

Deceased

Chapter 122 - The Beastly Alpha's Mute Omega

Riley POV

I thought that I would feel different, triumphant, when they had all been taken care of, satisfied I would never have to lay eyes on them ever again, but I felt strange. Almost like there was an emptiness inside me, becoming detached as I stood there, the sounds of the screams, the cries, the pleading, continuing to fill my mind as I swallowed hard and directed my gaze towards the other leaders, the crowd having dispersed. We were all silent. I felt exhausted. Hours had gone by, but once Dominic Mathias had been dealt with and the ones deemed to be the worst instigators, such as Elder James, Elder Michael, and a few others identified by victims, the punishments had been dealt much quicker, the prisoners given death, although one could hardly describe them as painless.

Blood stained the ground. It filled the air, giving it a metallic scent. The vampire King sniffed deeply, his eyes glowing a dark crimson red. Unlike the rest of us, he looked rejuvenated, energetic, giving off an air of vitality, whereas the rest of us looked more than the worse for wear. Even Queen Titania was looking rather woebegone, her pallor paler than I had seen before, dark circles beneath her eyes. I wondered if Fae magic drained the user, or if there was a limit to how long she was able to sustain her power before needing to recover from it. Dustin stood with his hands in his pockets, a grim expression on his face. He was the quietest out of all of us, but he had offered no objections to the fate of the elders and had not shied away from doling out some of the executions either.

"The treaty is signed, and the elders are no more" Queen Titania's voice was soft as she gazed around our small circle, her entourage still protectively behind her. "The building is fully destroyed and cannot be rebuilt". She looked at me for confirmation and I nodded, certain that nothing had survived the devastation "and what's just transpired, I hope never has to happen in my lifetime again."

"God willing, so long as we all remain true to our word, it won't" Sarah's voice was calm, "and as I've read everyone here, I can say with absolute certainty that nobody has any intention of turning their backs on the treaty we've all signed and the agreement we've made with one another. There will be no repeats" she told us solemnly. "At least not in the near future."

"Good" I exhaled, "but there still remains the hard work of dealing with prejudice from the packs and overcoming stigma and discrimination between all races in the packs. This wasn't intended to be a simple solution, but one that was going to need ongoing consistent teamwork and friendship. A way forward to show everyone that another race does not mean that they mean

harm or are a potential threat. I hope to discover more races who may be willing to live among us and teach us about their ways."

"I know of at least one more kind of shifter", Dustin's voice was unexpected as we turned towards him, our eyes widening in surprise, shocked that he was speaking so casually "however they are quite" he paused, looking thoughtful "aggressive as a species and not inclined to accept outsiders of any kind. They prefer to live among themselves and I imagine it would be hard to persuade them to join our cause, but perhaps somebody could attempt it" he suggested, "it would be dangerous, and they are volatile. I would suggest sending somebody who is up for a challenge and looking to spread out on their own. This type of shifter is not easily charmed" he warned as we listened intrigued.

"How have we not heard of these before?" I asked, turning to the group "what kind of shifters are they, Dustin? They sound fascinating and frightening at the same time."

"Yes" Queen Titania said lowly, "I fear that they aren't as we are imagining them."

Sarah gave a mysterious smile as though she knew exactly what they were. Perhaps she was seeing the creatures or race in her mind's eye. She was the only one who did not look fazed. My brother Damien was inching forward, a curious expression on his face. He loved to hear about different species. I wondered if it was due to being half shifter, half siren himself, or maybe it was just in his nature to be so curious.

My mate looked fascinated as well, rubbing his chin. "It sounds as though you know these shifters on a personal level, Dustin" he said shrewdly.

Dustin shifted on his feet awkwardly. "Not as well as you think" he muttered. "I saved the life of one of their own once and now am able to cross their territory without question, but that's as far as so-called friendship goes. Then again, I'm not much of a speaker" he added, flushing as we looked at each other with amused expressions.

"The shifters, what kind?" I prompted quietly.

He grimaced. "You'll probably think the worst, but I swear, they aren't as bad as you would think. Dragon shifters" he said hastily, seeing the confused expressions on our faces, "they sound menacing and while it's true that they are quite cold and indifferent sometimes as a species, they are also the most loyal, kind and considerate if they consider you a friend."

"You saved their lives, and they still don't treat you like a friend", Damien objected as I turned and glared at him. "Their standards must be pretty high," he added with a frown.

Dustin flattened his lips and said nothing. King Julian looked incredulous. "Dragon shifters" he murmured. "I can't believe it. I thought they were nothing more than fairytales and legends. I've never set eyes on one before," he added, sounding almost overjoyed at the thought of meeting one.

