

Psycho Shifters Chapter 12

JAX

CHAOS

The next day...

Sadie was different, and it made me want to roar with frustration. Or attack her and prompt a response.

Yesterday, the spider fae had attacked, and she'd transformed into an impressive alpha form. Today, she was impossibly cold.

"Another rep," I said, and my normal voice came out in a guttural growl.

Frustration coursed through me. I was a hundred and twenty years old, and I was known for being calm and collected.

At least, I had been known to be that way.

Ever since a little white-haired woman with shocking red eyes and a scratchy voice had joined our training, I had been acting like a madman.

When she had first arrived, I had kept a lid on my protective instincts and played it cool.

I hadn't thought she was actually an alpha.

That coolness had completely devolved during the battle.

Sheer terror, the depths of which I had never experienced, had coursed through me when the fae had barreled toward Sadie.

Then a gorgeous f~~~~g saber-toothed tiger had stood in her place. Almost as large as my bear, with shaggy white fur and black markings, it had stunned me for a moment. Then she had turned her head and flashed canines that hung longer than a foot.

My beast had gone crazy inside me. Mine, a voice had told me.

I wanted to claim the magnificent alpha. I wanted to make her mine.

When Sadie had gone after the fae, I had worried and given chase. When the creature had fallen back atop her, I'd lost my shit and roared like a maniac. I'd thought she was dead. My beast had screamed in agony, and a red haze had taken over my vision.

We would mutilate anyone that dared harm her.

"I'm done." The little alpha placed the sixty-pound bar back on the rack. She had only done four reps.

Her tiny muscles were so puny they would snap in a stiff wind, and she wouldn't survive if she didn't bulk up. That was why I had ordered the betas to focus on weapons practice and the alphas to weight train.

"Five more reps," I growled back. Once again, I completely lost control of my chest. I was trying not to scare her away, but every time I f~~~~g talked, I growled like a wild animal.

It was slowly driving me insane.

"Two reps." The little alpha leaned back against the bench like she was unbothered by a five-hundred-pound alpha growling at her.

I didn't know what had happened. The little spitfire who couldn't mask an emotion to save her life had become stone cold. Nothing I did got a reaction out of her.

There was something off about her, and it filled me with distrust. She was acting like a spy. It also filled me with rage.

I prided myself on my calm, controlled leadership, and it was all slipping through my grasp.

"Pathetic, Princess," Ascher sneered at her as he easily hoisted six hundred pounds above his chest.

I fought the urge to throw my thousand-pound dumbbell at his head.

Cobra and I had run the facility together for six years, and Ascher had only turned a year ago. The oligarchy had said it was a miracle another alpha had turned. Since portal three was invaded the most frequently by the fae, he had been assigned to us.

Before the little alpha had arrived, I had no issues with Ascher. He was a hothead, desperate to prove himself, but for the most part was a hard worker and a good guy.

Now he was a raging jackass.

He saw the little alpha as competition, and it killed him that she had saved him.

From Ascher's background check, I knew his father ran the largest weapons syndicate in the realm. It was technically an illegal operation, but since they also provided weapons to the oligarchy, their power went unchecked.

His father was a classic misogynist, and in Ascher's mind, he was supposed to save the little alpha, not the other way around.

"Half rep," Cobra said to Sadie silkily as he did pull-up reps with two-hundred-pound plates hanging off his w~~~t. "It doesn't count."

"I'll show you a half rep." Sadie's chest rattled with anger. She had started growling yesterday, and I didn't know if I should be concerned or turned on.

I was kidding myself. It was s~~y as hell.

Watching her and Cobra send death glares at each other did weird things to my stomach, so I hoisted my barbells quicker.

It didn't escape my notice that Sadie was the only woman Cobra ever spoke to directly.

My chest sparked with warmth. I was glad he didn't ignore her like other women.

I also wasn't blind, so I couldn't help but admire the way Cobra's abs rippled and how the emeralds in his skin sparkled. He was a breathtaking man.

He smirked over at me as he pulled himself easily up and over the bar.

At a hundred and twenty years old, I had loved, fought, and fucked many men and women in the shifter realm. None of them held a candle to Cobra.

Cobra's high cheekbones framed a stately nose, wicked mouth, and shocking emerald eyes. His wide shoulders tapered to a lean waist that was striated with muscles.

