the Academy as a cadet," Luca

says, opening his eyes and pushing himself up a little so that he can look at me.

"But yeah I just got word that it's going through."

"It's...kind of a big deal," Jesse says, looking at me with a little worry now. "I thought you. knew about it, Ari."

"Do you...all know about this?" I ask, looking around at the four of them.

Rafe meets my eyes now and nods. I shift my eyes to Ben, who doesn't sit up but

shoots me a thumbs-up to let me know he, too, was aware.

"Well, what is it?" I ask, suddenly anxious.

"It's kind of a...champion thing," Luca replies with a shrug, "I'm representing Moon Valley, as both the highest-ranking boxer and, now, a member of the military. I mean, I have to get through the Examination, but I'm not super worried

about that

"Wait, stop

I say, throwing out a hand, a little frantic now. "Why are you representing Moon

Valley? Who who are you fighting?"

Luca hesitates, so Rafe answers for him. "He's fighting the Atalaxian champion,

Ari," he says softly. "He's coming over as part of a delegation. It's part cultural connection, part display of military prowess, part...peace talks."

"Are you serious!?" I shout, appalled. Because this this is a way bigger deal than

they were making it out to be.

"It's fine," Luca says, shrugging. "I'm happy to do it proud, even "

"Luca," I say, leaning forward and staring at him, "the Atalaxian military is brutal

"I mean, I'm going to win," he says with a confident shrug, a little smug but also a

little offended that I'm doubting him.

I sit back a little, half torn by my allegiance and my faith in him and half knowing

that his confidence...is not going to be enough to pull him through.

Luca looks around at all of us. "Do you all seriously doubt me?" he says, his feelings obviously hurt.

"We don't doubt you at all," Jesse says, frowning. "Ari doesn't know what he's talking about when it comes to boxing, he's just worried about you," he says, pointing at me.

My mouth falls open in protest, but Rafe speaks before I can say anything.

"You

don't know anything about boxing, Ari," he says on a sigh. And I scowl, shutting

my mouth because... well, because again, they're probably right. But still! My mate, in a prize fight against the champion of a notoriously brutal military force!?

"But," Rafe continues, lifting his head to look at Luca now, "Jesse's not wrong. been training-"

"I work out every day! You're there, you know!"

You haven't

"I do know," Rafe says, raising his eyebrows. "So I know that you're as fit as you've ever been, but you aren't doing boxing workouts. Your uncle is going to be

appalled when he gets you back in the gym over midwinter."

Luca scowls, looking down at the floor, realizing that Rafe's right.

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"We'll work out with you," Jesse says, gesturing between him and Rafe. "If that's

what want. I mean, we're not as good as you, but we're not crap!

"And I will watch, and encourage from the sidelines," Ben murmurs from the floor.

"Thanks, guys," Luca says, frowning around at us. "That's...really generous of you."

"Anytime," Jesse says, sitting back down in his chair.

you

"Quit dicking around with alcohol, though," Rafe murmurs, his own attention back

on his book now. "It's only going to make you weak, and then you'll embarrass the nation. And I hate losing, even on a national level."

Luca laughs, promising that he will, but I'm still frowning at him when he turns his

attention back to me.

What? He asks, placing the question directly into my mind.

"Do you have to go to Atalaxia?" I ask, worried. "For the fight?"

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No," Luca says, his face bursting intoPlease bookmark site to read latest content. If you want to read please visit to read fastest content.

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a grin. "Ari, the fight is at home, in the

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city. You've — I mean, your whole family has already been invited.

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You're going to be there." The content

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chapter there!

My eyes go wide as I realize what he means- that I won't be there as Ari Clark,

but instead as Princess Ariel.

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But... mean, will I be out of hiding at that time? Will my family have

patched things up enough with that horrible Prince I left at the altar, so that I can re—emerge into society?

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And...what will it mean to go to the fight? Will I go as Princess? As Luca's friend's sister?

Or...or as the champion boxer's mate?

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I'm still staring at Luca, confused and pondering the complexities of this when a knock comes at the door.

Jesse, always ready for something new, springs out of his chair and strides over to it. We all turn, and my face goes a little pale when the door opens and Jesse reveals Jackson standing there, a note in his hand.

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"Hey, Jackson!" Jesse says, ever—friendly. "Come on in!"

"No thanks," Jackson says instantly, his eyes moving to me on the couch.

"Can't

stay — I was just asked to deliver a note."

"For me?" Jesse asks, eager.

Jackson huffs a laugh, flicking his eyes back to Jesse. "No, for Ari. I just had a meeting with Alvez," he says, rolling his eyes, "on some....homework stuff."

I intuit, instantly, that Jackson doesn't want to share the details of magic class in

front of Luca and Ben, and I know that Jesse and Rafe respect that alongside me.

"How did that go?" Rafe asks, his voice low with doubt.

"Precisely as you probably think it did," Jackson responds in much the same tone, "which is to say...it sucked."

I laugh, and after a moment Jesse and Rafe do too. Luca stays stonily silent, and

Ben just lays on the floor — maybe even fell asleep.

"Anyway," Jackson says, holding the note out towards me. "He asked me to

bring
you this.”
“Thanks!” I say, genuinely grateful, and I shove at Luca's legs, trying to get up.
But Luca?
He doesn't move an inch, trapping me awkwardly in my seat.

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“Luca,” I growl, shoving uselessly at his shins, “let me up.”
Luca just glares at Jackson at the door and then over at me. He can come to you, Luca says. into my mind, possessive and predatory. I narrow my eyes at him, pissed.

But there's no time to think any more about it, because suddenly Jackson's smokey pine scent strengthens and I look up to see him at my side.

“Here,” Jackson says, holding out the note to me and looking between Luca and I

curiously. He frowns, a little, when he notices Luca's legs stretched out over my lap.

“Thanks, Jacks,” I say, smiling up at him.

“Jacks?” Luca asks, and I turn to see him raising an eyebrow, his eyes flicking between the two of us. “What, the two of you are on like...a nickname basis now?”

The room is silent for a long, awkward moment as my two mates glare at each other and my cheeks go red. Honestly, I hadn't even noticed that I'd given Jackson a nickname it all happened very naturally.

“Yeah, I guess we are, Grant,” Jackson says, his voice quiet and dangerous.

The room returns to its awkward silence as I lower the note to my lap and awkwardly stare at it, not knowing what to do or how to mediate this. Because obviously, obviously I'm the cause of all of this and I'm the only one who knows it.

“Well, I for one like it!” Jesse says, grinning at the drama and leaning against the

doorframe. “Are you sure you won't stay for dinner, Jacks?”

