

The Hidden Princess At All-Boys Alpha Academy

#Chapter 81 - Read The Hidden Princess At All-Boys Alpha Academy Chapter 81

Chapter 81

“Cadet Clark, keeping his damn secrets,” Jackson sighs, slipping his hands into

his pockets and heading again for the stairs.

“Just for now!” I call after him, smiling.

“Damn well better be for now,” Jackson says, turning to look me sternly up and

down for a moment, which just deepens my smile. “Or I’ll...I don’t know, beat you

up or something.”

I grin, laughing at the threat. “Oh, come on, Jacks, at least challenge yourself.

We all know you could do that with your eyes closed. The secrets are worth the

wait, I promise it.”

But he just growls, low in his throat, glaring at me in a way that...

God, but my stomach flips over. Does somersaults, if I’m being honest or more accurately hurls itself off a cliff in freefall. And then my mate smirks at me, laughing as he shakes his head and makes his way down the stairs, ducking his

too—tall head so he doesn’t hit it on the ceiling as he goes. The moment

Jackson

disappears, I slump back against my door, my knees...a little bit weaker than I’d

ever want to admit.

Time passes quickly after this, faster than I’d like to see it go because there’s just

an incredible amount to do and, it seems, not enough hours to do it.

Predictably, the insane workouts that Rafe and Jesse put me through take up the

majority of my time and energy. They really do press me to the edges of my abilities, and while the work is grueling I understand that there’s a great deal of

love behind it. My brother and my cousin, I know, are rooting for me and are only

making me fall into bed every night in a state of complete exhaustion because

they want to set me up well for the Examination.
The rest of my time is spent working quite hard on Chemistry and Marksmanship, which quickly outstrip Magic class as my favorites. I don't make the mistake of going to Alvez alone anymore, always finding a way to casually ask Rafe or Jesse to come with me, which they always oblige. Alvez, I know, sees right through me — and looks at me in a way that promises retribution which I know he will enjoy. But...well, I'll deal with that when I have to. None of us make any more particular progress in that class, either because we haven't yet figured out how to work with our powers or like Jackson because we refuse to reveal — them. Jesse and Rafe, I know, are disappointed that they haven't manifested anything yet, especially when they see Tony's demonstration of being able to breathe under water. We all stood around watching him lay in a bathtub for about half an hour, which really was very impressive. I haven't figured out how to melt anything besides a little glass marble yet but... well. Considering that Magic is a class that doesn't have any threats of expulsion attached to it, it does fall a bit to the wayside, which I think pisses Alvez off. Instead, the majority of my spare energy and attention goes to Chemistry over the next couple of weeks the only class that really challenges me. Marksmanship is kind of a delight — I quickly outstrip my classmates as the Captain's favorite, ensuring that his bet on me at the beginning of term was made in good faith. We've mastered the bow and the crossbow and are now moving on to revolvers, because the Captain wants to make sure we can handle every weapon we come across, not just the fancy one with powerful scopes. But while I am clearly the Captain's pet, Dr. Neumann...god, I don't think he likes any of us. Or, at least the punishing way he administers his grades on our quizzes, exams, and projects suggests that we're all horrible little toads who

are
deeply undeserving of his time. and attention.
I groan as my test comes back about a week before the end of the term,
missing
about twenty points worth of credit. I put my head in my hands as I stare at my
grade- because I worked so hard for this, spent hours studying. What the hell
had gone wrong...
I begin to flick through the pages, looking over Alvez's notes as I glance at the
other students in the class, wondering if their results were as devastatingly
bad
as mine. Considering the horror on everyone's faces, though, I think they
might
have been. None of us have really become friends, honestly, except for
maybe
Hai, who I think is funny and clever.
Instead, Neumann pits us against each other in class, I think on purpose. He
wants his espionage students, I think, to be quite independent, not to lean on
each other for support. In the field, after all, we'll likely be working solo.
It makes sense, even if it does make for lonely days with no one to talk to
about
the rigors of Chemistry track.
"This," Neumann says, tapping on the test still sitting on my desk at the end of
class, after almost everyone has already left the classroom, "has to get better,
Clark."
I look up at him, surprised by the stern note of his voice. "I'm working, Sir," I
say,
my eyes wide and genuine. "Honestly, I am studying."
"You also spend a great deal of time with your family and your friends," he
says,
crossing his arms over his chest and glaring at me.
My jaw drops open a little in surprise. How how did he know that?
He just raises an eyebrow, giving nothing away. "This is serious work, Clark,
not
a game. You have a promising mind — don't squander your opportunities.
Save
fun for your winter
break. Now? Work."
I press my lips together and nod, guilt running through me because he's right.
It's
not that friends and family aren't important — of —
urse they are but I've got a limited time to prove my worth here at this

Academy,
to demonstrate that I belong here, even though I'm a girl and even though I'm
a
spoiled royal.

Neumann sees my renewed determination and nods once before turning
away.

Exhaling, I grab my bag and my test, heading out the door and up to my room.
My brother and my cousin let me walk through the halls alone now, which is a
tiny relief. Wright has stopped bothering me, either because he's scared of my
bodyguards or has his own things to worry about, I don't know which. Either
way,

I've been deemed "safe enough," and I think everyone in our year has figured
out

that I'm off limits for bullying if they don't want to face any Sinclair wrath.

Which, considering the amount of muscle that Rafe and Jesse have put on
this

semester is... not a small threat.

As I burst scowling into the room, though, I find that pretty much everyone is
here. Rafe raises his eyebrows in surprise. "You okay?" he asks.

Ben sends me a wave, concentrating on his essay, and Luca sits up on the
couch, looking curiously at me.

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I . "

Twenty points off on my Chem test,
I snap, tossing the shameful paper on
the coffee table after I press the door

: ") : :

shut behind me. "I can't believe it —

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I'm so mad at myself." The content is
on ! Read the latest
chapter there!

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Jesse clicks his tongue consolingly,
glancing up at me before reaching for

« :

the test. "That sucks, Ari I know you

killed yourself studying for this.

. : "Please bookmark site to read latest content. If you want to read please visit to read fastest content.

Honestly, did he make it too hard?

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"No such thing as too hard," I scowl, flopping down on the couch and crossing my arms, still upset.

Luca turns towards me and stretches out a leg, letting the casual touch of our bodies. his warmth and his condolence and his sorriness to see me upset. carry

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I meet his eyes, grateful, and give him a small smile with a pulse of thanks down the bond. He sends a sweeping sense of faith and affection in response, letting me know that he

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in me. It warms me, body and soul, and I can't keep from smiling at him. believe, it

"Do you want me to have a word with this Neumann guy?" Rafe asks, taking the test from Jesse and studying it closely.

And I groan, knowing that if I asked him? Rafe probably would.

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"Honestly, Ari, you did kill yourself studying for this test," Rafe says, looking at me

seriously, "and I know you know the material up and down. He must have included trick questions

"Rafe," I sigh, leaning back against the arm of the couch, "I don't need the Prince

going to yell at my professors for me, that's not going to make a man like Neumann be any nicer or give me better grades."

"I don't want him to be nicer, I want him to be fair," Rafe corrects.

"Well, at least we're all doing shitty in Chemistry," I sigh, "not just me. So. He is technically being fair."

Rafe shifts uncomfortably in his seat, unhappy to not be able to do something to help me, I know. And my heart warms more to see him like that, to know that I have a big brother who'd tear the world to pieces to make it a cozier place for me.

But still, I want to prove myself here I really do. I don't want to cut corners and get special treatment, and I know Jesse and Rafe get that.

"Well, we'll burn an effigy of him on midwinter," Jesse says, his eyes on his own

textbook, studying some kind of military theory. "That will make us all feel better."

Rafe nods sagely, smirking at Jesse, but he gets up when the dumbwaiter bell rings, heading to the little door to get our dinner.

Luca gives me a little nudge with his toe and I turn to see him give me a little smirk and a wink. I smile, biting my lip and leaning my weight against his leg a little more, pleased to see him.

Because while these past few weeks and months have been absolutely grueling?

Luca has been....absolutely the best part.

Every day we meet at breakfast and I'm absolutely buzzing to see him. We eat with our legs pressed together beneath the table, and I kind of forget that anyone else is around, so lost

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do we get in our conversations. Luca heads off with Jesse and Rafe to do their

warrior stuff all day, and I either head to Chemistry or Marksmanship or study with Ben.

But nights? Nights are where Luca and I really shine.

Dinner in our suite is always the best end to these long and grueling days, with

my little group of friends all cobbling together to study, and eat, and make each

other laugh as much as we can. We're all stressed, I know the program makes us

that way. But with Jesse's wild sense of humor, and Rafe's wry quips, and Ben's

clever observations and Luca's bold willingness to say whatever damn thing comes into his head?

God, I spent most of my evenings stretched out on the couch, holding my stomach because I'm laughing so hard.

