

## Chapter 7 A Spark in the Dark

"Okay, so what's the plan?" Ashton folded his arms over his chest as he looked down. Elena and Lenore had cast an illusion spell on all of them. Ashton looked like Elena, Colton looked like Lenore, and the women took on the men's appearances.

Elena came out of the bathroom, buttoning up her shirt. Well, it was Ashton's shirt. "We'll escort you over to Colton's room. There are a few guards there, but be on standby for elite guards. They'll be watching you two since you look like us."

"And then what?" Colton glared at Elena and Lenore.

Lenore pursed her lips together, shrugging her shoulders. "They need to think we're here."

"WHAT?! You want to go without us?" Ashton shook his head angrily.

"We won't be alone. We'll have Misha with us. Elena and I can get into the catacombs without being detected. We're going to teleport inside this time. The moment you two enter, you'll trigger the alarm." Lenore watched as Colton gaped at her in shock.

"We're decoys?! And teleport how?" Colton looked over at Ashton.

"Please, we don't have time to explain. I have to find the answer before security gets even worse," Elena pleaded with the angry men.

"Damn it, we promised we would protect you!" Ashton didn't like the idea of leaving them alone at all.

"This is protecting us. If I can find something about a shadow plague, it'll clear my name. Please." Elena grabbed onto Ashton's hand as he looked down at her.

"Fine, you better hurry. Once Aba comes back, he's going to cure it out fast."

"That's why we're moving you two into Colton's room. We're hoping it slows him down." Lenore moved to the door. "Just don't speak out there. We'll escort you to your room and then go."

"Man, I feel used." Colton snorted.

Lenore opened the door and looked down the hall. It looked clear, but that didn't mean it was. Next, Elena and the two guys walked out. Colton stumbled in his shoes, but recovered before falling. It wasn't far to the other corridor. They just had to go down the hall and make a right.

When they arrived at Colton's room, Lenore shook her head at the two men, telling them not to speak.

Be careful, Colton linked, before stepping inside.

You have a time limit. I'm leaving this room and coming for you in a few hours, Ashton linked, before storming into the room, which looked perfect because both women would look upset about being locked up.

Elena looked at Lenore, knowing they were far from being in the clear. Should we scratch ourselves or fart loudly? Lenore linked to Elena, who grinned back at her sister.

You're forgetting burp loudly, Elena linked back as they exited through the back castle door. It was one that servants used and rarely had guards. They weren't completely shocked to see some standing outside, especially given the situation. However, they were both unnerved to see Chaz, one of their father's elite guards, out there. He was barking orders to a couple of other soldiers. Luckily, he seemed preoccupied. Even with their disguises, they weren't sure they could trick the elite soldiers up close.

They practically held their breaths until they reached the forest. To be extra cautious, they kept up their disguises all the way to the catacombs.

"Alright Elena, you're up," Lenore said as she looked at the cave-like opening. Elena was going to use her relationship with the shadows to meld to the otherside. They predicted that the magical threshold needed them to physically pass through the opening. But once passed the opening it wouldn't be triggered. By melding with the shadows she wouldn't be detected. Once inside, she would bring Lenore to her.

The shadows encircled Elena, wrapping their dark tentacles around her. Lenore peered into the abyss, a yawning chasm that seemed to have no end. The underground kingdom stretched into the depths of darkness before her, a vast unknown underground world they had never explored. She could feel her heart pounding wildly in her chest as every nerve in her body quivered with anticipation. Her sister's body grew from the shadows in the cave opening. Just like they thought, the alarm wasn't triggered. "Okay Nora."

Within seconds, Lenore teleported to her sister across the barrier. The enchantment was gone, and they were back to looking like their normal selves. She looked back, and an excited glint reached her eyes. They were really about to explore the place she was driven to. Maybe it was the rebel side of her that was really doing something unexpected, but her heart was racing in excitement as they descended. She could feel the presence of their wolves, Yin and Yang, as they paced between them.

The walls were old stone, as well as the steps. The temperature dropped as they descended deeper into the earth. There were areas in this place that used to have old tablets buried deep. Some were even under water. It was rarely used after the new library and stronghold were built. Sometime after the twins were born, it was sealed off completely. They never gave a reason as to why, and this always intrigued the two women.

"Lena, do you want to talk about... Aba?" Lenore decided that this was the best time to bring this conversation up. She knew that her sister was hurting, and she wanted her to know she was there for her. Elena kept walking quietly, not answering right away.

"I can't."

Elena's soft, whispering voice broke her heart. She could hear her pain. "Look, we don't know anything. Aba wouldn't have walked out of the room just because he was in a relationship. He's more duty bound than that. I think something else is going on. Something important that he doesn't want us to know about. Yeah, we can see they're close, but they've spent a lot of time together."

"Nora, I appreciate what you're doing, but I just want to focus on what we're doing right now. Someone is trying to set me up. This isn't just happening. They're putting a target on my back. Are they trying to get me to leave the kingdom so that it's more vulnerable? Or are they trying to break me, hoping I'll spiral out of control?" Elena stared into the pitch darkness. Her vampire eyes were able to make out even the intricate writing in the stone.

"Maybe it's to cause chaos and mistrust among the vampires?" Lenore reached out, touching the cold stone. "If this is connected, and it's the same shadow plague, then—"

"We might also find out who the culprit is. They did a really bad job preserving some of the ancient tablets. They had to dive into the water to find the tablets on the Slayer. I'm wondering if they were afraid of the knowledge getting into the wrong hands."

