

## 06 | Battle Of The Scents

Dedicated to all the people who have been asking for updates <3

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My heartbeat pounds in my ears as the bedroom door clicks shut behind us. This stranger has an iron grip on me, not to mention an aggressiveness that could terrify anyone.

I want so badly to feel safe in my mate's arms— to let myself relax against his warm chest. But I can't. Anxiety only grips me tighter as he carries me towards the bed. The sheets rustle quietly as he sits me down on the edge and begins pulling o my jacket. My heartbeat pulses in my throat as the panic begins setting in.

Once the jacket is o he tosses it onto the floor, almost in a disgusted manner. He pauses for a minute a er that, raising his nose as if to sni the air. I take this opportunity to squirm further onto the bed, and further away from him. I hug myself tightly and pull my knees halfway to my chest. Suddenly the white T-shirt that I'm le with feels much too thin for comfort.

I swallow nervously, watching as he walks over to an attached room and turns the light on, revealing a bathroom. My skin prickles as I watch, the saliva cold in my mouth.

What's he going to do?

In one swi motion he raises his arms over his head, peeling o his shirt. My eyes feel ready to bug out of my head.

I did not sign up for this.

The light behind him illuminates his figure, creating a sublime, muscular silhouette made of rigid lines and defined curves. I can only faintly see the center of his outline, but it's enough to tell that his abdomen is no less apparent.

Striding towards me, his steps are slow and confident. He stops in front of the bed, looking down on me with intent, dark eyes. I lean back as he reaches forward, but I don't lean far enough. His fingers touch under my chin, igniting the area with a tingling feel as he gingerly pushes my jaw closed.

Heat rushes to my cheeks when I realize my mouth had been open. Was it that obvious?

My eyes flick to his uncertainly. What happens now? Because there's no way in hell that I'm letting these clothes leave my body.

"Wash his scent o ," he orders, his voice like steel. There's no denying that it's a command, not a polite suggestion.

He then drops his T-shirt carelessly into my lap. His voice is cold as he instructs me. Begrudging even.

"Then put this on."

With that, he lets his gaze linger for a few seconds. Then, he turns and strides out of the room, closing the door behind him with a loud click to disrupt the nerve wracking silence.

I scrunch my face up in both discontent and confusion.

He wants Nathan's smell o of me. That's the only conclusion I can come to, and a likely one considering his earlier disgruntlement with the scent. Being treated as a doll to be dressed up is irritating. But in this case, I don't want Nathan's scent on me either.

Cautiously, I slide o the bed, watching the door like a hawk. I half expect him to burst through it at any minute, spewing more demands.

With shirt clenched tightly in my hand, I pad into the bathroom, shutting the door behind me and making a point to lock it.

Mate or not, my privacy is my own.

The searing water is uncomfortable, drumming against my back, between my shoulder blades. My skin is burning to the point that I think it may peel o .

I've always preferred the cold. And I'd never choose a hot shower over a moderately room temperature or even a slightly cold one. But I need to feel the pain. I need to have the distraction it provides. Almost like it's a pause button.

I fight to keep my mind o the situation at hand, along with the questions that go with it. Did this stranger— my mate whose name is a mystery— take over the pack? How many of my pack members did he kill? Am I still expected to marry Nathan?

I shake my head, pushing away the curiosity. Whatever happens, happens. It's not like I was allowed to control my life before. What's the di erence now?

My focus turns back to my reddening body as I turn the water o and step out of the shower. I'm shaky as I put my clothes back on, my muscles lulled into a trance from the heat. Even more warmth pools in my stomach when I take a deep breath of the addictive scent clinging to this ominous stranger's shirt.

I'm not a petite person per se, but it's still oversized to the point where I might be able to get away with not wearing anything else. Nonetheless I slip my jeans back on anyway. There's a certain line drawn in my dignity that I'm not quite ready to cross yet. And walking around pantless with a shirt tail barely covering my ass would require crossing that line.

When I reenter the bedroom, my lovely and very congenially mate is nowhere to be found.

Is this my window for escape?

As soon as the thought crosses my mind, I ridicule myself for such a ridiculous idea. Running away from everything I know just to be killed on sight as a rogue? I'd rather not. Yet, at least.

I wander out of the bedroom— which has to be the guest one considering its lack of a scent— and down the stairs, right out the front door I was carried through. The stranger doesn't stop me, nor is there even any sign he was here.

Outside, the entire village still looks deserted and desolate. Everything is dark, with only the moon acting as a dim lamp of silver light. The snow crunches beneath my feet as I wander through the empty streets— which are really just worn out paths weaving between the cabins.

My nostrils flare when a certain hair raising smell reaches my nose. Immediately goosebumps rise over my arms as I slow to a stop in the middle of the village, smelling the air more intently now.

Blood.

No... It's more than just blood. It's carnage.

If that smell, combined with the dark, soulless streets, isn't enough to send someone over the edge, then having your every move watched is.

Just as before, when I look up, I find the curious, frightened eyes peering at me through the windows.

A growl escapes my throat.

I'm some kind of spectacle for them, and that fact piques me.

I stare right back, but whoever it is doesn't budge.

If they won't come out, then I guess that means I'll go in.

The heavy door of the pack house shutting behind me is louder than it should be. Usually I would avoid drawing too much attention to myself, but between Nathan's ceremonies and whatever the hell this can be called, I haven't been le much of a choice.

When I turn the corner going into the grand living room, I'm met with about a dozen pairs of those staring eyes, glaring at me through the dark hue and blue shadows of the room.

"You're wearing his 'shirf!" Mya's irritating, high pitched voice exclaims as she throws her arms out dramatically. She's standing in front of one of the large windows beside the couch. There's no doubt that she was peeking out of it just a moment before.

I'm not sure what she's trying to imply by her comment, but it runs right through me nonetheless.

"You're clothed at all?" I regurgitate her exaggerated shock right back to her. More o en than not, she's usually showing more skin than she's covering. And it's far from being subtle, which is why I'm surprised to find her covered from head to toe in winter apparel.

I can sense the room grow impossibly tenser. Everyone silently watching shi s uncomfortable in their seats and standing positions, but some of them I can feel staring holes right through me.

Mya crosses her arms and sneers. "You're calling me a slut but you're the one who just went to bed with a FUCKING TYRANT!"

I freeze.

Tyrant?

Then it clicks.

This is the tyrant everyone has been whispering about. The monster that Aimee warned me to stay away from.

So much for that.

"Enough, Mya," Alpha Andre growls, entering through the kitchen. His presence immediately weighs down the air, making it heavy with tension. "Adrienne," he motions past himself, gesturing for me to enter the room he just came from.

Alpha Andre may be the last bastard I want to talk to, next to his son, but I gratefully take the opportunity to get away from Mya. As I stride across the room to Andre, I stick my tongue out at her in a taunting sneer. She always hated being scolded by Andre instead of being his lap dog, and I've always loved her indignation over it.

Once in the kitchen, I clench my jaw when I see Nathan sitting at the table. There's no denying that I have strong feelings for him. Just not the feelings he wants me to. But repulse is a verystrong feeling nonetheless.

Although repulse isn't what I get we approach the table. It's more like happiness. Because there's just something about of him, with his head bowed, held between his hands, with stress creasing his features, that's satisfying to me.

"Explain to us," Andre says, leaning past me to lay his palm flat on the tabletop, "What that monstrous bastard wants with you."

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**Predictions to what Andre and Nathan plan to do? Because certain someones got inflated egos and got their pack taken away :)**

**Also, a question: Do you guys think I should start giving the chapters names instead of just numbers?**

**Thanks for reading!**

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