

Darkness Mate Cheated Versus Fated by Victory Done

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Zora

I joined Kara and Eloise on the couch, then linked the staff to serve us tea and biscuits.

“What is with Nellie?” Kara asked me, looking curious.

“She was drinking in the lounge of this wing, and we went to say hello. She was very nasty to us. Calling us whores, backstabbers, thieves, name it, Zora. She looked like she was out of it,” Kara said, and I sighed sadly.

“She is unhappy about what happened with Abelardo and believes I was the mastermind behind his arrest. I am officially her enemy now,” I said, and Eloise hissed.

“That is pathetic and silly. What do you have to gain from that? You already have it all. You will be the lady of the north in two months. Darius is indisputably yours. She is silly,” Eloise said, sounding irritated.

“Actually, I did ask her to make sure that Abelardo does not show up at the hearing, and I did imply that I will go against him if he troubles Darius,” I confessed, and Eloise rolled her eyes.

“So what? The asshole deserves it and much more. Sometimes I suspect she didn’t give birth to Darius because of the way she is quick to side with Abelardo against him, even if Abelardo is in the wrong, and that douchebag is always in the wrong. I think it is an odd situation. I can understand

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favouritism, but this is too damn much. Screw her. We do not need her as our friend.” Eloise said, and I giggled

Eloise made a lot of sense, but I knew Nellie was Darius’s mother.

“She disagrees with Darius’s policies. She wanted him to get justice for her husband.

She wanted him to expand..” I said, and Kara began to laugh, interrupting me in the process.

“Really, who will get justice for all the people her husband wronged? Her husband ruined lives and wrecked homes. Elbert is a hero. I do not care what people say,” Kara said, and I covered her mouth.

“Please do not say things like that. The walls have ears, and we do not want Nellie to have anything against us.” I said, and Eloise laughed.

Just then, Nancy walked in with our tea and biscuits, and I was worried she might have heard Kara. She was about to leave when I stopped her.

“I am sorry for what I am about to do, Nancy, but I will need you to taste the food. A lot is happening right now, and I am just being careful,” I said, and Nancy smiled.

“It is alright, Luna,” she said, tasted our teas, and ate our biscuits.

She stood for about ten minutes before I apologised and dismissed her.

“What

was that about?” Kara asked, biting into her biscuit.

I placed the tea by my nose, and the scent was a bit strong, so

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I put it down and opted to drink the cranberry variation instead of the Sage tea.

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“Nellie hates us, and she was married to a psycho. I do not want to make mistakes,” I said, and Eloise laughed.

“What is wrong with the tea?” Kara asked me, and I shook my head.

“The smell is a bit too strong this afternoon. I wonder if the brand is what we are used to. I will ask Nancy.” I said, and she nodded and opted to take the cranberry variation, too; likewise, Eloise.

“So, who do you think it is?” Kara asked me the real reason they had come.

“I doubt it is Abelardo; I think someone set him up to throw us off their scent. He is the most obvious culprit. It is just too easy,” I said, and Eloise laughed,

“Sometimes life can be easy, and the truth might really be what it is. Just look at how easily we found love again,” she said, and I nodded.

“I am not disputing the fact that he might have a hand in this. Possibly, he did it, but he was too stupid to cover his tracks. It is a possibility, but between Brighton’s attack and this, it does not seem like the same person.” I said, and Kara nodded.

“I agree, but **it** still does not mean Abelardo is innocent. He might have miscalculated or tried to copy the original crime hoping it would go a certain way,” she said, and it made a lot of sense.

“Abelardo was desperate to take over from his brother. The

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issue with Brighton must have given him the idea to try to replicate the same scenario with an alpha alleged to have teamed up with the enemy of the north. Either way, it would be a winning situation; **it** would have caused a war or forced Darius to step down.” I said, and Eloise frowned.

“But if Darius steps down, it would leave the Hand’s line and go to the Sidorovs, then the Orlovs. If neither Marcel nor Raphael cuts it, the north will have to choose between Abelardo and Vito to lead them. Neither of them is an alpha, but they would likely lean towards Abelardo.” Eloise said, and I nodded.

“You can put it that way, but we also have to consider Abelardo’s friendship with Larry. Larry is the eldest on the council. He hates Darius and believes Abelardo should take over from him. The man must have assured Abelardo that he would force the council to endorse him. In exchange, Abelardo will be his puppet and wage war, increase the power of the seat and the council and enrich the north,” I said, and they were silent.

“So, how is Darius handling it?” Kara asked, and I could not answer that question because I did not know.

“I think we should investigate this thing like we used to do back in the east,” Eloise said.

“I do not think Raphael would want you to get involved,” I said, and she rolled her eyes. She wanted to do this for the thrill.

Let us bring it up during dinner,” I said to them, and Kara agreed.

decided to tell them what I really wanted.

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“**I know** this might sound crazy.” I began, and everyone was attentive.

Duchers

“It might even be unnecessary. There might be nothing to it,” I said, and sighed.

“But we need to investigate Nellie,” I said, and Kara frowned.

“Why? The woman is clearly unstable and a psycho, but that would be a waste of time because she would not want to work against her sons. There is no way she would set either of them up. She is also a victim in this,” Kara said, and I nodded at my friend.

“I am not asking that we investigate her because of the event. She has no hand in this and can never actively work against her son. But I need to know what she has in store for Darius. She is always quick to side with Abelardo against him, and there is that issue of Darius not wanting to get the revenge she wanted so **badly**. I need to protect my man from a woman that is hurting and trying to lash out.” I said and sighed.

“He told her to get out,” I confessed, and Eloise gasped.

“And he sided with me against her. You needed to see the rage and scorn on her face when she realised he wouldn’t back her up. She said many implicating things that she only got away with because Darius is her son. There is no way Nellie is going to let what happened today go. No matter what happens, I need to be a step ahead of her, and I need help,” I said, and Eloise smiled.

