

Chapter 21

"WHOA! WHOA! WHOA!" Arlo stood up and held out his palms to me in a defensive position.

Closing my eyes, I had to focus on my breathing to keep myself calm. "I'm fine." Taking another deep breath. I held it before releasing it and opening my eyes again.

"That was fucking scary shit." Arlo relaxed his shoulders.

I didn't even stop from rolling my eyes. "It's nothing. Forget it even happened." Leaning back in the couch, I grabbed the remote and turned the T.V back on. Arlo gave me a last look before sitting down beside me.

"What do you want to do?" Arlo asked.

There was only a western on or a 60's game show. Neither sounded good so I just turned the T.V back off.

"I don't care. It's not like I have options."

"I have these..." Arlo got up and walked over to a small desk that was in the corner. He opened a drawer and pulled out something before walking over to me and laying it in front of me.

It was a drawing pad and colored pencils. My face lit up in excitement. My body moved quicker than it needed to, causing a fair amount of pain but I chose to ignore that.

Bring my knees up to my chest, I flipped to the first page and held my black pencil to the page and froze. What should I draw?

"What's wrong?" Arlo asked.

"Trying to think of what I should draw."

"Draw your trauma. Draw what you need to say but can't find the words."

Looking into his eyes, my past flashed before mine. The screams of my friends. Their faces etched into my memory of their terror, moments before their death. The sadistic smile of my uncle Thomas. The fear in my mother's eyes as she told me to run. The blood. So much blood. My bruised and achy feet from running in the woods. My burnt hands from trying to make a fire at 9 years old so I could cook food. The first time I was forced to defend myself from rogues.

I had no more tears in me to cry. Looking away, I just kept replaying it as my fingers moved forcefully against the paper. Arlo at some point had walked away. Occasionally, I could feel him behind me. Looking over my shoulder at my work. More than once he picked up the paper I had finished and tore out. Placing it on the coffee table before my hand started on another memory. He never spoke or tried to get me to eat. Other than refilling my cup, he was just a quiet bystander as I worked.

I drew it all. All the eyes. All the emotions on each face. Even my uncle's face. I would never forget the way he smiled at me as he tried to kill me. Even the eyes of the rogue I had to kill. Finally, I drew the palace but with flames coming out of it. I wanted to burn the whole place down. All the memories needed to burn. It needed to be ash.

My black colored pencil finally was too short for me to continue. I used some color in the eyes but it was all mainly the black. My hand was covered in residue as I massaged it. The coffee table was completely covered in drawings. My memories haunting me in present time, not just in my memories now.

"Come outside. I built a fire. Have a beer and supper." Arlo spoke for the first time.

I hadn't realized I spent the entire day drawing. My stomach rumbled hearing the word food so I didn't protest. Standing up, he handed me a blanket and we went outside. The sun was setting, making the view beautiful. The smell of fish was in the air, making my mouth water.

"That smells amazing." I said, giving him a small smile.

Walking over to the same chair I sat in last time, I got myself comfortable as Arlo made me a plate. "Glad you like it. It's one the few things I can cook."

"Does grilling count as cooking?" I teased.



"Not sure this actually counts as grilling but we'll go with that." Arlo gave me a soft smile as he handed the plate to me.

"Thanks!" My mouth watered as I took a bite of the salmon.

"Glad you like it." Arlo dished up a plate and set it aside before grabbing one more plate.

"Who is the third plate for? Are they boys back already? I didn't think they would be back so early."

"Nnooo, it's not for them." Arlo got a tad nervous and giddy.

A bad feeling came over me. "Then whoo?" I got my answer as I watched him walk out from the shadows.

"Oh."

"Sorry, I was instructed not to tell you." Arlo said as he took his own seat.

"Why didn't Axel come. Surely it would have made more sense he came instead of you." I said a little more colder than I needed to.

"True but I wanted to see you." Waylon smiled as he took his plate and sat down. He was directly across the fire from me. "Should I be worried you are more upset I am not Axel or that you aren't happy to see me?"

"Happy to see you? Isn't your mate waiting for you at home?" My good mood turned sour.



"I'm looking at my mate." Waylon took a bite and Arlo looked like he was enjoying this. His eyes darted between us like it was an episode of Jerry Springer and he was waiting on me to attack him.

"That wasn't how it looked the last time I saw you or was she not there hanging off you at my arraignment?"

"Some of us have to keep appearances up while things are happening behind the scenes." Waylon took another bite.

"So I should be grateful that I felt my lips burn? I should be grateful that you called the guards on me in the first place? I should had ran away from you in the first place. Never got on that plane."

"DAMN." Arlo yelled like a teenage girl. "You kissed another girl? Dude!"

"Fuck off, Arlo." Waylon glared at him as Arlo laughed. "Charlotte, I pushed her away and you know that nothing happened after that. It was Jasmine that called the guards. Axel and I got you out of the palace in case you forgot."

