

His Beta 328

Chapter 328

Gabriela

In all the stories I'd ever heard about Brightsky, I'd never imagined that eighty-seven floors down there would be an entire underground, small-town street. I had to double-take and look behind me at the elevator to make sure I'd stepped out of the one I'd entered and not some kind of crazy time machine... or portal.

No. This was real. My wolf chuffed happily as she scented grilling meat. I spotted a small food cart at the street's far end, and just beyond it, what looked like a wall, Proof that all of this was an elaborate set-up.

Fake, like a theater set, but so realistic I couldn't believe I wasn't walking the brick street of some charming European village

Floor Eighty-Seven was emblazoned on a sign to the left of the elevator. The street itself was lined with small shops and cafes. Clothing and sundries, a bookstore, a small grocery. I even saw a post office, and when I peeked through the front window, I saw what looked like a parcel-sorting center. More like

the mailroom of a big corporation, with rows of boxes labeled with names. A few people were chatting in front of them, paper coffee cups in hand.

It made sense that a community like Brightsky would need all of these things, but seeing it set up like this was truly an unexpected marvel.

“Gab

I looked past the post office to the storefront two doors down. A sign shaped like a coffee-mug swung over the entrance. Lenora waved at me, her face beaming.

We hugged, and she pulled away so she could give me a long, assessing look. Her gray eyes were shadowed and her pale cheeks a little hollowed, but her ebony hair bore the same luster as it had years ago, before the Great Wars. As she twisted a bit, the faintest shimmer glistened from her back and shoulders-her wings, hidden to keep her from bumping into things with them.

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She'd once told me how much she missed the freedom of when her people had lived solely in their underhill cities, with plenty of space to accommodate them

Humans had chased the far out from nearly every place, all over the world

“You look amazing” she enthused, tucking her arm through mine. “Come, I’ve ordered us pots of hot chocolate and some truly decadent cherry biscuits.

Oh and if youd like, I can have them bring some beef skewers from the cart down the street?

“Biscuits will be fine”

“They’re cookies” she coded as you cal

We settled at

unc

eat eat to the wall so I could face the cafe with

my back protected instinct i had alla skicking in

1/2

was worrying about, but of course there was nothing.

Even I couldn’t really be sure what I was expecting.

It takes a long time to catch up with an old friend you haven’t seen in years, especially when you’ve

been forbidden from staying in touch through even the most basic means. I was thrilled to hear that

she'd married and had many children during the interim

She, too, had grandchildren. Nearly a dozen.

"I thought three was a lot," I told her with a small chuckle.

"Three is plenty." She poured us both fresh cups of hot chocolate, adding dollops of whipped cream from a small pot. "Triplets?"

"No. Twins, Alaina and Isaac. And a little girl, Stella."

I

I waited to see if she'd show any signs that she'd heard about my granddaughter being a Celestial, but

Malachi seemed to have kept that quiet for now.

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"They have different mothers."

I paused, for the first time truly considering this.

"Different fathers, too."

Lenora looked confused. "So...the twins...?"

"Not my son's. His half-brother's."

"So...not blood-related to you," Lenora said after a second. She lowered her voice. "I heard about

Orion.

What he did,"

I nodded, not trusting myself to speak out loud.

"Your daughter-in-law is a strong Luna and very unique. She is the little girl's mother?" Lenora pushed

the

plate of biscuits my way.

I took one, although my appetite wasn't really there.

"Yes. But she is mother to the twins as if they were her own. We're raising them all together like

siblings."

"If you'd like to talk about it, about anything, Gab...

you know I'm here for you"

My first inclination was to deny I had anything to talk about, but then the words rushed up my throat

Raw and burong like bile I was happy hadn't eaten anything because it might've come right back up

sloud.

Fleened forward as my harsh whisper shot out of ing and i told her something i'd never dare spoken