I flick my eyes to my cousin, grateful.

“Nah,” Jackson says with a sigh before reaching out a hand and giving me a warm pat on the shoulder. I look up in surprise at the touch, and then grin at

him,
unable to help it. He smiles back before he turns and heads towards the door.
“A
little...crowded in here, as it is.”
Ben and Rafe call their goodbyes as Jesse ushers Jackson out the door,
telling
him to come
and spend some time with us soon. Luca is noticeably silent as I unfold my
note
and read through it.
“What is it?” Rafe asks, leaning towards me, almost as if he is trying to see
the
writing in my lap.
“It's from Alvez,” I ignoring Luca's jealous energy as best I can. “He wants to
see
me at office hours tomorrow.”
me at office hou..
“Well, have fun with that,” Rafe says, relaxing instantly and turning back to his
textbook.
“What do you mean?” I ask, refolding the note and tucking it between the
pages
of my book.
“It's boring,” Rafe replies, and I remember now that he got paired with Alvez
for
his magic homework. “Just a lot of sitting around trying to....do things to a
marble. I mean, I'm sure mom hired him for a reason, but I think a lot of this
stuff
we're learning is guess work at best. At least at the beginning, until you can
figure out what you can do.”
“What are you guys talking about?” Luca asks, frowning and looking between
us.
Jesse opens his mouth to answer, probably intending to tell Luca the truth, but
I

speak first, interrupting.
“Classified,” I say, snapping my eyes up to my cousin, who raises his
eyebrows in
surprise that I want to keep the secret from my mate.
“We're not the only ones in that class,” I say cagily, looking between Rafe and
Jesse. “It's not right to share anything unless Jackson and Tony agree first.”
“Whatever,” Luca says, sighing and holding up his hands..

“I, for one, would like it known that I do not care,” Ben murmurs from his place by the fire, and a grin breaks onto my face at his exhausted tone. “And, further, that if any of you have any pain killers....it would be great if you crushed them up and placed them quietly under my tongue. Thank you.”

I smile at my poor friend laying on the floor and turn to Luca, eager for the opportunity to change the subject. “What did you do to him last night?”

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“Nothing he didn’t consent to,” Luca says casually, giving me a smirk. But in my mind, he takes a different tact. Don’t think we’re finished talking about this, he murmurs, his words a caress as much as warning that this conversation is not done.

I just sigh, and nod, and send back an impression of the dream state, letting him

know that we can talk about it more safely there.

Luca just nods, and closes his eyes, and continues his nap.

That night, after dinner has been eaten and Luca and Ben have finally shuffled

off to bed, I finally rest my freshly—showered head down on my pillow, a little anxious about how to handle this conversation with Luca. I mean, I get why he’s

jealous of Jackson — why he doesn’t want any other young men near me showing

me any special attention.

We’re newly mated, after all, which is apparently a very volatile state.

But still it’s a fine line for me to walk, isn’t it? Because Jackson — he has just as

much of a right to my company as Luca does.

And obviously the clearest and fairest thing to do would be to explain that to both

of them — but doing that opens a whole can of worms that I’m not sure I’m ready

to face just yet. I mean, I haven’t even let Jackson know that I’m a girl yet, let alone his mate I can’t just casually spring that all on him when he comes by to deliver a note from our professor, right?

We should tell him, my wolf urges, turning a circle in my soul. We should tell both of them.

I know, I murmur, stroking a hand over her silky fur. And we will...we just...we need more. time.

She gives a little howl of discontent but lets me be with it, knowing that I'm right

that I'm trying to balance too much, and just coming out with the truth to everyone right now could make it all come crashing down.

So I just sigh, and close my eyes, and work to fall asleep, eager to meet my one

mate who knows I exist in our little dream forest.

When I open my eyes again, I smile to feel the familiar breeze against my skin.

And this time, for once, I don't bother to change into my cadet uniform, instead letting my hair blow

loose, enjoying the feel of my soft white nightgown against my skin.

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Hello, gorgeous," Luca murmurs, and

I turn to see him standing right there, almost like I conjured him. His arm goes instantly around my waist, pulling me close as he uses his other hand to tuck my hair behind my ear.

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"Hi," I say, wrinkling my nose in pleasure and leaning against him. "Are you feeling better yet?"

"Much better," he murmurs, lowering his face and nudging my nose with his.

"Dream forest makes everything feel great. You look very pretty, by the way — big

improvement, I have to say, over your cadet uniform."

I laugh, frowning and pretending to be offended. "I thought I looked quite sharp in

cadet black," I protest, though I don't really mean it as I wrap my arms around his

neck.

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Oh, you do," Luca sighs, smiling down at me, his dimples deepening

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as his eyes rove over face. "I just..like
you soft and delicate too. All stages
of Ariel are very good — this one is
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just different from what I'm used to.
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The novelty is nice." The content is
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my

"Look at you, saying all the right things," I sigh. "They should put you on
ambassador track."

"Hold your tongue," he growls, narrowing his eyes at me. "I am warrior,
through

and through. You wouldn't have it any other way."

I grin then, loosening my grip from around his neck and putting my hands flat
against his chest. "No," I say, shaking my head and suddenly giving him a little
push, "no I would not."

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Luca gasps, stumbling backwards,
but to his surprise the back of his
knees hit a very plush mattress and
he falls backwards onto a bed that

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I've conjured out of thin air. It takes
him a second to figure out what
happened, but then he just turns his
head upwards and grins at The
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the latest chapter there!

1. me.

"Well, that's a clever little party trick," he murmurs before leaning forward and
grabbing me by the waist, hauling me down with him.

I shriek with delight as I fall into my mate's arms.

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Chapter 75

Luca pulls me again against his chest and then turns his body so that my back is

flat against the mattress, my hair spread out around me.

“Nice addition to the dream forest, Princess,” Luca murmurs, hovering his face over mine and pressing kisses to each of my cheeks. “What else can you do?”

“Oh, whatever I want,” I sigh, stretching my arms languidly over my head and enjoying the feeling of his weight pressing me down into the mattress, as I did yesterday. It's my new favorite thing, and honestly I don't see how I'll ever get sick of it.

“Can you just like, vanish our clothing?” he asks, sending me a cheeky glance before lowering his lips to my neck and dragging kisses there short little ones that

send shivers all across my skin and set little flecks of light into the air, as his touch always does. “Just make us immediately naked?”

“I can do that to me,” I say, turning my head and considering the possibility.

“Though you're in charge of your own clothes, sir.”