Luca, I know, delights in this, and he's figured out precisely the things to say that make me laugh the hardest, pushing those buttons expertly like a scientist whose singular job is to make me laugh so hard my ribs ache. We spend most of our nights stretched out on the couch together, beaming at each other, just...so incredibly pleased to be in each other's company.

Jesse and Ben smile happily at Luca and me, I think pleased to be able to watch

our relationship develop, but Rafe...

Well, perhaps predictably, he's less pleased.

"You need to be careful with him, Ari," Rafe says one night after Luca, Ben, and

Jesse head down to the gym to do a little boxing practice. Rafe, to my surprise,

stays back with me, sitting on the couch with me, studying me carefully.

"What?" I ask, sitting up straight and not bothering to pretend that he's talking about Ben. "What's wrong?"

Rafe just slowly shakes his head at me. "You have a mate, Ariel," he says softly,

like he doesn't want to have to be the one who says it.

I bite my lip, not really knowing how to respond to that. Because, of course, Rafe

thinks that he's talking about Jackson but really, he's talking about Luca too.

"Look," Rafe sighs, glancing at the door where the three boys just left, "dad had

this chat

Chapter 82

[0]

with me a long time ago, and so now I'm going to have it with you. But can you promise to keep this between us? It's personal."

I perk up, curious. I didn't know that Rafe kept anything at all from Jesse — I mean, the three of us are very close, but I'm well aware that the bond between Rafe and Jesse is particularly close—knit.

"Of course," I say instantly, meaning it. If my brother asks me to keep a secret, I'm going to do it.

"There was a point a couple of years ago when dad caught me...with a girl."

I gasp, delighted. "Who was it!?" I ask, leaning forward towards him.

"Not the point of the story," Rafe says, giving me a tiny glare before I grin and

he

moves on. "Anyway, dad wasn't mad at me or anything, but we sat down and he

told me some stuff that really...stuck with me. And I'm going to say it now to you

and you can do what you want with it but I hope you'll listen."

Fascinated, I nod.

"He told me," Rafe sighs, pressing the bridge of his nose between his thumb and

forefinger. "that when Aunt Cora and Uncle Roger brought me to the Goddess to

have me baptized as a baby that...they saw that I have a mate."

"Rafe!" I gasp, leaning further forward and smacking him on the knee, "that is amazing! Oh my god! Do you know who it is!?"

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He shakes his head, dropping his hand from his face and looking

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evenly at me. "Dad didn't want to give me any details because he wants me to live my life as normally as I can.

But he saw how much I liked this girl

» . :

and..." he shrugs, trying to figure out

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his words, "he just wanted me to think about what it might mean to fall

:)

in love when I know that I've got something big coming my way that

2 u 5

would... interrupt that." The content is

on ! Read the latest

chapter there!

I sit back against the couch now, seeing where he's going with this.

"I know you... like Luca," Rafe says softly, and my heart swells to see how much

my brother is working to care for me. "And there's nothing wrong with that. But just...take care of his heart and yours, all right? Jackson is..."

Rafe looks towards the door, hesitating.

I smile a little, seeing him work to try to understand my complicated, taciturn other mate. Jackson has been around a little bit more, but he hasn't exactly ingratiated himself with the group over the past weeks — and honestly, I know that

Luca has been a large part of turning him away.

But Rafe, I can tell, doesn't dislike Jackson. He just doesn't get our connection, not yet.

"Jackson's important," I say quietly, nodding, understanding where Rafe is going

with this. "I get it. But Rafe," I slowly shake my head, silently asking me to trust

me on this too, "Luca's important too, all right?"

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Rafe sighs and, to my surprise, moves closer on the couch, wrapping me in his arms and hugging me tight.

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I know," he murmurs, giving me a kiss on the head in much the same "os ,

way that dad does. "I just don't want either of you to get your hearts broken, okay? Just....be careful, little 5 " 3

sister." The content is on

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"I will," I sigh, allowing myself to relax against my brother's warm side for a moment, letting him worry about me in a way that makes me feel comforted and

protected. I fight the desperate urge to just spill everything now, to reveal all the details.

But...we're just so close to finals and the Examination.. Spilling to him that I've got two mates, and that Luca is one of them? It's going to blow up Rafe's world

and completely freak him out precisely when he needs to concentrate.
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Rafe and I stay close like that for the next hour or so, sitting on the couch and studying separately even though I feel closer to him in this moment than I ever have before. We both jump a little, the stillness of our moment interrupted, when Jesse and Luca come back into the room covered in sweat, Ben looking relaxed as he follows behind. The content is on ! Read the latest chapter there!

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“Didn’t join in on the boxing, Ben?” Rafe asks, grinning at him.

“Nah, didn’t feel like getting my lights punched out by the national champ,” Ben

quips, gesturing towards his face, “I got too much beauty going on here to risk that.” I grin at Ben as he sinks into Jesse’s chair. Jesse gives us a wave as he heads immediately to the bathroom for a quick shower.

“How’d the workout go?” Rafe asks Luca, smiling. “You ready? Fight’s coming up.”

“Oh, I’m ready,” Luca says, pumping a couple of practice punches into the air. My

eyebrows raise, because honestly he moves so fast and with such power that I

can barely see his hands move when he does that. “Going to knock Atalaxia into the last century, first round.”

“I wish you would,” Rafe sighs. “Their technology, apparently, is getting advanced.”

I half listen as Rafe and Luca chat casually about the war for a few minutes before Jesse comes out of the bathroom in his towel and Luca goes in, taking advantage of our over- luxurious bathroom as he always does whenever he has

a chance. The other cadet’s bathrooms are, apparently, a far cry from what

we've
got in here.

When Luca comes out a few minutes later, dressed in a pair of Jesse's spare pajamas, he immediately flops onto the couch next to me, his eyes fluttering shut.

"You beat?" I ask quietly.

"If you're asking if your cousin beat me," Luca murmurs, smirking a little, "the answer is no. He is slow, like fighting a snail.

"False!" Jesse calls, yawning, from his bed. "I am swift, like a bunny. I just went
easy on you."

I let my hand fall to the side of Luca's leg where Rafe can't obviously see it, letting my fingers idly stroke the fabric of my mate's pajamas. "I'm sure you beat

him soundly, as he deserves," I reply with a happy sigh. "But, as you realize, I'm
asking if you're tired."

"Always," Luca replies, yawning and glancing towards his books with a groan.

"Just let me... close my eyes here for a minute or two."

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"Luca," I groan, slapping the side of his leg a little. "You have to study too!" Of
all

of us, studies by far the least, which always worries me. He's not as worried about the

Examination as Ben and I are, but he's certainly the most at risk of failing out according to his regular coursework.

At least, that's what I thought until I got my Chem test back tonight. I scowl, looking over at

ibis

"I'll study tomorrow," Luca murmurs, his voice light and unbothered. "You can be

the smart one between us, Ari, I don't mind."

"It will be sad without you here next semester, Luca," I sigh, giving his leg another

slap and

eyes turning back to my own books. He just smirks and shakes his head, keeping

his shut.

When bedtime rolls around a little bit later, I do my best to get up without disturbing him, heading for my nook with chemical equations rushing around in

my mind. When Rafe likewise gets up and moves to shake Luca's shoulder, I throw a hand out towards him, shaking my head.

Rafe frowns at me, silently asking why, and I step close, whispering. "He's tired,

Rafe, what's the harm? He'll sleep as well on the couch as in his bed."

Rafe just shrugs, conceding the point and not really caring. Ben waves his goodbyes to us, heading out the door, as I spread my green throw over Luca, tucking it in around him so that he stays cozy warm. Then I wave my goodnights

to Rafe and Jesse over my shoulder as, exhausted, I climb into bed.

I put out my lamp, noting the rest of the room going dark beyond my curtain, pulled shut tonight for a little extra privacy. Then I lay my head down, taking off

my cap and unwinding my tight braid, running my fingers along my scalp and wondering if I'll even see Luca in the dream state tonight when he's so tired. And though I very much want him to rest, I desperately hope that I do see him there.

friends...

Arcowe while we spend our evenings laughing companionably with him there. The dream state is where we really light up.

I meet Luca in the dream state pretty much every night now, and, as promised,

he spends our time there teaching me a great deal about myself, and my body.

We haven't gone very

far yet, sexually it's really just a lot of kissing and petting, with Luca respecting the fact that I'm dictating the pace. But in the past week or so, especially, things

have gotten... heated.

And I admit that I'm starting to get...curious. About more.

But even if I were curious, I'm not sure I'm bold enough to ask for it yet — or, really, prepared to deal with the consequences of that curiosity. There's absolutely no part of me that wants to get pregnant right now, obviously, and while Daphne has helped me with a variety of feminine products it does feel like

a step beyond to ask her to start ferrying contraceptives to me.

And I mean...I don't think I can get pregnant in the dream state but...

I mean, can I?!

