

Chapter 49

He wasn't just listening. He was absorbing, taking in every word like she was preaching a sermon imparted by the Goddess. The intensity in his eyes radiated his need to know. The range of emotions - from anger to sorrow - marring his face show that he wasn't just listening, he was connecting with her, feeling these things with her, and it was that very action that drew her physically closer to him, because emotionally, she was already attached.

Her throat flexed a hard swallow, and she threw out the biggest confession of the night, "I'm not with the hunters because I want to be." Admitting it to herself, in her head, was one thing. Confessing to someone outloud, someone she hadn't known very long, was foreign and unnerving. "I'm here because I'm convinced there's something in their systems that'll lead me to the truth on the night my mother was murdered. I've been looking for years. I'm sure it won't be something obvious but I know there's something - a link, a clue that I'm not seeing yet. Remember the files from the east? The one on an explosion of a huntress?"

Greg's heart stopped beating, but Sush went on, "It wasn't a case on my mother but the modus operandi seemed eerily similar. I have a lead and I think I'm getting close." Eyes trailing to his throat, she said, "I'm not here to serve or to protect, Greg. I'm not here because I can or want to help. I'm here to draw blood, for revenge. After I've gotten what I want, I'm leaving, putting all that - the murder, the

psychoticness of the plot, the hunters - I'm putting it all behind me and moving on."

Greg didn't look surprised, and she didn't know why she expected him to be. He was a firm believer in revenge as well, evident from the executions. Perhaps it took a bloodthirsty creature to appreciate another bloodthirsty creature.


His hand, rough and warm, reached to cup her cheek when he questioned in a wary baritone, "Are you sure about that, Sush? Are you sure that's what you want?"

She knew this was coming. The doubts, the sheer lack of morality in the whole thing, the fact that she wouldn't be the better person if she trailed down this route.

The fact is: she didn't care about being the better person. If better people lost the ones they loved in the most horrible way imaginable, then she was more than fine with being the worst person. Besides, if one adopted a different perspective, they'd see she was technically ridding the world of dangerous people who'd continued harming others like her mother if Sush herself didn't follow through with her plan to end them. She didn't have to be the better person, she needed to be the person that ended those who took the lives of others.

Sush reluctantly removed his hand from her face, her eyes darted to his shoulder as her insides began twisting, mourning for having to lose him, too. In a weakened voice, she said, "I'm not changing my mind, Greg. I deserve to know the truth. And if there's a cover-up, those behind it sh


—”

His grip tightened around her fingers when he interjected, “I don’t disagree. In fact, I fully support it. And I’m certain I just fell even more in love with you because of it. What I meant was...” As Sush held her breath, he continued in a firm whisper of disbelief, “Are you sure you’re not here because you want to serve and protect? Perhaps I read you wrong, but you seem to love it in the trenches. The way you get lost in your work is something many creatures fail to find or follow through in their lifetimes. You clearly don’t like people like Valor, Patterson, and a few of those incompetent fools, but you seem to love what you do. You seem to always enter a different universe when you work. Did I read you wrong?” 

She’d long known he was checking her out, feeling his eyes lingered on her and never seeing those lilac orbs travel to anyone else the same way. But the fact that he read her - and read her accurately - brought out her vulnerable side that she’d never shown to anyone since her late family. It never felt safe to be vulnerable with anyone. Not until him. He may not know her as well as her family did yet, but it was clear he wanted to.

In a whisper, she admitted, “No, you didn’t read me wrong. But...” she sighed. “I don’t see how I can keep being there after I’ve drawn blood. If the murder has been buried this deep, someone powerful is involved, and to topple a person like that would trigger a lot of hunters if not the government itself. I already have people wanting me suspended - or worse, removed - for the executions I purportedly let

happen. This plan to fulfill my own interest? It's going to be ten times worse."

Greg's teeth gritted at the suggestion that someone would want to hurt her, that someone dared think about doing such a thing. "There are ways to get around those things, Sush. There are methods to get what you want and get rid of the people against it. Murder itself is an option." In fact, he was already curating the steps for it. 

Eyeing him a glare, she declared, "I don't want to draw any more blood than necessary. Murders aside, I wouldn't want to be working in a place that sees me as a traitor. Besides, I'm not out of options. You read my profile. I have a degree and a good enough track record in the non-hunter world to start again somewhere."

Greg sighed, knowing her well enough to know the look in her eye when she wasn't going to change her mind. Slowly, he lifted her hands, watching himself stroke her fingers, getting lost in the motion as frustration creased his forehead. Then, his voice came in a low murmur, "If that is what you choose, if that is what makes you happy, then I don't see why you shouldn't do it."

