

Ethan

I only stop long enough to tie up the guards I fought, swipe their uniforms and pick up Linda. I can't stop picturing Jane being loaded into the back of that van, the ruthless way Anita fought her, the frightened cries of my pups. The images play over and over again in my mind, driving me half mad with fear, fury and self-loathing.

I'm so angry with myself for letting Jane come along on this trip. This is precisely why I shouldn't have given in to my wolf. I never should have split us up either, but I didn't know what else to do given the gate situation. Goddess, I hope she's alright. I'll do anything, give anything, for her and the pups to be home safe again.

As usual my prayers are met only with silence, but I can only hope the Goddess is too busy looking after my family to respond at the moment. I don't know how I'm going to get them back: I have no idea where they're being kept in the palace, but for once I might actually be able to track them in this rain-soaked kingdom.

"I can't believe this." Linda is muttering next to me.

"What are we going to do?"

"We're going to keep our wits about us." I answer tersely, passing her one of the uniforms. "It's a good thing we had these disguises, Simon doesn't allow she-wolves to work as guards."

"Bigot." Linda grumbles, pulling on the livery. "How Eric turned out so well when that monster raised him,

I'll never know."

I have plenty of thoughts about this, but I wisely keep them to myself. However her words do remind me of our second objective, and I try to make my tone gentle as I say, "We'll try to find him while we're inside, but I hope you'll forgive me for insisting Jane and the pups have to come first."

Linda stiffens slightly. "Of course they do, but I hope you'll forgive me if I don't jump for joy over the idea of leaving my mate behind."

"I know, I'm sorry. I profess, "I just wanted to make sure we're on the same page."

"It's okay." She sighs, looking truly forlorn. "For all I know he's not even alive."

"You would feel it if he wasn't." I assure her, "It'll be alright. You'll see"

"How can you be so sure of that?" Linda blinks up at me, seeming very vulnerable indeed. "How do you hold onto hope so tightly? Doesn't it ever seem like it's all too much?"

"I have to." I shrug honestly. "I have to hold onto hope... the alternative means losing everyone I love, and I won't accept that."

"Okay." Linda nods, straightening her shoulders.

So what's the plan?"

Sneaking into the palace is the easy part. We spent all day watching the guards posted at the gates, so we know their schedules and routines, we know how they screen visitors and interact with one another. When their shift changes for the evening, we slip into the employee entrance, walking in as if we belong. The chaos of this afternoon has died down now, and even though the palace is still on high alert, the guards I fought are still safely tied up in a decommissioned public restroom, so no one knows that their uniforms have been stolen.

One downside of Aimon having such a massive home is that securing it requires too many soldiers to possibly count. Unlike my modest penthouse, where I know every single sentry employed by name, the guards here don't seem to notice strangers are in their midst. This fact inspires a rush of optimism, if there are too many watchdogs to even know each other, I guarantee Aimon won't know the men in his employ either. Of course this is also a big problem. It made getting inside easy, but it's going to make getting back out with Jane, Eric and the pups almost impossible.

I pick up Anita's scent first, and my wolf immediately demands to be let out so he can find and destroy her. I'm sorely tempted to let him, but I know attacking the trafficker will risk exposing us. I wave Linda on behind me, following her trail and trying to figure out how to sneak without looking suspicious. Her scent leads us to the East Wing, and soon Linda and I are huddled outside a door, pretending to stand watch while really eavesdropping on the phone call happening inside.

"The King is thrilled. Anita is saying, "He actually tripled my reward when brought him the mother with the pups, and promised a bonus if the scheme successfully puts an end to Blackwell:"

It takes all my willpower to remain silent, and all my attention to ensure I don't accidentally growl and give myself away. Linda is looking at me with genuine worry, but Anita is still talking. "I'm tempted to ask him to let me take the pups when he's done with them. He only needs them to lure Ethan, and after he's dead there won't be any danger selling them elsewhere.

Those kids could fetch a high price at market."

There's a pause as the person on the other end of the phone says something, then Anita scoffs, "No, the omega b\*\*\*h couldn't even beat me with the element of surprise, and the King is going to be too busy breeding her to let her out of his sight. I guess he'd rather start all over again than rely on his failure of a son. He hasn't let him out of the dungeon since I turned up."

I feel all the blood rush from my face as Anita reveals Aimon's plans for my mate. I'm relieved to know she's alive, but horrified to imagine what Aimon will do to her. I glance at Linda, and see her looking equally shocked. I don't know if it's for the same reason, or because we now know what has become of Eric. Either way, I've heard enough – we know that Anita is alone now, and if anyone knows where Jane is, it's her.

I gesture for Linda to stay close, and push my way inside the room. Anita is facing away from the door, and she doesn't sense my presence until it's too late. I pounce on her from behind, not feeling a single shred of guilt for the unfair tactic. Linda snatches up Anita's cell phone when it clatters to the floor, hitting the red 'end' button on the call as I slam my hand over Anita's mouth before she can make a sound. I circle my other hand around her throat, squeezing her airway closed and relishing her panicked response.

"Where are they?" I snarl in her ear, stilling her struggles without any effort whatsoever. Apparently she's only strong compared to sweet little omegas, next to me she might as well be a helpless pup. I feel a surge of righteous pleasure at this fact, and give her a vicious shake when she doesn't immediately answer. "Tell me now and maybe I'll let you live."

This is an outright lie -I have no intention of letting this woman live and I don't feel a damn bit of remorse about taking her life. She stole my children, she's responsible for the enslavement and abuse of Goddess knows how many others... and she laid her hands on my mate. As far as I'm concerned every subsequent breath she takes is a gift she doesn't deserve. I loosen my grip on her throat only enough to let her.

"Fourth floor, north wing." Anita chokes out, her feet kicking in the air.

"Are you telling the truth?" I demand, putting all my Alpha authority into the command. "Don't even think about lying to me!"

"It's true." She wheezes, her pupils dilated in panic.

"The second door on the left from the main stairs"I listen to the tenor of her tremulous words. They ring with honesty, and now there's only one question left to answer. "And Eric – you said he was in the dungeons, do you know where?"

She shakes her head frantically, and all at once her usefulness to us ceases. "If you were smarter you would have held out." I inform her ruthlessly. "Now I have no reason to keep you alive."

Anita's eyes snap to their widest point yet, and she begins sputtering, begging despite the fact that she's almost out of air. I growl and squeeze her throat with my full strength, crushing her larynx and crumpling the bones in her spine. The fragile column becomes like jelly in my hand as her head lolls over my fingers. Her life winks out very quickly then, and I wish I'd had the time to truly make her suffer.

I drop Anita's body like a sack of bricks, and Linda and I leave as swiftly as we came. About halfway to the north wing I pick up Jane and the pups' scents, and from then on I don't need to abide Anita's directions. I follow their trail to the exact door she described, but it sets off alarm bells in my mind that no guards are posted out front. Is Aimon really so over-confident?

Surely he knows Jane will be determined to escape. I pause to listen through the wood and ensure we aren't about to head into a trap, my heart leaping in my chest when I hear the lyrical notes of Jane's voice, and five beautifully beating hearts.

They're right on the other side of that door!

[Previous Chapter](#)

[Next Chapter](#)