I sigh, thinking it through, deciding that I really, really need to have a chat with my

mom about this about all of this —

But I gasp, suddenly, when I feel the edge of the mattress sink on my left. I instantly spin towards the movement, my eyes wide in the darkness, but a hand

covers my mouth to stifle any cry I might make and that scent-

Well, I'd know it in my sleep, wouldn't I?

I nod, quickly, to let Luca know that I understand and he drops his hand away as

he crawls onto my bed. I simultaneously sit up and make room for him, anxiously

glancing beyond him towards my curtain, which suddenly feels very flimsy, and

the room beyond.

Luca! I scold, putting the word directly into his mind. What do you think you're doing!?

They're asleep, he replies, his mouth silent as he wraps his arms around me and

pulls me close, slipping under my covers and pressing a silent kiss to my temple.

They're snoring away, I made sure of it before I moved.

I gasp then, just a tiny sound, as I realize that he planned this, only pretending to

be so sleepy earlier. Then I smack him on the chest. Luca! You're taking unnecessary risks!

Ariel, Luca replies, taking my face in his hands and pressing a soft, desperate kiss to my

mouth. Please. I'm dying here. The dream state is amazing but god, please, please just let me hold you in my real arms.

I relent, then, instantly half for the sad, desperate tone of his words, half because

I, too, have been craving this. And so I curl up with my mate, tucking my head beneath his chin. and wrapping my arms around him, even letting my legs tangle

up with his beneath the

Covers.

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Instantly, I feel him relax, feel his breathing soften, sense his heartbeat slowing with the rightness of it all. I

dip my head, pressing a kiss to his chest as I let my hand slide down the long length of his torso, dipping

beneath the blankets and then
untucking his shirt to run my fingers
idly along the skin of his back. He
twitches a little, ticklish, but I can feel
him smile and then lean into my
touch. The content is on

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chapter there!

Wouldn't think the national boxing champion was so ticklish, I murmur into his
mind.

I'm a delightful mix of contradictions, Luca replies, his mental voice sleepy and
happy. He rubs his cheek across the length of my hair, feeling the softness of
it

against his face, a sweet, wolfish gesture that goes right to my heart.

I sigh, nuzzling against him. I'm going to have to burn these pajamas and
these

sheets, I mutter to him, you're getting your stinky scent all over me. I'm
kidding,

though no part

of me is actually mad to have my mate sneaking into my bed in the middle of
the
night.

Could just take those pajamas off now, Luca casually remarks, making my
head

fly up to glare at him. Let me get my scent all over your body instead..

I pull back a little, narrowing my eyes. We are not doing STUFF in this bed
tonight, sir, I let him know, my words stern. Not with my brother and my cousin
separated from us only with a bit of velvet fabric.

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I know, Luca replies, sighing, even as
his hand does drift down my body,

A ; :

lower than it's ever gone in real life. A
shiver goes through me as his broad
palm moves over my ass and slides.
down my thigh, pulling my leg up
over him so that my knee hitches up
over his hip. He presses a soft, silent

kiss to my lips. The content is on
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Like I said, he continues,
mind—to—mind, I just want to hold
5 , > : .
you, Ariel. I've been sick with wanting
. . .

you in my arms. It doesn't feel right,
having you by my side all the time
and not being able to grab you, and
kiss you, and throw you over my
shoulder and carry you away The
content is on ! Read
the latest chapter there!
to bed-
Cnapket 0

I laugh now, working to stifle the sound, shaking my head at him in the dark
before pressing a kiss to his mouth. Go to sleep now, boy, I say, pressing my
eyes shut and letting my head fall to the pillow. We'll talk there.
My gorgeous mate nods, his own eyes drifting shut, and then — nose—to—
nose
asleep.
we fall

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I'm shocked, however, when I wake up a few hours later to find that we did
not,
indeed, go to the dream state. I spend a moment wondering what happened
but
then...well, I guess we didn't need to, did we? Not curled up as we were all
night
long, tangled up in each other, sharing our dreams in a completely different
way.

So I just smile at my still-sleeping mate, admiring the sweep of his long
eyelashes in the dark-blue light of early dawn. After a moment, though, I
attune

my hearing, wanting to know if Rafe and Jesse are up if we've been caught...
But no, I can hear them both still breathing the slow, heavy breaths that suggest

they've slept soundly through the night. And so I risk it, turning over in my mate's

arms and wrapping his arm around me, pressing my back to his front and giving

him a mental nudge down the bond, waking him up.

Instantly, Luca's arms tighten, pulling me closer against him. He takes a moment

to come back to consciousness and I can almost feel him blinking awake before

he dips his head, pressing a kiss to the back of my neck.

Morning, gorgeous, he murmurs, his voice somehow still thick with sleep even though it's only sounding in my mind. I like waking up like this.

Me too, I say back, happiness thrumming through me.

I especially like this part, he says, his mental voice lazy and warm as his hand drifts down to my hip and pulls my ass back hard against him. My eyes fly wide

as I instantly go fully awake when I feel the long length of him hard against my ass.

I mean, I've gotten used to it in the dream state but...this is definitely the first time that I've felt it in person. And honestly, after all of that dream practice...

I have to admit, I don't hate it. I arch my back a little, pressing myself tighter against him, letting him feel all of me against all of him.

Luca groans quietly, half in my mind and half in real life and I bite my lip for the

joy of it, the sheer pleasure of turning my mate on, making him want me. His hips

buck slightly as he buries his face against my neck, his hand slipping from my hip

upwards along my skin,

Emergency calls onlyMO

Chapter 84

over my waist and up my torso until he cups my breast in his palm.

*.096%

15:36

The moan that nearly escapes my lips — he's ready for that too. Luca slips his other hand around my head, covering my mouth so no one can hear me as he grinds himself against me, softly squeezing my breast in his hand, letting his thumb stroke idly over the sensitive skin of my nipple in a way that has my

eyes

fluttering shut, my head arching back on my neck.

I can't wait to mark you, Luca whispers into my mind, pressing his lips along my

neck right where, I think, he intends to press his teeth into my skin giving me his

mark and letting everyone know, incontrovertibly, that I'm his and he's mine. I nod, agreeing, wanting it very badly in this moment, losing myself to the very literal reality of him along every of me —

But then Luca sighs, and pulls away, and I turn towards him in surprise.

But he just shakes his head at me, glancing towards the curtain, and I sigh, nodding.

inch

Never thought, gorgeous, he says, shaking his head and stroking the soft skin of

my cheek. with the backside of his hand, that I'd be the mature one putting an end to this sort of thing.

Maybe you just....make me throw caution to the wind a little, Luca, I reply, smirking at him and turning over to get one last look at my mate in the secret morning light of our little nook.

He sighs, deeply regretting it, I think, and then leans forward to press a long kiss

to my mouth. Before I know it, though, he's gone through the curtain and back to

the couch.

I take a long moment to collect myself, knowing I need a shower, knowing that I've got to get these pajamas tucked away in my hamper before Rafe gets a whiff

of them...

But then, something completely cruel comes to my mind. And I immediately decide to go

with it.

Two or three minutes later I peek out of my curtain, my eyes instantly darting to

Rafe's bed. and then Jesse's. When I'm fully convinced that they're still asleep, I

slip out and slowly walk towards the bathroom.

Chapter 84

My mate, pretending to be asleep on the couch but secretly watching my every

move, lets out a very real, not-too—quiet moan as I walk past him only in a set

of

girls' panties that Daphne set up to me, my naked breasts cupped in the hands

that I've got crossed over my chest.

I almost burst out laughing at his reaction as Luca covers his face with his hands,

turning to face the ceiling and clenching his jaw.

You are killing me. Ariel! He shouts, the words echoing loud in my head as I laugh and pull open the bathroom door, slipping inside. This is cruel!

Borderline

mental and emotional abuse — god damn it

“Luca?” I hear Jesse's concerned, sleepy voice ask. “You still here? You okay, man?”

I'm still grinning, wicked, as I pull the door shut behind me.

“Sorry, Jesse,” Luca sighs. “Just a nightmare. An absolute god. damn. nightmare.”

And then I sigh happily, a little too pleased with myself as I skip over to the shower and turn on the water, nice and hot.

Classes go well that day, with me passing marksmanship with flying colors and

receiving a great deal of gratifying praise from the Captain, especially after Neumann was so disappointed in me yesterday. But not even that can keep my

concentration on schoolwork, because I am so incredibly excited about tonight.

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I charge up the steps to our room

after class, already mentally

composing the note that I plan to

send down in the dumbwaiter asking

for extra provisions for this evening,

because it is Friday and finally finally!

— Daphne is coming up for a visit.

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She's been very overwhelmed with

: ,

her work lately, and while I've been going down for a few hours a couple times a month to sit and study while she sews, this is the first night when she has some time free. And Daphne)

— she's been so overwhelmed lately, :) 5

and I think she's quite lonely. Also, I) 4

that she'll get along with our group beautifully and that we can The content is on ! Read the latest chapter there! cheer her up.

Overall, I just really, really want to show her a good time, and I'm going to do everything in 3/4

my power to make it happen.

