

## The Forced 132

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Chapter [www.NoVeLworm.com](#)

132

XANDER'S POV:

The atmosphere over the dinner table was to the normal eye calm. But to me it felt oppressive. A heavy silence blanketed the dinning hall

Xander's POV:

Caldan and Sabrina. They're back? To the palace?

"Send them in." I said to the guard, my voice as controlled as I could get it.

"Yes your Majesty." The guard bowed and left. Moments later he returned with Caldán and Sabrina.

My breath caught in my chest as I saw her. Unharméd, in one piece, albeit exhausted from the looks of it.

I felt the rush of multiple emotions at once. Relief. Joy. Happiness. Sadness. A terrible feeling settled in the pit of my chest. After so long I spent searching for her, fearing the worst, unsure when I'd ever see her again, she walked in like nothing every happened. At a time when I had resigned to resort to magic just to find her.

The air felt heavy, like the oxygen had become suddenly too heavy. I was at a loss for what to say, unable to tear my eyes away from her.

She looked down and bowed. "Your majesty." She greeted inam a neutral tone.

"Your majesty," Caldán greeted too.

"Sabrina..." I said, whatever other words I had to say

She looked up at me, but otherwise was silent.

died in my throat.

Is this perhaps a dream? Will I wake up to coldness and her being gone again?

This can't be a dream. It's too real to be one.

"You've returned." I turned to my brother. It was easier to look at him. "You aren't done with the trip. There still a lot of packs to be visited. Why are you back so soon?." "Why was Sabrina sent away from the palace?"

I paused. Caldán stared at me, his eyes shooting daggers. "I beg you finest pardon?"

"All this time. All those long months. I believed that she was here Safe and cared for. But she was sent out? Why? Why did you allow it to happen?"

"Caldán, perhaps you've gotten the wrong idea. I don't have time for unnecessary things. So don't everything."[www.NoVeLworm.com](#)

expect an answer for

"How do you mean?" He asked, his tone borderline accusatory. "The last time I checked, everything was fine back here. You must have known something. Why didn't you..." "Caldán!"

"Your majesty" He said with indignation. "My apologies for my tone."

This is so annoying. He wasn't sorry at all, it was painfully clear to me. His eyes have that challenging look in them. He held Sabrina's hand and squeezed it. And as he did, his eyes dared me to say something. His insolence is fucking annoying right now. But at the same time I understand why he's acting like this.

Sabrina is right here. Right now. I've dreamt about this moment when I'd get to see her again. I never expected that moment would be anytime soon.

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From the nature of Cattán's questions, she didn't tell him the details. I didn't know if that was a good thing or a bad thing. Had they been together for long? How long since they met? How on earth did Caldán even run into her?! What happened while they were away? I want to hug her. Pull her close to me and feel her body against mine. I want to take her into my arms and express my joy at seeing her okay. Words can't describe the devastation I felt when I went back to that forest and didn't find her. I want to tell her how much I missed her, and how worried I was about her. And how I'll never do anything to hurt her or even attempt sending her away, I made a mistake. I shouldn't have been so quick to send her away. The guilt ate me away every single day.

And yet I can't move. I stood frozen. Watching.

"Since you're back, you can go and rest up." I said in a controlled tone.

"You haven't answered my questions." Caldán said. "Rest, we'll have plenty of time to rest. I want to know why you sent her away. Why can't you tell me? Whatever happened?"

I resisted the urge to rub my temples. "Caldán. You can leave now"

"Hey," Sabrina said and tugged on his arm. "I'm really tired. Perhaps we can do this later." She looked at me as she said the last words, and I could see the hatred reflected in her eyes. Her eyes were cold as she stared at me. Colder than I had ever seen. She turned to Caldán and smiled softly.

Caldán brought her hand up to his lips and kissed the back of her palm. "I'm sorry. You're right, we should get some rest."

That's exactly what I said! And he acted like I was his biggest enemy.

He's doing this to further annoy me. Hanging all over her like a lovesick puppy. It's so fucking infuriating.

But above all, I'm greatly relieved that she's safe.

I turned away from them so I wouldn't see them leave. The door shut and then opened again.

"Your majesty," I heard Nifra's voice behind me. "Caldán and Sabrina... they're..."

"I know," I said. "She's back. And she's safe. I'm glad."

Nifra went silent.

I could guess her thoughts. He's back. Now what? Caldán is a very stubborn child he always has been. And now that Sabrina is involved, I can only guess what he's going to do now.

"I shall prepare a welcome dinner." Nifra said. "They need it."

I replied with a hum. A welcome dinner. It's probably going to be at the royal dining hall too. Seated with Caldán and Sabrina.

It's not something I'm looking forward to at all.

"My king?" Nifra called softly. I turned and looked at her. She opened her mouth to say something then sighed. "You should get some rest before the dinner. It'll help."

