

Fatal Temptation: Between Two Alphas

novel Chapter 19

Chapter Nineteen

I scream.

My knees skid across the wood beams, taking skin with them. My face slams into the ground.

“Don’t hurt her!” Jace roars.

“I didn’t mean to!” Michail yells. But he’s a second away from shifting and he’s a fierce wolf, his instincts would’ve been triggered by the chase.

“I’m sorry,” he tells me as he drags me to my feet.

“Let me go!”

Tyler grabs my other arm.

“Don’t do this, Jace! Don’t.”

He looks physically pained. “You’re bleeding again.”

“Yeah. I know. I was hurt before you all showed up, and Michail just ground me into the railway.”

“I said I’m sorry!” Michail protests. “Shift and heal, damn it!”

I glance sharply at him. “Did you not notice my other wounds earlier? I can’t heal right now, you asshole!”

He blanches.

“Get her into the jet and back to packlands,” Jace orders.

“NO. Get your hands off me. I’m not going back!”

Jace talks over me. “Sedate her if you have to, but don’t let her hurt herself any worse.”

“I didn’t hurt myself, you asshole—he tackled me!”

I stop. This arguing and bickering, falling back into old roles. “I’m not subservient to you or your pack or anyone else. Not anymore. Do you understand?”

Jace freezes.

“I’ve always thought of you as my brother.” A tear slides down my cheek. “If you do this...I’ll never forgive you. Never. You’ll be dead to me.”

He pales. He reaches to touch my cheek and then his hand falls away. “I’m sorry,” he says.

“No! Damn it! Nooo!!!” The guys lift me off the ground. Each holding a limb so I can’t gain enough leverage to do anything. They pull my arms and limbs apart so I’m stretched like a sheet and can’t get close to any one of them. “Let me go!”

Jace looks gutted. But that doesn’t stop him. “Hurry!” he says.

They move over the rough terrain and into the forest. I wrench my arms and legs and shift, but even hurling my body from side to side, I can’t get close enough to bite them.

I retract to human so I can speak. “Jace... I have to protect my kids.”

“You mean Cameron’s kids. My kin. I’ll take care of them,” he tells me.

I thrash harder, shifting fully and mauling Tyler, then lunging at Liam before Declan throws his wolf form on top of me.

A second later I feel a pinch in my flank.

Michail holds a syringe. He shakes his head.

“Christian is en route,” Declan says.

From the airfield? That's going to take a minute. "Seriously?"

"I didn't think Uber would take too kindly on half naked men and an unconscious, bleeding wolf-or worse, an unconscious bleeding woman."

A fair point. "Okay."

I grab my cell and check the time. I see a flurry of text messages from Jacob. I scan through the information. Just what in the hell has Mia gotten herself up to!?!

Damn it.

"Tyler, tell them you're coming back with Mia. She's ill and appears to be suffering the same ailment as Cameron and little Merilee."

All drama of the last few hours aside, my brother and 'sister' are on the verge of death. I'm pretty sure my little niece is too-and that just guts me.

I'll do whatever it takes to save my family.

I can't worry about hurt feelings.

"You're not coming with us?" Tyler asks.

"No."

What I have to do next... I'm not sure I can ask it of them, because there will be no forgiveness.

And if I'm wrong... I may just have sentenced all of us to death.

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Chapter Twenty

JACE

“You’ve got to be fucking kidding me.”

I glance at the winding road and the guardhouse at the base of the hill. Mansions dot the hillside all the way up into this gated community. Modern homes with walls of glass and infinity pools, chalet-style designs and a couple homes that look like Italian villas plucked from Tuscany and dropped onto these exclusive streets.

But it isn’t the fancy houses, or the gates surrounding the community that give me pause.

It’s the magical wards in place that lift up from the ground in a transparent sheet. My wolf eyes see it—our eyes have nine times more rods than cones, so our grayscale vision far surpasses humans. It isn’t just the magic, but the actual energy I can see, shimmering in a veil that would prove impossible to pass through, which means any thoughts I had of a covert arrival are pretty much shot to shit.

Fine.

Fuck it.

I drive up to the guardhouse and roll down the window.

The witch slowly slides open hers. “I’m sure this is going to be good.”

She’s mid-twenties, with dark brown skin and flawless hair. She could be a model or actress or some powerful, centuries old witch stuck here for some infraction. Who knows?