But it wasn't just his outer beauty that made him devastatingly handsome; it was his contrasting nature that drew me in. On the surface, Cobra was cold as ice, but underneath he was an inferno of passion and loyalty.

He was an intoxicating mix of cruel and loyal. He was damaged and angry with the world but fought fearlessly and had saved dying betas countless times in battle.

Cobra liked to pretend he was black to the bone, cruel, and not savable, but he wasn't at all.

He hurt those who hurt others, and he fought to protect the weak. Sparring with him was like a breath of frosty air. It filled my lungs with adrenaline and spiked my beast into a fever pitch.

Just being around him was exhilarating. You never knew what would happen next.

Sadie and Cobra glared at each other, and sparks practically leapt between them.

The delicate waif and the strong snake man. They were polar opposites, and it should have been impossible for me to be attracted to both of them at the same time.

I hoisted my weights and grunted. Everything was messed up.

Taking care of five younger sisters, overtime I'd become overly protective of women. My sisters would beat my ass if they knew how I was treating Sadie, and I would let them.

My stomach cramped like it always did when I thought about my family.

I was an immortal alpha, and my mother was a null shifter. She had lived unnaturally long for a null, but still passed away a decade ago. She'd adopted me when I was just a baby.

I thought about her every day. There was an aching cavern in my heart that would never again be filled.

A little less than twenty-years ago, she adopted my oldest sister. Before my mother had died, she'd adopted four more girls. She was selfless like that.

I didn't get much time off as an alpha, but when I did, I went home to the girls. All the money I made, I sent to them. It didn't matter that they were adopted; they were my family.

My sisters.

It hadn't taken long for them to become my everything. An immortal alpha, I'd been lonely for as long as I could remember.

Between my five sisters and Cobra, in all my years, I'd never felt so loved.

If only my mother were still alive. I breathed deeply and tried to stop my thoughts from spiraling. Lately, I hadn't been sleeping well because I'd been so stressed.

My oldest sister Jess would turn twenty soon. That meant she would get tested at the sacred lake.

My stomach pinched and my chest hurt; I didn't know if I wanted her to be an ABO so she would be immortal and never leave me, or terrified that she could be forced to fight in the war.

I was overwhelmed with stress just thinking about Jess being tested.

Now I tried to focus on not panicking about my sisters, and I focused on how happy they made me.

My sisters were all hopeless romantics. They would be horrified by how I was treating Sadie, growling at the girl like a wild beast.

My sisters had taken over running our single mother's flower shop. She'd harvested rare frost flowers from the valley and had been skilled at making them blossom.

The girls still had the luxury of being hopeless romantics. I hoped it stayed that way.

As soon as I had been revealed as an alpha at the sacred lake, I'd lost that luxury. Brutally.

At twenty years old, when I'd tested as an alpha, there had been more ABOs in the realm. I had always been larger and stronger than everyone, but in the months after I'd been confirmed as an alpha, I'd bulked up ridiculously.

Back then, the fae queen hadn't been invading as frequently, and I had worked a multitude of jobs for the military. I'd mapped unexplored forests, fought against the monsters from the northern lands, and had relationships with men and women.

Over time, fewer alphas turned, the war effort picked up, and more and more ABOs disappeared or died out.

An alpha couldn't die unless all their blood was drained from their body, and I had seen it happen more and more throughout the years. There were also many alphas who'd just disappeared.

Over the years, I'd grown introspective and disillusioned by the realm. I lost interest in fighting and relationships.

My melancholy had worsened as my sweet mother aged and I stayed the same.

Nineteen years ago, she'd adopted my oldest sister Jess and, suddenly, I had a reason to live again. Something to fight for.

Those emotions only grew stronger when she adopted four more girls.

Then, six years ago, I'd been assigned to portal three at the same time Cobra was.

We'd bonded immediately and were successful together. He was the icy bite to my calm leadership.

It was a bonus that Cobra liked men and found my large frame attractive.

I would have to be blind and dumb to not be into him. He was physically the most beautiful man I had ever seen.

When we'd discovered Cobra couldn't wrestle control back from his beast unless he was sexually aroused, our fate had been sealed.

There was nothing that could keep us apart from each other. We'd become a two-man unit, in every sense of the words.

Our fates were intertwined.