“I am?” he asks, lifting his head to peer at me curiously. “How do you know that?”

“Because,” I laugh, raising a hand to his head and letting my fingers drift through

the dark strands of his hair before they move down his neck and then over his shoulder. “I wouldn't have known to pick this outfit. I've never seen you in anything but candidate or cadet clothes. But I bet it's something you're comfortable in, isn't it?”

Luca takes a second to look down at himself, considering. “What, joggers and a

black sweatshirt isn't your fantasy look for me, Ariel?” he asks, and I burst into laughter. Luca raises his eyes to mine and grins at me, clearly enjoying making me laugh.

“I actually like you in your cadet uniform,” I confess, which makes his smile broaden. “You look like....sinfully good, Luca. It's really a shame that the tabloids

haven't gotten a picture of you in it yet — you'd drive all the girls crazy, not to mention really do a lot to boost enrollment at the Academy —

Luca laughs at this and then, like he can't help it, presses a kiss to my mouth. When he pulls away, I do a bit of a double take, because his clothing has actually

changed. I grin

impulsively to see that my Luca is back the version in his high-collared black

uniform, his hair swept neatly back from his face.

“Now that's what I'm talking about,” I murmur, letting my fingers do as they please

and bury themselves in his hair as I raise my lips to his neck now, pressing them

to the skin right at the edge of that collar, as I've been dying to do for weeks

—

basically since the moment I saw him wear it.

Luca groans softly as my lips move over his skin, a shudder passing through his

shoulders. and then he dips his face, nudging my cheek with his nose so that I lift

my mouth to his again. He kisses me, fast and hard, almost desperate to have me, to claim me as his own. And I kiss him right back, matching every inch of him, my lips meeting every fervid stroke of his tongue like they were made for it.

Which, I mean, they probably were.

My heart is racing, my breath coming fast as Luca deepens the kiss, rolling his body over mine so that our stomachs press together, though he takes the majority of his weight on his forearms so that he doesn't crush me completely beneath him. Following some instinct I didn't know I had, I angle my head just slightly, opening my mouth further to him as my left knee comes up, brushing against the outside of his thigh before hooking over his hip.

Luca takes full advantage of the new position, dipping his tongue deep into my mouth in a

that makes me moan, running his hand all the way down my side to cup my ass

as he settles himself between my legs, as he press his hips forward against me —

way

I gasp, suddenly, my eyes flying open when I feel...him.

Feel it.

Pressed...well. Precisely where it wants to go.

I go very, very still, staring up at my mate, shocked and not knowing at all what to do.

“What?” Luca asks, suddenly wary as his own eyes open and he looks down at

me. He pulls his face back a little, searching my expression. “Ariel, what's wrong?”

“Um,” I say, my face suddenly burning with my blush as I glance downward,

not
knowing what
to say —
Or how to feel

Because, I mean, it's not that I don't...don't like it....because I think I do!? I just
this is all very new, and very fast.....

Luca inhales sharply as he takes in my blush, the direction of my glance, and
the
position of our bodies that initiated such a reaction in me. And he bursts into a
smile.

I groan, whipping my hands up to my face and covering it as my cheeks
redden
even further.

"No, stop!" he says, laughing lightly and subtly moving his hips away so that
he's

not pressed so blatantly against me. "Don't be embarrassed, Ariel." He laughs
more though, pulling my hands away and pressing more kisses to my hot
cheeks.

"I'm sorry," I murmur, shaking my head.

"Stop," he commands, lifting his face to look me in the eyes. "Please, Ariel, it's
my
fault. got carried away."

I

"You didn't!" I protest. "It's fine — let's keep going —" I raise my chin then,
closing

my eyes, fully intending to continue making out with my mate, but to my
surprise

he just laughs again and shifts his position, rolling onto his side and taking me
with him so that we're face—to—face, instead of with him on top. I open my
eyes,

curious and a little guilty. wondering if I've killed the mood, or —

"I'm sorry," he murmurs, his face still close to should have realized that you'd
be

surprised

mine, stroking my cheek with his thumb. "I

I frown at him, confused. "Why should you have realized that?"

His smile deepens. "Because you're a virgin, Ariel."

My frown develops into a glare. "Why do you think that, Luca!?"

But he just bursts into laughter, shaking his head at me and grinning. I sigh,
rolling my eyes and giving it up.

"Oh fine," I huff, looking away. "I am. But how did you know!?"

He shrugs. "Just a hunch. You're so sweet and you can be...well, very innocent, Ari."

I open my mouth to protest but he silences me with a swift kiss.

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It's not an insult," he says after a moment when he pulls away, shaking

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his head. "It's just the truth, yeah?

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You're not very experienced in all of this, which is fine. It makes sense

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that you wouldn't have as much experience in these areas. I should

have gone slower — eased The

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you into it. 'I'm sorry I got swept up in the moment."

I bite my lip, worried.

"What?" he asks, nudging me again with his nose.

you want,"

"I don't want you to have to go at a glacial pace just for my sake, if that's not what

I sigh, wrapping my hands in the fabric of his uniform and tugging him closer, wanting him to be as happy as I am.

"It's not for your sake, it's for our sake," he whispers, tucking my hair back behind

my car. "It's about us together, not either of us individually. And it's not easy, learning about...sex, and all this romance stuff."

I blush again, scowling and looking away.

Luca suddenly laughs again. "What?" he says, squeezing me tighter, insistent.

"Talk to me, little mate. What are you thinking?"

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I'm just suddenly wishing I was a lot

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sluttier," I mutter, looking away, still a

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little embarrassed. Luca's laugh

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deepens as I continue. “Honestly,

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then I'd know all of this, and you

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wouldn't have to put the breaks on

your own instincts just to

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accommodate me =" The content is

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« . ”

Oh no, Princess,” Luca murmurs,

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grabbing me again I'm finding that I

like this being grabbed and rolled

around thing very much, I note and

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pulling me so that I'm laying on top of

him now, my hair falling loose around

up

both of us. “I've been slutty enough

for both of us in the past ten years —

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and I'm going to very much enjoy

teaching you everything I The content

is on ! Read the latest

chapter there!

know.”

I grin down at my mate, my fingers brushing against his cheek as my eyes

dart

over his beautiful face, his warm smile. “Everything?”

Chapter 75

“Oh,” he murmurs, his hand coming up to knot his fingers in my hair,

“absolutely

everything.”

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Chapter 76

I lean forward, wanting to kiss him very much again, but suddenly his words register fully. With me and I give a little squeak, sitting up straight.

“What?” Luca asks, suddenly concerned.