“I’m here to see Morgan Devereaux. I’m a friend of Mia Riorsen.”

“A friend, you say?” she scoffs. “I doubt that.”

Her dark eyes hold contempt. Maybe they all know what we did to Mia. Part of me is glad she found friends, people to defend her.

The other half of me is plain pissed.

One witch was deadly enough.

Taking on this whole coven—which Jacob relayed was who lived in this swanky little subdivision—that was suicidal.

“Mia is injured. And she needs help,” that much was true. “If you and your sisters are her friends, then you need to let me through.”

She purses her lips. A butterfly lands near the booth and she talks to it—whispering in some ancient tongue. Then the little bug flits off, like some message-carrying moth in *Lord of the Rings*.

“Please,” I say again. “She needs your help.”

I watch her deliberate for several seconds.

“It’s not my call,” she finally says.

But then her cell phone beeps and she looks at the screen. Her lips curve into a dangerous smile. “Hmm. Looks like you’re in luck. Go on up.”

Something about the way she says ‘luck’ makes me think I’m anything but.

“Number 13.”

I slide back into the car and wait for the gate to rise. Then, like the parting of a waterfall, the veil of magic lifts up. I accelerate up the mountainside. This really is prime real estate and the homes are spaced wide apart, something you never really see in California where space is at such a premium.

My wolf Thane prowls beneath my skin. He hates this place and is very unsettled at the thought of us heading into the heart of a coven. Can’t say I’m crazy about this plan either.

But desperate times and all that...

When I reach Mia's witch-friend's home, the door is open.

A tall, striking woman stands at the entryway, her arms crossed. She wears skinny jeans and a white blouse. She looks stylish and wealthy and flawless. Her hair is a big tumble of strawberry blonde curls and her eyes are pale. She wears only lipstick, a bright reddish color and it draws all my attention to her mouth.

She smirks.

Like the witch in the guardhouse, I suspect I "amuse" her.

"Morgan, I presume."

"You do realize the risk you're taking coming here."

"I do." It's why I had to come alone. There was always the chance—and a high one at that—that this witch would kill any enemies on sight.

"Wonderful. Then let me make this simple for you, wolf. You have two options. One, you turn right around, get back in your car and drive yourself back across the country. Or two, I make you get back in your car and drive back across the country. And I warn you, it's very likely you'll drive off a cliff along the way."

I open my mouth ready to argue with her, when there's a shatter from somewhere in the house followed by a child's scream.

Morgan spins and runs inside.

I follow.

At a glance my mind registers the details of the room. Oversized white linen furniture. House plants and accent walls. For as modern as the outside of this house appears, the inside is warm, cozy, with artwork and colorful blankets and lots of decorative glass.

I run into the kitchen to see one such glass piece shattered all over the floor.

A young girl stands in the middle of the colorful shards. "I told you it would work," she says proudly.

"It would've been easier to just go outside." This from the young boy who is now behind me.

"That's right."

Morgan twirls her hand and the shards of glass in the kitchen spin up fast as a centrifuge and reform into a vase.

"See," the little girl says. "I knew she'd fix it."

Morgan arches a brow at her. "The water and flowers are still on the floor. You made the mess, you clean it up." She glances at me. There's something in her eyes as she studies me, but it's blinked away before I can figure out what it is.

My clothes float over and into my hands. "You can clean up too," she tells me.

I take my shirt and jeans and walk into the first room I see. I close the door behind me to dress. Normally when we shift so abruptly our clothes are shredded. But Morgan must've used the same magic she did on the vase because my clothes aren't missing a thread.

I'm in a library.

Tomes line the walls. Books so old the covers are made of animal skins rather than cardboard or paper. On another shelf, are a slew of romance novels. The spines show shirtless guys and even some knights and Regency heroes.

Huh. This witch had a romantic streak.

I wouldn't have thought that.

Thane makes a rumbling sound in my chest.

He's...intrigued by this woman.

If I'd met her under other conditions, I might like her more too.

I didn't often play outside of my species—and I didn't do long-term relationships. But something told me this witch would be fierce in bed.

Yes, my wolf insists.

No, Thane. She's no good for us.

He might not hold a grudge, but she'd literally shattered all four of my limbs. If my nephew hadn't intervened, I might be dead. One didn't forget that kind of pain right away.

My wolf growls. Mate.

Oh hell no.

Mate, he insists.

Are you fuckin' kidding me!?