

The Forced 157

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Xander's POV

I had just stepped into the party arena before I felt strong arms ckle me into a hug.

"You made it!" A cheerful male voice said. "I was starting to worry you lied to mother."

I stiffened at the unwarranted touch. "You can let me go now." lid. Taryn and her kids apparently shared the same lack of understanding of personal spaces.

He pulled back and stared at me. "Wow. You're so tall. And handsome too. The ladies are gonna eat you up tonight."

I looked around us. The party was taking place under a large and ancient tree. The moon shone throughout the space, and the sound of music filled the air. The guests were already in attendance, some wolves, some elves and some other creatures I hadn't seen before. And there were the women too.

I felt hesitant to go forward. Parties haven't been my thing. And this one felt like Taryn's attempt to set me up.

"What do you think? Pretty slick right? Faye planned the entire d

handling it all by herself." **Ww.(n)Ove{WorRM.co(m)**

"It's okay," I said, more to myself.

She gets fussy about these details and ends up

I briefly wondered if I'd be able to meet any woman that could intrigue me. One that would hold my attention for longer than ten seconds. Like Sabrina did

I immediately shoved thoughts of her out of my mind.

"Come on!" The boy linked his arm with mine. "I have to show you all the popular spots

I pulled my arm back. "Excuse me. I'm sure you can talk to me without touching me."

He blinked, dark inky eyes full of surprise. "Ahhh, mother did say you're very cranky." "I am not." **wWw.#OVsⓈδRM.coM**

"You are. But it's fine. I know just the thing to loosen you up. I'm Orion, by the way."

I sighed. He yaps my ear off and only now gives his name. "Orion."

"And you are?"

I gave him a sharp look.

"That is correct."

and-"

He exhaled. "In any case, come with me. The watering hole is right close by, and at this time of the night, you can see how the moon forms diamonds on the water." "That must be impressive." I said dryly.

He laughed, my sarcasm lost on him. "It's more than impressive! Wait, just see it for yourself!"

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He suddenly turned to me and made to grab my arm. I pulled back in time, putting some distance between us.

Tve been thinking about this for a long time now! Can I say it?"

I blinked, "What?"

"Can I come with you? Back to your castle? I really want to work with you, you can have me do anything you want. What do you say huh?"

I rubbed my temples. I was sure by the time this party was over have a massive headache just waiting to erupt.

"I'll think about it."

"Is that a yes, no?"

"I don't know." I said and walked past him...sure having an elf around would be helpful. But this one loved to talk.

"Alright! Right this way is one the more popular spots for lovers. And they..."

He talked to length about the popular spots. And what's worse, he was popular too. For each two steps, we got approached by someone who yelled his name. And he would call them by name, hug them and they'd talk. I knew it. No understanding of personal space at all.

Ten minutes into the tour, he shoved a glass of wine into my

hand.

He was on his third.

"Try it. You'll like it."

I stared at the glass. It looked so tiny in my hands, the liquid inside a fine blend of gold and red. I drank it, and I immediately felt the burn. It tasted sweet and bitter at the same time. Orion grinned. "See?"

"What's in it?" I asked. Just one glass, and I felt the alcohol swim through my head.

"Elf wine" he said. He got another glass and handed it to me. "Drink up. There's plenty of them."

I drank. And drank more. Orion talked about the wine, and how it was a specialty passed down for generations.

For the first time in years, I felt drunk.

unable to get drunk due to the curse. But this time, it came easily.

"I'll need this when I go back," I said, my words sounding slurred. And it was only my what? Sixth glass?

"Heyyyy buddy! Meet Estina!" Orion cheered. He walked up to me, an elf woman by his side.

I stared at her. She had short black hair and human looking blue eyes. She smiled and bowed. "Good evening mister." "Evening." I replied, my eyes trained on Orion.

Orion winked at me. He knew what he was doing. This was the fifth woman he's presented before me.

"How are you enjoying the party?" Estina asked, a coy look in her eyes. "Are you having fun? Or do you need more fun?"

The suggestive nature of her words was hard to miss. Irritation flashed through me. It was all the same. The ones before her,

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and her. They agreed to easily. They fell over me too easily. And they didn't even know of my king status yet.

"Goodnight." I said to her and turned Away

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Sabrina's face flashed through my mind again. And I found myself thinking about her. She knew I was a king from the start, and she didn't care at all. Nothing fazed her. I had to force her to stay in my wing, where she would have been protected. She was so stubborn. Always going head to head with me, her and her sharp mouth that landed her in trouble more often than not. She knew she could get punished but she still fought me.

These women can never hold a candle to her.

"Hey!" Orion called out, I heard him racing up to me. "Where are you going? that was kinda rude you know."

1. me. "Where are you going? that was kinda rude you know?"

I turned and glanced at him over my shoulder. "I'm going to bed. Thank you for your guide. Goodnight."

His face fell. "Is it about the woman? I'll stop, okay."

"I'm tired." I said. "It's not you." **wWw.NOveIW(ø)vm.c(ø)M**

I hurried off before he could say anything else. **wWw.W.N(ø)V(e)Lw(ø)R@.čôM**

My mood was completely ruined. Thinking of Sabrina was a sure fire way to do that.

I headed back to my room, and by the time I got there the alcohol had cleared from my eyes. All I was left with was a deep feeling of helplessness.

I stayed awake all night, hearing the sound of the party long into the morning.

I felt like a loser.