

Chapter 226

The Critical Situation 18

"So, will you tell us what is the deal with this golden mask?" Lucia asked Zander for explanation. She looked at the king with her sharp eyes, Rye was sitting beside her, while she was standing.

She crossed her arms in front of her chest and waited impatiently. She didn't even have any scrupulous to demand the answer, even though the man before her was the king.

She needed to know after all the horrendous thing that she had to go through. She still remembered all the name of the children that had met their demise on the slab when they sacrificed them and she couldn't do anything about it.

Lucia knew it was not nice to bring this up, but she was more than willing to stoop that low to remind Zander about that. She looked at the king in the eyes and then reiterated all the name of the children.

"... Rose, Dean. There are around thirty children in total, but obviously there are more children that I didn't know of, since I am not always in the ritual." Lucia walked toward Zander and stood in front of him. "If you don't think you owed me an explanation, you are sorely mistaken."

Zander looked at Rye, who didn't seem wanting to say anything. He only shrugged his shoulders. "She insisted to remember those children's name." Rye then changed his tone. "Whether you think you owed us or not, you need to know that we are willing to help only if you allowed us to do so."

Zander creased his brows. He took off his golden mask and stared at it for a while.

"Nadia..." Zander said. This must be the first time he said that name after a decade. "She is a spy, but she is also a magic user."

Nadia was his destined mate. She died ten years ago, where all of this started, where he started to wear this golden mask.

"What the thing with the golden mask?"

"She came from a tribe in Andelus continent," Zander started.

All of them knew about this, ever since decades ago, this continent gave them nothing, but a headache, yet somehow, they seemed to tangle together in the matter of business and whatnot related to magic stone.

"She put curse on me before she died."

"What curse?" Lucia narrowed her eyes.

"I don't know how to explain this, but ever since her death, I saw so many people in golden mask and while they don't bother all the other people... they would always notice me. As if I am part of them."

These people in the golden mask were akin to a ghost, where only Zander could see them. The reason why Zander would use the golden mask very often was because they would come to approach him and take over his body.

All this time, Zander was wearing the golden mask because he pretended that he was one of them. He had been 'hiding' from them behind his golden mask.

"What happened if you took off your golden mask?" Rye asked. This was weird, this was the first time for Rye to hear something like this. He didn't even know there was this kind of curse. The black magic world was indeed vast and confusing. He was sure even the magic user didn't even know the depth of their own history.

"They will take over my body. I realized this on the first week of the death of Nadia."

Zander didn't talk to anyone about the golden mask people that he saw the moment he realized that he was the only one that could see them. This might be ridiculous, but he was afraid that people would call him crazy.

People already looked down on him because he lost his destined mate and branded him as an incapable king. He didn't want to add more label on his head.

Therefore, when he found a way to keep these 'masked people' from him by wearing a golden mask that was the same like them, he didn't see the point of talking about it and now, after a decade, he used to it.

"You are crazy, Zan," Lucia said, she clicked her tongue. "Don't you think if you could see those masked people just like the children that had been marked as the sacrificed, it meant, you have been marked too?"

Zander tilted his head. "I know." A self-deprecating smile grazed his lips. "Why do you think I lost my beast? My dear mate took pity on me, so instead of outright killing me, she put the mark on my wolf spirit and killed my wolf spirit instead, which caused me unable to shift. How sweet she was..."

The sarcasm was very thick in the way Zander was speaking, he gave a chuckle to make the situation less tensed, but it was clear to see that it still hurt him deeply. People thought he must have forgotten about it, but as it turned out, Zander still remembered every detail of what happened and he was holding onto that memory. He only put it on the back of his mind and pulled it out whenever he was alone.

"Zan..." Lucia was speechless she didn't know what to say anymore.

"Did Zen know about this?" Rye chimed in, he stood up and then approached Zander.

"No. I told you that I have never talked about this. So, no one knew about it."

"Who do you think 'those people' behind the golden mask?"

"The people that had been killed for the sacrifice." Zander put on his golden mask again, but this time, Lucia shuddered and looked over her shoulder, as if someone could jump from behind her and this subtle movement made Zander chuckled. "Don't worry, they will not be able to bother you. They only like to bother me though."

"How do you know that? Can you communicate with them?"

"No. They didn't really talk."

When they were in the middle of discussion, Yara barged into the room.

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Even after there were so many people had died for the sacrifice, Jared was still having a hard time to get out of the black beast. His shoulder was soaking red with how much blood that oozed out from his deep wound.

