

Chapter 99

There was a sigh from the Alpha's end of the line before he said, "Lucy, for the infinite time, it's just Clement to you. I swear, if you call me by my title again, I'm going to start calling you 'Your Highness'."

Xandar instinctively held Lucianne tighter when jealousy crept into his being at how the Alpha sounded more flirtatious than irritated.

"Clement, get serious! When was this taken?" Lucianne exclaimed with zero humour. A steady inferno started building in Xandar's chest at how close they seemed to be that the Alpha insisted Lucianne only called him by his name. And this Alpha wasn't even a part of the alliance. Just how many men were after his mate anyway?!

Alpha Clement began speaking, "First of all, it's good to hear that you're okay. Second," He matched her serious tone as he said, "this photo was taken only a minute ago. I forwarded it to you as soon as my Beta sent it to me. We should be worried, right?"

Lucianne's eyes never left the photo showing several large footprints, which could only belong to Lycans. Her voice was calm when she asked, "Do these lead anywhere?"

Clement's reply was immediate, "The tracks stopped at the river. They must've crossed it, shifted back to their human form and disappeared into that thick forest behind our pack. Our warriors are awaiting instructions but I told them I'll ask you first. Should we be worried, Lucy?"

Lucianne bit her bottom lip before she spoke reluctantly, "We should all be, Clement. I'm glad that it was just the footprints they found and not the creatures themselves but I can't help but wonder what they were doing there."

"Beats me. I'm all the way over here. If they came to kill me, they must've been disappointed."

"This location is too far from the pack house to know you're not there though." Lucianne uttered and pondered for a moment before she said, "Clement, you might wanna ask Beta Nina to tighten security around your pack border. Get the families to lock themselves in their panic rooms from midnight until daylight for the next ten days. Place a few more warriors up in trees to look-out for incoming attacks. Blue Crescent should be able to spare a few warriors. Link Juan to get our people to help. Ask for seven of them, if possible."

"Yup, I'll do that." Clement said before he chuckled lightly.

Lucianne looked at her phone in annoyance as Xandar's grip around her abdomen tightened even further. "Clement, this is real right? It's not a joke, is it?"

Although his chuckles died down as he said, "It is real, Lucy. I wasn't laughing because of that. Believe me, I'm worried too. But..." his tone came out flirtatious when he continued, "...when I hear you speak like that, it just reminds me of the times when we trained and fought together."

Lucianne rolled her eyes and said, "When I bark out orders, you mean?" Alpha Clement chuckled lightly again at the memory they shared.

When Xandar and his animal had finally had enough of it, Xandar's deep voice joined the conversation, "When you bark out orders with grace, authority and clarity was probably what he meant, my love." He emphasized the words 'my love' just to satisfy himself.

Although Xandar's words were spoken to Lucianne, the two men knew it was directed at Alpha Clement, for him to stop speaking to his mate in that coy manner. Alpha Clement's stream of chuckles came to a sudden stop when he heard Xandar's cold voice.

The Alpha swallowed a lump in his throat before he greeted His Royal Highness with as much courage as he could muster, "My King, I apologize for the late acknowledgment. I didn't know you were there."

"Oh, I'm here, Alpha Clement." Xandar then smooched Lucianne on her cheek on purpose, hoping that the Alpha could hear the contact his lips made with his mate's skin. Xandar then said as diplomatically as he could, "And if you'll allow it, Alpha Clement, I can send three of our warriors to stand guard."

"Really?" Lucianne's eyes sparkled, soothing some of Xandar's anger.

"Oh no, your Highness. We couldn't..." Clement's apologetic voice rang through.

"I insist." Xandar said before taking a whiff from Lucianne's hair and running his fingers through her large curls. He gently placed his mate's long hair to one side before gluing his nose to her nape to take in her scent, calming himself from the anger of hearing the Alpha's voice. ❶

Lucianne then said, "Clement, just take it. If the threat is Lycans, it's safer to have Lycans on your side. Besides, you've met some of them on the training ground, they're not all bad."

There was a short moment of silence as the Alpha weighed his options before he said, "If you say so, Lucy. I trust your judgment. And thank you for the offer, your Highness. The Forest Gloom Pack thanks you."

"It's a pleasure to help, Alpha Clement." Xandar said out of courtesy more than sincerity. His nose moved onto his mate's arm, and he started nuzzling Lucianne's scar while he waited for the stupid phone call to end. With immense difficulty, Lucianne held back her giggles threatening to escape from her throat.