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All the boys have promised to be on their best behavior and, as I hurry into the room, I start to move around, cleaning up and getting ready. A little guilt pulses through me as I set schoolwork out of my mind for a moment, though, remembering what Neumann said about prioritizing school while I have the small window to do so. The content is on

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But...well, friendship is important too, right?

I bite my lip, knowing what he'd say about my evening plans, but there's no time

to think on it when the door opens behind me.

I spin, instructions already on my lips for whoever is there, but I falter for a second when I see that it's...

It's Jackson.

"Sorry," he says, glancing around the empty room awkwardly. "Am I...early?"

"No," I say, bursting into a smile. "No, Jacks. You're right on time."

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Chapter 85

"Nah," he says, grimacing and starting to back out of the door, "I'm totally carly-

"Jacks!" I laugh, darting over to him and grabbing his arm, tugging him into the room. "Everyone will be here in like, thirty seconds. Just come and sit down or,

better

or, better yet, make yourself useful —"

I drag him over to the coffee table and shove a pen and paper into his hand.

"What am I supposed to do?" he mutters, staring at it.

"Just write that we'd like dinner sent up for two more," I say, waving a hand at him

as I continue to straighten up, setting pillows right and folding blankets.

Jackson

sighs dramatically but does as I say, heading over to the dumbwaiter with the note even as I marvel that he's here at all.

I mean I shouldn't be that surprised that Jacksons' here I invite him to come over

all the time. He's gotten closer with Rafe and Jesse over the past two weeks during magic class, and I know that they like him. Plus, like Daphne, I suspect that he's lonely and could use a night

of fun.

I know that it will be awkward with Luca at first but I mean, Luca's going to have

to get used to it too, eventually, isn't he? I mean, I have to imagine that at some

point...Luca and Jackson are going to like, know about each other. And I figure....the more used to each other they get now, the easier that will be?

Right?

I sigh, shaking my head, not wanting to think about that now as I put my hands

on my hips, looking around the room.

"What's next?" Jackson asks, walking slowly over to me, his hands in his pockets, just the touch of a smile gracing his lips.

I start to say something but then forget my words, captivated as I am by the

sight

of him. his broad shoulders, his strongly featured face, that long, straight nose.

Instead of speaking. I just smile.

Chapter 85

Jackson laughs at me, shaking his head. "Why do you do that?"

"Do what?" I cock my head to the side.

"You just stare at me sometimes," he murmurs, stepping close.

"Well have you seen you?" I say, my eyes going wide as I take a long moment to

look at him from head to toe. "You're kind of a surprising specimen."

"I'm not," he sighs, looking away from me and grinning nonetheless. "I'm just big, but you're used to that, in the family you came from."

"You're more than just big, Jacks," I say with a little sigh, drawing his eyes back

to me. It smile at him again. "I'm really glad you came. You're going to like Daphne."

"Daphne?" he asks, the smile falling from his face.

"My friend!" I say, grinning anew and moving to the fire. "Didn't I tell you she was

coming? I figured that's why you came you're probably sick of our faces, but you'll get to meet

someone new

"Agirl!?" he asks, and I look up in surprise to see him looking towards the door with real anxiety on his face..

"Yesss," I say slowly, watching him curiously. "Is that a...problem?"

Jackson spins his head back to me, his brow furrowed, but before he can say anything else the door opens again, Jesse and Ben coming through.

"Hey!" Ben calls, grinning between us. Jesse beams, crossing the room quickly

and shaking Jackson's hand, giving him a warm welcome and working very hard

to make him feel at home.

"Wow," Ben says, kneeling down by the fire with me and starting to hand me wood, "I can't believe you finally got him here. To a social occasion. How long do

you think before he bolts?"

"About five minutes," I say, giving Ben a sad little look. "I just told him a girl is coming and he flipped."

Chapter 85

Ben bursts out laughing at this, shaking his head at me. “Oh, if he only knew that

he’s been in the presence of one all this time.” I grin too, stacking the logs on the fire and speaking softly to Ben as I light a match.

“Take him under your wing a bit, okay, Ben? I want Jackson to have fun, and you’re nicer than the rest.”

“Aye aye, Princess Captain,” Ben says happily, giving me a little salute before moving to Jackson’s side to say a real hello.

I sigh with contentment as the fire catches on the little bit of kindling I’ve shoved

beneath the logs, starting to burn warm and cozy. I sit back on my heels, watching the fire lick up the cool wood, pleased again to have a fireplace in this

castle, which is getting colder and colder as the nights pass.

“What the hell is he doing here?”

I jump almost out of my skin, so lost was I in contemplating the fire, before I look

up to see Luca staring down at me, his hands tucked deep in his pockets.

I sigh, exasperated, the moment I recover from my surprise. “Luca,” I growl, grabbing his wrist and tugging him down next to me. “You’d better be nice to Jackson tonight he’s my guest —”

“Yes, Ariel,” Luca growls back, using my name as a way to suggest to me that he’s being very serious, though he pitches his voice low enough that no one will

hear. “And why have you, in particular, invited him?”

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I shake my head at him, not wanting to have this fight again. Because of course Luca and I have talked about Jackson at length in the dream state and Luca just absolutely does not get my insistence on continuing our friendship when it bothers him so much. The content is on

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We need to tell him, my wolf says in my mind, giving me a determined little nip.

We’re not being fair — it’s getting close to blatantly lying to him, at this point. I nod, agreeing with her, determined to do it over winter break. But god, it’s going

to break his heart, and maybe mine too. Luca — he's become so important to me over these past weeks and months. I just...don't want to ruin what we have. Selfish, my wolf quips, nipping at me again. But I roll my eyes at her, turning my attention back to my angry mate. Because even if it is selfish, I can't just blurt it out right now.

"Please, Luca," I say, reaching out and putting a soft hand on his forearm. "Jackson's really nice, and he's lonely. Can you please find it in your heart to just

be nice to a poor guy who doesn't have any friends?"

Luca sighs but then glances up to where Jackson is standing at the center of the

room, towering over everyone but Rafe, chatting amiably with all of our friends.

"He doesn't look so lonely now, does he?" Luca says, a little bitter.

And my heart swells because....well, no he doesn't. Jackson — in this moment, at

least, he looks...warm. Accepted. Like he's having fun.

Of course, his face goes pale when a little knock comes at the door.

"Daphne!" I shout, jumping to my feet, knowing there's only one person it could

be.

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Her face bursts into a grin as she sees me and I hurry to her side. I wrap her in a warm hug, tugging her : " »

into the room. "I love your dress!" I whisper, my eyes roving over the pretty purple fabric with blue flowers : PTE sion

printed on it. "Did you make it?" The content is on ! Read the latest chapter there!

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Of course I did," she says, flipping her hair back over her shoulder and pretending to be smug about it even

though she glances in towards the room, her hands tight around the : ,Please bookmark site to read lastest content. If you want to read please visit to read fastest content.

bottle of wine that she's brought. She

p “ leans in closer to me. “Do I really look ” :

okay?” The content is on

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chapter there!

“You look gorg,” I say, grinning at her, meaning it. Daphne — she really is very

pretty, isn't she? “Come in, please!”

The Hidden Princess At All-Boys Alpha Academy #Chapter 86 - Read The Hidden Princess At All-Boys Alpha Academy Chapter 86

Chapter 86

presses a

1 usher Daphne into the room then, where she’s warmly greeted first by Rafe, who brotherly kiss to her cheek — making her blush and then by Jesse, who kisses her hand like a Duchess, making her laugh.

“Hi,” Luca says, stepping forward with his hand out, his dimples on full display as

he greets. my friend. “I'm Luca Gra-”

“Oh, no need,” Daphne interrupts, smiling at him as she presses his hand. “I know who you all are —

Luca Grant, Ben Ternicki,” she peers around Rafe to where Jackson is hiding, “Jackson McClintock.”

“Impressive,” Rafe says, raising his eyebrows at her. “How do you know all that?”

“Well,” she says, grinning at my brother, “your dad pays me a lot of money to keep all of this information ready in my mind,” she says, tapping her temple with

her forefinger and making me grin. “Honestly, I could probably rattle off all of your

measurements, too.”

“Oh really,” Jesse says, a wicked grin on his lips as he leans forward. “And who

amongst us has the largest...inseam.”

I groan, tilting my head back, wrapping my arm around Daphne’s honestly, that’s

precisely the kind of joke I told him not to make —

“Oh, Jesse,” Daphne says, tilting her head and pouting her lips a little in mock pity as she steps forward, patting him consolingly on the shoulder. “Do you really

want me to answer that?”

The entire room bursts into laughter, Jesse laughing especially hard with delight

at my clever friend. I tug Daphne away to the couch, glancing at Jackson to see

him smiling as well, though I can tell that he’s still uncomfortable.

“Did you bring us wine?” Rafe asks, taking the bottle from Daphne like a gracious

host and raising his eyebrow at it. “You trying to get us kicked out, ma’am?”