Just then, I felt nauseous and rushed to the bathroom to vomit

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“What is the matter with you?” Eloise asked me, and they joined me in the bathroom. Other than the tea and biscuits I ingested, there was

nothing in my stomach. So when I threw everything up, I sat by the toilet seat, heaving.

Kara poured cold water overhead, and I sighed with relief because I was burning up.

“What is wrong with you?” Eloise asked, looking concerned, and I shook my head

“I guess I am reacting to something in the tea or biscuits. It might also be because of the up-and-down feeling today. Everything has been crazy.” I said, feeling better.

“Maybe you should rest,” Kara said, and we left the bathroom and went back to the couch.

We talked about other things, watched a movie, and then they left.

Darius returned thirty minutes after they left, looking very angry and troubled.

He went to the bathroom immediately, and even though I wanted to join him, I wasn't feeling that great.

He lingered in the bathroom before coming to bed:

“Are we not going for dinner?” I asked him, and he shook his

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He looked at me and held my hand.

“You look pale,” he said with concern, and I smiled at him and caressed his cheeks gently.

“And you look tensed,” I said, and he smiled at me and pulled me into his arms.

I placed my head against his chest, and he wrapped his arms around me. I felt his uneasiness, and I knew the issue with his brother troubled him.

“You need to be calm, darling. I know you care about

Abelardo, and I pray he is innocent too, but you need to be calm,” I said, and he kissed the top of my head.

“I want you to join me in questioning him and Larry tomorrow. Do you think you are up for it?” He asked me, and I looked at him with a broad smile.

“That will be amazing. It will be more fun than anything I have been doing since I got here,” I said, and he frowned at me, his dark eyes flashing. I wondered what I said to make Cremin jealous.

“More fun than making love?” he asked, and I smiled broadly, shaking my head.

“No, definitely not,” I said, and he smiled and tickled me.

“Did my mother come to this room after I left?” he asked, and I shook my head.

“We are definitely now enemies. I doubt she will come here knowing you aren’t here,” I said, and he nodded.

“She has taken a short trip, and for some reason, I am nervous because it has to do with Abelardo,” he said, and I frowned at him.

“Kara and Eloise said they saw her in the lounge a few hours ago,” I said, and he nodded.

“The alcohol must have given her a bright idea,” he said, and it did not sit well with me.

A desperate woman would do anything. Nellie’s judgement could not be trusted at the moment.

“Did you have her followed?” I asked him, and he shook his head.

“I doubt I need to have her followed, Zora. She is just angry. Besides, she is my mother

r. I can't treat her like a suspect in a crime," he said, and I nodded even though I disagreed with him.

I honestly wished he had her followed. Deep down, I doubted her trip had anything to do with Abelardo's freedom.

After hearing what Kara told me she said to them on their way to my room, I knew she believed I had masterminded everything.

She had also implied that my position with Darius wasn't a given and that two months was time enough for things to change. I wondered what my new antagonist had in store for me. I prayed silently for the strength to overcome.

Morning came, and Darius and I got ready for breakfast.

It was going to be a busy day, but I was not feeling up to it.

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I was a bit tired even though

though we didn't do anything and I had just woken up from sleep.

I did not think much of it and just got ready quietly.

Once we were done getting ready, we went to the dining room to have breakfast.

Everyone was there as always, and we ate in silence.

What happened with Abelardo had brought gloom into our lives. I hoped the matter was solved quickly.

I prayed it did not linger because we all deserved better.

Our love was still young; we were still getting to know each other and trying to manoeuvre through our differences to accept them and make it work. This matter needed to be solved as soon as possible.

“Zora will be accompanying us to question Abelardo and Larry,” Darius announced, and Marcel nodded.

“I want Kara to come with us too,” Marcel said, and Darius didn’t seem okay with it, but he did not complain.

Raphael requested to bring Eloise along, and I touched Darius’s lap to stop him from making a scene.

I could not really eat, so I just pushed my food about the plate picking the bits and stalling for breakfast to be over.

We finished, and Darius decided to go to the cells on the property to question Abelardo.

As we moved towards the place, I remembered when Abelardo attacked my friends and me and locked us up

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because of councilwoman Jenny’s death and the attack on his mother.

I was still baffled why the attackers spared Nellie’s life. It really didn’t add up.

When we got there, we noticed Abelardo outside his cell in officers.

chains standing will soo

“What is going on here?” Darius growled. He was angry.

“What is the council task force doing here?” he asked, and the men saluted him and bowed their heads immediately.

“Your eminence, the council has ordered that we move him to the council prison,” One of them said.

“Under whose orders and why?” Darius asked.

“It was a collective decision by all council members. The act of treason is judged and punished by the council,” The man said and handed Darius a paper.

Darius did not bother to read the piece of paper. He just tore

1. it.

“Out of my house now!” he ordered them, and they shook; even I shook because there was an authority in his voice.

We let them leave, and Darius’s Brians ushered Abelardo to a room

We followed, and as soon as Abelardo sat down, he looked at Darius.

“What would you gain in this? You already have it all. Why lock me up? First, your woman threatened mother to keep me at

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home, and now I am being tried for treason. What happened to you, Darius? We used to fight, but nothing like this,” He said with disbelief, and I could see he was genuinely hurt.

“It stopped being fair when you decided to forge my signature and seal and send Bryce to stir up shit in the east. You knew the development tax issue was false, yet you still chose to use that same method to cause trouble for me. Why?” Darius asked him, and he looked at me.

“Do not look at Zora; focus on me, Abelardo. I need to know why you would actively work against me,” he said, and Abelardo’s eyes welled up with tears.

“If I tell you my truth, would you believe me?” Abelardo asked, and Darius did not respond.

“Answer me!” Darius growled at his brother. The pressure was overwhelming, making me nauseous, but I held it. Beads of sweat formed on my forehead, and my vision was a bit blurry, but I tried to keep it together.

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Chapter **83**

Zora

“I did not give anything to Bryce. He is lying against me, Darius. Mother asked me before she left to get help, and I told her the same thing. I did not do this. I have never given Bryce anything or sent him on an errand before. I was stunned when I was arrested, and his name came up as my accomplice.” Abelardo said to his brother.