"Arrogance. Those who wrote them felt like they weren't needed. When they made the new library, they never brought the old things over. They thought there would always be someone around with the knowledge. We may be immortal, but we're not invulnerable. The vampires who wrote those tablets are gone. They either left or were destroyed. Their knowledge would be lost if not for those tablets."

"He talked to her like he talks to me." Elena's voice was just above a whisper.

"She was upset. He was just trying to calm her down."

"He held her."

"Colton, Ashton, and Joel have hugged you like that. It doesn't mean anything."

"But Aba doesn't ever hug anyone else. Not like that. Maybe you, but only on occasion. She dove into his arms as if it was natural, like she's done it before." Elena couldn't help it. What she didn't want to talk about just started to spill out.

"No one will ever be more important to Aba than you. No matter what."

Elena inhaled sharply and then shot her sister a side glance. "It's the 'no matter what' I don't think I can take. I have to have all of him, Nora. I feel so possessive over him and I can't take it. The idea of him being with someone else poisons my insides." She stopped when she reached the end of the stairs.

"Tell him."

"I can't." She looked over at Lenore. "Don't you think he already knows? Saying it out loud and getting rejected—"

"Is better than pretending. Get it all out there so that you know where you stand. Don't turn into Erebus."

"White hair and psycho might look good on me." She gave her sister a wry grin before looking around. Lenore pulled the energy in the air and light began to illuminate the area.

"I'm here for you Lena, always."

"And I'm here for you."

The sisters exchanged a knowing glance before setting off on their journey into the mysterious terrain. Their determined strides belied the trepidation of venturing into the unknown. The cold, dark gray stones that lined the walls, ceiling, and floor gave off an eerie chill that held stories of the past. The walls were thick with a faint, musty smell. It wasn't as bad as they had imagined, especially for a place that hadn't been lived in. The only light came from Lenore's manipulation.

As they walked, the sound of their footsteps echoed through the empty halls, bouncing off the walls and filling the air with a haunting melody. It was as if the walls themselves were alive, whispering secrets of a bygone era.

"Can you believe we're really down here?" Elena bumped her sister's shoulder playfully.

"This never would have happened if mom was here. I swear she knew what we were going to do before we did it." Lenore laughed as they looked into one of the rooms.

The chamber was filled with a vast array of artifacts. Shelves and tables were filled with ancient books, ornate jewelry, and mysterious trinkets. The walls were lined with intricate tapestries, each depicting a different scene of battle and victory. The air was heavy with the weight of history, and they could feel the power emanating from each object.

They left that room and traveled deeper into the underground hallway. Vampires used to have their kingdoms underground back when they tried to keep their existence a secret. This was one of the reasons the rumor started about them not being able to venture into the sun. Their homes were originally located in darkness.

ELENA! The thunderous growl cut through her mental link. Aba's voice was terrifyingly angry. "He knows." Elena turned and looked at Lenore, who shrugged her shoulders.

"He has no one to blame but himself. I guess he shouldn't have left your side." Lenore grinned, stepping into the next room.

"I'm not going to answer him." Elena's eyes wandered over the books and another set of stairs among the books. "I think this is where we need to look."

ELENA, ANSWER ME! Elena took in a shaky breath and cut off the mental link.

"Did you just cut his link off?!" Lenore's lips twitched upwards as her eyes widened. "Oh, you naughty girl. He's going to lock you up."

"He's gotta find me first." She smiled, biting her bottom lip. They were on borrowed time, because Aba would have Colton and Ashton singing like canaries in no time. They needed to get to work fast. "I wonder if it's categorized. Where is the sign that says 'Shadow Curses Here?'" She laughed as they began looking over the books.

"I'll help," Misha said as she uttered in the air. "Although, if I was going to have a section on curses, I'd put it in a restricted area." Her gaze moved to the other set of stairs.

"Good point Meesh," Lenore said, clapping her hands together.

"You two go ahead and take the next section. I'll skim over the ones here and then join you."

"I'll link you if I find something." Lenore headed down another flight of stairs as Misha hid in her hair.

The air shifted again as she reached the lower level. There were more books and an area to the right that was underwater. However, what caught her eye was how the area to the left looked. The shelves seemed to have been dusted, as if someone had been down there. The air was warmer and less stagnant.

Her heart raced as her feet moved on their own. She was being pulled towards something, just like how she was attracted to this area. Beyond the towers of books and tablets was another hallway. She diminished her light as she began to walk down the path. There were no webs or rubble on the floor. It also looked as if it had been maintained.

Yin and Yang were snarling and pacing anxiously in her mind. There was a subtle fragrance of cloves in the air. As she headed deeper down the corridor, the scent became stronger. There was a faint glow in the darkness. She should have headed back and told Elena, but she couldn't. Her body pulled her towards the light by instinct. The scent of cloves was all around her.

She reached a room that had a lit candle next to a stack of books. There was a large, king-size bed with an elegant fur comforter. The room was warm, and cinders seemed to dance in the air. Someone was living here, but she wasn't afraid. Her body trembled in excitement.

"What are you doing here?" A rich voice rumbled her core.

She spun her head towards the darkness in the corner of the room. Her eyes locked with dark green emeralds. Her lips parted in shock as she stepped into the light. The sound of her inner vampire voice rang clearly in her mind.

"Mate."