“Oh, I figured,” she says, laughing just a little, “perhaps for later? For a little toast,

just to say thanks for having me over?” She shrugs, anxious. “I mean, one bottle

split between...” she

takes a second to count, “seven? Honestly, no one’s getting drunk off of that.”

Rafe concedes the point and thanks her graciously for the gift, placing it on the

side table of his own little chair as the dumbwaiter’s bell rings. He and Jesse go

off to get the food while Luca settles in on Daphne’s other side, chatting with her

while I take a second to glance over at Ben and Jackson, who settle onto the floor on the other side of the coffee table.

Ben. I’m pleased to see, is being very warm to Jackson, as I knew he would be. A

little thrill of happiness passes through me because Ben he’s really wonderful, isn’t he?

We’re so lucky to have him here with us.

Hope he makes it through the Examination, my wolf says suddenly, pacing anxiously in soul.

I go still at the thought.

my

The Examination — it’s scheduled for next week, and even though we all know it’s

coming inevitably along, we're all anxious about it. There have been no hints

—

absolutely none- about what it will entail.

But Ben — even beyond the Examination — is he even doing well in his studies?

He's been working out alongside Jesse and Rafe just like me but...has it been enough?

Is there more I could have done?

“Right, Ari?” Luca asks, and I turn, suddenly distracted.

“Hmm?” I say, glancing once more towards Ben, still worried, but my Princess instincts take over and I turn my mind towards my guest, wanting her to feel at home.

“I was telling Daphne she should come to the City for midwinter,” Luca says, smiling at me, and I burst into a grin as I look between them.

“You should!” I say instantly. “I would love it — I can introduce you to so many people, and we can go shopping —”

“Excuse me,” Luca says, pretending to be offended as he presses his hand to his

chest, “I invited Daphne to come see me at midwinter, at my fight. Not to hang out with you.”

Emergency calls only

Chapter 86

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“Oh, boring fights aside,” I say, flapping a hand at him, “she’s my friend, Luca.”

“The fight's not going to be boring,” a voice says, and I turn in surprise to see Jackson sitting with his arms looped around his knees, clearly listening in on our

conversation with Ben at his side. The room falls quiet even as Rafe and Jesse

come back, laying plates on the table as we all give Jackson our full attention.

“No?” I ask, raising an eyebrow, perhaps the most shocked of us all Luca, of course.

except for maybe

“No way.” Jackson says, shaking his head and meeting Luca's eyes. “I's going to

be the show of the century there hasn't been a fight against the Atalaxians in decades. Not only do we get to kick their ass, but we get to see what fighting

techniques they're developing over there.”

I turn to Luca then, a little swell of pleasure running through me to see his lips starting to curl into a smile on one side. “Do you like boxing, Jackson?”

“Of course,” Jackson says, his eyebrows going up like it's obvious.

“Why didn't you say anything before?” Luca's curiosity has a hint of suspicion to

it, though I wonder if only I can hear it since we've gotten so close recently.

“Did you give me much of a chance?” Jackson asks, his voice quiet, a little curl in

the corner of his own lip.

I burst into a grin, turning back to Luca, who just laughs. “Well, then you'll have to

come too,” he says, nodding quickly before turning back to Daphne and chatting

with her more. I grin at him over her shoulder, grateful that he's come to what feels like a bit of a truce with Jacks.

When I turn to my other mate, I find his eyes already on me.

“Can you come, you know,” I say softly to Jackson, though I know his Alpha hearing picks up on it despite the fuss in the rest of the room.

“We'll see,” he replies, quiet. Jackson nods once, and then turns his attention back to Ben as Jesse hands him a plate of food.

Dinner and the rest of the evening passes beautifully, just as I hoped it would. I'm

replete with happiness as the hours pass, as everyone begins to relax into casual

conversation and a great deal of laughter. Daphne, I note, blushes every time Rafe talks to her at first. But as the evening goes by, she calms, letting her personality show more and more.

In a way

Jesse, to my surprise, brings it out of her the most. He teases her at all the right

times, never

that makes her feel self-conscious but always in a way that makes her laugh.

Then, Jesse very casually opens about a thousand conversational doors for Daphne to tease him right back. He takes each and every one of her ribs with a

great deal of genuine pleasure, beaming at her, and I can't help it as I smile between them.

But all Jesse he wants everyone to think him the heartless playboy, doesn't he?

But

in the end, he really wants tonight is for Daphne to feel warm and happy. I

sigh,
considering that my cousin really is a good guy. I wonder, passively, why he
tries
to hide it.

As the evening progresses, Daphne finds a moment to lean hard against my
side, taking a deep breath as Rafe gets up and crosses to the fireplace,
joining in
the boxing chat with the rest of the boys.

"I'm having so much fun," she breathes, glancing at me before looking back at
all

of them. "Also, well done here, Ari!"

"Hmm?" I ask, pleased by the compliment but having no real idea what she's
talking about.

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I . " 5

Your collection," she says, gesturing
towards all the boys by the fire.

« : :

Seriously, some cuties here a lot of
girls would pay a great deal of money
to be a fly on this wall — The content
is on ! Read the latest
chapter there!

"And here you are, on my couch," I say, laughing and wrapping an arm around
her shoulder, giving her a squeeze.

"Very glad to be on this couch," she says, and then she wrinkles her nose at
me,

lowering her voice. "How are things going with Luca?"

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I bite my lip, grinning at her, which is
apparently all she needs. Daphne
squeals lightly with pleasure,
grabbing my hand. Ben laughs when
he hears her, though the other boys

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don't respond. He grins, shaking his
head at me, but darts his eyes
towards Jackson. I nod, letting him

know I understand. The content is on

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chapter there!

“Ben says

we're being too girly,” I whisper, dropping Daphne’s hand and giving her a little

Emergency calls only

Chapter 86

push on the shoulder so that she scoots away a bit.

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“Oh,” she says, her face falling a little. But then she glances back towards Ben.

“So, what's his deal, anyway?”

“Ben?” I ask, glancing towards him with a grin. “Why, are you interested?”

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No,” she says, coking her head to the

. . . . “)

side and considering him. “He's not my type, but... well, Luca, I

, .

understand why he hasn't hit on me.

And Jackson seems very shy

” :

but..Ben...” The content is on

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chapter there!

I tilt my own head to the side, considering it and realizing that she’s right.

And I consider, perhaps for the first time, that Ben has never hit on me either.

I

mean, I get that he’s not going to like every girl that walks into the room but...

What, really, is Ben's deal?

Chapter 87

I study Ben for a long moment, really paying attention to him for the first time in a

long time. At my side, I can feel Daphne do the same. And as I watch I notice...

the

Well, I notice the way that he looks at Rafe. The way that he tilts his head back to

look up at my brother, the way he laughs at Rafe's joke — which is not very funny,

to be honest way his eyes don't leave him even as Luca begins to talk.

And my spine stiffens just a little bit as I realize...

But I glance at Daphne, wondering if she sees what I see, but not wanting to bring it up because, I mean, Ben's never brought it up. And who am I to speculate on something that he might very well want to keep to himself?

But as I glance Daphne, I realize that she's actually not looking at Ben at all. Instead, her eyes are fixed on Jackson, of all people, as he stands with his hands

in his pockets, listening intently but not adding to the conversation.

My little wolf jumps to her feet inside me, her teeth bared. But I brush a hand over her fur, even though I, too, am jealous. Because Daphne — she doesn't know about my claim on Jackson, does she?

And even if she did who the hell am I to say anything at all about her liking him?

After all, I'm basically in a relationship with Luca, who is standing two feet from the man I'm getting all jealous over.

Who the hell am I to scold anyone for looking with interest at someone else?

"So," I say, leaning closer to bump my shoulder against Daphne's. "You like "em

big, hmm?"

She starts a little and glances at me, but then she bursts into laughter as she realizes that she's been caught staring at Jackson. "Yeah, Ari," she says, stretching her arms over her head as she grimaces a little in embarrassment.

"I

guess between Rafe Sinclair and that other one over there, you've figured out my

type. I like a big boy."

I grin. "I mean, they're all big," I say, shrugging.

Chapter 87

"I know, we're just spoiled," she sighs, propping her chin in her hand and gazing

over at all of the eye candy. Even Ben, the smallest of the group, is well-muscled

and over six feet tall. Rafe and Jackson...they're just something else.

Jesse, maybe overhearing us, suddenly separates himself from the group and comes to flop down on Daphne's other side. "Did I hear you two talking about

me?" he asks, too casual, trying to keep the smirk from his face. "Something about dreamboats? Celebrity crushes? Undying love?"

"Sorry, Jess," I say, laughing at him and standing up, wanting to give him a minute alone with Daphne to shoot his shot. "As much as I love you, cousins are not my type."

"I knew you were wise, Ari," he says, grinning at me as I step away. Then, he turns his attention back to Daphne. "So," he says, smiling gently at her. "Let me

down easy, Daph. Which one of them has stolen you away from me?"