“Why would Bryce lie against you?” Darius asked, and Abelardo looked at me.

“She wants to be rid of me. Can’t you see what she is doing? Mother told me how you treated her and insulted her because of this woman. Did it ever occur to you that she and her so-called ex might be trying to divide the strength of the north? Bryce might have collected money or something from Casey and Elbert to do this. They need a reason to go to war. They might have done this to try to create the opportunity to attack. Do you not think it is weird she would just fall in love with you and want to spend the rest of her life with you? All three of you are blind. You destroyed their homes and took them away from their mates. No matter how fucked up their marriage situation was, you can’t dispute that they loved their mates. Do not let them turn you against your people, Darius. I might be a douchebag, and you and I might not see eye to eye on many things, but I did not do this. I did not

send Bryce anywhere. I do not know why he will speak my name,” Abelardo said and bowed.

“Your explanation isn’t good enough for me, Abelardo. I will

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give you time to think about things, and then I will return. If you do not tell me the truth, I will hand you over to the council and wash my hands off the case,” Darius told him calmly.

“Mother was right when she said she needed to go get help because she doubted you would help me, since your woman controls you now,” Abelardo said, looking at me scornfully.

“Matter of fact, she is right. I am a fool for my mate, and it will always be that way. You are lucky she isn’t evil or vindictive. You wouldn’t have been here if that was the case,” Darius told Abelardo, and tears streamed down Abelardo’s face.

“I didn’t do this, little brother. I swear on my wolf and everything I hold dear that I did not do this. Someone or some people are trying to set me up. Please do not let them win,” he pleaded with Sylvestre in tears, and so mehow I suspected the man was telling the truth.

It broke my heart to see them like this.

I decided I would come and speak to him alone.

“Let us go,” Darius said and turned his back.

“Please, Darius, I am begging you,” Abelardo said in tears.

“The punishment of treason is death. I didn’t do this,” he pleaded, and I placed a hand over Darius’s shoulder.

“You can’t leave him here unprotected. He could be telling the truth. If he is, the culprits might try to finish the job,” I linked him, and Darius looked at me. His eyes lingered on me, and he looked at Abelardo and then at Marcel.

“Lock him in a protection cell,” He ordered Marcel and led me

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out.

I noticed we were heading for the exit, and Marcel and Raphael were not behind us.

“where are we going?” I asked Darius.

“To see Larry,” he said, and I shook my head.

“I doubt it will yield anything,” I said, and he frowned.

“We are at a dead end. I need to know who is who in this, Zora. My reputation and the peace of our world are at stake here,” He said, and I pulled him close to me. I could feel his panic.

“Let us speak in private, please,” I pleaded with him.

He agreed, and we returned inside and headed to our bedroom.

The moment we entered, I went to sit on the couch because I was tired.

“Like I said, Darius, this might be a wild goose chase. Either to throw us off or keep us occupied. I do not think Abelardo did it. I do not like your brother, but doubt he is lying. If he is telling the truth, it means Bryce is compromised. Focus more on Bryce to get real information. At the same time, Kara, Eloise, and I will visit Brighton,” I said, and his eyes widened.

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Zora

He shook his head immediately.

“I can’t let you go to Brighton. That journey is for Raphael and Vino to make,” he said, and I shook my head.

“You need to be tactful with these things. Brighton hates the north, and they see you as a menace; the last thing you need is to send northern elites there. They won’t cooperate, and they won’t be receptive. But people like Kara, Eloise and me will be well received because they might feel we have something in common. We had both suffered the northern brutality even though we are to be married soon; it wouldn’t matter,” I said, and he shook his head.

“I can’t let you or your friends go there,” he said, and I got angry.

“Can’t or won’t, Darius?” I asked, and he refused to answer.

“I thought you said we weren’t prisoners here anymore,” I said, and he was slightly annoyed.

“Don’t put it like that, Zora,” he said.

“I won’t let you go to a part of the west close to the south. You will be close to Elbert’s region and Caseynardo,” he said, sounding possessive, and I realised his fear, so I stood up and went to him.

“**If it weren’t for** your tradition and the necessity of the blue

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moon for the claim to be complete, Darius, I would have asked you to claim me right now,” I said and placed my head against his chest.

“I can never go back to Casey, and there isn’t anything between Elbert and me. Please, Darius. I promise I will return. I just want you to succeed. That is why I am doing this,” I said, pleading with him, and he lifted my chin and searched my

eyes.

“I love you, Darius. I can’t run away from you,” I said, and I could see the difficulty in his eyes. He was trying to figure out what to do.

“You know I am telling the truth. We are the only ones that the people of Brighton would receive and open up to. We need to solve this matter before it gets out of hand. We can’t wait until the culprit does something that will be unstoppable,” I told him, and he held me to his chest and squeezed me.

“I will let you do this,” he said with difficulty, “but please come back home to me, Zora. I do not know why Elbert is after you, but Brighton shares a border with Elbert. You have to promise you will return no matter what. You have to promise that you won’t run away. You have to promise you won’t decide to let me go out of fear that we are not fated. You have to promise to come back to me. If you don’t, I will go crazy and burn the world, Zora. If you do not come home, I will become the monster people believe me to be because you would have left with my soul. Promise me you will return to me.” He said; I wrapped my arms around him and held on tightly, tears streaming down my face.

I had no intention of running away, but with what he said, I had to ensure that I returned.

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“I cannot imagine a life without you, Darius. I promise I won’t run away. I chose to love you, I chose to be with you, and I hope to spend the rest of my life with you. Nothing will change that. I won’t get to where Elbert is, and once we get the information we need, we will return. To be safe, I promise not to spend mor

e than three days in Brighton because we would question the pack members too. Whether we get answers or not, we will return on the third day," I assured him, and he kissed my forehead.

"Secret guards will accompany you to protect you," he said, and I thanked him

It was necessary to know what happened with Brighton to solve this case, and we were the only ones we could trust to do a thorough job.

