

In Love With My Best Friend Chapter 52

Astrea

I knew he was heartbroken. We weren't expecting to see anything like that. We knew he'd be crushed when he found out about Danisha's betrayal, but this was a twist none of us had foreseen.

The warriors began removing the bodies and separating the foes from the rest of the group. They were transported away to be buried, while the bodies of our fallen colleagues and innocent residents were transferred to the mortuary and kept there until their funeral procession could take place.

"Nanna," Leo murmured as he dashed to the infirmary where she had been rushed to.

When we noticed his mother perched on one of the seats in front of the emergency room, staring blankly into space, we came to a halt. Beta Nolan sat gravely beside her, his arm around her shoulders, while my parents sat silently on adjacent seats.

It didn't sit well with me. They were far too quiet. The Queen and her husband ran towards us, gasping for air.

"Hey, how's she doing?" exclaimed the Queen.

Leo's grandparents hurried inside the infirmary before anyone could respond. Ava burst into tears as soon as her parents walked in.

She sobbed, "Dad."

Despite the fact that he didn't say anything, the sorrow on his face was obvious.

My gut sank as my heart dropped to my stomach.

"Ash, are you thinking what I'm thinking?" I asked her.

"Maybe we shouldn't think right now," she replied through our link.

"What's going on?" Leo was concerned. Through our connection, I could sense his unease. Ava rose up and faced him after brushing her tears away.

“Leo... your Nanna...” she paused.

Silence fell for a few moments, and I couldn't help but fear the worst. In my chest, my heart thudded madly. I tried to refute it, but it was futile. If only denial could reverse the effects of the war.

“She is gone, isn't she?” Leo's voice was strained.

As she nodded, tears streamed down her cheeks.

“That bolt went right through her heart. We couldn't have done anything to save her,” Ava spoke with much difficulty.

I felt as if the ground underneath me trembled. She is gone.

I stared at them, speechless. Leo and his family grieved the death of the great sorceress. My parents offered their support. All I could do was blame myself for everything.

Perhaps none of this would have occurred if I hadn't run away that night. Perhaps Arnold and Wilma would still be living today. We might have been able to save all of the innocent bystanders who died as a result of the battle. It's possible that this was my fault.

I wished I could go back in time and change everything. Yet that was impossible.

“Can we get a look at her?” In a trembling voice, Leo inquired.

I followed him into a room with trepidation. I was apprehensive about approaching her. She was lying on the bed, covered with a white sheet. Leo slowly revealed her face. She appeared to be at ease. Even in death, she kept a smile on her face.

Leo mumbled, “Nanna, I... I promise you, I will make you proud,” He pledged in hushed tones.

My lips were pursed. I took a step closer after letting out a long sigh.

“Please accept my apologies,” I let out. “Perhaps if I had listened to my father that night, Calvin wouldn't have been able to do this,” I theorized.

For a brief moment, Leo looked at me and said nothing. My mate had lost a family member, and I felt responsible in some way.

He ultimately responded, “No. Even if you hadn’t run off that night, he would have found a way to do exactly what he wanted. It wasn’t because of your negligence that Danisha was impersonated. That evil witch would have done anything she could, to get the same result. It wasn’t your fault in the least, ” he emphasised firmly.

He grabbed me in his arms after exhaling a trembling breath. My cheeks were flushed with tears that I had tried to keep from falling out of my eyes.

“Please don’t say it again. Nanna had lived her life and had contributed a lot for the society. She has done her part. You know, I don’t believe anyone will die before their given time. It was now her time. We don’t have the power to stop it,” he muttered into my hair.

“Leo,” I sniffled as I tightly clutched him. “I’m so sorry.”

He hummed and placed a kiss on my head.

“Shhh. I’ll miss her, but I know she is in a better place.”

I sighed as I looked at her still body. After wiping the tears from my eyes, I walked away from Leo’s embrace and stood by the bed. I struggled to talk despite my clenched throat.

“Thank you for everything,” I said, my voice quivering as I struggled to get the words out. Leo joined his parents and grandparents after we left the room.

