

## 09 | Don't Get Attached

**Warning: half-assed editing job done while I was about to fall asleep. I'll do better editing later :)**

My sleep was restless the entire night. Tossing and turning, accommodating for my tied hands. I wake up for about the fifth time, this time to morning sunlight illuminating the curtains from behind.

Right then the door opens, revealing a very worn looking 'Riot Sydney.' His eyes are tired and there's dark purple semicircles beneath them. He looks freshly showered, his wet hair pressed down on his forehead.

His smell makes my wolf howl to the point that I have to take a few breaths to retain myself. A masculine cologne mixes with his natural piney, musky scent, making for my heart to falter a few beats.

He walks over, still refusing to look at me. My spirit drops.

For some reason, I crave his attention. That reason more than likely being the mate bond.

Doesn't he feel it, too?

He holds his palm out towards me.

"Hands," comes the same emotionless command.

I oblige, placing the tied bundle of rope in his open hand. With the other one he starts to cut me free with a single protruded claw on his index finger.

It slices the rope like a razor blade on paper, making me shudder inwardly. The thought of that same claw pressed against flesh, doing that exact same thing, is mortifying.

Once cut, the ropes fall from my wrists. The skin is an angry red, irritated and rubbed raw. The sweat in the abrasions only make it burn worse.

Riot seems to flinch at the sight, his eyes locked intently on my rose colored hands. For a brief moment, I get excited. The look in his eyes — locked anxiously on my hands— almost makes it look like he cares. Like it pains him to see.

When I think he's finally going to say something, he turns away abruptly with a quiet growl and heads for the exit.

And just like that, I'm left alone again.

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Half an hour passes before I finally will myself to wander downstairs. When I do, there's no trace of Riot.

To both my dismay and my pleasure, I find his scent lingering faintly about the house. It triggers a desolate feeling in me. Something unexplainable.

Am I... missing him?

Before I get the chance to figure out what it is, three solid knocks sound from the front door.

At first I freeze, remembering Alpha Andre's latest command: put her back in the cell. Now they've come to get me. They know Riot brought me back and now they know that he's gone.

I take a shaky breath as the icy chill of vulnerability clenches my heart.

A few seconds later, three more knocks come, more impatiently now.

"Goddamn it, open the door, Adrienne!" A very irritated, yet comforting voice yells from the other side. A voice I've got stored away in my memory as belonging to the only friendly person in this pack.

Immediately I'm rushing to the door, my adrenaline-filled fingers fumbling over the handle to get it open.

"Thank the gods you're still alive!" I no more than fling the door open before I'm being pulled into a rib crushing hug.

I inhale Aimee's scent, the familiarity of it a much needed comfort. My nose presses down on the top of her shoulder, my face burrowed into her curly strands of dark brown, almost black hair.

"I swear to you I'll castrate that worthless bastard," she growls, her chin bobbing on my shoulder as she does.

"Have at it," I grumble, finally freeing myself from her suffocating bear hug.

Whether she hears the vexation in my voice or sees it on my face, her brown lips fall into a frown. But it's not a sad frown, because her sharp eyebrows scrunch madly together along with it.

"Where the hell does he get off thinking you owe him a marriage?" Her voice is irate, the more she talks, the angrier she seems to get.

The blackmailed marriage. I had almost completely forgotten about it. And remembering it only makes all of my previous questions resurface. Surely Nathan won't still try to go through with it.

A sickening bile rises in my throat with the thought of how close I came to being bound to that spoiled assbag. The only comfort I find, however, is in the fact that so long as Riot is here, holding the title of Alpha just out of Nathan's reach, then that spoiled brat has no power over me.

"How many died?" Aimee suddenly asks, the burning anger still present in her chocolate colored irises.

I shake my head and shrug. "No idea. Sophia at least."

There's a silent pause between us, not an awkward one, but one long enough to let me sink into my thoughts.

I contemplate telling her about Riot. About my suspicions, about his strange, almost bipolar behavior. But right as the first word is on the tip of my tongue, it falls back down. If I say it out loud, if I allow someone else to know about what I think is between us, then it only becomes that much more real. And that terrifies me.