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Hardy

I was sitting in my office when my beta, Lukman, walked into my office to announce Alpha Jake Brighton's arrival. I thought my business with his pack was over. What was he doing in my pack? I did not want to seem rude, but I wasn't in the mood for a guest.

"Let him in," I told my beta.

Alpha Brighton walked into my office smiling, and I wondered what the occasion was.

"Good afternoon, Elbert," he said, and I plastered a fake smile on my face to avoid being rude.

"Hello, Brighton," I told him, and he nodded and sat down without me offering him a seat. The man made himself comfortable.

"To what do I owe this visit?" I asked him, wanting to get straight to the point, and he sighed.

"I was laying on my bed last night thinking of how to improve my people's lives when an idea popped into my head," he said, and I frowned at him.

“Shouldn’t you be discussing that with Hand?” I asked, and he had an angry scowl on his face.

“I can never discuss my people with that bastard. He has done enough,” he said, and I wasn’t comfortable with his words. As

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much as I wanted to dissolve the rule of the north, I wasn’t comfortable having such a conversation.

Jake noticed and frowned at me.

“Did I come on a bad day?” he asked, and I wanted to say yes, but I shook my head and smiled at him.

I couldn’t be happy or enthusiastic about anything. There were just two months left to the blue moon. If I don’t do anything and Darius claims Zora, I would have to kill him to get her back. I hope she isn’t in love with him. I needed to do something quickly.

“Care to elaborate?” I finally said, wanting to be rid of the man.

He smiled, adjusted his seat, and then looked at my shelf where I had drinks.

I deliberately didn’t offer him anything because I did not want to stand up.

“If you want some, you can pour yourself a glass,” I said, and he smiled and went to pour himself a glass of brandy. He took a sip and returned to sit down.

“I know what you did for my people was from the kindness of your heart, and I appreciate it,” he started, and I was attentive.

“I was hoping you could allow my people to work in your region. Mostly part-time odd jobs in construction and the factories,” he said, and I frowned at him.

“The income and experience will help develop my people, and if things get worse with the north, we can abandon our lands

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and settle down in your region as members of your pack. I am willing to let go of my leadership for the sake of my people," he said, and I knew he was serious.

I had to respect the love he had for his people.

"I do not think that will be possible in the south because we are highly populated," I said, and his smile dropped.

"But," I added, and there was hope in his eyes.

"I plan on visiting Casey Grady in the east. They have land and jobs. Your people will be able to settle and work there. He might even give you land to use to feed your people." I said, **and** he frowned at me.

"Are you his friend?" he asked, feeling awkward about my suggestion.

"We are acquainted, and I know they need people for manual labour due to the current issues they had with the north and the fact that some of their people have moved to the south," I told him, and he smiled at me.

"When do you plan to visit him?" he asked, and I sighed.

"I have an appointment for tomorrow. Mind you, I have an issue to discuss with him already, so you will have to table your matter yourself," I told him, and he nodded.

"What time do you leave for the east tomorrow?" he asked

in the

"Ten in the morning. Magic Fang isn't far from Red Moon. I will be there in two hours." I told him, and he nodded and stood up.

“will return by eight tomorrow so we can leave for the place

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together.” He said, and I nodded.

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Morning came, and Jake

Brighton arrived earlier than eight. I knew he was desperate. I could see his desperation, and I hoped Casey would ease his mind and put a smile on his face.

The people of Brighton needed a break. It was sad I couldn't give them that.

We arrived at Mountain on time. I expected Casey was waiting for me in his office. I had to commend the man for being civil.

We were offered drinks, and I opted to drink water instead. Beta Dustin took us to Casey's office, but I asked Jake to wait so I could speak to Casey privately.

I entered Casey's office, and he was looking bedraggled. His beard had overgrown, and he had dark circles. I could tell he was not sleeping, but it wasn't my business.

“To what do I owe this visit, Alpha Hardy?” He said. I did not know if he was in the right mood to discuss my concerns. I knew Zora was the reason for his appearance. I did not understand why he did not treat her well when they were together. He must have thought she would always be with him hence why he accepted Lori. It was his loss.

“Alpha Casey,” I said.

“I do not know where to begin, but I need your help,” I added, and he was attentive.

“I do not know how good your relationship is with Hand, but I need you to help me inform Zora that she is my fated,” I said, and he exclaimed.

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I knew I sounded like a madman, and it wasn't far from the truth, but I needed her to know so she would know that her fated was out there and he was waiting for her. I was hopeful that would buy me time.

"I do not think that will be possible. She is Darius's property now. I, too, wish I could take her back, but we both know the Wolf Lord never lets go of his trophies." He said, and I realised he had not heard of the wedding.

"I am desperate. Please help me. My wolf and I have been suffering. You know what it is like. You have a fated. Every day I lay awake wishing I had taken her away from that dinner and dealt with the consequences later. That way, she would have been mine, and Darius wouldn't have her because she wouldn't be in the east to begin with. Please, Casey, I will give anything for you to tell her the truth about me," I pleaded desperately, and he leaned forward.

"Why are you desperate? I told you Darius sounded

possessive of her. I doubt he will let her go. She is his trophy. The best advice I could give you is to try and visit their annual sports in four months. The trophies are allowed to attend. I plan on attending so I can see her too. She no longer bears my mark. She would recognise you, and then both of you can decide..." he said, but I interrupted him and shook my head.

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Hardy

"I do not have that much time, Casey," I said and bowed.

“Darius will marry and claim her on the blue moon night. They have celebrated their engagement,” I said, and he exclaimed. I looked at him. His hands were shaking, and tears formed in his eyes immediately. It was clear he had not let go, and I had come to the wrong person for help.

“What?” he said in a low voice. I could hardly make out the sound if it weren’t for the fact that I could read lips.

“They are getting married, Casey. I am desperate.” I said.

“In that case, I will advise you to let her go,” he said, and I shook my head and banged my hand on the table.

“Don’t ask me to do what you couldn’t do, Casey. I just want you to help me.” I pleaded, my hands shaking.