Despite Leo’s assurances, I couldn’t help but be disappointed. I wished that things had gone differently.

“Astrea,” my mother said as she sat next to me and pressed her hand against my palm.

“Everything will be fine,” she tried to reassure me.

We stood there silently watching the beta family mourn their loss. It was hard to see them like that, and Leo’s dead expression stung my heart.

“I think a little fresh air might help me,” I told my mother, sucking in a shaky breath. “I’d like to go for a run,” I said.

“Is it safe now?” she asked, looking at her Majesty, who nodded.

“It should be. The conflict has come to an end. Calvin’s body was discovered among the dead, and the rogues were either apprehended or murdered. So, it should be stable,” she evaluated.

I left after promising them that I would return soon. I shifted into my wolf as soon as I arrived in the woods, disregarding the fact that the shift would rip my clothes, and trotted through the trees. It was great to be outside in the cold night air. Ash sprinted through the dense foliage of the jungle. My mind wasn’t on my surroundings. My mental turmoil had put an unrest to my heart. Soon enough we reached the river bank that ran through the enchanted woodland.

The river shimmered under the starry sky. The night was sufficiently illuminated by the moon. A gentle breeze ruffled Ash’s velvety fur. We didn’t exchange words and Ash shifted back.

The night was peaceful, which was exactly what I wanted. I needed some alone time to reflect on my past blunders. I didn’t have to put up a brave face when I was alone. In the palace I felt compelled to mask my emotions which was exhausting.

Oh, how I wished I could alter destiny. Still, I’d never be able to change the past. I had no choice but to learn from my mistakes and grow as a person.

Arnold, my friend who died saving my life, sprang to mind. I thought about all of the citizens and soldiers who died as a result of the battle. Finally, the Wizard Kingdom’s renowned sorceress and my mate’s Nanna made me drop onto my knees. As I stared blankly at the glittering water, a single tear slid down my cheek.

As I kept thinking, my thoughts went to the black witch who had impersonated Danisha, my eyes furrowed. Leo has a valid point. They would have found a way to wreck havoc even if they didn’t get me.

My thoughts were disturbed by the sound of a dried branch snapping. A variety of scents assaulted my nose. I snapped my head towards the thick bushes.

Burning rubber and vanilla.

My brow furrowed in concentration. What an unusual pairing. Despite this, I leapt to my feet and prepared to fight. The smell of burning rubber can only imply one thing: a rogue. Perhaps some of them were hidden in the trees.

The fact that I was naked was the least of my concerns. If I had to, I could switch to Ash, who would always be ready to finish out those useless rogues.

“Show yourself!” I snarled.

Another crackling noise alerted me. Someone was unmistakably nearby.

I drew in a deep breath and narrowed my gaze on the source of the aroma. There was perhaps just one of them. I couldn't detect several scents. I scowled, wishing I'd brought my weapons.

“Come out, coward!” I became enraged and growled. “I know you're hidden in the bushes!”

The shrubs' leaves fluttered, and a female emerged from her hiding place, much to my astonishment. I was stunned for a little stint, but I quickly recovered.

Natasha had come back! And she had the audacity to confront me after murdering my friend.

“So we meet again,” she muttered as she walked up to me.

“So you're the one. You smell strange now?”

She sighed and rolled her eyes.

“So, what do you think you're going to get? My ties to a more civilised world were fraying. It's all because of you!” she retorted “I wouldn't have had to flee the kingdom if you hadn't shown up!”

My fists were balled up.

“It wasn't my fault that Arnold was slain. You're a murderer,” I made a hissing sound.

She responded with a scowl.

“What the f**k do you want?” I sneered.

“Not a whole lot. Just to complete what I couldn’t do the first time around,” she scoffed. “Let’s fight. The prize goes to the winner,” she c****d her head and smirked.

A chuckle escaped her lips when I peered at her with a critical gaze.

“You know, Leo, the hottie. That’s the prize,” she explained.

It was now my turn to laugh.

“He’s already mine,” I snickered, brushing my hair back from my shoulders to display the mark he had left on my shoulder. As her pupils dilated, the unpleasant grin faded from her face. She tensed her muscles, as she growled in fury.