“Wait,” I say, looking at him askance as I let my knees fall on either side of his waist, straddling him with my hands on his chest. “Precisely how slutty were you,

Luca Grant?”

He grins up at me, broad and happy. “What answer do you want, Ariel? The truth,

or the one that’s going to make you want to kiss me again?”

“The truth,” I growl, giving him a little smack on the chest.

“Do that again,” he murmurs, one hand slipping to my back and pressing me forward a little bit, “I liked that.”

“Pay attention, boy,” I command, pointing a finger into his face, though I lean forward a little more. “Now, spill.”

Luca shrugs, noncommittal, laying casually back on the magical dream bed and

letting his hands rest on my thighs. “I have not been a very chaste man, Ariel. If a

girl and I liked each other, and we wanted to, I didn’t hold back. Does that upset you?”

I tilt my head to the side for a second, balancing my jealousy with my common

sense. “Well, no,” I say, my words slow and measured. “But, how many girls were there?”

“That I’ve kissed? Or that I’ve slept with? Because those are very different numbers —”

My mouth falls open in shock as I stare at him, and he grins at me again, clearly

amused. “You’re very sweet,” he murmurs, his hands starting to rub distracting

circles on my thighs.

“Slept with, then,” I say, through my teeth, doing my best to not get distracted by

the way. his hands feel on my legs.

Luca's grin deepens. "Somewhere around fifty?" he says, giving another one of

those too- casual shrugs.

My jaw drops again, accompanied by a shocked huff of air.

"What?" he says, grinning at me, his hands pausing on my thighs and taking hold

there, like he'd stop me if I tried to run away. "Too many?"

"You hussy!" I gasp, raising my hand before I think about what I'm doing and smacking him again on the chest.

Luca bursts out laughing at this as I raise my hand again.

"And around fifty!?" I raise my hand again, "like you can't even be bothered to remember some of them!?" My hand falls, aiming for the same place, but before

it can connect Luca's moving, sitting up as he grabs my wrist out of the air, his movement shifting me back at little so that I'm sitting in his lap with his other hand tight against the small of my back so I don't fall backwards.

"I'm your hussy now," he murmurs, his voice honestly a little delighted at my outrage. "just think of it as my...education, which I can now put to good use."

And

then, almost as if to prove his point, Luca uses the hand pressed to the small of

my back to press me tighter into his lap, grinding against me in a way that lets me feel all of him. At the same time, he leans in and presses his lips to the soft

skin of my throat, just above my clavicle.

And in combination...

1 groan, my head falling back as I feel a heat bloom in my core. My eyes flutter

shut as Luca delivers a long, slow lick to my throat, and I find my hips moving on

their own, wanting to press tighter against the hard length of him now instead of

shying away from it.

"See?" he murmurs, his lips still against the skin of my neck. "It's not all so bad."

"Luca," I say, half moan and half sigh, as I raise my head and take his face in my

hands. Because as much as I definitely want to keep going, want to keep experimenting, this is definitely a conversation we need to have.

"Hmm?" he hums, inviting my question.

“How...” I hesitate, not wanting to hurt his feelings, “how can you have slept with fifty women?”

He grins, like it wasn't difficult at all, and I laugh a little, surprised to find myself grinning back at him.

“I'm serious, Luca!” I say, looping my arms around his neck and forcing myself to

pout a little, wanting him to be just a little more serious. “I mean...” I blush lightly,

because I know I'm going to sound naive but...well, I want to know. “You can't have loved them all. Did you love...any of them?”

“A few,” he says, his face falling into more serious lines as he tightens his arm around my waist, pulling me close. “I've had serious relationships, Ariel. But the

majority of them...no, I didn't love them. But sex it's not always about love.”

“Then what's it about?” I ask, dead curious. Because I've never had anyone to talk to about this sort of stuff. My mom made sure I know everything I need to know about the mechanics of sex and babies, and I know that I could always go

to her to ask whatever I wanted.

But this sort of thing, the personal side of it? The sort of thing you talk to your friends. about?

Well, my friends are just as naive as me.

Or at least I thought they were

until Jesse blew their cover. I scowl, a little, thinking about it, and Luca grins at me, lifting a hand and brushing his thumb over my frowning lip like he loves the

shape of it.

“Sometimes,” he murmurs, “sex is just about two people who are attracted to each other getting naked and doing really weird things to each other's bodies.”

I burst into laughter then, my head tilting back on my neck. Luca laughs with me,

I can feel his body vibrating against mine. “Luca!” I gasp. “That is the least romantic thing I've ever heard!”

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Well, sometimes it's not romantic!

he replies, laughing with me as I raise

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my head and smile at him. “But it can

be. Or it can be really intimate, and
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bring people closer.” Almost as if to
illustrate he tightens his arm again,
pulling me flush against his chest
and brushing his cheek up the length
of my neck before pulling back a little
and staring into my face, his brown
eyes warm. The content is on

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“I think I'd prefer the latter,” I say, my voice a little dry.
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With you?” he says, tilting his head to
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the side. “It will be all of it, Ariel, at
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different times. But,” he gives me a
soft smile now, understanding, that
“)

warms me body and soul. “We don't
have to do any of that now or
i il l

anytime soon. We'll go slow. I..want
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you to like it.” The content is on
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chapter there!

I take my face in my hands, leaning close so my lips brush his as I speak. “I
do

like it, Luca,” I murmur. “I just...it's new.”

He nods, understanding. “Plus,” he says, considering, “you shouldn't lose your
virginity in a dream state.”

“Oh yeah?” I ask, my face bursting into a smile. “Then where should I lose it,
the

dorm room of an all-boys war academy?”

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Certainly not," he says, frowning at

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me like it's a ridiculous idea. "I was

thinking, like, the hallway of that

academy, about five minutes from

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now? We'll meet halfway, I'll just like,

. . . "

pin you down in the staircase =" The

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I burst out laughing, tucking my head against his shoulder and shaking it.

"Luca!"

I protest.

"I know," he murmurs, laughing with me, holding me close and rocking me

back

and forth just a little. "I'm just kidding, gorgeous."

"Gorgeous," I say, lifting my head and smiling down at him again. "I like this

new

nickname. Better than Shrimp."

"Shrimp is for the rest of the world," he sighs, grinning at me. "Gorgeous that's

just for me and you."

"Good," I murmur, lowering my face to his again, wanting nothing more than to

kiss him and kiss him and kiss him for the rest of the night. "I like this —

having a

secret with you."

"First of many," he murmurs, and then Luca turns me again, laying me flat out

on

the mattress and proceeding to kiss me senseless for hours on end.