His magic only managed to protect him from the beast from snapping his body into half, but obviously it was not enough to get out from this predicament.

Meanwhile, when those black magic users saw their leader was weaker than the opponent, one by one stepped back, they feared the black beast and, in their mind, there was no point for them to fight this losing battle.

Based on that, they started to flee from the scene, yet the knights immediately chased them down and the battle started anew between them, while Jared was still struggling to keep his life intact.

"Dawn!" Jared screamed her name. "You are the one, who wanted this! You are the one, who wanted to kill all the shifters! Have you forgotten about that?!"

Dawn frowned, she didn't have any idea what he was talking about.

But then, Jared started to talk about her strong desire that she wanted to kill all the shifters, the war between the magic users and the shifters and how the shifters saw her as a traitor.

Because even though she was a shifter herself, she was on the magic user's side and also, even though she was a shifter, she used to fight with her skill in poison art, instead of shifting into her beast, because she despised the shifter so much.

It explained why Dawn was fighting against Zaya in the first life.

"You hated all the shifters because they let you down!" Jared screamed. "What happened now?! Have you forgotten how those people had hurt you? Have you forgotten how those people let you down?! You were not allowed to see your own child, you were poisoned and was abandoned! You saw your son's dead body, mauled by the monster! Can you let it go just because now you have another son?!"

Dawn was slightly taken aback with that revelation. She was one of the instigators of the war between the shifters and the black magic users in the first life.

"Don't listen to him, Dawn," Darius said hastily, because he could see how what Jared said started to get to her. "Don't listen! It's different now!"

However, Dawn didn't need to listen anymore, because Rowan came and cut off his head.

The leader of the dragon sect died and once life left his body, the protection around him broke, the black magic that shielded him from being snapped into half by the beast, broke as well and Jared lost a big chunk of his shoulder.

Yet, Rowan was in a dangerous position right now because he was too close to Zenith and without Jared, the black beast directed his killing intent toward the king.

Rowan knew his action was very risky, but he did it anyway and despite the feral look on the black wolf, there was this smirk that tugged on the corner of his lips.

"Well, Zaya will be pissed if I hurt her brother, but I have no other choice now, right?" Rowan smirked at the beast, as it started to attack him.

The king dodged the first attack, but on the second attack that came so fast, he used his sword to prevent his arm from being claw. The sword snapped and he was left defenseless.

Now, it wiped off all the smirk from his lips, because his face turned dark, as he faced the beast.

Seeing what happened, five knights immediately came between their king and the beast, protecting Rowan, but they were not a match in a fight against a bloodlust beast, who let his killing instinct run rampant.

"Shit!" Darius went ahead and grabbed one of the swords on the ground.

"You didn't know how to fight with sword, Darius!" Dawn followed behind him, she was afraid. She was trying to think of a way of how to fix the situation.

There was this one thing that she noticed, which dreaded her, because even though Jared had died, they still couldn't shift into her beast. She felt uncomfortable with this fact.

Could this be only a phase? Where they would eventually get their beast back?

But there was no time to peruse over that when she rushed after Darius. The gamma looked at her, mortified.

"You don't even know how to fight, go back!"

No. Dawn didn't want to go back. She wanted to fight to get Zenith back to his sense. She didn't want what happened in their first life happened again here, where he killed all of the people.

If anything, she remembered even in his beast form, even when he was out of control, he still managed not to kill her that night. The black beast only stayed out of her door, after he annihilated the whole pack.

Which meant, he still had self-preservation for not hurting her, though the hope was very slight and probably it was crazy of her to bet on it, but she was willing to try.

"Are you crazy? Go back!" Darius pushed Dawn aside, he was in panic and he didn't mean to push her too harsh; he forgot to control his strength because the adrenaline that rushed in his blood, but he ended up pushing Dawn too hard, which caused her to fall on her butt.

Darius stopped running and looked at her in shock, while Dawn stared back at him in disbelief. But then, this gamma had the audacity to question her.

"What are you doing sitting there?"

"Why do you think I am here?!" Dawn snapped back at him, annoyed, but then her eyes widened. "Get down! Darius, get down!"

Darius didn't even think twice when he knelt down and a black beast lunged over his head. He would have been knocked down if he were standing.

"Damn!"

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Darius escaped death only a by a sheer of luck, because he did what Dawn told him to do without even thinking about it. It was funny how his habit of not thinking thing twice could save his life.

