

14 | Going Too Far

When I wake up, the room is dark, lit dimly by the light of the fireplace. I sit up with a soft groan, rubbing the sleep from my eyes.

The first thing I notice is the plastic removed from all the furniture. The second thing is the aroma of tomato sauce in the air. And the third is Riot sitting on the other end of the couch, watching me intently.

"Food?" I murmur, the heel of my hand still pressed against my eye.

He leans forward to grab something off the coffee table and presents me with a steaming plate of spaghetti. It's warm to the touch and I take it graciously.

Curling the noodles around my fork, I try to brush off the feeling of his eyes on me. Expecting him to talk is far from realistic. So I don't bother getting my hopes up.

A few minutes pass by, my chewing uncomfortably loud in the otherwise quiet room. Finally, I can't take it anymore.

"Riot?" I ask, looking up from my plate.

"Hm?"

"Who are you?" I know who he is. The entire pack constantly whispers and talking about him made sure of that. But somehow it seems surreal. So surreal in fact, that I need it to come from his lips instead of a jittery pack member.

There's a pause, only seeming to confirm my answer past what words could.

"I think you know." His expression doesn't change, but his eyes let something slip. There's a flash of something, there and gone in half a second.

I swallow. The soft sound of metal tings as I drop my fork on the plate.

My voice is barely above a whisper, like I'm half afraid of what will happen at saying the title, "You're the Exiled Alpha."

Another pause. I lose my appetite.

"Yes."

This is who everyone has been making a fuss over. The one they shake in their own skin at just the thought of. This wolf in front of me is a single tyrant who has made every Alpha fear for their position ever since word of his exile got out.

Something within me didn't want to believe that before. It's almost as if, subconsciously, I had dismissed everyone's talk of being nothing more than rumors.

But rumors don't sit in front of you and agree with you.

"Eat," he urges, noticing how I'm staring blankly at my food.

I shake my head, "I'm not hungry."

I uncross my legs and get up from the couch, taking my plate and an empty one from the coffee table, presumably his. When I walk past him I avert his gaze, keeping mine to the ground.

This shouldn't change anything. Knowing who he is and accepting it should only deepen my understanding of him. But it doesn't. It only complicates what already has my head in a mess.

What wouldn't sink in before now starts to. The fact that this infamous figurehead has taken me captive and refuses to feel the bond between us. It's unreal. It's... frustrating.

Suddenly I whirl back around, sitting the plates down on a nearby stand as I do so.

"Why are you resisting?" There's heat to my words, all of the pent up frustration leaking out, "I know you feel it, so why are you fighting it? Am I really that goddamn terrible?"

His fingers tighten on the couch, balling the leather into his fist. When he answers, it's grudging and through clenched teeth, "Just drop it."

My expression sours, contemplating for a minute. "No."

I stare hard, making sure that he feels the scrutiny burning into his skull.

"Tell me why you were outside my door all night," I demand, crossing my arms and shifting my weight, "Answer me that and I'll never ask anything ever again."

"You're going too far," he grits out, repressing a growl.

"I have a guess," I continue pushing him, "You're trying to fight what your wolf."

"Adrienne," he warns with a deathly undertone, "Stop."

The sound of my name off his tongue for the first time makes my heart accelerate, threatening or not.

In a split and thoughtless second, I spit back a taunting response. "That's funny. Nathan has never asked me to stop."

The words are out before I can stop them. It doesn't take me long to realize the weight of what I've just said. Or to feel my body pulse with panic as regret sets in.

My arms fall to my sides, as does the smug look on my face when the house shakes with a thunderous roar. I cover my ears and close my eyes, but I still hear the loud, banging racket.

When I look again the couch is flipped over on its backside and laying on the complete opposite side of the room. Riot is facing me, his chest heaving rapidly as a constant growl comes from his throat. The deep ruby glow of his blackened irises in the dark put the light of the fire to shame.

He takes a hesitant step towards me, then two steps back before abruptly turning and striding for the front door. My feet are glued to the floor as I watch him swing it open. It slams into the wall with enough force to undoubtedly form a hole.

It seems like an eternity before I can snap myself out of my daze.