"Let me get on my knees and thank you from the bottom of my blacken heart." The sarcasm was thick.

Arlo snorted. "I like your spirit."

Waylon also raised half his lips up in a smile but quickly composed himself. I felt the desire run through him. "You look like you are healing."

“Yeah, you could have fucking told me where the fucking brakes were!” I found a new thing to be mad at him for.

“Hmm.” Waylon had finished his food. Setting his place down, he cracked open a beer.

“Nothing said how much you care for a person like literally tossing them off a plane with no instructions on how to land. Only for them to quite literally fall out of the sky and into a thick forest. Do you know what it’s like to smash your face against a tree trunk? I’d be happy to show you. IT’S NOT FUCKING FUN!” I yelled as I sat up straight and leaned forward. I couldn’t eat anymore. Setting my place down.

“Don’t go all glowy again!” Arlo said looking at me like I was crazy.

“Is that even a word?” I rounded on him.

“You know what I mean! Your eyes. I felt the power you still possess.”

“I should have just stayed home that day at work. I would have been perfectly fine.” I muttered more to myself.

“Actually, you wouldn’t have been.” Waylon said in a more serious tone than he has used all night.

“Excuse me?” My fight was cracking.

“You don’t need to know details but here.” Waylon got up and walked over to me. Handing me a photo. It was of me,

eating at the cute cafe I liked to visit. In this picture, I was wearing that pant suit that I had on when I first met him but no coffee stain. "This picture was taken by the men under Thomas's employment. He has had eyes on you this entire time."

A cold wash splashed over me. The whole time? I thought I was safe but in reality, he knew where I was this whole time? "Why didn't he just come get me?"

"I have a theory." Waylon said as he went back to his seat and sat down.

"Care to share it with the class?" I had to stop my eyes from busting out of the sockets.

"All those times Nora's ex-boyfriend found you. What if it was Thomas who gave away your position and he was letting him do the dirty work? What if Thomas wanted him to take you girls out so you wouldn't be able to claim the throne?"

I had to blink a few times to let that absorb. It would make sense. "Why let me live in the first place? Why not stage an accident? Like a leaky gas line and just kill me?"

"Not sure. I haven't worked that out yet but what I do know is that has been watching you this entire time."

"I'll never be free." I muttered as I sat back and wrapped the blanket around me. The fire cracked as an uncomfortable silence fell over us.

Arlo got up, grabbed our plates and went into the house. "I really am sorry." Waylon muttered.

"Okay." I wasn't looking at him but up at the stars. How I wish I could be up there.

"I'm not the bad guy you have pictured in your head." Waylon kept going.

"You haven't exactly shown me otherwise." Looking back at him, I just felt anger. "I met you and you didn't even tell Axel who I was. You kept it a secret. Then you forced me to stay on the project, fly to Canada only to meet your chosen mate. I had to watch her cling to you, kiss you and take over my project. You then forced me into a bomb shelter, invade my privacy, kiss me only to allow me to be taken by the royal guards. In all that time, you never once told me you were on my side. I can still feel your hesitancy. You don't know if you even want me! I get it, you can't take a wanted murderer as your Luna. However, you won't let me go. You are keeping me trapped with little to no explanation and I am suppose to trust you blindly? You have given me so many reasons to do that."

"You don't know anything about me or what I am capable of." Waylon glared at me.

"I could say the same about me." I challenged.

"From where I am sitting, you look like someone who has given up."

“Really? Is that so? What exactly do you want from me?” It was a loaded question and fortunately, Waylon read between the lines.

“Many things. I want to see that smile again.”

“I don’t have a reason to smile.”

“I could give you one tonight, if you were up to it.” Waylon had a devilish look in his eye.

“Keep dreaming.”

“What do you know about what I dream about?” Was Waylon trying to flirt with me?

“Probably about ripping people’s throats out.” I tried to keep it clean.

“You’re not wrong but that wasn’t what I was thinking about.”

“All the woman you have shared a bed with and how they have pleased you?” New tactic, hit him where it hurts.

“Those girls don’t even come close to comparison with the kiss we shared.” Waylon leaned forward. The honesty in his voice shocked me. He pushed his sincerity into me, making me at a loss for words.

“Actions speak louder than words.” I finally said with a dry throat. Grabbing a beer, I cracked it open. In one breath, I drank half of it.

“Easy, you have high painkillers in your system.”

“I’ll pass our earlier this way. Sleep harder.”

Only the crickets were making sounds as we sat under the stars. The first was started to die when Waylon got up and added another log. When he was finished, he pulled out a cigar and lit it.

“Why are you really helping me?” I asked, suddenly all my feelings came to the surface.



Mrs. Smith  Author

“ Thank you all for reading!!

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