However, it did not end there, because the black beast touched the ground and then immediately turned around, it was obvious that Darius was his next target.

"Zen! Seriously! Couldn't you remember me?! Damn it!" Darius scrambled to his feet, he put his hands out, telling him random thing to make the alpha remembered about him. "I am your sweet gamma, okay?! I didn't mean to push her! I swear!"

However, the black beast didn't seem to interest with whatever explanation that he was trying to blurt out, as he charged forward with the intention of killing him off.

Seeing this, Dawn immediately got on her feet and chased after the beast as well. Thankfully, Dawn was closer to Darius and manage to reach him.

She didn't know what she was thinking when she put herself between Darius and the black beast. If Dawn was wrong and Zenith completely forget about her, it only meant, she would die in the hand of her mate.

However, the black beast indeed stopped and then let out the most deafening roar that they had ever heard. Dawn and Darius pressed their palms against their ears, because they were the closest to the beast.

"What the fuck!" Darius growled. He felt his ears were ringing painfully and the pain from unable to shift to his beast only intensified, it didn't help with his situation at all, as he knelt down and whimpered.

Dawn could feel the discomfort for not being able to shift into her beast became more unbearable.

What was going on?

However, they were not the only one that felt that way, because all the shifters felt the same thing, even those who were not aware of the battle that was going on in the moonlight pack, or the shifters, who were in different continent.

They could all feel the pain, including the young shifters, who had not yet awakened their beast spirit.

Yara rushed toward the throne room just an hour before the pain started and she told the king about Zade's weird condition, where the baby breathed heavily and Celine tried to heal him because his little lungs didn't work.

"What do you mean?!" Zander immediately rushed toward the nursery room, where he saw how desperate Celine was to keep the little boy to breathe. "What is going on here, Celine?!"

"I am not sure," Celine said, she was frustrated and half sobbing at this point, the light from her hands seeped through Zade's chest. "I think he is in so much pain and because he is too young, his little body can't bear the pain."

Lucia and Rye followed behind them and heard what happened.

"I will go for a while," Lucia said, she was worried about the children that she brought with her, because they had the same mark just like Zander and she was afraid something like this might happen to them as well.

Zander and Rye didn't stop her, but Rye chose to stay in the room, as he watched Celine tried to save Zade desperately.

Right at the same time, in the woods that separated the Moonlight pack and the capital city, Zaya finally regained her consciousness, she pulled the rein of the horse that Pyro was riding and this startled the royal beta.

"Zaya!" Pyro shouted, as he held her closely, afraid that they would fall from the horse back. "What do you think you are doing?!"

"We need to go back," Zaya said, she gritted her teeth. Because her back was against Pyro, he couldn't see how her eyes were not the color of blue, but instead it was black. Yes. She had black color of eyes.

Her expression was hardened, as if she knew what she needed to do right now and she was in hurry, because she could be so late to save anyone.

Pyro took the rein of the horse from Zaya's hand and then made the horse to run faster. He didn't know what was going on, but he knew something didn't look good.

And because the two of them were not shifters, they didn't know that half an hour later, all of the shifters had been subdued to an excruciating pain.

Back in the palace, Celine was trying to keep Zade alive, because his lungs were collapsing and because Zander had lost his beast long ago, he didn't feel the pain, but Rye and Yara did.

Both of them fell on their knees and screamed in pain, as the discomfort that they felt because they couldn't shift into their beast intensified thousand times and they felt something weighing down their chest.

"What is going on?" Zander approached Yara and she only cried, saying that she was in so much pain. "Celine!"

"I can't," Celine said, she couldn't stop her treatment to Zade, just in case his condition got even worst.

"Damn it!"

Zander rushed away and then found Hecate, he dragged him to come with him and tell him to do something about this.

"What should I do?!" Hecate grumbled, but he knelt down and checked on Yara and Rye. "I think something is wrong with their wolf spirit, not with their body. They felt the pain because of that."

"Can't you do something?"

"I can put them to sleep." Hecate shrugged his shoulders nonchalantly. "But I need to use my precious baby to put them to sleep." Hecate immediately changed his tone when he saw the rage in Zander's face. "Fine, fine. I will get it."

Zander checked the other warriors and from the look of it, they were under the same excruciating pain as well, all of them fell on their knees.

They said the pain was akin to someone just ripped their chest opened and it was the same pain that Zander felt when he lost his beast.

