

## Chapter 17

"Hades," I gasped, whirling around to face him. And between the feeling in the pit of my stomach and the evil glint in his eyes it seemed like Ajax and I had been caught in bed together. And hadn't I been letting him flirt with me?

"Is this your fucking angle, Ajax?" Hades hissed, ignoring me entirely as he stomped over to us. "You show her all the things that you have and try and turn her against me."

I could've been miles away. Hades's only target was the king. And Ajax was staring right at my mate, his eyes alight with something I couldn't read. Any sane man would've been terrified, but maybe the king and the god of death would be well matched for one another. I certainly didn't want to find out.

But King Ajax just goaded him on. "And what if it is, Oakley? What if that is my fucking angle? What if I don't think she should be with you?"

Hades's eyes rolled back and his jaw was clenched with his lips pulled back to reveal extending teeth. He was fighting his wolf off as hard as he could, trying to remain in his human form. It was more painful than just allowing the shifter to take over and he was beginning to sweat with exertion, but he fought on.

"She's my mate," he managed in a pant.

"Hades," I blurted, terrified. I didn't know what either one of them would do if they allowed their wolves to take over. And I didn't know what kind of consequences would fall on Hades should any harm or even a threat fall onto the king. God damn it, where was Noah when I needed him? "He wasn't trying anything, he didn't mean it like that," I pleaded.

"Of course I meant it like that," Ajax denied with a wicked grin, like enjoyed watching Hades struggle with himself. "Look at her, she's beautiful. Any man would be lucky to have her. But she's stuck with you"

"Ajax, not helping!" I snapped, ignoring the fact that I was talking to my king and glaring at him for all I was worth.

"Look at him, Charlotte. Hades has so much power he's damn near jonesing out right now. He's got way too much power for any one person to handle. It probably just makes you sick being near him. You don't need to be with a guy like that. You shouldn't be with a guy like that," Ajax pressed.

And he was right. Waves of power just rippled off Hades. Living in the same house as him had made me used to it on some level. But seeing him like this, fighting off his wolf, made it so clear that the beast had so much power over his person. I could easily recall the way he had barely glanced at me, his mate, before he tore into my best friend. There was a blood lust in him that couldn't be denied.

The only thing that I found strange was the way his eyes remained amber instead of turning red like they did when he had reached for my necklace or when he had clashed with Caleb.

Then Ajax smirked and shot me a subtle wink before he pulled his tee shirt off, staring at Hades like a welcome challenge. "Come on, are you feeling strong, Hades? Hit me. Let's see how strong you really are!"

That's when I realized he wanted it. He wanted Hades to attack him and my mate was barely clinging to control as he dropped to his knees, fighting his wolf for all he was worth.

"You don't deserve her," Ajax pushed, sensing that my mate was close to cracking.

And, at his words, I did the last thing I thought I would ever do.

I ran towards Hades as he was on the brink of shifting.

"Hades," I whispered, stopping just a couple feet away from him, too scared to get much closer.

He just grunted and pressed his hands into the dirt. His fingers curled into claw like form. But his eyes were still amber.

"He's wrong," I said, toeing closer so there was just inches between us. He didn't respond, but his eyes were jammed shut. "Come on, this isn't you," I whispered, but I wasn't terribly sure of that.

Regardless, my words didn't seem to be working. Maybe it was prolonging the process by shutting Ajax up, but the wolf was still under the surface, desperate to come out and fight. He wanted to fight for me. Even if it meant committing treason against an overly arrogant king.

Sucking in a deep breath, I reached out and cradled his chin in my hand. He was rigid, desperate to remain centered on his opponent, but I carefully steered his head towards me, moving slowly but firmly.

"Sebastian," I breathed, lowering myself onto my knees in the dirt beside him. His fingers relaxed out of their claw like form. "I'm going home with you. I'm your mate." With my free hand I reached up and brushed his dark hair off his forehead. My finger shook, but not as much as I thought they would've considering I was trying to talk down a beast. "Sebastian, look at me please."

There was a flash of amber as his eyes opened and I felt myself stiffen, ready to leap away in case I had played my cards wrong. Then, he let out a so breath and I felt him melt like butter into my palm. His shoulders dropped down and he leaned more weight against me, like all those muscles weren't enough to support him anymore.

"I-I'm so sorry. He was just..."

"It's alright," I shushed, still running my fingers over the soft skin of his forehead.

"What the hell is that?!" Keiko shrieked.

I was on my feet in a second, physically positioning myself in front of Hades as he continued to recover. I opened my mouth, fully prepared to defend Hades, though I had no idea how to do so. He had just been blatantly threatening the king and I'm sure that wasn't taken lightly around here, even if he had started it.

But she thundered by me, not even sparing Hades a second glance, her glare only set on Ajax. He looked like he wanted to curl up and die in that moment. I couldn't say I blamed him.

"I leave you for five seconds to put our child to bed and this is what I come back to?!" she demanded, placing her hands on her hips.

"I was just-"

"I know what you were doing!" she shouted.

I used to think that Ajax was something of a god when I was younger. Big, strong and muscly. In comparison to Hades he was at least three inches shorter and not nearly as intimidating. I guess my perception was flawed now because I lived with the hulk, but he was still a large man. But, with Keiko glaring at him he might as well been a speck on a dandelion.

"You wanted to see if you could get Hades to attack you because you have this stupid fixation that my half brother might be stronger than you. Well congratulations love, you almost got what you wanted, but instead you just scared the life out of poor Charlotte and hurt a new relationship!"

"I'm sorry," Ajax whimpered, taking a step back.

"You should be! If you wanted to try and fight Hades then you just fucking ask him. He has the right to say no. You don't prey on two people who just figured out they are mates."

"It wasn't meant to hurt anyone. It was just a game. I always try to push him into shifting, this was just the closest I've gotten," Ajax defended, not sounding so apologetic anymore.

Keiko's face turned very red for a moment. Her whole little body was tight, like she was about to explode. Then she clamped her mouth shut and forced a lungful of air into her body. When it was released most of the flush left her cheeks.

Ajax didn't look any less afraid.

"Go inside and put on a god damn shirt," she snarled. Her mate skittered away like a hurt puppy. Then she turned to Hades who was climbing to his feet, seeming a little wobbly. "You, go shower and find some clean clothes."

When both of our men were gone she took another deep breath then shot me a smile so big it was frightening.

"Shall we go for a walk?" she suggested.

I was too afraid of her to say no.

~~~Question of the Day~~~

What was your favorite show as a kid?

I personally loved Spongebob. Now that I'm older I still say stuff referencing the show. My co-workers ask me how I'm doing and I always reply "living like Larry". No one gets it, but oh well, it makes me laugh.