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The Hidden Princess At All-Boys Alpha Academy

#Chapter 77 - Read The Hidden Princess At All-Boys

Alpha Academy Chapter 77

Chapter 77

When I wake up the next morning. I am in an absolute daze of joy.

Rafe just smiles at me as he passes my nook on the way to the bathroom, happy to see me happy, but Jesse immediately knows what's up as I stretch my arms over my head, unable to keep the smile off of my face.

"Ugh, it's so unfair," he moans, flopping back into his own pillow pile as the bathroom door closes behind Rafe.

"What, do you want to swap with me?" I ask him, teasing. "Make out with Luca in the dream state instead?"

"No, I don't want to swap," Jesse mutters, bitter, lifting his head to glare at me. "It's just very unfair, Ariel, that you get to wake up in a sex haze while the rest of us are all pent up-

"No one is stopping you from making out with the other cadets, Jesse," I say with a happy sigh, climbing out of my bed and starting to set out my clothes for the day.

"Well, considering they hold very few charms for me, it's not precisely an appealing option," he replies, deeply sarcastic. "And considering that you actively are cockblocking me from making out with the one person I do want to get naked with in this castle."

"Again, I am willing to share Luca," I joke, sending him a little grin over my shoulder.

Jesse just rolls his eyes at me. "Please," he says, sitting up and pressing his hands together in prayer, "please release me from my promise not to hit on Daphne. Even just let me flirt with her!"

"Jesse!" I sigh, turning to him. "Do you actually like her? Or are you just hitting on her because she's the only girl around."

He sits up straight for a second, turning his head like he hadn't considered it. "I will invite her over," I say, pointing a finger at his face and speaking slowly so he hears how seriously I am. "And you can pursue her if you actually like her. But don't mess her around, okay?"

Chapter 77

"I promise," he says, almost reverent.

“And if she likes another boy instead of you,” I say, turning my head to the side and continuing my glare. “You have to let her, all right?”
“Wait,” he says, going still and narrowing his eyes at me. “Did she say something? Who does she like?”
I don't say anything, but I flick my eyes towards the bathroom door.
“Oh Rafe?” Jesse says, perking up. “I can handle that. Everyone likes Rafe until they realize that I'm the funny one —”
“If she likes Rafe you have to let her like Rafe!” I say, speaking over him and throwing out my arms in protest.
“Fine fine,” he says, though I can already see his little mind turning, scheming.
“Fine,” I sigh, feeling very generous and happy. “I'll send her a note.”
“You're the best, little cousin!” Jesse says, hopping out of bed and darting across the room to wrap me in an enthusiastic hug, rocking me back and forth.
“When is

she coming over? Tonight? For lunch?”
“Oh, go away,” I say, pretending to be sterner than I am and unable to keep from laughing. “She'll come when she comes.”
Morning workouts and breakfast pass blissfully, especially considering that Luca's leg is pressed warmly against mine throughout the entire meal. The only dark point is when Jackson walks by and gives us a little nod of acknowledgement as he goes. I wave back to him, but I hesitate when Luca goes rigid beside me.
Slowly, I turn to him. “Guess we got...distracted, didn't we?” I whisper, remembering our intent to have a little chat about Jackson last night in the dream state.

“Yes, I suppose we did,” Luca says, narrowing his eyes a little.
I sigh, staring into his pretty brown eyes, taking in the stern set to his mouth.

Chapter 77

Are we okay? I ask quietly mind-to-mind, and Luca's face instantly softens, Ariel, of course we're okay, he replies, shaking his head slightly as he slips his hand into mine beneath the table. I'm not mad at you I just don't trust that guy. But you and me?
We're fine.

I smile then, pleased to hear it.
But inwardly my wolf paces and I do my best to tuck the anxiety away,
because I
don't want Luca to feel it.
You need to tell him, she says to me, nudging my soul with her nose. Not fair

—
he thinks he's your only mate. He needs to know.
I feel like howling alongside her as I realize that she's right.
But honestly, how do you break that to someone? I drop my eyes to the table,
but
look up again when Luca squeezes my hand. He raises an eyebrow at me
and I
put a smile on my face, nodding and turning back to the food as Rafe calls my
name.

"Hmm?" I say, turning towards him.

"Are you going to be late?" he asks, turning his head at me.

"For what?" I ask, completely distracted.

"Alvarez's office hours," he replies, looking at me like I'm a bit of an idiot for
letting it slip my mind.

"Oh!" I say, jumping a bit. "Oh my god," I glance up at the clock on the wall, "I
am
going
to

be late shit "I scurry to my feet, and Luca stands too, dropping my hand so
Rafe
doesn't
see.

"I'll walk you," he says, dead casual, like he was getting up anyway.

"No, that's okay," Rafe stands up, all duty, "I'll ="

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Seriously," Luca says, lifting his chin
towards the full plate of food and cup
of coffee in front of my brother.

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Finish up, it's fine. I'm done." He
waves his hands towards his clean.
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plate. "Plus, I'm going to get to the gym, hit the bag a few times." He lifts his fists

then, taking up his boxer's stance.

Rafe grins, pleased. "That's a good idea. You've got a nation to represent."

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Damn straight," Luca says, giving my brother his best celebrity grin before nodding me towards the door. And then the two of us walk out of the Hall together. We chat idly, I think both of us knowing that this is not the time to have a conversation about Jackson McClintock — thank god — and so Luca just tells me about his workout plans. The content is on ! Read the latest chapter there!

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I mean, not much of what Luca says about that workout makes sense to

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me, but I'm used to boys telling me enthusiastically about their athletics, so I nod along. When we get to

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Alvez's office door, Luca glances around and then puts a hand on my shoulder, letting it slide slowly down my arm until our fingertips barely brush. The content is on

! Read the latest chapter there!

"See you at dinner?" he murmurs.

"Workout good," I reply, smiling up into his perfect face. Luca grins back and then

starts down the hall just as Alvez's door opens.

I turn in surprise to look up into my professor's handsome face. "Ah, Sinclair,"

he

says, and go stiff to hear him use my actual last name, even though there's no one around to hear.

I

"So nice of you to heed my summons and join me for a little...chat."

But the way his mouth spreads into a wide grin?

I'm very, very aware that this is going to be much more than a chat.

Sighing inwardly and doing my best to be polite to this man who is holding my secrets over my head like a sack of bricks, I put on my best Princess smile and

step into Alvez's office.

He closes the door behind us.