What have I done?

I jog out onto the porch to see him, just in time to catch the view of an enormous dark furred wolf disappearing into the forest.

I don't expect him to come back, not anytime soon. He needs space, so I try to wait. I try to pass time faster with sheer force of will and want. Which only turns into me prancing restlessly around the house.

What if he's going after Nathan— assuming he's even alive— to finish what he started? Or what if he's just leaving me here with no sense of navigation to the way back to my pack? Or maybe he just wants away from me. If it's the latter, then I can't say I blame him.

Telling my overly-aggressive mate that I had relations with a wolf he already hated. That's sure to get him to open up.

Enough time passes for my stomach to knot up with guilt. Every passing minute I'm coming up with scenarios of what he could be doing out there, each one worse than the last. Eventually I can't take it anymore and find myself wandering amidst the looming trees. Following the distinctive scent of Riot Sydney.

The moon shines harshly overhead, but even its light can't penetrate the thick canopy of leaves. There's a gentle yet chilling wind blowing through my hair, disheveling it.

I start to wonder why I'm out here. Why I'm not running to find the way back to my pack. Why, instead, I'm tracking down the infamous Alpha in exile whose title has the world shaking in paranoia.

"Adrienne," I melt at his voice, coming somewhere from the shadows. I turn in its direction.

Riot is sitting slumped against a tree, his fingers tangled tightly in his hair. He doesn't bother to hide his nudity. It takes one glance before I'm averting my gaze, heat rushing to my cheeks.

"I don't know what you want me to say."

He's staring aimlessly at the ground, his elbow propped on his knee. He looks exhausted, his eyelids and lips drooping.

My brow furrows. "What do you mean?"

His hand drops from his hair and he laughs bitterly, "I don't fucking know. It's like, when you're around all my senses go into overdrive. When you're close, my heart starts pounding harder and I can't think straight because my wolf goes dumb in the head and I always wanna touch you and it's fucking weird."

He says it all in minimal breaths, the words rushing out. His tone is sharp, fluctuating between high and low notes.

I take a step forward. The sight of him hurting me in turn.

"Please don't," he begs, dragging his palm over his face.

"Riot."

"God, don't say my name."

"Why?" I challenge, defying him by easing closer, "Because you're afraid you'll feel something?"

"I'm not afraid," he snaps.

The wind blows in his direction, moving my hair to lay on my chest. His nostrils flare, and I know he can smell my scent.

"Then show me," I say, taking another bold step, "Show me that you're not afraid."

He throws his head back suddenly, letting out a deep, guttural sound. His lips curl back in a wince, revealing sharpened teeth.

He's clashing with his wolf again, this time in a losing battle.

In a flash I'm to him, kneeling at his side. Somehow I stay calm despite the apprehension growing within me.

"You don't have to fight it." I resist the urge to throw myself at him or to even touch him. I don't know how he would react to that, especially in a state as distressed as this.

His chin lowers back down until his eyes meet mine. There's a brokenness in them that makes my heart ache, that makes an all too familiar pang of hatred ricochet on the walls of my stomach.

His voice is quiet and defeated, "I want to touch you. I want to touch you so bad."

Gingerly, I hold out my hand, "So touch me."

He inspects it for a few seconds, as if deciding whether to trust me or not. With great caution, his hand raises to engulf mine, our fingers lacing like a perfect puzzle piece. He watches our hands intently, like he's actually trying to see the invisible sparks dancing between our skin.

I break the hold, and in the time that our contact is broken, a flash of panic crosses his face. Like he's afraid of losing something.

My fingers wrap around his wrist, bringing his palm up to cup my cheek.

"It's okay," I whisper reassuringly. His fingers twitch at the touch before giving my face a gentle squeeze.

"We need to get back to the cabin," I say, searching his face and failing to make out an emotion.

"Why?" His posture suddenly improves, alert eyes darting around the forest around us.

I stand up, pulling him up with me, "Because the couch is in the wall and I don't clean up messes that aren't mine."

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I love this little scene between Riot and Adrienne. I think it sort of shows a bit more of them from the inside.

Please share your thoughts!

Thank you for reading!

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