“Please, I will give anything..” I said, and he shook his head.

“Did it occur to you that she is in love with him and wants to spend the rest of her life with him? Zora isn’t the type to be forced into a union. I can’t take that bliss from her by telling her about you. I can’t. I know what happened to me with Lori. My bliss was taken from me the moment I caught Lori’s scent. It ruined my perfect life. It ruined everything that I held dear, Hardy. I can’t allow Zora to go through that kind of turmoil. It is easy to chase after your fated if you aren’t in love, but it is torture when you have already given your heart to another.

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No matter how strong the pull was, I could not stop loving Zora. I still love her, and I always will. If she is getting married to Darius, I will advise you to reject the bond and let her be. Please. She does not need to be torn between her heart’s desire and fate. It wasn’t easy for me; I do not want her to have the same experience,” he pleaded with me. Although the news seemed to break his heart, he was still looking out for her.

“I can’t let her be. I can’t,” I told him my truth, and he sighed.

“Then I wish you the best, but I won’t help you to mess Zora up,” I told him, and I was mad that he would see my plea as an attempt to mess Zora up. I did not understand his logic, but I knew he was still hurting. I had come to the wrong person for help. There was no way he would help me get with Zora. He was selfish like that.

Jake Brighton was ushered into Casey’s office, and he explained his matter to Casey.

“Why haven’t you taken your idea to the north? I am sure the Wolf Lord will have a solution,” Casey said, repeating my words, and Jake got angry.

“I can never go to that bastard for help. He imposed development tax on my people and then sent his enforcers to attack my people when we couldn’t pay,” he said, and Casey shook his head.

“I do not think you should be quick to judge. I do not know what is happening in the north, but I doubt the Wolf lord did that to you. Two days ago, enforcers came here with a written order that we are to pay development taxes henceforth or face the consequences. I panicked, but my beta talked some

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sense into me. I called the Lord’s office, and his beta was shocked. They never passed such an order. I believe the issue was from the council. There is a possibility he doesn’t know of the attack on your people.” He said, and Jake shook his head.

“He is marrying your ex–wife. He wouldn’t want her to see him as a monster by taxing and attacking her people.” Brighton said, making a valid point, and Casey sighed.

“Very well. I still doubt the lord had something to do with it, but I am willing to offer your people part–time jobs. I cannot let them settle here because you are under the north, and I do not want trouble with the north,” he said.

Jake was happy about Casey’s response. It was clear he wasn’t expecting to get anything from it, but Casey came through

I thanked Casey for his time, even though he did not agree to help me. I understood his position but could not give up on my fated.

Jake and I returned to Red Moon, and I teased him about his pack being named after his last name, and he found it funny.

“It was a settlement, and my ancestor was the alpha. It was called Brighton’s pack, and as they grew, the settlement became a village, and it was named after the pack,” he explained, and I laughed. I knew he would soon retire, which was why he was taking all the steps necessary to secure his people and help his son rule with ease. I had to commend him for it. I would have been happier if my father had been as strong as him.

Jake’s wife was taken from him by Lord Collier Hand. They were only nineteen when it happened, but he held firm for the sake of their twins and was still holding firm. I respected the

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man greatly.

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“I would like you to visit Brighton, so I can host you, Hardy. You have been most kind to us. I want my son and daughter to meet you. I think you can come and unwind in Brighton. We might not be deve

loped, but our environment is serene and good for the soul,” he said, and it so unded like a good idea because I needed to think, and I couldn’t do that with my mind muddled up.

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Zora

I could feel Darius’s uneasiness about my trip to the western village. I did not know how to tell him I could never leave him.

After our discussion, he insisted that we visit Larry.

He wanted to get to the bottom of the matter, and I needed to figure out how to stop him from wasting his time.

I was feeling nauseous, so I went to the bathroom to throw up my stomach’s content.

Darius rushed to the bathroom, a bit worried. He carried me to the shower and turned on the water while he took off my

clothes.

“I noticed you were slightly warm last night but didn’t think much of it. Now you are burning up. What is happening?” he asked me calmly, and I could see he was fighting every fibre of his being from acting out.

“It started after we had tea and biscuits yesterday afternoon. I threw it all up and felt better, but the nausea is back,” I

managed. The water was soothing, and I wanted to stay under

1. it.

“Who served the snacks?” He asked, and I knew what he wanted to imply, so I shook my head.

“I doubt they did anything to the food, darling. I made the person that served it taste it,” I said, withholding the person’s

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name, and he was silent. Once I was calm, he carried me to the bed.

“You can’t go to Brighton tomorrow in this condition,” he said, and I smiled because I was already feeling better.

“Nice try, Alpha,” I said and touched his nose. He did not smile.

”

Let me call the doctor?” he said, and I knew how important going to Brighton was, so I shook my head and sat up, pretending to be strong.

“I feel better. You will be wasting your time. I believe the stress caused it, and something might have irritated my stomach from breakfast. Come on. Let us visit Larry.” I said, and he frowned at me for a bit before finally accepting.

We got dressed and left the room. The moment we walked past Nellie’s room, I became nervous.

“Where do you think your mother went to?” I asked, and Darius shook his head.

“I do not know, and honestly, I can’t be bothered. No matter who she brings to plead with me to let Abelardo go, I won’t listen. Sadly, she does not understand the gravity of Abelardo’s offence,” he said, and I touched his hands.

“I do not think your brother did it, Darius. I believe him. He is too proud to beg like that. Someone wants him to take the fall. We need to question Bryce, not Larry, and you must ensure the council does not get their hands on Abelardo. If they do, he would be found guilty. I doubt they would go through the stress of finding the truth. See how they handled the matter that concerned you. They did not do any

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investigation to figure out what was going on. They tried to blame you for the crime. They are either a bunch of lazy idiots or against the Hand family and want you to step down by all means. Which is why you can't let them lay their hands on him:" I said, and he pulled me close as we walked.

"If my mother only knew you meant well," he said and stopped to kiss the top of my head. Then he looked into my eyes and caressed my chin.