Chapter 78

"Please," Alvez murmurs, gesturing towards of all places — his desk. As I hesitate,

he sinks into his rolling chair, which scoots back a few inches. Seeing my confusion, his smile grows. "I'm unfortunately low on seating in this little room —

castles, such wide sweeping halls, such... tiny little workspaces."

My eyebrows raise as he gestures towards the desk again and I realize that he

wants me to sit there. But I just sigh inwardly again, doing as he says and lifting

myself up onto the desk so that my legs dangle. I cross them at the ankles, leaning forward with my hands pressed to the edge of the desk, watching him warily.

There's such pleasure on Alvez's face, in the way he lets his eyes rove over me.

Is it that he enjoys seeing me unsettled? Or is this just...how he is?

"We've met before, Princess — before the Academy, I mean. Do you remember?"

I sit up a little straighter, surprised. "We did?"

Alvez nods slowly, folding his hands in his lap. "At the Palace, during my interview with your mother and your aunt. You popped in, asking a question about evening plans."

"Oh," I say, my heart sinking a little — because that sounds very plausible.

"I'm

sorry, no, I don't remember."

"Understandable," he says, giving a little shrug. "I'm sure that your home is rather

a revolving door of visitors. But I certainly remembered you.”

I blush a little, because the way his voice pitches lower when he says the word

suggests not just that he remembered me, but that he...noticed me. Like noticed

me, notice women.

the way

that men

My stomach twists and his grin deepens, giving me my answer.

He does like this making me uncomfortable. I can see it clearly now in the take in

my blush, the way my hands grip the edge of the desk.

way

his eyes

God, how am I supposed to handle this? I wish, quite suddenly, that my brother

were here —

he'd solve everything, probably by punching Alvez right in the face.

But Rafe he has a pretty strong trust in authority, especially in people hired by our own parents. I don't think that there's any way he'd suspect that Alvez was making me uncomfortable unless I actually told him.

And I can't tell him, right? Because Alvez — he'll rat me out, get me kicked out of

the Academy, and probably Rafe too.

God, he's really got me tied up here.

“So,” Alvez says, using his feet to pull his chair closer to me, peering up into my

face from his lower spot in the chair. “How have things been going with your magic, little Princess?”

I shrug, eager for the change in conversation but not wanting to open up about

my magic either not that there's been any developments. Jackson and I, when we did our

“homework” outside under the tree, we didn't exactly try to do anything magic, did

we? We just held hands and talked.

“Oh, come on,” Alvez prods, his voice low with a little laugh in it. “Why so reticent,

Princess? I'm trying to help you here.”

I flick my eyes up to his, a little spark of anger in me now. “Are you?” I ask quietly.

"Because it feels like you're trying to intimidate me."

He clicks his tongue, turning his head to the side. "And what gives you that impression?"

"The fact that you've called me, alone, to your office?" I say, surprised by my willingness to confront him, "and that you keep calling me Princess, reminding me of your secret. And that I'm completely under your control."

"Oh, that's where you have it wrong," he says, leaning forward now and reaching

out a casual hand, letting it rest on my knee. "The opposite is true, Princess — you've got me quite under your spell."

My eyes widen, my

mouth falling open a little at his bold touch, at his words. My reaction pleases him, I think or at least, his grin deepens. But this just makes me scowl, even though I don't brush away his hand, or move in any way. I don't know what the rules are here and I find that I'm terrified to make him mad.

Chapter 70

But how do I get the upper hand here? Or, at least, get out of this?

"No developments in my magic," I snap, though my voice is soft, almost a whisper as I stare tensely down into his face, wondering what the hell he's going

to do next. "Not since the marble."

"Ah, yes,

the fascinating marble," Alvez murmurs, his thumb starting to make slow circles

around the inner part of my knee. "That you melted. All by yourself."

I raise my chin, daring him to call my bluff.

"And what of your connection to Cadet McClintock," Alvez murmurs, his thumb still moving, though making broad strokes now instead of little circles. "Did you experiment. more with him? Complete your homework, like a good girl?"

My breath hitches, then, as his hand presses upwards, caressing the top of my

thigh and working its way around to the outside as Alvez smiles at me, possessive and hungry.

I just stare at him, shocked, until he gives my leg a quick little slap that makes me

jump. "Pay attention, Princess," he murmurs, his smile deepening. "Did you do your homework?"

"Y-yes," I say, sitting rigid on my professor's desk, "but...um..."

"No developments," he says, his voice low, like he's disappointed in me.

Slowly,

his hand. begins to move again, moving slowly so slowly upwards. An anxious

heat starts to curl in me, and I don't know what to do, panic mixing with something else.

With with fury? I don't know what. Some kind of heat.

I don't respond, not saying anything else.

"And," Alvez continues, his eyes locked on mine, "what of McClintock's power?

Did your magic's affinity with his produce any results regarding his own powers?"

I frown slightly at him now, confused. "But you saw him yesterday," I whisper, "so

he'll have already told you —"

I gasp when Alvez smacks my leg again, this time harder, and getting dangerously close to my ass. My professor leans forward, smiling at me, enjoying

himself. "Don't worry about

what McClintock and I talked about yesterday during our office hours," he murmurs, slow and pleased, "I'm asking you now. This is our time, after all.

Just

you and me."

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I lean back, away from him, my heart starting to pound as he puts his other hand on my other knee, starting to press against it, clearly obliging my legs to spread open. I squeeze my thighs, wanting the opposite, when suddenly The content is on

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chapter there!

Aknock comes at the door — a deliberate rapping sound, but too hard to be casual. Alvez freezes, his head whipping towards the door. Neither of us move.

The knock comes again and Alvez scowls, glaring up at me. "Who did you call here?"

"N-no one," I say, shaking my head.

"Professor Alvez?"

I sit up straight when I instantly recognize the voice calling outside.

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The professor scowls at me but stands and walks towards the door.

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When he pulls it open, Jackson's eyes flick over him only for a second before they move immediately to me,

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sitting on the desk, Alvez's chair still sitting directly before me. The

content is on ! Read

the latest chapter there!

"Yes, Cadet McClintock?" Alvez murmurs, leaning against the doorframe and blocking Jackson's path should he want to enter. Alvez is annoyed and makes sure that Jackson hears. every inch of it in his voice.

"Yeah, I had some questions about magic," Jackson says, not taking his eyes from me, his voice bored and not even bothering to pretend that he's serious about that.

"Well, then you'll have to make an appointment," Alvez replies, pressing himself

up from the doorframe and starting to close the door. "I'll be happy to speak to you at another time

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Nah, I need to come in now, Jackson says, breaking through the arm that Alvez has spread across the door and moving immediately to the window on the other side of the room, which he leans against. He

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taps the side of his head. "I'll forget all my questions if I leave now. And considering how much progress

Do I 1 "

you'd like me to make," he shrugs, wp) »

I'm sure you'd hate me to do that.