She grins, shaking her head at him, but she doesn't say a word.

Jesse groans, tilting his head back. "Oh no," he murmurs, devastation in every line of his face.

"What!?" Daphne laughs.

"You're not saying anyone," Jesse says, his eyes shut, shaking his head.

"Which means...it's Rafe."

Daphne just laughs again, harder now, and Jesse opens his eyes, peeking at her.

"It's always Rafe. Do you know how many loves of my life I've lost to that man? If

he wasn't my cousin, I'd toss him straight off a cliff."

Daphne grins. "Sorry to break it to you, your Grace, but don't bother killing your

cousin thinking that would fix anything. I'm not even sure you'd be my second choice."

Jesse gapes at her and then glances over at the group of men. He gasps then,

turning back, "McClintock!?"

Daphne grimaces and Jesse groans again. "Cruel woman," he mutters, dragging a hand

down his face.

"You'll always be a dear friend, Jesse Sinclair, Daphne sighs, still laughing, enjoying the hell out of herself.

"The words of death." Jesse sighs, still smiling at her. "Friendzoned. But I accept

it. I'm at good friend, if you'll let me be it." He offers his hand to her, ready to shake on it. "I'll even put in a good word for you with my good-looking cousin."

Daphne smirks, looking at Jesse askance with some suspicion in her eyes.

“This isn't just a ploy to trick me into falling in love with you, is it?” she asks. “Oldest trick in the book, you know — pretending to be a girl's friend, get her laughing, console her when she cries, and then BOOM! Before she knows it, she wakes up in your bed.”

“Well, as amazing as that sounds,” Jesse says, tilting his head to the side and giving her a significant look that makes Daphne laugh again. “No, I mean it,” he

says, still offering his hand. “If you want me to be your friend, I'll be your friend.

No tricks, no strings attached.”

“Hmm,” Daphne says, narrowing her eyes a little as she slips her hand into his,

accepting his offer. “Honestly, Jesse Sinclair, I think I was hoping you'd try for me

a little harder than that.”

“Daphne,” he says, her name a sigh on his lips as he shakes his head and raises

her hand to his mouth, “if you ever really want me to stop being your friend and

try Instead?...just say the word.” And then he presses a kiss to her knuckles — a

real one this time, not a joke like it was before.

And Daphne? She finds herself smiling at Jesse now, a little intrigued despite herself.

I walk away as Jesse and Daphne talk, letting them have a minute to themselves,

trusting Jesse to be the gentleman that I know he can be. I'm not very surprised,

though, when Jackson loosens himself from the group at the fire and steps over

towards me.

I also don't miss the fact that Luca watches him go and meets my eyes, clenching his jaw and looking not very pleased. But I smile at him and he nods before turning back to my brother and Ben, continuing whatever it is they were chatting about.

“So, are you surviving?” I ask, smiling up at Jackson and giving him my full attention for the first time since others started arriving. “It's not so bad, right?”

“It's not,” Jackson says, hesitating as he runs a hand through his hair and

looks

around. "Although, honestly, it's a little exhausting you guys do this every night?"

"Yes, Jacks," I say, grinning at him, unable to take my eyes away. "It's called having friends."

He turns back to me and scrunches his face a little bit, like he doesn't like the idea very much, which makes me burst out laughing.

"And how are you handling the girl," I say, turning a little to tilt my head towards

Daphne, who is talking pretty intently with Jesse on the couch.

Jackson scowls a little. "How'd you know I was nervous about that?"

"Oh, just all the blood rushing from your face, and the look like a deer ready to bolt from the road when it faces down a sixteen-wheeler," I say, giving a casual

shrug. Jackson smirks, glancing at me and shaking his head.

"I just don't know a lot of girls," he murmurs, his voice so low I can barely hear it.

"Really?" I ask, frowning at him. "Did you go to like, an all-boys school or something? Don't

have any girls in your family?

you

Jackson turns to me for a second, studying my face like I've said something a little ridiculous. And then he just laughs a little. "No, Ari."

"No to what?" I ask, confused suddenly. "No cousins? No...boys school?"

"No to all of it," he says with a sigh. "I never went to school. I don't have cousins."

"You never went to school!?" I ask, kind of appalled. I stare at him, my mouth open. I'm shocked first that he was homeschooled, which is so rare these days,

and second that I didn't know

any of this after months of getting closer to him. "Are you like...an only child?"

"Ari," Jackson says, turning his head at me like he's surprised, too, that I don't know. "I don't have parents."

My mouth just hangs open as I stare at him, frozen, because...

Because what the hell!?

I had no idea! I mean, he never mentioned anyone, but he never mentions anything —

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1 step closer to my mate, a thousand questions flooding my mind, but

before I can ask Daphne stands up
and clears her throat, immediately
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drawing all of the boys' attention to Please bookmark site to read latest
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her. I'm the last to look, distracted as
I am by this bombshell that Jackson
just dropped. The content is on

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chapter there!

“Actually.” Daphne says, suddenly awkward as she looks around. “Shall we
have
that...toast?”

Rafe, ever considerate, immediately moves to her side and begins to open the
bottle of wine as Jesse grabs some paper cups from the bathroom,
apologizing

for the lack of glassware even though he knows none of us care.

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I sigh, glancing up at Jackson with a
frown to let him know that this is not
the end of this conversation. He
ignores me, though, watching the
action and accepting his little glass
of wine as Rafe and Jesse come
around. The content is on

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chapter there!

I accept mine too, Luca moving to my other side and toasting my little paper
cup
with his.

“Thank you so much for having me tonight,” Daphne says, smiling around at
us

and raising her own little paper cup in the air after Rafe has filled it with the
last of

the bottle. “To...new friendships, yes?”

She smiles around at us and I smile back, but I hesitate when I see that...

That Daphne, she's more nervous than she usually is, especially after a night
of

laughing with us. Something's not quite right, is it?

I'm frowning at her as she catches my eye, but then she lifts her cup again,

saluting me in particular, and I don't want to be rude so I raise my own cup in her

direction and then drink it down.

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I make a little face, though, because

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the wine — it's more saccharine than

)

I'm used to. I glance up at Jackson, who is likewise frowning at his empty

cup, and then over at Luca, who

glances around before his eyes land

on me. The content is on

! Read the latest

chapter there!

“That's...” he says, studying his glass. “Is something...wrong with it?”

“I'm sorry,” Daphne whispers, and all of our eyes snap to her, my own going to the still-full cup of wine in her hand. “I'm so, so sorry, everyone,” she says.

Chapter 87

And as soon as she says it, I feel the exhaustion overtake me. I give a little gasp

as Jackson crumples to the ground at my side, and then Luca and Rafe and Jesse and Ben all fall

I catch Daphne's eye, guilt and devastation on her face as I, too, collapse to the

ground.

The Hidden Princess At All-Boys Alpha Academy

#Chapter 88 - Read The Hidden Princess At All-Boys

Alpha Academy Chapter 88

Chapter 88

I gasp when my eyes fly open, hauling breath into my lungs as if I've just broken

out of a pool of water.

I immediately it up. panting, staring around at my unfamiliar surroundings. And my

thought, absurdly, is that I'm in the dream state-

Because this — this is not the dorm room that I was in with my friends ten seconds ago.

first

No, as I look around I realize that I'm in the woods now. But it takes me a few moments and blinks to realize that these are not the dream woods in which I meet Luca — but real woods. And it's dusk, which is absurd, because it was just

night time, but why...

My instincts come back to me in bits and pieces and I curl my legs beneath me,

ready to get to my feet as I look warily around, trying to figure out what the hell is

going on here. My body feels sluggish and tired, but I would swear that moments

ago I was drinking a toast with Daphne

Daphne, who I suddenly remember betrayed us. But why!?

I dart my eyes around, trying to figure out my surroundings, how I got here, why

I'm all alone, and I almost jump when I turn to see a wooden box behind me.

Ari Clark, it says, my name written onto a piece of paper nailed to the top. I just

stare at it for a long moment, putting together the clues.

I'm here, alone, in the woods, with a long box with my fake name on it.

And the only ones who use my fake name are...the Academy...

Suddenly, as I move my hands to the box and flip open the lid, I figure it out.

The Examination. This is the damn Examination — they lied to us, telling us it was

next week so that we wouldn't suspect or prepare. And Daphne didn't betray us —

she was just doing her damn job, drugging us with the wine so that they could get

us here to be...to be examined, I guess.

I glance around in the box, which doesn't hold much, though I admit that the contents are fascinating. For a moment I ignore the long crossbow and the set of

six vials, opting instead for the little folded piece of paper, which surely has the

thing I want most in the world right now: information.

My hands shaking a little, I sink back onto the ground with my legs underneath me, my eyes flying over the note as I unfold it.

Cadet Clark, it begins.

Your Examination begins the moment you wake and read this note. In order to continue at the Academy in the spring term, you are required to be amongst the

top 60% of cadets in your year who pass the Examination.