"Do not get your hopes up, green eyes. Abelardo might disappoint you," he said, and I smiled at him.

We left the mansion, and a Jeep was waiting at the entrance.

We drove to Wonderland silently, and Nellie's trip did not sit well with me. I doubted she was going to get help. Whatever she planned on doing was extreme, and I knew it had to do with me.

I could not understand why the woman would blame me for this. I might have overstepped when I went to ask her to keep her son at home, and I might have said some things that scared her, but I have done nothing wrong.

I was troubled, and so was Monica. Nellie wasn't a good enemy to have.

Even though Darius had sided with me against her, and I knew she couldn't make him change his mind about me, I did not want their relationship to be damaged.

I remembered all the good times we had had with Nellie and wondered if she had been pretending all along. I doubted it, though, because she seemed genuine. She loses her mind whenever it has to do with Abelardo, and I needed to know

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why.

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We arrived at the Northern prisons, and to my surprise, Darius asked to see Bryce instead of Larry.

“You changed your mind?” I asked him, and he shook his head.

“I want us to see Bryce first, and then we can check on Larry,” he said, smiling, and I smiled back.

I could see he was stressed and worried, but he hid it well.

It wasn't easy knowing that faceless and nameless people were plotting against him.

I just hope he handles the pressure well.

We were led to an interrogation room.

The smell of the disinfectant they used to clean the place filled my nose, and I felt sick but held it. I knew if I showed any sign of sickness, Darius won't allow me to go to Brighton.

“May I have a glass of cold water?” I linked Darius, and he frowned at me. I smiled at him, so he won't think anything was wrong.

“Thirsty“, I whispered, and he nodded.

Four chairs were in the room, and one was welded to a desk. I figured that was for the prisoner. I sat on one of the free chairs while Darius paced.

The water came, and it was freezing. Drinking it made me feel better. Bryce was ushered in a few minutes later and kept his eyes bowed.

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“Look up,” I ordered him to look into his eyes.

He refused until Darius ordered him to.

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“You do whatever she tells you,” he warned the man, and he apologised to me.

“Explain how Abelardo sent you the order.” Darius said, and Bryce looked down.

“Look up!” I ordered the man I went to stand beside Darius.

I doubted the man would tell the truth, but I needed to see his eyes.

“He called me to come to the estate. Then he handed the document to me and told me that his eminence wanted me to carry out the task quickly. That the east is supposed to pay development tax, and if they refuse, I should use force.” he said, and Darius looked at him.

“Was he the one that asked you to request development tax from Brighton too?” Darius asked, but I doubted that was the right question because the council-owned up to it.

“That order came from the council”, he said, and I now understood what Darius was doing. He wanted to gauge his reaction. He wanted to understand how he behaved when he told the truth and compare it to his mannerisms when he spoke of his dealings with Abelardo. Darius was a master.

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Chapter 88

Zora

“Tell me how Abelardo called you. When he called, and the time and day you went to the estate?” Darius asked, and the man swallowed.

“He called me in the evening, and I went there an hour after his call. This happened five days ago,” he said, and Darius was satisfied, but I wasn’t.

“You were right, Zora; he is lying,” Darius linked me.

This wasn’t Darius’s duty. His office places him higher than this. They would normally send Brian William or Brian Wilson to do this. Darius must care for his brother to do it himself.

Although Darius had figured out the man was lying, Darius’s conviction was not enough to free Abelardo. The council will still ask for him and will likely sentence him. It wasn’t enough. We did not only have to know Bryce was lying. We had to prove it.

“So you went to the estate in the evening five days ago to receive the order from Abelardo Hand,” I said, summarising his explanation, and Bryce nodded.

I was mad at the bastard but needed to back him into a corner without threatening him.

If I threatened him, his confession might be seen as something made under coercion, which might make it inadmissible.

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“I can see you have an excellent memory, Enforcer Golubev,” I said, and he looked down, avoiding eye contact. I did not need to see his eyes anymore.

“I am sure you didn’t sneak into the estate. You would have had no reason to sneak in because you were officially summoned. You must have gone through the gates. Will the people stationed at the gate be able to testify that you passed through that gate in the evening five days ago? Will the people station

ed at the entrance into the building be able to testify that you were in that building?" I said, and he nodded.

I realised

they had that part covered, so I decided to go the extra mile and lie to catch him.

"Will the newly stationed guards in the hallway testify that they saw you and Abelardo that day? And since Abelardo doesn't have an office in the estate, can they testify that they saw him give you a document in the hallway or admit you into his bedroom or any room for a private conversation that the ladies in the harem weren't privy to?" I said, and the man looked at me. Of course, there were no guards in the hallway, but he could not know that because the person that sent him did not have that information.

"I can't remember the time of day," He said, and I nodded.

"That is great, but

as long as it happened five days ago, we do not need time. I want to know if anyone would testify to those things," I said, and he was silent.

"I do not want to hurt you, Bryce, but I want you to tell us what happened. If you tell us the truth, then Lord Hand would tamper justice with mercy.

We know you went to the estate but had no dealings with

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Abelardo. Which means Abelardo Hand had no interaction

with you. What we want to know now is who put you up to it and why you agreed to do it," I asked him and his eyes welled up in tears.

"My wife is seven months pregnant. I got a note stating they would hurt her if I did not comply. I did not meet anyone. The order was sent to me via mail, and I was asked to state that Lord Abelardo put me up to it. They took my Maria during that time, and I did all they asked to get her back," he said, and I smiled, knowing my guess was correct.

They wanted the plan to go belly *up* and Abelardo to take the fall. I also believed this was to make Abelardo the fall guy for what happened in Brighton.

Knowing Abelardo and Darius do not see eye to eye, they thought Darius wouldn't bother to dig and help his brother, and that would have been the case if I had not insisted.

"So where is Maria now?" I asked him, and he told us where his mate was.

Darius placed a call to Marcel to have the woman taken to safety.

"You will be transported to a cell on the estate for your safety."

Darius said, and the man thanked him.