Currently, Cobra did pull-up rep after pull-up rep and glared down at Sadie, who sat panting on the bench, drinking water. She glared back.

Cobra's dark past made him distrustful of women. He had never told me the full story, but I had gathered snippets here and there over the years. What I could gauge about his past was horrifying.

I shuddered thinking about it.

As a result, I needed to figure out what the little alpha was hiding, and soon.

The longer she kept secrets, the longer Cobra was in danger. Even if I felt protective of her, that didn't change the fact Cobra was my priority.

I had secured portal three by listening to my instincts and trusting my gut. My gut was telling me that everything was not as it seemed about Sadie.

I did another punishing rep and sighed heavily.

The secretive way Sadie hid her body, her ability to flip her emotions off, and her brutal fighting skills were all characteristics of a trained professional. Even her broken, raspy voice was a mystery.

The oligarchy and Sadie claimed she had no battle or combat experience, but everything about her said differently. They were lying to us, which meant she was working with them, and they were up to something.

Cobra gave the little alpha a death glare, and amusement sparked in my chest at his hostility.

Sometimes, I was convinced I was put on this earth to be the warmth to Cobra's frosty cold. The problem was, I could tell Cobra was obsessed with Sadie.

He usually ignored women completely.

Even though Cobra hated women, he still could appreciate them sexually.

We had shared betas and null shifter girls before and taken them at the same time. It was the only way I could f~k them without feeling like I was cheating on Cobra, and it was the only way he could stand to touch them without being repulsed.

I couldn't help but picture Sadie between us.

"I'm done." She looked over at me haughtily.

Her small, upturned nose, high cheekbones, almond eyes, and unfashionably large l~s made me want to ravage and protect her at the same time. Even with the stony expression on her face, she was adorable.

Like a little kitten with claws.

I knew from having five sisters that if I ever dared tell her she was cute, her saber-toothed beast would likely rip my face off.

Women didn't like to be told how adorable they were. Which was too damn bad because, from my towering perspective, she was tiny.

She was too tiny. Everything about her triggered my instincts, and I couldn't help but think she'd been trained to do so.

My thoughts were all over the place. No one woman should be so tempting. She had to be a spy.

She was also an alpha.

Reminding myself she was a fellow war general, sent a cold dash of fear streaming through my chest. I had to prepare her for war when all I wanted to do was keep her safe.

At the same time, I had to protect myself and my men because she wasn't what she seemed.

My head was scrambled, and I tried to focus on contracting my muscles and not the little alpha. It was an impossible task, and my mind drifted back to yesterday's events.

Everything had gotten out of control last night when I'd helped Cobra transition out of his beast. Alpha pheromones had swirled hot and heavy, and we had all lost our heads.

When Sadie's alpha scent of sweet cranberries had filled the room, I had nearly lost all control of myself. Cobra had tensed beneath me, and I had felt him clench around me. He'd also been affected.

F~~~~g cranberries. Her alpha scent was intoxicating.

Never mind Ascher, who had been so out of his mind with I~~t that he had goaded the little alpha like an idiot. His taunting had worked us all up.

My mouth watered just thinking about it.

I hoisted the thousand-pound dumbbells quicker and grunted loudly to release my frustration. My orderly training regimen was starting to feel more chaotic every day.

The rest of the training session flew by in a blur of weights and trying not to stare at the little alpha. Cobra didn't bother. He criticized almost every one of her reps, and Ascher made rude comments about the "princess."

A few hours later, we sat in the battle tactic classroom, listening to Auntie drone on and on about formations.

Auntie was the old crone who was in charge of helping us prepare for battle.

It was a waste of time; in the heat of the moment, everything always went to shit, no matter what you planned beforehand.

I didn't know why the elderly beta required everyone to call her Auntie, and I didn't ask. ABOs had extended lifetimes, and it was rumored that she was over three hundred years old. I believed it.

Sadie still had a blank expression on her face, and I watched with annoyance as she smiled when a beta named Aran came up to talk to her. He was one of our newest betas and hardest workers.

I dug my fingernails into my palm to stop my chest from rumbling with displeasure that she was talking to the younger beta.

My beast's protective instincts were out of control.

I reminded myself that she was suspicious and probably a harm to Cobra, but my beast ignored me.

Auntie singled people out and asked them how they would handle hypothetical situations. It was her favorite way to teach.