The Examination ends when you reach the Final Destination, noted on the included map.

I take my eyes away from the letter just for a moment, glancing into the box to see that there is indeed a map inside along with a small compass.

All cadets have been given the same map and compass, though yours has been

marked with your unique starting point. The other supplies in the bin have been

given to you by the professors in your specific discipline in order to aid you on

your mission to reach the Final Destination quickly and ahead of your fellow cadets. Please note that only the first 60% of cadets to reach the finish line will

be invited back in the Spring term; even if you do reach the Final Destination, if

you cross the finish line too late, you will not be invited back.

your

The supplies included have been designed by your professors to aid you to slow

any of fellow candidates on their own way to the Destination, should that be part

of your tactics. However, be aware that these supplies are not designed to Kill.

While this is a war simulation at a military academy, your fellow candidates are

your countrymen. Any blatant acts designed specifically to kill will be met with strict discipline.

My eyes go wide at this warning because....well, I mean, they've given me a cross bow, haven't they? What do they want me to do with it, make friends?

I return my attention back to the page, finishing the letter in a quick glance.

You have thirty-six hours to reach the Final Destination. Any candidate who takes longer than that will not pass. We wish you the best of luck.

I glance through the note one more time, my mind coming fully back to me now

adrenaline starts to pump through my veins. Once I'm sure that I've committed it

all to memory. I crumple it and toss it into the corner of the box, sorting quickly through my supplies as I glance around the forest, eager to get on the move.

1

Because it's not only that I'm on a short timeline here, but I'm also newly

aware

that the vast majority of my fellow cadets are now my enemies, seeking to slow

me down. And considering who I am, and how small I am?

I'm easy pickings, all alone like this. No, I've got to move, and fast.

My hands shake a little as I strap the crossbow to my back, examining the quiver

full of arrows lightening fast before I attach their little belt to my hip. All their points, I noted, are suitably dulled — not designed to rip through flesh, just, as the

note suggested, to do enough damage to slow someone down.

Unless you get someone in the eye, my wolf says, her hackles raised, all of her

instincts on high alert as she turns around, examining the forest as I pick up the

set of vials at the bottom of the box.

I smirk a little at her comment, because — quite frankly — I'm good enough with a

crossbow now that I could sink an arrow into someone's eye. Not that I'd do that,

I don't think, but....

I mean, would I?

If I were pushed to it, could I kill someone, even a countryman, as the note says?

My wolf hesitates alongside me, but I brush the thought away, forcing myself to

concentrate on the supplies after another quick glance around the quiet forest.

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I immediately recognize the

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chemicals as those from Neumann's collection and, considering my

expertise, I know precisely what to do with them. The collection, as the note

suggests, includes enough

ingredients for me to make a

moderately toxic poison that will

definitely stop a cadet in their tracks

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but won't kill them. The kit also cleverly contains a series of decoy chemicals, designed to trick an

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espionage—track cadet who hasn't properly studied our textbook. The content is on ! Read the latest chapter there! But me? I studied.

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Lightening fast, I quickly mix the correct toxin and then hurl the remaining vials into the forest, wanting them out of sight. Then I grab the canteen of water from the back of the box, quickly chugging as much as I can from it before dumping the toxin in it, making sure that I get in every last drop. Then this vial, too, I throw into the woods. The content is on ! Read the latest chapter there!

1

Finally, I grab my map and an apple from the bottom of the box, leaving the rest

of the food behind, knowing that on my small frame I won't be able to carry it. Thirty-six hours I can go that long without food and water, and I need to be fast.

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So I chew the apple as I go, consulting my compass and then moving north in the direction that the map indicates the Final Destination lays. As I pass out of my little starting grove, I casually drop my water canteen behind, almost like I did it by mistake as I ran. The content is on ! Read the latest chapter there!

I'm not going to get a chance, after all, to get close enough to any of my fellow

cadets to press the toxin directly to their skin or their faces. Getting close enough to do that would mean that I got knocked out before I even had a chance. So my best chance? A scavenger cadet who is loading up on lost supplies. I clench my teeth as I move away from the canteen, glancing at my map and the landscape around me, trying to figure out my best route. All the while wondering desperately how the hell 'm going to get through this in time. And where the hell my family and friends are. As I plunge into the woods, I hope desperately that they, too, are safe and on the move.

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#Chapter 89 - Read The Hidden Princess At All-Boys Alpha Academy Chapter 89

Chapter 89

My feet carry me quickly through the woods as I survey the map, swiftly making sense of it and matching physical landmarks with the points on the page. Inwardly, I think gratefully of my dad and my uncle Roger, who brought me along on those early camping trips and showed me how to do this sort of work, not leaving me out. I mean, Rafe and Jesse certainly got more training in this than me as we got older — they could find their way home in the dark, just by looking at the stars. But me? I'm confident in my map reading skills, and I bless them now. When I identify a ridge running along my right and realize that I simply have to follow this until I reach a man-made bridge — which seems, honestly, a little too easy I fold the map and shove it deep into my back pocket. Then I set my sights ahead and hurry my steps, keeping my ears open for any other movement in the forest around me. My wolf, inside me, has her hackles raised and her instincts trained on

everything

around us. Shift into me, she commands, her teeth bared even at the sound of the wind rustling through the branches. I'm faster, stronger. I can bite and tear anyone who comes near...

For a long moment I consider it, but then I shake my head and carry on in my human form. Too much risk, unfortunately, of being identified as female if I'm spotted as my rose-gold wolf. Not to mention my natural scent will be on full display, meaning that pretty much everyone would be well aware that there's a girl running around the Examination.

Plus, my instincts will be that of an animal. It's not that you lose your human thoughts as a wolf, just that they become...secondary.

And I really, really need to keep my wits about me.

My wolf growls, displeased with my choice, and mentally I bury my fingers thick

into her hair. I will if I have to, I promise her, the feel of her fur against my hand

bringing us both comfort and strength.

I continue forward, my mind set on our trek.

As I move into a clearer space along the ridge my eyes move, inevitably, to the

jagged mountain that rises before me, slightly north-east from my current position. I swear,

lightly, as my eyes take it in and I slip the map out of my back pocket, consulting

it to confirm what I already know.

Yup — there, right at the top. That's our Final Destination.

I curse the stupid map, which makes the trek look ridiculously simplistic and short. Just cross the river! Then the plane! Up the hill, and to the end!

But the reality of it?

The mountain is sheer cliff-face at some points, rocky shale just begging to crack

and bring you crashing down to your death. I swallow heavily, missing my canteen suddenly, but simultaneously grateful that Rafe and Jesse made me do

so much upper-body work. I'm going to need it, at some points, to do some quite

literal bouldering. God, am I going to have to like...dangle out over open air?

Surely there's an easier path, perhaps around the side of the mountain where

I

can't currently see-

My head whips suddenly to the left and I freeze, hearing voices in the distance.

Voices, plural. Shit.

Unlike me, some cadets have found their friends or at least some temporary allies and are moving in a pack.

I curse under my breath, quickly scanning the ridgeline and darting directly for a

set of bushes. I don't have a chance, I know, caught alone like this. I'm such easy

pickings, and knocking any candidate out is a win at this point.

I tuck myself behind the bushes and slightly under them, pulling the crossbow down over my back and silently loading an arrow even as I keep my eyes trained

ahead, towards the voices. Passively, I thank the captain for making me load a

crossbow so many times I could do it in my sleep.

It takes longer than I thought it would for the cadets to appear, and while this is

half a blessing — giving my scent time to disperse in the air — it certainly makes

me scowl, because every minute gone is a minute wasted. Speed, I know, is the

only thing I've got on my side here but if I have to duck under a bush every five

minutes?

Being fast on my feet isn't going to help me, is it?

"Come on," a cadet I don't recognize says, pointing left towards the ridge I was

following. "This way — we follow to the bridge.

I nod slightly, my own plan confirmed in his.

"A fucking bridge?" another says, shaking his head, even as he turns in that direction. "It has to be a trap if everyone's heading for the bridge..."

"Well then we'll have to be the first ones to get there, won't we?" says a third, his

voice a little wicked. The first two turn to stare at him, and then they all laugh together — a dark sound.

I scowl again as I figure out the import of their words, their laughter.

If they get there first, they can be the ones to set the trap.

A seemingly endless string of curses forms itself in my mind because...what the

hell am I going to do? If cadets spring a trap at the bridge, using it to harm or slow others...

How the hell am I going to get across? I certainly don't have the brawn to muscle through...

I'm itching to reach into my back pocket for my map, to reconsider my route, my

plan, but I force myself to stay still and not do anything to draw attention to myself as the three cadets prepare to move forward. I'm working out my plan about how closely to follow when suddenly a fourth and a fifth cadet emerge from

the woods.

I go even stiller, if possible. Because while I didn't know the first three...these two?

I know these two..

"Peace," Alan Wright says, raising his hands to shoulder height to show he doesn't mean any harm, even though he's got a sturdy staff held in his left hand.