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Chapter 78

I work very, very hard to t
the smile that pulls at my lips.

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Chapter 79

Alvez glares at my mate, who leans his heavily muscled body so, so casually against the wall by the window. And I realize, quite suddenly, that Alvez is playing

a very, very tricky game here. Because while he is the professor, and does have

power over Jackson...

I mean, he can't exactly make Jackson do anything, can he?

If it were me barging into an office and refusing to leave, Alvez or really any Alpha in the castle could just sling me over their shoulder and hurl me out of the room.

But Jackson?

He's so physically powerful that the only person who even really has a chance of

tossing him bodily out of this office would be Rafe, and then they might have to

call in my dad for backup.

And Alvez is clearly very aware of this fact as he leans against the open doorway

across the room, glaring daggers at my mate, who is so obviously here because

he knows what was going on in this room. Or, at least if not precisely, that Alvez

didn't call me here to help me with my homework.

Jackson doesn't know what Alvez has over me, but he clearly did not like me being behind closed doors with this man, and I'm deeply grateful for his help.

"Ask your questions, McClintock," Alvez snaps, arms crossed. "And then go. You're interrupting Cadet Clark's time here."

"Oh, I don't mind," I say quickly, sitting up straight and smiling between Alvez and

Jackson. "Our magic calls to each other after all, right? Maybe he can help." I

turn my smile singularly on Jackson now, and I don't miss the fact that the corners of his mouth twitch, just subtly. "Professor Alvez, after all, was just asking

after your magical progress, Jackson."

"Oh really," Jackson says, slowly turning his head to stare at Alvez now. "After I assured you yesterday, for an entire hour, that I hadn't made any progress at all.

I'm surprised you had more questions, sir."

Alvez's eyes narrow as he looks between us. "I considered that your partner perhaps had observed changes that you had not."

"Shame." Jackson says, his shoulders tensing as he glares at our professor, "to

be wasting Cadet Clark's time in office hours talking about me, especially considering that his own powers are so much more developed."

"Are they, McClintock?" Alvez asks, his voice low and subtle now as he moves away from the door, starts to prowl towards Jackson a bit, their eyes locked.

"Are you sure?"

I go rigid as I realize the import between Alvez's words that he suspects the truth,

that Jackson's keeping his abilities hidden.

But Jackson stays perfectly still, saying nothing and giving nothing away.

I watch, fascinated, as my professor squares off against my mate, as the two stare at each other for a long, tense moment.

And then I clear my throat, reminding them that I'm here.

Alvez flicks his eyes to me before returning them to Jackson. "Ask your questions, McClintock," Alvez orders. "And then go."

Jackson takes a long, leisurely breath, leaning back against the wall, clearly making himself comfortable. "I forget them now, all of a sudden, professor," he murmurs, looking up towards the ceiling. "You'll have to forgive me big guys like

me, sometimes we're more brawn than brain. Takes a second to remember the details."

"I'm very aware of your performance on the intelligence examination, McClintock," Alvez sighs, crossing his arms, clearly seeing through Jackson's performance, as he's meant to. "Don't insult my own intelligence by trying to pretend you're too stupid to remember."

"Must just be sleepy, then," Jackson says, faking a yawn, his eyes flicking back to

me. "Give me a minute, I'm sure it will come back."

Alvez sighs, moving away from Jackson and flopping back into his chair, glaring

up at me like I planned this. I just shrug at him, hoping to communicate quite honestly that I had nothing to do with it. Even if I am a bit thrilled at the result. The rest of the meeting falls along more predictable lines. Alvez leans back in his

chair,

Spiera

asking me about how it feels to access my magic, giving me suggestions about

new things to try. And, honestly, the suggestions are actually helpful he suggests

that since sun is the signet to which I'm largely aligned, I should concentrate on

manifesting heat in different forms.

When he shifts his attention to Jackson, though, asking about how physical touch

with Jackson changed or amplified my magic, I play as dumb as I can. I don't deny that Jackson's presence was helpful, but don't add any more detail.

Eventually, Alvez sighs, looking at me beneath lowered brows, clearly frustrated.

"All right, cadet, it doesn't seem like we're getting any further with this," he snaps.

"Continue the good work, and please come to class prepared to demonstrate what you can do for the others."

"What?" I ask, a little surprised by the request.

"As you and Tony are the only ones who admit to manifestations of your gifts," Alvez says, deliberately flicking his eyes to Jackson here, "I'd like you to show the others in the hope that it will...inspire or awaken them. Tony will be asked to

do the same."

"Okay," I say, hopping down from the desk and trying to decide how I feel about

that. Because, I mean, I don't think I'm going to be able to do anything without holding Jackson's hand — and I don't know how he's going to feel about that.

Luckily, it looks like I'm going to get a chance to talk to him about it as he pushes

himself up from the wall.

"Have you remembered your question, McClintock?" Alvez snaps, spinning his chair towards my mate.

"Seems to have just flown away today," Jackson sighs, smirking a little and drifting a hand through the air like a bird flying. "Sorry about that hope it wasn't an inconvenience."

“Stick to your appointment times,” Alvez murmurs. “It isn’t fair to take work space.”

up another student's

“Oh, I don’t mind,” I say, breezy as Jackson comes to my side and we head together for the door. “Thank you, professor! I'll work on your suggestions!”

He doesn’t say anything or look our way as we leave, clearly still pissed at Jackson's

deliberate interruption. Jackson, likewise still displeased, slams the office door shut behind

1. US.

The moment he does, I impulsively throw my arms around his waist, hugging him

tight and pressing my cheek to his chest. “Thank you,” I breathe.

Jackson freezes, his arms out by his side, and I look up into his shocked face.

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He doesn't say a word, just staring

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down at me unmoving, and I can't

help the smile that stretches over my

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face. “What?” I ask, loosening my

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arms and tilting my head back. “I

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can't say thank you?” The content is

on ! Read the latest

chapter there!

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I um ” he blushes, of all things, and

then looks to the side, using one

hand to give me a soft, brief pat on

the shoulder as he clears his throat.

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Yes, that's fine. Should we get you

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back to your rooms?” The content is

on ! Read the latest

chapter there!

Grinning, not knowing precisely what just happened by kind of tickled by it anyway, I unlock my arms from around his waist and tuck my hands behind my

back. "Sure," I say, still grinning at him.

