

02 | Threatened With A Cage

My face burns with embarrassment and ignorance. Apparently, everyone has known about my fate except for me. But that ends now. 294

After having burst through the door of the Alpha's house without a single trace of hesitation, I head for the stairs where I know his office is. I'm marching my way down the hallway when angry voices stop me dead in my tracks. 295

"That maniac is on the loose! How am I suppose to takeover when he's out there just waiting for someone to pounce on?" I recognize the whiny yet still smug voice of the celebrated prick, Nathan Swelter. 294

Since I need to talk to him anyway, sticking around by the partially open door wouldn't be that wrong, would it? I've never exactly been against eavesdropping before, so what's the difference now? 295

That's my reasoning as I creep closer to the door and press my ear against the wall, letting the gift of heightened hearing do its job. 296

"He's less likely to bother us if there are two leaders. You have a Luna picked out, correct?" I recognize the voice of Alpha Andre, speaking in a composed tone. 297

"I want Adrienne," he responds almost immediately, causing me to physically restrain the gag squirming to escape my throat. At the mention of my name, I feel the color drain from my face. "She's the one and I'm tired of waiting for both her and my title." 298

A deep hum reaches my ears, what the Alpha always does when he's considering something. "Then wait no longer. I'll have the wedding moved up to Thursday. Since there's no mate bond to bind you, vows will work just as well. Plus, you'll have more time to get acquainted with her. Maybe even." 299

"There's not going to be a wedding," I announce, seething after barging through the door on impulse. There's no way I can stand out there and silently listen to my future being decided for me. Not anymore. I'm sick of being a ghost in my own life. 300

Two pairs of eyes turn on me. One is Nathan's-- a light blue that pairs nicely with neatly combed black hair. The other pair are a darker blue and belong to his father, whose once inky black hair is now peppered with grey. Evidence of the stress that comes attached to the title. 301

"Excuse me?" Alpha Andre stands up from his leather office chair. He has squared shoulders and a tall stature that would be hard to beat. One thing is for certain, and it's that he's used to looking down on people, not vice versa. He shoots me that disappointing gaze that he's mastered over the years, making even the most arrogant of wolves ashamed of themselves. 302

I swallow, fighting to keep my attitude under control. Too many times I've mouthed off to him and seen the consequences. But keeping this new leaf turned over is proving to be quite challenging. 303

"I'm not marrying him or anyone else," I seethe again, planting my feet firmly in place. He can't possibly think that he can force me into this. Can he? He's held control over me my entire life, but surely there's a line he won't cross. There has to be. 304

To my right, Nathan lets out a frustrated moan. 305

"Why can't you just cooperate for once?" He whines at me. "I thought we were past this. I can give you everything you want! Who turns down the title of Luna?" He looks to his father for help with pleading yet demanding eyes. 306

He's never grown up. He still reminds me of that same child who threatened to throw a tantrum if he didn't get his dessert. Or the one who threatened to have my fingers cut off if I tried to play with a toy he'd forgotten he even had. 307

"You can't give me shit or you wouldn't have treated me like it my whole life," I shoot back, feeling a growl starting to rumble deep in my chest. He's always thought of himself as royalty and everyone else peasants. But in my eyes, a king without a crown isn't a king at all. 308

Alpha Andre snarls at me for my backlash. "Watch your damn tongue." He then turns to his son, confidence thick in the air around him. "She'll do whatever I say." He sits back down in his chair, leaning back and watching me with a calculating look. One that reminds me of a beady eyed snake in the grass. 309

"Won't you Adrienne?" He asks in that sickly sweet, ominous voice. I hate that voice, that tone. I hate it with all of my being and I always have. It makes me sick. Sicker than imagining a future with Nathan. 310

I clench my jaw tightly, my hands curling into fists. "And if I don't?" 311

He tilts his head down and smiles darkly, clasping his hands loosely together. "Then you'll be locked up again. You wouldn't want that, would you? I'd think it gets awful lonely down there." 312

My blood turns to ice and suddenly I feel cold. Chilled to the bone. It's as if I can already feel the frigid stone against my skin and the silence ringing in my ears. 313

I hide my fear and scoff, skeptical and taken aback. There's no way I can go back there, not to that hellhole. Though if he's serious about this, then I'm more screwed than the missing ones in his head. 314

Though that's an easy accomplishment. 315

"You wouldn't." I force my words to come out as a challenge, yet on the inside I feel like breaking down, dropping to my knees, and begging to keep my freedom. 316

He smiles again, his eyes sparkling with a twisted amusement. "Oh but I would." 317

He enjoys this. I know he does. 318

I find myself staring down at my shoes. Heat rushes to my cheeks at the fact that he can bend me so easily with one simple threat. 319

This can't be happening... 320

"The wedding is Thursday," the Alpha's words are like a cold bucket of reality, reassuring me that this isn't a nightmare. "That should be enough time. Now go on. I believe you have ceremony to prepare for." 321

Go figure Forced into an engagement and I'm still the one who has to cater the party I don't want. 322

My feet move mechanically towards the door, more than ready to leave. But not without knocking a potted plant off a nearby table first. The sound of the clay shattering on the floor is amplified by the thick silence of the room. 323

"Bitch," I mumble under my breath. 324

"What was that?" Nathan snaps. It surprises me that he doesn't let his daddy handle this for him, too. 325

I start to prepare a sarcastically sweet response, but instead I decide to voice my true feelings. There's no longer a reason to keep my mouth shut. 326

I whirl around on my heel to face him. My eyes lock with his, shooting daggers dripping with venom. 327

"Bitch. That's what I said," I snap, loud and clear, "You're a fucking bitch and I hope and pray that one day comes when your rotting and bloated body is found floating in the river, eyeless because the fish have already picked them out." 328

It feels as though my skin is on fire and my lungs ache for air. I mean every single word of what I say and my tone is more than laced with hatred; it's seeping it. Pure and livid hatred. 329

I don't wait to see if he's going to patronize me further or if his father is going to throw me back underground for not holding my tongue. I slam the door behind me with enough force and intent that a loud crack through the wood streaks across it. 330

Instead of going back to prepare for the party like I'd been told, I head straight to one of the many small cabins in the village and into my bedroom, which is similar to a loft. 331

Fairy lights hang around the tops of the dark grey walls. The room is flooded with natural lighting from the giant window that my bed is sidled up against. I plop down on it, burying myself in the sheets. 332

Just forget it. Forget everything. 333

Forgetting is always easier. Except this time, I can't push the dreadful thoughts away. 334

The wedding is Thursday. That leaves me with four days. Four days left of freedom. Four days left to figure out how to save myself. 335

Suddenly, in a random thought, I remember what Nathan said before I barged in. 336

"That maniac is on the loose! How am I suppose to takeover when he's out there just waiting for someone to pounce on?" 337

What maniac was he talking about? And what does that have to do with him needing a Luna before he becomes the Alpha? 338

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