

The Last Spirit Wolf

by Elena Norwood

Chapter 69

Vera

I gasp, my hands flying to cover my mouth. Elden is equally shocked and as mouth hangs open. We're both staring between Beta Caleb and Noah, trying to figure out if there is any semblance of truth in what Chirp is saying.

Noah frowns, but doesn't say a word. He approaches Beta Caleb and puts a hand on his forehead.

"It's ok, Chirp. I will tell him you did good; you did everything you had to do. Now, you have to get some sleep."

Beta Caleb smiles at Noah's comforting words and lays down on the bed again, closing his eyes and breathing peacefully. In only a few minutes, he's sound asleep. The bath Elden prepared for him and the comfortable bed he's on are working their magic.

Elden and Noah quietly move away from him, joining me by the door.

"Nobody hears from this until we have confirmation that this is true, we can't claim such wild allegations without solid evidence," Elden whispers to us.

"Elden, Chi-Beta Caleb is insane. We can't possibly believe what he's saying. We know who my father was, he claimed me before he died, Eli will tell you. There is no point in entertaining Beta Caleb's idea."

Elden narrows his eyes at him.

“Follow me,” he says.

We leave the room silently and follow Elden, not before telling two of the guards to watch the Beta chambers so that Chirp won't be disturbed.

Heading towards the staircase that leads to the library, Noah gives me a look and rolls his eyes. For some reason, I'm not as dismissive of the notion, in great part because Elden guards many secrets to this castle and the royal family; if he's entertaining the idea, there must be a reason.

When we reach the library, Elden sniffs around before entering, making sure we're not being followed. I find myself double checking as well.

Once we're inside, Elden retreats to one of his dark corners but Noah and I stay by the door, unsure if we should follow him.

All of a sudden, bright moonlight shines in from the direction where Elden went, and then more and more light. I'm having trouble deciphering where it's coming from until Elden rounds up the corner, dragging heavy drapes across the floor. He proceeds to reveal even more floor to ceiling windows right in front of us with elaborate stained glass designs. I never knew these windows existed.

He continues to round up the corner and now the library is as bright as if it were daylight pouring in. I gasp, the library is even more majestic this way, with the intricate designs creating a kaleidoscope effect on the space.

Elden comes back from the corner and joins us in the middle.

“Come,” he says.

We follow behind him, admiring how much more open the space looks now. Elden stops and we turn to look at what we stopped in front of. It's one of the doors to enter the tunnel, the one covered by a portrait of a man. Only

now that I can see him better, he has dirty blonde hair and caramel colored eyes. He has some resemblance to Noah, but nothing striking.

“This is King Alexander, or rather the last portrait left of King Alexander. The first thing Alistair did when he came to power was burn all portraits of him and his father before him. It was his way of deleting him from history. This is the only thing I managed to save.”

always wondered what he looked like. Eli and all the other teachers would talk secretly about him to us, but we never saw pictures.”

Elden nods and he looks at us, expectant.

After a few minutes,

“Yeah, I don’t see it,” Noah says.

“There is some resemblance but it’s nothing striking.” I say honestly, looking at Noah and back at the portrait.

Elden rolls his eyes,

“Come along, then.”

We follow him to the other side of the library, to the door through which I first exited the castle. This is the one with the portrait of a woman.

“This portrait came in after Alistair had won, so when it came in, I just stashed it here to hide it. It was commissioned by King Alexander long before his demise. I can’t actually see it, but I was told it’s of a woman, What do you see?”

My mouth hangs open and I quickly cover it with my hand, taking a step forward. The resemblance is uncanny. She has the same color of hair as Noah, and some of her facial features resemble his; but what is undeniable is the eye color. Whomever painted this portrait made sure to capture her eye

color in great detail, and it's exactly how I would paint Noah's eyes; she has the same specs of gold dancing in her irises.

"Noah..." I say, but when I turn to him, he's looking at the portrait, shocked.

"This doesn't mean anything, Elden, it's just a couple of paintings and we don't even know who she is," he finally says.

"I know, which is why we have to investigate further. Caleb did say King Alexander took in a secret mate, and I think this could have been her."

I keep looking back and forth between Noah and the woman, having no doubt in my mind that this is his mothers

"Leave it to me. I'll find out, but again, I suggest this stays between us until we can prove it."

Noth and I nod at Elden and go our separate ways. Elden stays in the library, disappearing off into some corner as usual, and Noah and I head down to the courtyard again.

The place is deserted already and the pyre has all but burnt out. We step outside the castle, greeting the night guards as we go. We lay just outside the castle, on the grass, staring up at the full moon.

We stay silent for a long time, lost in our thoughts. I'm mainly worried about what's going on inside Noah's head after such a big revelation; it seems to me like he's in a bit of denial still.

"It makes no sense," he says. I turn to look at him and he continues, "why would King Alexander have a secret mate? And why would they hide a child? You'd think they would celebrate having a male heir..." he trails off

"I think we have to wait to see what Elden comes up with, but Noah... you can't deny that it's very possible that those are your parents, King Alexander and that woman."

“How come nobody knew? Had we not found Beta Caleb, we wouldn’t know any of this.”

“A two year old is pretty easy to kill, Alistair wouldn’t have let you live.”

We stay silent another while, just staring up at the stars. Then, Noah stands up and offers me his hand.

“I’m tired, and we have a big day ahead of us tomorrow. We should get some sleep.”

I smile and take his hand, walking hand in hand back into the castle and into our room, for some well-deserved rest