

The Last Spirit Wolf

by Elena Norwood

Chapter 68

Vera

A pregnant silence follows Elden's shocking reveal. Nobody is moving, it feels like nobody is even breathing. I look over to Noah who is looking between Elden and Chirp Beta Caleb with a frown.

The silence is interrupted by a loud chirping noise, coming from Beta Caleb, followed by manic laughter.

"Vera, help me take him to his room, quick."

Elden steps to Beta Caleb's other side and we quickly leave the courtyard, heading towards the stairs. Beta Caleb continues laughing and sagging against us. Getting him up the stairs takes a few minutes but we manage to do it, walking quickly to one of the largest rooms in the castle: the Beta's chambers.

"Here, I'll hold him, you open the doors."

The doors are naturally stuck from being shut for so many years, a thick layer of grime and dust coming from under the doors when I finally manage to open them.

Elden walks inside with Beta Caleb,

"Shut the door behind us."

I enter the room and do as I'm told.

"Remove the top sheets, please. This bed smells disgusting," he tells me.

Again, I do as he tells me and remove the top layers of the bedding which are indeed dirty beyond imagination. The bed itself however isn't that bad; it's been protected from the dust all these years by the layers I just removed.

Elden moves Beta Caleb and sits him on the edge of the bed.

"Stay here," he tells me, retreating to the door, "don't let him leave, and don't let anyone see him like this."

I nod, dumbfounded. I'm still processing what just happened out there.

Beta Caleb, Alistair's father and former Beta to King Alexander... is alive. He's not only alive, but he's gone insane.

He sits right now on the edge of the bed just staring absently at the space in front of him; he doesn't even seem to recognize his own room.

I keep myself busy by making sure the lights in the room work and that there is running water in the bathroom. I don't know how long Beta Caleb has gone without a proper bath, but it seems like it's been a while; he smells like the dungeons,

As I'm preparing a bath, there's a knock on the door. The hairs on my arms stand in awareness.

I go to open the door and Noah is waiting outside rather sheepishly.

"Can I come in?" He asks.

I open the door wider for him to come in and join us.

"Elden is gone, Goddess knows where, I'm hoping he comes back soon."

Noah steps forward in the room, regarding Beta Caleb and his absent stare into nothingness.

“He has moments of lucidity, I noticed it too back in the dungeons, but I could have never imagined... he trails off, “how could he do this to his own father?”

I know exactly what he means.

“Do you know what this means?” Noah continues, “the answer was right under our noses the entire time, and we had no idea. A Beta is perfectly capable of taking over Royal duties without incident. All of these years, all this time, wasted under Alistair’s command.”

“Noah, there was no way any of you could’ve known. Alistair kept him very well hidden, and if he didn’t want him found, he was never going to be.”

“I think there was a reason for it. Back in the cells, he was telling me about a two year old boy he hid, and said that he was the rightful king.”

“The rightful King? How is that possible? King Alexander didn’t have a son.”

Suddenly, Beta Caleb snaps his head, turning to look at us. It takes us both by surprise and we shup up, expecting him to say something, but he doesn’t. He just stares at us, primarily focused on Noah.

After a few minutes, Noah moves closer to him carefully as to not scare him.

“Hey Chirp, how are you feeling?”

“Ha. Chirp. That’s my name,” he says with humor, carefully watching Noah as he approaches.

Noah crouches down in front of him.

“Remember that boy you were telling me about? The boy-would-be-King? You need to tell me where to find him. I have no intentions of keeping the throne from a rightful heir. Do you remember where you hid him?”

“Noah...” I caution. It isn’t wise to fluster someone who is mentally unstable. Perhaps after some treatment and therapy this question won’t be overwhelming, but as it stands, it could make him snap.

Beta Caleb starts rocking back and forth in the bed, staring directly at Noah but not saying a word.

“Noah, I think we better let him rest, I’m drawing a bath for him maybe that will calm him.”

As I’m saying that, Elden comes in through the door with a basket filled with herbs. I can smell chamomile, lemongrass, lavender and many others.

“Oh good, you’re already drawing a bath,” he says and proceeds to the bathroom to dunk all of the herbs into the water, stirring them in with his hand, “help me get him in.”

I go forward to help him but Noah stops me,

“I’ll do it.”

He carries Beta Caleb to the bathroom, ridding him of the horrible robe he was wearing, then he carefully puts him in the bathtub where Elden is waiting with a sponge.

“There, there. This will make you feel better.”

Elden is bathing Beta Caleb carefully and Noah and I step out of the bathroom to give him some privacy.

“Where do you think he could have hidden such a boy? A Royal baby can’t be easily hidden, much less a toddler,” I ask.

“I don’t even know if it’s true, V. He might just be delusional; maybe all those years in the dungeons altered his memories: Besides he’d be what? 25 or 26 already? Surely he would’ve claimed the throne by now.”

About twenty minutes go by until Elden emerges from the bathroom with Beta Caleb. He looks a lot better now that he's clean, and smells a lot better too.

Carefully, Elden lays him on the bed for him to rest, but as soon as he sees Noah again, he jolts up; this time, he's tearing up.

I served my King. I served my King well. Oh Elden, will you tell him? Will you tell the King I saved his boy?"

Elden is looking at him perplexed,

"Caleb, our King had no children, he was unmated," he says gently.

"No! No no no! He had a son, a hidden mate. For two years i kept the secret of his birth, and for twenty-four years I kept the secret of his existence from my boy. Please tell him I did good, please tell him to forgive my boss"* The his tears flowing freely down his cheeks.

We are staring at him, confused. Elden tries to shush him gently but he won't stop crying

"I will, my friend, I will, but then tell me, where is this boy you speak of?".

With a very serious expression, Beta Caleb raises a shaky hand and points it at