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Fortunately, Dawn was right. Zenith stopped right in time before he could rip them off, but he looked in so much pain, the black beast roared in anger, the beast was enraged, as if there was something that aggravated him, or probably, he was trying to fight something off, something that he was the only one, who could fight this off.

"Zenith?" Dawn called him.

But there was the time when all of the shifters felt the pain, as if their heart was being ripped apart, their skin was burned and the excruciating pain sent them to their knees. They couldn't breathe and with the heat of this place, they were struggling for air.

This place was very hot. At this point, they felt like they were standing on top of a stove and they couldn't even figure out how to survive this, because obviously, there was not even a shred of hope at this point.

The knights were trying to fight the black beast, once they realized the roar from the beast effected all the shifters.

Rowan led his knights to fight, they intended to kill the beast and Dawn knew that. Against the agony, Dawn pushed herself from the ground and ran toward Rowan.

"You can't kill him!" She screamed at him, which didn't help with her situation, because she was already having a hard time to breath. "I am going to kill you if you hurt him!"

No matter what, the beast was still Zenith. Her mate was there, somewhere. They needed to get him back, not to kill him.

"Are you crazy?!" Rowan was enraged. "I am here to help! Can't you see that he is trying to kill all of you!?"

Dawn didn't care! She wanted to say that out loud, but she stopped herself because she knew that was not the appropriate thing to say.

"There must be another way!" Dawn screamed at him, panting, she held his hand, which held the hilt of his sword. She knew that if the king wanted to push her to the side, he could do it without any trouble, since Dawn was literally very weak and in so much pain, but he let her to speak. "There must be a way to get him back. We can get Zenith back!"

Dawn kept saying all the things that jumbled up in her mind, at this point, she didn't think her words was coherent enough for him to understand her, but she kept talking.

"Enough!" king Rowan finally snapped, he looked at Dawn closely. "We are done here! You kept saying to save him, but you yourself didn't even know how to save him! What are you going to do to save him?" He looked at Dawn closely. "If you don't have any solution, we will go with my solution."

Dawn gritted her teeth. "You are going to kill the royal family."

Rowan's eyes blazed with rage. "This is not my battle; I could withdraw all of my knights and let you to fend for yourself if that's what you wanted. So, you need to be grateful that I helped you here instead of threatening me."

That was right, Rowan could get all of his knights to withdraw and leave this place as soon as possible, since they were so close to the harbor and their ships were still there, they could just bail out.

However, he didn't do that only because of this silly reason in his mind. He was annoyed with himself because he risked all of his knight's lives for this stupid battle that wouldn't give him any benefit and now this woman rubbed him in the wrong way.

King Rowan then added. "Moreover, he is going to kill all of you, shifter, if anything, I saved your kind from the extinction. You need to kneel and kiss my feet to show your gratitude."

After that, King Rowan didn't even look at Dawn again when he walked away and sheathed his sword to join the fray to kill the black beast.

"No... please..." Dawn felt her heart was tightened to watch how Zenith was fighting against hundreds of knights alone.

She was scared so much, the pain that racked her body was forgotten. She wanted to make them stop from attacking Zenith.

She could see blood; there was so many blood that stained the ground and she couldn't tell whose blood was that.

She saw how the black beast's fur coated with blood. Was that Zenith's blood?

She was both terrified and relief to see the black beast managed to defend himself against so many attacks from the knights and while she didn't want the knights to die, she didn't want them to succeed too, because they were their last defense and if they went down, no one could fight the beast anymore.

"Zenith, please... stop." Dawn whispered to the nothingness in the air.

One more knight down, his head was ripped off his shoulder and this enraged king Rowan, he charged forward to take down the beast and wanted to do the same with him. It became personal now.

However, the black beast moved so fast and his attack was very precise, where he could kill the attacker in one single move.

Darius crawled toward Dawn; his expression was ashen. He must have shared the same feeling and thought like Dawn to see how everything unfolded.

He couldn't help Zenith because he couldn't shift into his beast and even if he could, he wouldn't be able to do so, since Zenith right now, was not in his right mind and would definitely kill him the moment he got too close to him.

"What are we going to do now?" Darius breathed heavily and Dawn shook her head.

"I don't know..." Dawn breathed raggedly, she tried to wreck her memory, trying to think of a solution, a way out from this situation without having to kill Zenith.

There must be the answer somewhere in their past life that could help them.