Dustin's eyes slid towards him. "They particularly dislike vampires" he said apologetically, as King Julian's shoulders slumped in resignation.

"They sound a bit arrogant as a species" I commented and Dustin didn't deny it, "but if we could get them as allies..." my voice trailed off.

"Why didn't you tell us this before?" Queen Titania demanded, putting her hands on her hips and looking at the big bear shifter crossly "It would have been vital information," she added with annoyance.

"You wanted to make sure you could trust us before you told us" my mate said, meeting his gaze as Dustin nodded slowly, "because you like them, as much as you pretend not to."

"Why not just have Dustin speak to them then?" I was baffled.

"Because he is friends with them, he doesn't want to put them in a position where they feel forced to say yes" my mate was quick to reply as Dustin looked at him with relief. ", it's better to send somebody that has no affiliation with the dragon shifters at all."

"I concur" King Julian said moodily, while Sarah's eyes danced "but who exactly are we going to send?" he looked around the group dejectedly.

He must have really wanted to lay eyes on those dragon shifters, I thought, with a slight giggle. I had never seen the Vampire King look so forlorn.

"Dustin knows them the best between us" I said, turning back to the shy man, "so maybe he can offer up a suggestion."

As much as I would have liked to go, I was also heavily aware of my pregnancy and that I was due to give birth soon. I couldn't travel far away, and I was hesitant for my mate to leave me in this condition, but if it was necessary, I would not hesitate to let him go. Dustin ran a hand through his hair, looking carefully at the group. When he put eyes on Sarah, she smiled and shook her head. "They despise witches as much as Vampires" she said without compunction, "I'm not insulted by this, just stating the facts. I am not a good choice," she told him.

Damien was standing so close to me now that he was practically brushing my shoulder as I frowned at him. He looked at Bailey and I felt my eyes begin to burn. I knew it. I knew he would choose my mate, but then I saw Dustin's eyes slide over to Damien, a strange look coming across his face.

"I'll go", Damien was quick to offer, while we looked at him in shock, while Dustin began to slowly nod in agreement, "it makes sense for it to be me, you're pregnant Riley" he glanced pointedly at my stomach and then at Bailey "and Bailey has no desire to leave your side or leave you to face all the responsibilities here alone."

"But will they accept you? Will they even let you onto their territory to speak?" I asked, turning to Dustin, who raised a brow.

"Out of all of us here, Damien has the best chance of getting them to speak with him" Dustin said as I looked at him in surprise. "As a siren, Damien knows what it's like to be almost hunted out of existence and has empathy for a race trying to survive on its own and being a half sifter, they'll be able to smell that in his blood. Their curiosity will overwhelm them to the point they won't be able to ignore his presence."

"But you also said it was dangerous" I said, looking at Damien, whose eyes were bright and sparkling. "You said it was violent. What are the chances they'll kill him on sight?" I asked.

Dustin avoided my gaze.

"Dustin" I snarled.

He sighed. "Pretty high. It depends on their mood and how they feel upon meeting you. If they feel like you're being deliberately misleading, they will execute you without warning" he told my brother, who nodded, "so it's imperative that you don't lie to their face or make any sudden movements when in their presence. It makes them nervous."

"I don't know, Damien" I began, but he held up his hand and stopped me.

"Riley, let me do this. I've been meaning to tell you that I was planning on leaving soon anyway. There's nothing for me here, besides you. I want to strike out on my own, look for a mate, like you have. I want to find the other half of me that's missing and maybe while I travel to these dragon shifters I'll find her" he said with pleading eyes. "You've had your adventure, now let me live mine" he begged.

"You're too old for me to stop you" I whispered, turning and embracing him hard "but if you end up dead, I'm going to murder you all over again," I threatened, making him laugh.

The group grinned. My mate looked at the darkened sky and sighed. "With everybody's agreement, I suggest we turn into bed and get some rest. Thomas will show you to your rooms" he added, his eyes going cloudy as he began to mind-link.

"Thank you, some of us will be heading back to our territories tomorrow morning and some much deserved rest would be appreciated" Queen Tatiana said with a warm smile.

"We will, of course, see those who are leaving tomorrow morning, so please don't leave beforehand" I urged, seeing the look in her eyes as she winked at me.

"Of course not" she insisted, beginning to walk towards Thomas who was coming out of the pack house, a frowning King Julian behind her.

None of us could have anticipated what would occur the next morning, or the chain of events that would follow.