I asked Darius if he would release Larry, but he refused. Larry had misguided Abelardo, Darius wanted him to suffer a bit, and I agreed.

We returned to the estate in high spirits and returned to our

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room.

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The moment we entered, I went to lie on the couch because I was tired and did not want Darius to know.

"You have to stall the hearing. Do not let the council know what we know. Keep your brother in the cell. That way, whoever tried to set him up would believe he had succeeded. It will buy me the time I need to investigate in Brighton. Once I am back, we can have Bryce speak his truth," I said, and Darius came to sit on the chair where I was lying. I could see he wasn't comfortable with me going to Brighton but did not want to say no because he had already said yes.

“Who do you think is doing this?” Darius said, and I honestly did not know. I was more worried about what Nellie was up to than who was trying to set Abelardo up.

“You should just be cautious and don’t give too much away. Once you do not raise the alarm that someone is out you, the person would still think they are winning, but I

la to get

suspect this is

bigger than it seems. You occupy the most powerful seat in our world; it is meant to be hot,” I said, and he looked at me and smiled.

Then he stood up and carried me off the couch to the bed.

“We will be having dinner in the room. I will spend the night proving to you why you should return quickly,” He said, peeling off my clothes. “Throughout your journey, you will be wet and eager to come home when you recollect what I will do to you tonight,” He said and sucked my neck. My skin was extra sensitive, and I knew it was on. Monica purred in my head, eager to receive Darius’s love.

“Your skin is so sensitive, Zora; it feels like I am learning your

O

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body all over again,” Darius linked me, eating me up.

I grabbed onto his hair tightly and writhed.

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I felt my orgasm coming, and I couldn’t control it. Everything was going straight to my head, and my skin was burning.

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Zorà

“Darius...” I moaned, and my body climaxed.

“I want to see your green eyes, Zora,” he said and placed himself into me.

He knew I was sensitive, so he was gentle.

“So warm, so soft, so wet,” He moaned and started pumping, hitting the right spots. My body felt so different, and I loved

1. it.

I watched his teeth elongate, and his eyes turn Sage. Cremin was in charge, and he increased his speed.

“Mine,” He growled his famous words. Owning me with every pump, my body responded strongly. Taking it all and wanting

more.

It got into my head, and I could no longer keep eye contact, feeling my orgasm coming.

I grabbed him, digging my nails into his skin, wanting everything he was ready to give and all of him.

“I am coming,” I moaned, unable to control my need anymore and shattered all over.

Cremin pumped through my orgasm, making me feel like I had an out-of-body experience. If too much pleasure could kill, this would have been my death because he kept pumping,

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and I kept coming.

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Every sense was heightened. Everything amplified. It had never felt this good, and I knew I would be wet every time I thought of this and would find myself running back to him.

He growled and poured into me. My pussy milked him for everything I could get. I felt his hands shake. He could no longer support his weight with it, and he gently lay on top of me to catch his breath.

I wrapped my arms around him and rubbed his back gently. Satisfied and glowing. Darius understood my body.

Soon he rolled off me to lie on the bed. Then I turned to the side to look at him. He smiled at me and then touched the tip of my nose gently.

“You know I do not want you in Brighton, but you are too stubborn.” He said, and we both laughed.

“You do not have to solve the mystery, green-eyes. Just come home in three days,” he said, and I smiled and nodded.

“It will feel like an eternity for me here. Not seeing you or being with you for three days would be torture. Please do not let it linger,” He pleaded, and I kissed him to assure him he had nothing to worry about.

He held me all through the night, and soon morning came.

Darius made love to me in the shower. We got dressed, and we were famished. So hungry that I felt like biting something. He laughed at my hunger, and we went to the breakfast room.

We walked past Nellie’s room, and I felt a chill down my spine.

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The woman's absence and silence troubled me, but Darius did not think much of it, so I did not want to bring it up or take any measures, so he won't think I was against his mother. I could only be lucky where she was concerned so many times. She was his mother, after all, and I know he loved her, regardless of her behaviour.

Everyone was in the lounge, and I noticed only Kara was dressed. Eloise was n't dressed, and she did not seem happy.

I sat down and started dishing my food. At the same time, I greeted them individually with the utmost respect a hungry, freshly fucked woman could manage.

"You are really hungry," Kara said and giggled.

"Alpha must have drained you," she teased, and we both laughed, but Eloise did not join in. She was upset.

"What is with her?" I linked Kara, and she stopped laughing.

"Raphael said no. He said he would not allow her to travel to Brighton in her condition." she linked me back, and I felt sorry for her, but I could understand his reasons. She was at a delicate stage. She needed to be careful.

Eloise was so angry that her mood affected everyone except my tummy. I ate the tarts, croissants, sandwiches, I sampled everything to eat on the table, and Darius was surprised.

"I believe they have good food in Brighton, Green eyes," He said, and everyone laughed, including myself.

I felt terrible for Eloise, but Raphael had a point: she was carrying his child, and we did not know what kind of stress we would experience in Brighton.

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Chapter **89**

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“You will use the jet,” Darius said, and I knew if I declined, he would insist. My intention was to arrive there covertly, but it seemed that would not be possible.

“There will be a chauffeur in Gad that will drive you to Brighton. The shadow warriors will be with you, but you won’t see them. They are good at hiding and trailing people, which is why they are called shadow warriors. I have instructed them to only interfere when your lives are in danger,” he said, and I nodded.

As much as I wanted to tell him it wasn’t necessary, I knew those were his conditions.

We got ready to leave, and Darius and Marcel decided to drive us to the hangar.

It was a covert mission, so no one was there except the pilot. I was there except the pilot. Kara and I got into the jet.

We landed in Gad an hour later, and I realised the distance would have been torture if we had to drive through. The nausea was terrible, but I kept it together.

True to Darius’s words, a driver was waiting for us at the airport in Gad, and we proceeded to Brighton.

As we drove through, I realised Gad was a big city. I also saw a **lot** of electronic billboards paying homage to Darius. I

honestly thought the west hated the Hands.