“Can anyone tell me how you would defuse this situation? Three betas defect from battle and run off into the woods. You come across the three of them together. What do you do?” Auntie asked, her wrinkled jowls shaking as she squinted back and forth, looking across the small room.

I was convinced she couldn't see anything and that the squinting was for show.

“Cobra?” Auntie looked at a beta on the opposite side of the room from where Cobra sat. She was slightly insane, and always looked at the wrong people.

I smiled over at him as he rolled his eyes at her antics. He hated Auntie, and I was pretty sure she hated him back.

Cobra didn't reply, just turned his head and looked away from her. Apparently, him talking to Sadie was the only exception. He still didn't talk to women.

“Ascher?” Auntie asked after she finally realized Cobra was not going to respond.

Ascher replied in a monotone voice, “I would charge them and knock them out with my horns, then alert the oligarchy of their location so they could deal with them as they saw fit.”

“Hm,” Auntie said vaguely, like she wasn't happy with his answer.

“How about you, Sadie? What would you do?” Auntie looked at a three-hundred-pound male beta shifter with a mohawk and smiled expectantly.

The class turned to look back at Sadie. She hadn't been called on yet by Auntie.

This was a defining moment for her.

Would she be a favorite student like Ascher, or one of the disliked ones like Cobra? Or would Auntie be indifferent to her like she was to me?

The little alpha's expression was stony, and she looked at Auntie with disinterest. When she spoke, even her raspy voice seemed sharper.

Her entire persona was frigid.

“I’d tackle one defector in my beast form and knock him unconscious. Then I’d transform back, and since he was ready for battle, I’d steal his gun. Quickly, I’d shoot one of the other traitors perfectly in the head, and I’d spray the other with multiple bullets in his thighs and chest so it looked haphazard,” Sadie said casually.

The room was dead silent as she spoke.

“Then I’d shoot the incapacitated beta through the heart and stomach. Carefully, I’d place the gun in the first beta’s hand. I’d take out all the weapons and place them in the betas’ hands to make it look like they’d killed one another and empty the cartridges to match the number of bullets sprayed.”

Her eyes didn’t so much as twitch. She held herself completely still and kept talking, like she was discussing something mundane, such as the weather.

My mouth dropped open. Like every person in the classroom, I gawked at the little alpha.

“Then I’d cover my hands with blood and track footsteps around each beta, so when the search party arrived, I’d have a plausible reason for my presence at the scene. I’d be administering CPR and crying. I’d tell them I did everything I could to save them, but when I found them, they were already dead.”

She paused to take a breath, and everyone in the room held theirs.

“I’d say I’d heard them argue over defecting and shots fired as they’d killed themselves. The oligarchy would no longer have to punish these three defectors or deal with an investigation into their death. The problem would be eliminated. Situation de-escalated.”

She finished talking, and there were audible gulps around the classroom.

Sadie’s long white hair and bright-red eyes practically glowed in the small room’s candlelight.

At that moment, she reminded me of descriptions of devils and angels, rumored mythical beings from faraway realms. She was a mix of both.

Auntie stared directly at Sadie like she was a creature she had never encountered before.

Cobra raised his eyebrow at her like she was a puzzle he was trying to solve. Ascher just looked confused. I could relate.

“That is fantastic problem-solving.” Auntie broke the tense silence and clapped her hands.

Now everyone gaped at Auntie. I shifted uncomfortably in my seat; while I appreciated the little alpha’s creativity, her attitude was not conducive to beta morale.

“However, I also must order you to attend a weekly psychological meeting with me to work on homicidal impulses. As a war general, you must curb them if you are to be successful.” Auntie’s exuberant smile said she wasn’t actually concerned about curbing any impulses.

I was half-worried that Sadie would become more intense if she met with Auntie.

The little alpha said nothing, just glared back at the woman with a stony expression.

“I have to disagree. It wasn’t homicidal. It seemed logical,” Aran said loudly from beside Sadie.

The blue-haired boy put a serious expression on his face, but it was clear what he was doing.

Unfortunately, Auntie fell for it. “Very well. Aran is also ordered to attend my sessions with Sadie. Anyone else showing signs of sociopathy?”

The entire room stayed dead silent, and I fought the urge to bury my head in my hands and pull out my hair.

Our well-ordered training facility was going to hell.