Happy? Hah. "Not all of us have the luxury to be happy, Greg," she remarked with a smirk that carried evident loss - an emotion that she hid well before tonight.

His jaw clamped taut, heart ached at the thought that she wasn't fully happy. Someone like her deserved all the happiness the world could offer, maybe even more. Knowing better than to disagree, which would push someone of her

character away, he decided to simply say, "Maybe, but all of us do have the power to sabotage whatever little we have of it."

There was a pause, a quietness between them, allowing Sush to ponder before he added, "I'm sure you've thought this through long before we met. I'm sure you know what you want. And you've clearly shown that you're more than capable of getting anything. At the end of your venture, all I want is for you to be somewhere without ever needing to leave, somewhere you're safe and happy, somewhere that allows you to escape into your universe when you work."

That made her think. Really think. She'd worked in a notable company in the non-hunter world, but she wouldn't say she was happy there. Everything was so rigid, so controlled, especially if one was new. Plans were handed out. Innovation was only welcomed if it coincided with the project and research at hand, and it was always about what the market wanted.

Sush didn't give a damn about the market. But she did give a damn about security and everything it took to perfect it, if not improve it. Admittedly, her mother's disappearance and the subsequent discovery of the murder had been a strong motivator behind the direction she'd wanted to take in her skills to, but the point remained: security, weapons, defenses - they fascinated her. These were the things that brought her soul to life, that launched her from reality and into the universe Greg had apparently caught her in.

He was right. She loved it in the trenches. And although she'd been mentally preparing herself to ultimately let go of

it, a part of her was still holding on to the thread of hope that she wouldn't have to. On her best days, she even wondered whether she should just stall the plan or give it up entirely to keep working there. But then she recalled where she was, who she was amongst - the people who had a hand in burying the truth, and she brought herself back on track.

"I won't change my mind," Sush said, firm and sure. "I won't stop until I know what happened, why it happened, and finish off those who made it happen."

A smile cracked on his lips as he brought her closer when he muttered, "I know... And I hope you know you're not doing this alone. We'll get to the bottom of things together."

It wasn't just gratitude that coursed through her veins, but happiness as well. His words, though delivered in a monotone, touched her heart in more ways than one. His eyes conveyed more emotion than any intonation ever could.

In the midst of her enjoying the silence between them, Greg's eyes went to the springs of her hair, the curls that captivated him every single day, that he only touched when they were close to kissing the other day. Without the pink headband to overshadow them, they look all the more whole and perfect, especially on her, especially with those eyes.

His fingers reached out, threading through her hair and he couldn't help but smirk when Sush released a sigh, leaning into his hand that ultimately found her cheek. His thumb traced her lower lip, the yearning from the elevator the other



day and the dance floor just minutes ago rekindled, the urge coming back ravenous and ferocious - a hunger she matched judging by the way her pupils dilated and her breath shallowed even though they hadn't even done anything.

Her hand slid up his shoulder as her body glued to his, eliciting his growl as blood shot to his groin before he pressed her against the wall, hand behind her head to shield her skull - a move that sent the her arousal spiraling free in the space between them, a move that made her want to submit, which she instinctively did when he captured her lips, melting into him as he pressed his mouth deep onto hers, the cocky smirk lifting his lips when she moaned, creating the opening he was waiting for as his tongue plunged in without permission or hesitation and he explored, tasting her and stroking her tongue slowly, lovingly, drawing out her whimper, bringing another snarl out of him. She felt him pressed against her thigh - hardness to softness - as her fingers raked through his hair.

Rough hands glided up her arms before they pinned her wrists above her head. Leaving one hand there, Greg tongue went deeper into her mouth as his free hand trailed back down her bare arm, leaving little fires in its wake. He reached her waist before moving quickly to her butt, where he squeezed forcefully, famishedly.

Another gust of air left Sush. Her body arched toward him, relishing in the scorching trail of pleasure his palm left from her butt which moved up her back and finally to her breast. The strong, callous hand kneaded the softness and fingers

 +15 BONUS

and thumb fiddled with its peak, pinching it to bring her impossibly closer, intensifying his need for him, coaxing her to relinquishing control. He felt it was only fair, since his need for her had long been anything but controllable.

When her tongue retreated and she backed away, a fierce growl of protest left the depths of his lungs. He was far from done.

Instead of looking afraid, she looked softened, flushed as her chest rose and fell. Her heart beneath his palm cupping her breast pounded in trepidation with the quicken breaths. Her eyes drifted from his mouth to his nose, then to his eyes - which looked like he was ruminating on something that matched the very thing she had in mind, and with a conspiratorial smile, she whispered, "Want to get out of here?"

 Comments

 Vote (4.5K) 