“These people seem to love Lord Hand,” I said aloud, not wanting to call Darius by his name.

“Yes, Luna. Lord Darius was the one that brought development to Gad. It wasn’t different from Brighton. Where

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others pushed back, the people of Gad welcomed him, and this was the result . There are other parts of the west like this. After the development of Gad, people accepted him, and he has been working hard ever since. The west is grateful to be under his lord ship.” Denis, the Chauffeur, said, and I hoped my work would be easy.

The drive was long, and I threw up twice during the journey.

When we got to Brighton, I could see the difference. It was indeed underdeveloped.

We were taken to a small hotel. It had only twenty rooms, and Kara and I decided to share.

I knew we would have to visit the Alpha, but I wanted to rest before I proceeded . I had seen the destruction the attack caused, and it broke my heart.

“How are you feeling?” Kara asked, handing me a glass of water. I sat on the bed in our room. The air conditioning was on, but I was sweating. I knew I needed to tell someone the truth.

I collected the bottle of water from her and drank the content.

She sat next to me and rubbed my back gently.

“After I threw up that day, I haven’t been feeling good,” I confessed.

“Does Darius know?” She asked, rubbing my back, and I shook my head.

“If I told him, he wouldn’t let me come, and you know how important it is for us to do this ourselves,” I said, and she

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nodded.

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“Marcel knows if they come here, the people would attack. He felt we should have left the council to handle it,” She said, and felt we should have left the c

I rolled my eyes.

“Not when the perpetrators are nameless and faceless. We are the only people who can protect their reputation and ensure peace,” I told her and further explained what we had learned from the enforcer. She was in shock.

“Poor Abelardo. I know he is a douchebag, but he did not deserve that humiliation. I can understand Nellie’s grudge. Where is she, by the way?” Kara asked, and my stomach churned.

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Chapter 90

Zora

“I believe she is part of the reason I am ill, Kara,” I said, and my friend frowned.

“That woman has it in for me. I know Darius loves me and will always side with me, but I do not want to deal with

unnecessary stress, and I am afraid of the extent of the damage she might cost. I also would not want her and Darius to be estranged.” I confessed feeling emotional about it, and she hugged me.

I let my tears fall freely, realising I had been holding so much in with no outlet. I didn’t want Darius to know it bothered me because he had a lot on his plate.

“What about Larry?” She asked, and the thought of Larry made me giggle. I wiped away my tears, laughing.

“Darius knows he is innocent but wants to keep him a while longer,” I said, and she laughed.

“I must agree with him on that one. The old man is obnoxious,” She said, and we giggled.

We ordered lunch and then prepared to visit Alpha Jake Brighton. I was nervous about meeting him, but I was hopeful.

Denis took us to the Alpha’s house. A blonde-haired woman about twenty years old let us in. The Alpha lived comfortably, and I was glad his home wasn’t destroyed.

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Kara and I sat on the couch in the living room, and soon Alpha Jake joined us. He wasn’t smiling and came to sit down.

“To what do I owe this visit, Luna Albert?” He asked, and I wished he wouldn’t call me that.

“Just call me Zora. I am yet to wed the lord, and I no longer bear Casey Grady’s mark.” I said with a smile, and he nodded.

“So he sent his woman,” he said, referring to Darius.

“He wanted to come himself, but I insisted I come in his stead,” I said, and he looked away and cursed under his breath.

“Alpha Brighton, Lord Hand had no hand in this,” I said, and he stood up. His hands were shaking, and his mouth was quivering.

“His father took my wife and sister, and now he sent his men to kill my people,” He said, and I could understand his pain.

“We are trying to get to the bottom of the issue, Alpha. We are trying to fix the problem. Someone is working against Darius to force him to lose favour and step down. Please Alpha. If this person succeeds, judging by their methods, the four regions would not have it easy,” I said, and he shook his head.

“Alpha Corrigan’s region is secured. Nothing can happen to the south. I will just go and live there with my people,” he said, and I nodded.

“There is no place like home, Alpha,” I said, and he shook his head.

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“What do you want, Lady Zora?” He asked me, and I was about to speak when I felt like throwing up. Kara noticed immediately and asked for their bathroom.

We returned to the living room, and Alpha Jake looked worried.

“You do not seem well. Why will he send you or even let you come?” He said, and I shook my head immediately.

“He didn’t, I insisted,” I managed, and then he sighed.

“I must commend your effort, Luna. Your ex-husband told me the same thing. Let us say that is the case; how can we protect ourselves?” He asked, and I was amazed by his switch but knowing Casey had spoken to him already made me realise he believed Casey but just wanted to hold on to his grudge.

“You can call the Alpha, Beta or Gamma directly to confirm anything henceforth. To show our goodwill, the lord will be footing development projects in Brighton to fix the damage – and improve the living standard of the people,” I said, and the man was grinning from ear to ear.

My words must be like music to his ears, and I was glad to put his mind at ease.

“Do you know the name of the enforcer that brought the tax order and led the attack on Brighton?” I asked, and he smiled.

“Councilwoman Pamela sent the tax increment order, but as for the Brian that attacked, he said he was from Lord Hand. He told us who sent him before they did their deed,” he explained.

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“Did you get his name?” I asked, and he shook his head.

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“But I can recognise his face,” He said, and that was good enough for me.

“I will be hosting a small luncheon at the Hand Estate in a few weeks. I am personally inviting you to come and secretly identify the bastard by looking through the pictures of every Brian warrior that belongs to the north. Do you think it is something you can do?” I asked, and he nodded.

“I would like you to attend a Brighton festival tomorrow night. Some alphas will be in attendance. Kindly have your driver move your belongings to my home. It is

wrong to have my future luna, Lady of the north, staying in a hotel. I must say, I see why Lord Hand chose you,” He said, as much as I wanted to decline and just leave in the morning. I knew it would be rude and spoil the little progress I had made with the man, so I obliged him.

Kara and I insisted on sharing the same room. Alpha Jake offered to have his pack doctor examine me, but I refused.

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