“He marked you!” The sound of her fierce howl echoed across the woods.

I fought her with haste, channelling the strength of my wolf. We had sparred together in the past during training, but this bout was different. She was battling to kill.

I felt her claws cutting into my flesh as she grasped my sides, but I refused to give in. I punched her in the stomach as hard as I could. When she landed on her back, I punched her in the face numerous times.

I wanted to avenge Arnold’s death because she had killed him. Before I could finish her off, a pair of hands yanked me away from her, and a group of warriors snatched Natasha.

“So you’ve returned!”

The Queen was the one who talked. I looked around and saw that everyone I cared about was standing around us. I was too inundated in the fight to realise that they had arrived.

My parents, Leo’s parents, and our friends, as well as the royal couple, were present. My father held my hands, keeping me from approaching Natasha, while my mother hastily wrapped a blanket around me.

Leo was standing right alongside me, and I was able to relax once I realised everything was under control. Natasha was taken into custody.

“Tonight, we have caught a wanted felon. Colonel Arnold’s murder has been charged against you, Natasha. Throughout your trial, you will be detained in custody,” the Queen informed, shooting daggers at her.

“Her trial will begin tomorrow at 12 p.m. We’ll also inform Arnold’s parents and the Silver Moon pack’s alpha,” the Queen announced.

Thrashing against the warriors who restrained her, “It was a mistake! I wasn’t going to kill him!” Natasha shrieked.

The Queen’s severe expression remained unflappable.

“Take her away,” she ordered, and the warriors immediately complied.

Leo embraced me in his arms and inhaled my aroma by burying his face in the crook of my neck. I smiled. I loved being in his arms. He was my home and now, I could finally breathe in peace. Yes, I’ve made mistakes, but I was determined to learn from them. Closing my eyes, I drew him closer, only to realise that his heart was thudding hysterically.

My mouth drew apart. Was he scared?

“Are you worried?” I asked.

He muttered, “I was worried when I felt your distress through our bond.”

“Did you feel it?” I explored.

He confirmed his remark with a nod of his head.

“I notified everyone and followed your smell here, and I’m delighted I arrived with them.”

His statement made me laugh.

“But I’m not in danger. I am capable of self-defense,” I said, casting a glance at my parents.

Shaking their heads, they pursed their lips.

“Yes, but Astrea, please. There will be no more solo forays into the woods. You should bring someone with you. It could be a beta or a gamma. Alternatively, your mate,” Dad said as he kissed my forehead.

I nodded my head humbly, smiling sheepishly.

“Yes, dad,” I assured him.

Natasha’s trial began at noon the next day and Arnold’s family arrived at the hearing just in time. We discovered that Natasha had joined Calvin and his rogue army after additional interrogation. After stunning and killing the scouts manning the borders that night, she crossed the border with them.

As a result, she was found guilty of betrayal and murder. It didn’t take much time for her to be sentenced to life death. It felt good. She was too twisted to be pardoned.

We went to the Palace after Natasha was taken away to continue the funeral procession of Leo’s Nanna. We all wanted to be a part of her funeral. Since the wizard king had requested that her body be carried to the Wizard Kingdom, she was being transported there and we followed. She was, after all, a member of our family who had done a lot for our realm.

The royal family as well as the Dark Howl pack made their way to the Wizard Kingdom. I noticed how much Leo’s Nanna was respected there. Among the magicians, she was well-known. I met Leo’s new acquaintances, as well as members of Amelia’s family. We discovered that one of his pals was dating Amelia’s sister while we were there.

It was a small world but it wasn’t the right time to feel pleased. Leo, his father, and Ava’s father helped carry Wilma’s casket to her grave. It was a terrible day for the entire wizard community. The whole area was packed with black-clad mourners who had come to pay their respects to their mentor.

No wonder that they wanted to bury her there. Among them, she was a leader – a sea of knowledge that had to be buried six feet beneath the surface.

Apparently, no one was prepared for that. Neither her family, nor her society.

She surely will be missed.