

Chapter Seventy-One: A Nightmare Awakens

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Phera POV:

I jolted awake, my body screaming in pain. Every nerve felt like it was on fire, my heart racing from the remnants of the nightmare that had gripped me. The room was dimly lit, the soft glow of a lamp casting long shadows on the walls. I tried to move, but my muscles protested with every slight shift.

Blinking, I looked around and saw familiar faces, all haggard and tired. My mates, Damon, Axel, and Zane, were there, their eyes filled with a mixture of relief and worry. My family was there too—my sister Newmara and her mate Adam, my brother Nate, and my best friends, Betty and Reese. Their presence should have comforted me, but all I felt was a deep, gnawing fear.

"Sweetheart, you're awake," Damon said softly, his voice thick with emotion as he leaned closer, his hand gently brushing a strand of hair away from my face.

I tried to speak, but my throat was dry and raw.

"W-what happened? Where am I?" I croaked, my voice barely above a whisper.

Axel's hand found mine, squeezing gently.

"You're home, love. You're safe now," he assured me, his eyes glistening with unshed tears.

As their words sunk in, memories came rushing back—being captured, the relentless torture, the steel rod above

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my heart, and the face of my tormentor. My heartbeat spiked as I tried to tell them about Rex, the bastard who had claimed to be their father's half-brother.

"Rex... he..." I began, but the pain and fear made my voice falter.

"Shh, it's okay," Zane said, his tone soothing as he stroked my arm. "We know. We know everything."

I looked at him, confused.

"How? How do you know?"

Damon exchanged a glance with his brothers before turning back to me.

"Nate and Adam told us. Rex revealed himself during the attack on the pack. We've been putting the pieces together ever since."

Newmara stepped closer, her eyes filled with guilt and concern.

"Phera, we are so sorry for everything. We should have protected you better."

My throat tightened with emotion.

"It's not your fault," I whispered, trying to reassure her even as tears welled up in my eyes. "None of you could have known."

Nate knelt by my side, his expression fierce.

"We're going to get him, Phera. We'll make sure he pays for what he did to you."

I nodded, feeling a surge of determination despite my pain.

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"He... he has a plan. He wants to take over the Red Moon. He said he'd use the attack to come in and pretend to save the pack."

Betty's eyes widened.

"That son of a bitch," she muttered, her hands clenched into fists. "We'll be ready for him."

Reese nodded, her jaw set in a hard line.

"We won't let him get away with this."

My mates exchanged a look, their expressions dark and resolved.

"We need to come up with a plan," Damon said. "We can't let Rex get any closer to achieving his goal."

Axel nodded, his grip on my hand tightening.

"For now, you need to rest and heal, sweetheart. We'll take care of everything."

"But I want to help," I protested weakly. "I need to do something."

"You will," Zane promised, leaning in to press a gentle kiss to my forehead. "But right now, your health comes first. We can't lose you again."

The room fell silent, the weight of the situation pressing down on us all. I closed my eyes, trying to take comfort in their presence, knowing that we had a long and difficult road ahead. My body ached, my heart heavy with the knowledge of what Rex had done and what he still planned to do. But I wasn't alone. I had my mates, my family, and my friends by my side.

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I lay back on the pillows, my body aching with every breath. As I struggled to sit up, Damon and Axel quickly helped me, their touches gentle yet firm. Zane held my hand, his eyes never leaving mine. I could see the exhaustion etched into their faces, the worry lines deepening around their eyes.

Taking a deep breath, I began to recount the horrors I had endured.

"It was... it was Josh," I said, my voice trembling. "He was involved in the kidnapping. He drugged me with wolfsbane and... and tortured me."

Gasps filled the room, my friends and family exchanging shocked glances.

"Josh? That bastard," Nate growled, his fists clenching at his sides.

"He wasn't alone," I continued, my voice gaining strength. "Rex was there too. He... he said he's your father's half-brother. He wants to take over the Red Moon. And... and Alpha Erickson from Blue Moon is working with him."

Axel's eyes widened in disbelief.

"Erickson? Are you sure, love?"

I nodded, tears welling up in my eyes.

"He said they planned everything together. The attacks, the financial sabotage, all of it. Rex let the Alpha King's trackers find me on purpose. It was all part of his plan."

Damon's jaw tightened, his eyes flashing with anger.

"That motherfucker," he muttered under his breath.

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"We'll make them pay for this."

Zane squeezed my hand, his touch grounding me.

"What else did he say, sweetheart?"

"He... he said he would come in and pretend to save the pack. He wanted to look like a hero," I said, my voice trembling with emotion. "He plans to attack Red Moon and take it over, using the chaos to his advantage. And he talked about... horrible things. Prostitution, child slavery... he wants to destroy everything."

Newmara stepped forward, her face pale.

"We can't let that happen. We need to be ready."

"We will be," Damon said, his voice steely. "We'll make sure of it."

Nate nodded, his expression fierce.

"While you were gone, Rex showed up during a rogue attack. He fought alongside the pack, acting like he was there to help. But we all know now that it was just a cover."

My heart clenched with fear and anger.

"He needs to be stopped. We can't let him win."

"We won't," Axel said, his grip on my hand tightening. "We'll protect you, love. We'll protect our pack."

Damon's eyes softened as he looked at me.

"We've already started making plans. We're fortifying our defences, and the Alpha King has sent reinforcements. We won't let Rex and his allies get the upper hand."

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I nodded, feeling a surge of determination despite the pain.

"I want to help. I need to be part of this fight."

"You will be, sunflower," Zane said, using the endearment that always made my heart flutter. "But first, you need to rest and heal. We'll need your strength for what's coming."

The room fell silent, the weight of our situation pressing down on all of us. I looked around at the faces of my loved ones, drawing strength from their presence. We had a long and difficult road ahead, but I knew we could face it together.

"We'll get through this," I said softly, my voice filled with determination. "We'll fight back, and we'll win."

As I settled back against the pillows, I felt a renewed sense of hope. My mates, my family, and my friends were all by my side. We would face this threat head-on, and we would come out stronger on the other side. For now, I needed to focus on healing and preparing for the battle to come.

"How did you find me?" I asked, looking up at my mates. "How did you know where to look?"

Axel exchanged a glance with Damon and Zane before answering. "We sought the Alpha King's help," he said. "His trackers were the ones who located you."

"But why did he help us?" I asked, my brow furrowing in confusion.

"That's a conversation for another time, love," Damon said gently. "Right now, you need to rest."

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I nodded, though the unanswered question lingered in my mind.

"Rex said he made it so you could find me," I added. "It was all part of his plan to lure you in."

Zane's eyes darkened with anger.

"We'll deal with him, sweetheart. He won't get away with this."

The room fell silent again, the weight of the situation pressing down on all of us. I looked around at the faces of my loved ones, drawing strength from their presence. We had a long and difficult road ahead, but I knew we could face it together.

As exhaustion pulled me back into a restless sleep, I clung to that thought, hoping it would be enough to see us through the coming storm.

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