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Jackson looks back at me, the faint blush still on his cheeks, and to my delight he scowls more and sets off

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down the hall. But I don't miss the fact that he shortens his stride so that I have no trouble keeping up with him. The content is on

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chapter there!

I sigh, content to have my big, brutal, interrupting—office—hours mate walking by

my side. Because, honestly, I'm starting to figure out that he's...kind of a sweetheart, deep down.

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Chapter 80

"So, what was going on in there?" Jackson asks softly as we move through the

quiet halls, glancing over his shoulder as we go.

"Don't you know?" I ask, frowning up at him.

He just looks at me blankly, not answering.

"Well, then why did you interrupt?" I ask, confused. Because it's one thing if Jackson interrupted because he knew that Alvez was going to be a creep, but quite another if he interrupted for...well, why else would he have interrupted?

"I don't trust that guy," Jackson sighs, the words slipping between clenched teeth.

"Something's...off about him." He moves his eyes to me again, searching my face. "Was I wrong?" His words are tense.

I sigh, shaking my head. "No, you weren't wrong, Jackson," I say, looking forward

as we climb into an elevator and Jackson presses the brass button, closing he

doors. "I was...very uncomfortable in there."

Jackson grunts in a self-satisfied way, pleased I think to have his instincts confirmed. "I

don't like the way he looks at you," he says, quite soft. "I knew it was going to be

trouble when he gave me that note, asking you to come alone."

"How did you know the note said to come alone?" I ask, looking up at him.

Jackson turns, instantly frowning down at me like the answer is obvious.

"Because I read it."

I burst out laughing, shaking my head at him. "Jackson, you can't just read my mail.

"I was helping you!"

"That's not an excuse!" but I'm smiling, and he smirks back at me, figuring out that I'm not actually mad. Because he really did help me — I'd have been in a very

tricky situation, I think, had Jackson not come pounding on the door.

"Don't let yourself be alone with him," Jackson murmurs as the elevator raises

us up into

the air. "Bring Rafe or..or come get me. Or something."

"All right." I say softly, studying my mate's profile as he pretends not to notice that

I'm looking at him. And inwardly, I wonder how the hell he's justifying this whole

hero act to himself.

Because, I mean, it's pretty obvious to me that Jackson is protective of me because some part of him knows, deep down, that I'm his mate or that I'm special to him, in some way. It's happening, I think, on almost a bodily level he's

driven to ensure my safety by the same biological mechanism that makes a hen

protect her chicks. But how...how the hell is he justifying it to himself?

He must know, my wolf says to me, sitting back on her haunches and turning her

head curiously in Jackson's direction. He must have figured it out and he's just...

playing it cool.

But as I study him, I'm not so sure. Jackson — he's smart, but in some ways he's

so outside of our world, our culture. Would he be able to pick up on the little

clues

that Ben noticed, which might communicate to others that I'm a girl?

Or, like Luca, would he even be willing to address his attraction to me, if he feels

it? I've heard that Northern communities are much, much less progressive with

things like homosexuality and gender fluidity. Even if Jackson did feel a stirring

towards me, would he let himself go there, the way Luca was so willing to?

I sigh as the doors open to the dormitory floor, shaking my head at my mate, wishing I could just...ask.

"What?" Jackson asks, stepping out of the elevator and turning his attention back

to me. "Why are you sighing? What's wrong?"

"Nothing," I murmur, shaking my head as I continue to look up at him, at the stark

panes of his face. "I just....wish I had you figured out."

Jackson almost stumbles a step as we walk down the quiet hall

almost, though. He's too graceful, really, to actually do that. "Me?" he says in disbelief, gesturing towards himself. "You think I'm the mystery here?"

I smirk a bit, my eyes dancing, silently admitting that he's right that I'm certainly

the one keeping secrets. "You've got them too, you know," I say quietly as we reach the stairs at the

end of the hall and begin to climb them up to my floor. "Things you're keeping back from

Jackson's the one who sighs now, shaking his head. "I'll gladly tell you everything

you want to know — every single thought in my head, Clark, for the secrets you're

keeping from me."

Guilt builds in me as we make our way to my door. And

radiating from the entire hallway, from the silence somehow, by the quietness my own door, I know that I'm

the only one here that Jesse and Rafe are away, probably exercising. That Luca

and Ben are likewise off doing their own thing.

It would be so easy, to just...tug Jackson inside...

To tell him everything...

But even as my wolf howls at me to do it do it do it, I shake my head up at Jackson, knowing that it's still not right. Not yet.

Jackson sighs again, intuiting the direction of my thoughts, knowing that I'm still holding on to my secrets.

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And again, it's not that I don't want

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him to know. It's just...as always, the

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timing. It's not right. Not now not

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when I'm still figuring things out with

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Luca, when we've got finals and the

Examination looming, when Jesse

and Rafe still think I have one mate,

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even if they think it's different people.

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It's just not right to blow up everyone's world with this, not yet.

I stare up into my mate's dark blue gaze, willing him to trust me, to just...give me

more time. But he just snaps his head away, frustrated.

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Jacks,” I murmur as he shifts his

weight, taking a step away. I grab his

hand, ignoring the pulse that pounds

through the hall when I do. He turns

back to me, his jaw clenched in

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rustration. “I promise,” I say quietly,

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shaking my head. “I promise that one

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day I'll tell you everything, all right?

The content is on !

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“Why one day?” He exhales the words all in a rush, shaking his head at me, even as he moves closer. “Why not now, Ari? What's what's holding you back?” But I shake my head as I stare up at him, knowing that the reasons why I'm holding back are part of the secret. “Can't it be enough? The promise that I'm going to tell, as soon as I can?” “Would it be enough for you?” he murmurs, stepping closer. Despite me, my eyes flicker half-shut as his scent floods my nostrils, making something warm and hungry stir in my core. God, if I could just...

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I dismiss the ridiculous impulse to beg him to give me his shirt so I could tuck it under my pillow, breathing in that scent all night, and force myself back to full

: :)

consciousness. To my surprise, he's just smirking at me. The content is on ! Read the latest chapter there!

“Goodbye, Clark,” he says, putting particular emphasis on the farewell that he usually omits. “Tell me next time Alvez calls you alone. I'll think something up.”

“Thank you, Jackson,” I say, tightening my hand, not letting him go just yet.

“You

saved met from...some weird stuff back there.”

“Are you going to tell me about that, at least?” Jackson presses, shifting his weight back to me curiously. “Like what did he do? Did he...”

But my answering smile just makes him groan and pull his hand from mine, because it's very clear that I'm not going to tell him a damn thing

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