I felt exhausted. Like all my energy had been lynched out of me. "I will. Thank you, Nifra."

I have a bad feeling about all of this. I can't shake off the look in Sabrina's eyes a rightfully angry at me.

she looked at me. I sent her away, and she's

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Sabrina sat a couple of chairs away from me. I hadn't been prepared to see her again. I had even thought that maybe I had dreamed the entire encounter at my office.

But she was here with me. With Caldán by her side.

She had been cleaned up exquisitely. Her long hair shiny and pinned up her head, with golden ringlets framing her face and nape. Her skin was pale, her cheeks and lips red. She was dressed in a dark green gown that made her look like a princess. Her back was ramrod straight, her face a mask of neutrality.

She's always looked like a princess. It's hard to look away from her, but at the same time I have to make sure it's not too obvious.

But Caldán was right beside her. his mere presence was simply annoying, but I did my best not to show it on my face. He would brush his hand with hers, and they'd exchange small smiles.

"How was your journey?" I asked. The only question in the dining room ever since we all sat down fifteen minutes ago.

Caldán looked up at me. His eyes flashed for a brief second. He's still angry at me, I can see it. "It was good, your majesty." He said curtly. And returned back to his plate.

I drank some of my wine. I hadn't any appetite for food, as such it laid untouched in front of me. I'm still deeply curious about how they ran into each other. How did their paths cross? What sort of things happened along the way?

"How did you two meet?" I asked, my eyes on Sabrina.

She didn't look up at me. She drank some of her wine and turned to Caldán instead, her eyes promoting.

"I met her at one of the packs I was visiting."[www.NoVeLworm.com](#)

I had a feeling he wasn't telling me everything.

"And what was going on in that pack?" I asked.[www.NoVeLworm.com](#)

Caldán's eyes narrowed. "I was hoping you would tell me, your majesty. How she ended up there."

I turned to Sabrina. She still hadn't glanced at me all evening. I didn't reply to Caldán's biting comment.

A period of silence ensured, broken only by the sound of cutlery on plates..

"Is everything okay?" Caldán asked Sabrina. "You haven't eaten anything."

"I...I'm okay," she said and smiled at him. "Just a little shaky."

"Here," he took her fork and knife from her. "Let me help you with that."

Annoyance flashed through me. He's been doing this all damn night. Fussing all over her silently. And now he was cutting her steak into bite sized pieces.

"Is she handicapped? Why are you doing that?" I snapped at Caldán, my annoyance reaching an all time high.

Sabrina looked at me. Finally. But the look on her face made me stop in my tracks.

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Hatred. Nothing short of hatred. Her eyes glowed with a fierce light as she glared at me. I wouldn't say I was a stranger to her glares, but this was the harshest one I had ever seen.

"She's been through a lot, your Majesty. Caldán said, making me turn to him. "But you wouldn't understand that.

"Is that so?" I mused. She's been through a lot, I know that too well. But he wouldn't understand too. "Very well. Go on. Don't let me stop you."

"I plan to." He said, and I knew he wasn't going to just let this dic

"Caldán that's enough out of you."

"What's the matter? Did I say something wrong? Something you don't like? I'm pretty sure you can order me to stop at any

time."

His eyes

narrowed as he stared at me. He's doing this to push me Order him to silence? Over something as trivial as this? I can already see the resentment he has built up in his heart against me. And he's seeking to add more.

If I wanted to, I would simply send him away. I would cost me nothing. But then Sabrina would only hate me more because

I can't erase her memories. She will remember everything. And then I would lose her forever.

I drank more wine.

"And before I forget, there's something I want to bring to your attention."

He finished up cutting the steak and pushed the plate back to Sabrina. She smiled warmly at him and whispered a thank

you.

That smile. That smile that was once for me. And now it's for Caldán.

I drank the last of my wine. "What is it?" I asked Caldán.

"From the outlook of things, for whatever reasons, Sabrina was sent out of the palace. And now I have brought her back. She's no longer under your control and she won't be your slave any longer."

"What are you hinting at?"

"I mean what I said, your majesty. Sabrina is no longer your slave"

Oh. So that's what it was about. He wants to claim ownership of her, as he had always wanted. I denied him in the past, thinking that it would make him stop asking. But now he thinks he's found the perfect loophole. "That's simply not true." I shot back at him. "She is still my slave, no matter what."

"She isn't, not anymore. Not after she was gone. The moment you send her out she ceased to be your slave. She regained her freedom because you sent her out to die."

Now he's attempting to push all my buttons.

"I didn't send her out to die."

"Then what happened? You threw her out of the palace because you hated her?"

Because I hated her? Is he being serious right now? How can I ever hate Sabrina?

This was all an accident. I never should have sent her out. If I hadn't, none of this would have happened. Caldán wouldn't ever have the guts to question me. He would dare it.

I rose to my feet and walked out of the dining hall.

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