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The Critical Situation 22

There must be a solution for this situation, but what? What she could do?
What happened in the past?

Kill him.

The prophecy.

The prophecy that Zander believed about her killing Zenith, that was one thing that had not yet happened.

Dawn shuddered; she felt this another pain in her heart when she thought about that. Called her selfish, but she would choose to die even she had to kill Zenith with her own hands.

She couldn't watch this...

"Dawn...?" Darius seemed to notice that Dawn was thinking of something.
"What is it? What is in your mind?"

Dawn shook her head, she didn't want even talk about this with Darius, because she didn't want anyone to have that idea in their mind, especially when Darius also knew about the prophecy. She wouldn't be able to stand it if he thought that it would be best for them to kill off Zenith to save all of the shifter kind.

She must be the most bitter and selfish person when she thought, she would rather to have the whole shifter to die rather than to kill her own mate.

Let them all die together if it had to come to that.

"Dawn?" Darius grew puzzled, the pain was unbearable, but he tried to stay focus on their current situation and obviously, Dawn knew something that he didn't. "Did you get another memory? There is a way to stop this?"

"No." The answer was so curt to make that sounded believable, but the pain only became worse and they couldn't even think of anything else, but the pain and the battle between the black beast and the knights.

Meanwhile in the palace, the situation there was not particularly good, it was only getting worse as well, especially when Celine cried out loud.

"He is not breathing!" Celine was trembling in fear when it became even harder to keep Zade's little lungs to work and now, he was not breathing at all, despite Celine's crazy effort to keep him alive.

Zander immediately rushed to the bed and check on Zade's pulse. He was still alive, but he wouldn't for long if this kept going on.

"Fuck."

Zander gritted his teeth, he didn't know what to do to fix this whole situation. He wanted to rip his head so he could find a solution.

He was so dumb. How could he let thing escalated this far? How could he not see it? He couldn't save his kingdom and his siblings and now their child was dying under his care.

"Hecate!" Zander shouted his name and the man immediately rushed toward him. "Do something!"

Hecate checked on the little one, but he was trembling too, he was afraid of the king because he looked like he was going to kill him if he told him the truth.

"There is nothing I could do, my king," he said in small voice.

"What do you mean with that?!"

Zander was frustrated, he felt useless. All of the negative feelings that he felt the moment he stepped on the throne rushed back to him.

How useless he was and how he didn't fit to be the king, how he couldn't even save anyone. He was weak and stupid. He was nothing like his father.

People always said how great his father was and how he could solve all the problem and him? He created only problem and dumb mistake. He was not a planner, neither he was a fighter.

He lost his beast, he couldn't even call himself as a shifter, but it was hypocrite of him to rule those shifters.

Zander balled his fists tightly.

He was useless and stupid.

"This is beyond me, my king," Hecate said politely and it seemed, he knew there was something off with Zander, the king was over the edge and if he pushed him a little bit, he was going to explode, therefore, he minded his own manner and the way he spoke.

The sight of Zander must be very terrifying for him to be willingly polite with the king.

"This is something that couldn't be cure with herb or anything, this is the power beyond my knowledge," Hecate said regretfully.

Zander didn't say anything, he turned around and then left the room. He needed to calm himself down and shut down all the negative thoughts that kept plaguing his mind because it wouldn't do any good on him.

It wouldn't help him to make a decision or to decide what he would do or what he need to do next.

Zander closed the door behind him and closed his eyes to think of a solution. His mind wandered all of the possibilities that could happen and what he missed.

But then, it something crossed his mind.

He stared at the distance, as if there was something that intrigued him, but at the same time, he didn't see anything in particular.

But then, slowly, he took off his mask. He let his face to be seen and just like usual, those masked men started to notice him.

They turned their heads toward him and approached him.

They were not walking, they were gliding, as if their body made of paper, but then they didn't have body. They were akin to ghosts.

They were not even alive...

All this time, Zander was always 'hiding' from them, because he didn't know what these creatures wanted from him and why he was the only person, who could see them, until those children with the mark came and said the same thing.

Zander didn't want to talk about this even to Zenith, because, in his mind, it only added to his 'weakness'.

He always thought that Zenith was the person, who suited to be the king, he fit more to be the king. Often time, he agreed with Zenith's supporter that his twin brother was way more capable to be the king than he did.

"What do you want now?" Zander asked these ghosts...

All of them approached Zander now.