"How did you know I was here?" I ask instead, changing the subject with a nervous gulp.

She gives me a pointed look. "Adrienne, the entire pack knows he brought you here. That's all they're talking about. How apparently he's using you as some kind of pawn." She rants with disapproval, giving me the impression that Nathan isn't the only one on her shit list.

Although she didn't say a name, only a pronoun, my heart speeds up and my face heats slightly.

Goddamn it, stop.

"Speaking of being a pawn," Aimee continues, oblivious to my spike of nerves, "Andre is asking for you. He's waiting at the pack house."

He's asking for me? A reminder for me to be put back in that hellhole and then sending his son to play a high stakes game of hide and seek with me, he has the audacity to ask for me?

"Tell him he can go fuck."

"You're going," she cuts me off sternly, "And so am I."

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My breath fogs in front of me with every exhale. The air is frigid and dry. The ground remains frozen, a painful reminder of my bleeding, bare feet the previous day.

I pull the door of the pack house open, Aimee's hot breath fanning the back of my neck as I do so.

"Do you want me to come?" She asks gently. I shake my head in response and assure her that I've got it handled. A reminder about a minute of arguing with her, I finally convince her to wait outside.

I walk down the lightless hallway toward the living room. The radiate warmth of a fireplace increases the closer we get.

When we enter, Andre immediately shoots up from the leather couch. His long legs stretch out, no doubt containing pent up energy. His fingers curl repeatedly into strained fists as his livid eyes lock with mine.

He's not pleased. And neither am I.

When he opens his mouth to speak I already anticipate his words.

"I gave you an order and you resisted." He says it in his classic condescending, ashamed tone. The exact tone he uses anytime he wants someone to feel guilty for something that isn't their fault.

I gave you my loyalty and you didn't care? Giving me time to think. But for once, as if the silence of the room were giving me what I want, I bite my tongue.

I notice Nathan sitting by the fireplace on an adjacent couch. He cradles his right hand in his lap, and, to my utter shock, he avoids looking up. His head is down and his shoulders are slumped. Just like a newly neutered dog.

"I want to know what's going on between you and that tyrant" he spits the last word through his teeth in disgust. Like it would soil in his mouth if he didn't get it out fast enough.

"W-" I don't get very far in my answer before he cuts me off.

"Tell her what you smelled," he barks at Nathan. For a second I almost think I see the golden boy jump.

"His scent was circling us," Nathan says. It hardly sounds like his voice without the arrogance flowing through it.

So that's why Nathan stopped following me. That's why, for the first time in his privileged life, he gave up on something. It's not because I out-endured him or because he lost my scent or decided to grow a heart and let me go free. It was because Riot's scent was there, threatening him with his presence. Acting like a border between Nathan and I.

I remain silent. I try to keep myself from reading too far into it, but how can I not?

"Don't think this is a permanent thing." As if he read my mind, Andre shatters the bit of hope my wolf instincts had started to drum up.

"Once this problem is dealt with, then he won't be around to intervene with your punishments anymore. Better yet, he won't have a reason to."

His voice is cold. Purposefully indifferent. In fact, it's vain. "Don't get attached, Adrienne. He's not your friend. All you are to him is a pawn."

I don't let a long pause of silence follow his words this time. My jaw has clenched as hard as it possibly can. And if I go any longer without opening it, it'll reach its cracking point.

"And what am I to you?" I snap, staring this shit excuse of an Alpha dead in the eye. For years I looked up to him, admired him even. At one point he was almost like a father to me. But things fucking change, don't they?

"If you say anything other than a pawn or a waste of space, then you're a goddamn liar," I growl. My hands are shaking and my heart is pounding as I dare say my next words. "You should have just let that infant in the rain where you found it."

We play a speechless staring game, Andre and I. He doesn't respond with anger, nor does he wear it on his face. He doesn't have to though. I can feel it filling up the room, ready to swallow us all.

When he finally answers, it's impassive.

"I'll withdraw my order of lock up. For now. You're dismissed."

He doesn't have to say it for me to know to take the truce.