"We've got no trouble with if you don't have any with us."

you

I scowl a little, displeased to see that warrior—track students like Wright have been given weapons. Like they need them, when their bodies themselves are already weapons on their own.

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My eyes shift to Perry Gibson at his side, who I assume is ambassador

, :

track. He doesn't have anything on him given to him by his professors — at least not that I can see. But what

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would an ambassador student even be given in a situation like this?

I put the question out of my mind, focusing instead on the response from the first

three cadets.

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The other three cadets look over

Wright and Perry anxiously, backing away but agreeing to a truce. None of them, I see, are truly interested in attacking each other if it means they could be hurt so early in the Examination. The content is on ! Read the latest chapter there!

I exhale in relief as I see the first three cadets turn and move forward, clearly eager to get to the bridge first to either cross it or set their trap. Or both.

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Perry takes the map from his back pocket and he and Alan consult it together, noting alternate tracks to the Final Destination as I had considered doing, though their murmurs indicate that they, too, see the bridge as the fastest route. The content is on ! Read the latest chapter there!

Perry shoves the map back into his pocket before taking a step forward, his jaw

set, his feet eager to continue when suddenly Wright reaches out and grabs him

by the arm.

I go still even stiller than before when I see Wright raise his nose, scenting the air.

My wolf snarls within me, her hackles raising, because by the smirk on his lips I

know that I've been caught.

My finger tenses on the trigger of my crossbow and I shift it slightly, taking aim.

"What?" Perry snaps, turning to glare at Wright. "Let go of me we need to get a move on!"

"Wait just a second, Perry." Wright murmurs, slowly turning to look directly at my

bush. "I think I smell...a rat."

I make an impulsive decision, hoping to my grandmother the Goddess that it saves my life.

Baring my teeth with a vicious snarl, I take aim with my crossbow and pull the trigger.

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My bolt flies as Wright charges directly for me, his eyes focusing on my exact location either by dint of my scent or my snarl. He dodges, though, at the last second, when he sees the crossbow bolt flying directly for his chest

His quick movement works and the bolt glances off his arm, ripping through the

fabric of his uniform and spraying blood into the air. Wright roars, turning to survey the damage even as he stumbles towards me. Perry's face is the picture

of shock and confusion, but I don't bother to give him more than a glance as I spin, leaping to my feet even as I load another quarrel.

As fast as I am, it's too slow. Just as I get the bolt into place and spin on my feet

to shoot. again, Wright's full weight hits me like a freight train, knocking me to the

ground. I shout in pain and fear as he lands on top of me, but the sound leaves

me in a rush along with the rest of my breath..

"Fucking bastard," Wright snarls, and even as I gasp, trying to get more breath into my lungs, I can smell the scent of his blood on the air.

Even in my pain and panic, something is satisfied at that.

But Wright grabs my face, whipping it towards him, my cheeks pressed between

his fingers. as he pins me down with his weight, snarling down into my face.

"What, little Shrimp," he snaps, using my nickname like the dirty word he probably imagines it to be, "got no recourse without your prince, or your duke, or your boxer to save you!?"

I snarl, but Wright shakes my head viciously, addling my thoughts. He releases

me for a second, but I groan when I feel him plants his hand on the side of my face and press, hard, so that the whole left side of my head is pressed into the dirt.

that

"This is for Graham," Wright whispers, violent and cruel as he begins to press down. I gasp in pain and fear as I realize that he's going to crush my whole head

under his hand he could probably do it, if he puts his whole weight into the act

—
“Wright!” Perry shouts from behind. “Come on, there's no time for this!”
“He's the reason my brother's life is nothing now!” Wright shouts, his voice
frantic
in the

Chapter 90

killing rage in which he's caught.

“Don't fucking kill him!” Perry shrieks, and I feel a disturbance in Wright's
weight,
even as [thrash uselessly in my panic, trying to get him off of me, to save my
life.

“You read the note
heard what it said you'll be kicked out, even if you make it!”

you

“He”

But Wright doesn't get to finish his words because there's a sudden earth—
shattering roar behind him.

Perry shrieks first a shrill, terrified noise that ends suddenly in a cry of pain.
And then Wright goes still, turning, and I see his eyes go wide as the roar
sounds

again and he's whipped off of me, a huge paw connecting with his chest and
tossing him through the air like a ragdoll.

My eyes go wide as I stare at the huge wolf standing above me, one leg over
my
laid—out body-

Because, I mean, I've seen my dad's wolf form before, so I am used to big
wolves. So, when I say this one is huge....

God, he could give a polar bear a run for his
money.

But there's no time to think on it as the wolf standing above me snarls at the
cadets in front of him, his teeth fully bared in warning and malice. For an
instant —

just barely — I'm terrified that I'm next that this is just some rogue cadet who
is

taking out everyone in his path so that he can get to the Destination first-

But then, I catch his scent. And my fear drops from me in a second.

Because it's... it's Jackson, standing across me, just begging Wright and his
little

crony to challenge him to a fight.

I lit myself to my elbows, looking to my left where Perry is holding his hands

up

and Wright is moaning, rubbing his back where it clearly hit a tree.

“We’ll

go, all right!?” Perry shouts, glaring at Jackson and edging towards the ridge line.

“Call it even!”

In an instant, Jackson shifts, his breath heaving in him as he shrinks in on himself and takes his human form again, one leg still spread on either side of my

body. “Even!?” he snaps, clearly livid. “You want to call this fucking even!?”

You

were going to kill him!”

“Well, we didn’t,” Wright snarls, getting to his feet. “Come on, Perry, let’s go.”

As I watch, Wright turns, heading fast towards the edge of the ridge, through the

brush and away from the clearer path. Jackson moves to follow, to chase to do

what, I don’t know, maybe kill him for wanting to kill me?

cheek But quickly I grab his ankle. “Just let them go, Jacks,” I murmur, lifting a hand to my and rubbing it, wondering if Wright has done some real damage there. God, he tried to crush my skull, and it aches-

“What are you even doing here?” Jackson snaps, and I look up at him, confused.

And then I scowl, getting pissed myself.

“Oh, you know, just laying out, enjoying the sun,” I quip, angry, dropping my hand

from his ankle and leaning back on my elbows. When Jackson narrows his eyes

at me, I do the same. “I’m doing the same thing you are, Jacks! Trying to get to

the top of the fucking mountain!”

“Well obviously, Clark,” he snaps, continuing to glare even as he steps away from

me and offers a hand to help me up. “What are you doing here!?” he asks, gesturing at the grove.

around us.

I stare at him as he pulls me to my feet, confused. “I’m not doing anything here,” I

murmur, looking around. “I was just hiding because I heard voices I was on my

way to the bridge. Why? Is there...is there something special about...here?”

Jackson sighs, turning away from me and confusing me more when he lifts his nose to the air, moving around, sniffing eagerly like he's on the hunt. "Of course

you're fucking here," he mutters, shaking his head, angry.

I just stare at him, wondering if he's snapped or something, mentally. "What?" "Of course!" he shouts, whirling on me, glaring harder now. "Of course you're here, where her scent leads! Like you always fucking are!"

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I groan, realizing what happened that somehow he caught a whiff of my

. .)

girl scent, his mate's scent, and

:)

came running. That he wasn't here to help me, Ari Clark, he was here to help his mate. The content is on

! Read the latest

chapter there!

Who, of course, I realize is also me.

God, this is just going to cause trouble.

"She's not fucking here, Jackson," I sigh, rolling my eyes, wondering how fast I can get through the speech this time. "Come on, we have to go

H

I start towards the ridge again, eager to get to the bridge, well aware that I've already wasted way too much time, when suddenly a huge hand grabs my shirt,

pulling me close.

"She is here, Clark!" Jackson shouts, shaking me and shouting down into my face. "I can smell her I can smell her fear!"

"Her fear?" I ask, my voice softer now in its confusion.

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Yes!" he snaps, dropping me and turning in a frantic circle, scanning

"

the trees. "I can smell her — I know

I))

she's scared she's here, and she's

) . . r

scared, and I'm not leaving until I find

” :

her! I-" The content is on

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I groan, putting my face in my hands, shaking my head, realizing that this is

a horrible trap. for Jackson to have

F Sy 5

fallen into. Because it's his mate he'll

spend all thirty—six hours of this

Examination in these woods looking

for her, looking for me, if he seriously

: f 5

thinks she's here and in trouble. The

content is on ! Read

the latest chapter there!

Which, of course, I was.

But Jackson doesn't realize that he already did his job and saved his mate's life!

He's still all worked up, thinking he has to find her!

Honestly, what the hell am I supposed to do with this!?

“Jackson!” I shout, whipping my hands down from my face and taking three short

steps towards him, grabbing his arm and pulling hard so that he half turns

towards me. “She's not here!”

Chapter 90

“She is here!” his eyes still frantically scan the treeline, ignoring me.

Making a snap decision I jump, whipping my hand forward and smacking him

on

the side of the head.

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