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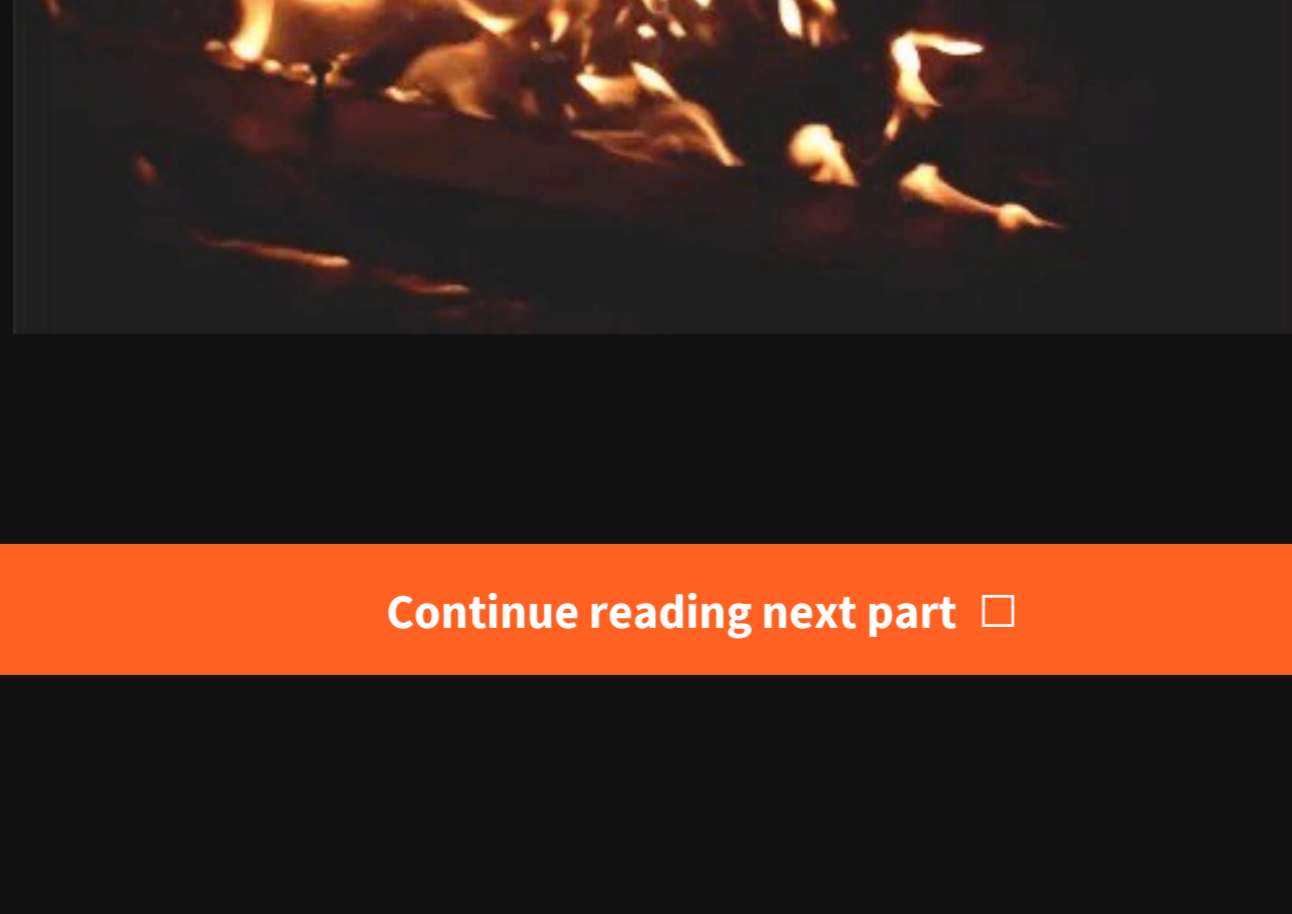
**I finally updated! Yay!**

**I'm sorry for this chapter. Truly, it bored the freaking heck out of me just writing it but it had to be done. Hopefully you all haven't given up hope yet, more Riot scenes are coming I promise!**

**Also, NEW COVER. Yay or nah? Personally it's one of my absolute favorites that I've ever made and I'm obsessed with it.**

**Thanks for reading!**

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