"Thanks again, Lucy. I'll link Juan now. Take care."

"You too, Clement."

As soon as she hung up, Xandar's hand went to Lucianne's nape and he pulled her into a deep kiss before parting their lips. He then asked in a voice that didn't even bother to mask the jealousy he felt, "Who is Alpha Clement?"

Lucianne's thumb traced one of his furrowed brows as she answered, "The leader of the Forest Gloom Pack and one of Blue Crescent's allies."

His features softened not by her answer but by her touch on his face. "He seemed a little too friendly for an ally, baby."

Her hand cupped his cheek and her thumb started stroking the skin there as she tried to assure

him, "He's friendly with everyone, darling."

"How did you two meet?" Xandar asked.

"Juan's 18th birthday party. He and his family were one of our guests."

"Did he speak to you at the party?" He continued to press.

"Yes."

Xandar held her hand that was on his cheek and asked, "How long did you both speak?"

Lucianne shrugged, "An hour or so, I guess."

An hour. Xandar noted the whole list of things they would have spoken about in the length of time. "What did you two talk about?"

"Pack life. His family. He hates his siblings, by the way. And that's about it."

Xandar's orbs started developing onyx shades again at those sort of intimate, personal questions being asked before he uttered murderously, "Did he touch you during the conversation?"

Lucianne continued to trace his eyebrows, in hopes of soothing him as she said, "Only when we danced, Xandar. No—"

"Where did he touch you?" His grip on her tightened.

She started stroking his cheeks as she said, "My hand and my waist, like any normal dance. It was just a diplomatic thing, dearest. It wasn't intimate."

Confusion sparked in Xandar. "Care to explain that, my love?" He was hoping that by using those last two words, it would take out a little of the aggression from the way he asked the question.

She shrugged like it wasn't a big deal as she explained, "His late parents were good friends and allies of Blue Crescent. The whole family came because Alpha Clement's parents were stepping down as pack leaders in the following year to let their first son, Alpha Jake, take over."

Suddenly, Lucianne snuggled into Xandar's chest, which made him and his animal confused. But he held her nonetheless. What the hell happened? Why does it feel like she wants to hide from something?

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In Xandar's chest, Lucianne continued her tale in a small voice, "Alpha Jake was bad news from the very start. Everyone saw it, except his parents. There was this negative energy that you can feel whenever his presence was close by."

She sighed before saying, "He asked me for a dance but I said no. Luna Janice, being the cordial one in the pack house, told me that as children of pack leaders, we had to oblige simple gestures to keep the peace with our allies. She said that just because I was adopted, it didn't make me any different. I was mad at her for pressing me like that but I was also driven by a sense of duty to my pack. So, I mentally prepared myself to oblige Alpha Jake's request if he asked again, which he didn't, thank Goddess. But his brother, Clement, did. As I told myself that I was doing it for my pack, I obliged. Clement is definitely not like his brother. The two couldn't be more different."

Xandar finally understood why she buried herself in his chest. Alpha Jake. That was definitely a name Xandar would never think of forgetting. He held her tighter as a form of assurance before muttering in controlled anger, "I can't believe Juan's mother made you do that. You should never have to do something against your wishes, Lucy."

She took in his comforting scent before she said, "That was what Alpha Ken and Juan said. Well, what they yelled, to be more precise. The father and son threw a fit for two hours after the party when they found out what Luna Janice said to me. Their outburst definitely made me feel better. At least I knew that a sense of duty to Blue Crescent didn't mean saying yes to things that made me uncomfortable."

Xandar's mood eased considerably, and he kissed her temple as he said, "I would love to meet Alpha Ken one day. I need to thank him for this." He took in a whiff from her neck before something struck him: If Jake was the Alpha, why was Alpha Clement...the Alpha? Is this a new pack system that he didn't know about? Can a pack even be run by two Alphas?

He pulled away from his mate to lock eyes with her, and he asked in confusion, "Baby, why does Forest Gloom have two Alphas?"

Her eyebrows furrowed as she replied, "They don't. Alpha Jake was only there for a few years before Clement challenged him for the pack and succeeded. Jake and their other sibling, Iris, were cast out as rogues."

Xandar blinked in surprise and Lucianne chuckled at his reaction. She started the tale from the very beginning, "Forest Gloom was always our ally until Alpha Jake took the title. Most packs, including Blue Crescent, started avoiding it. Many packs cut ties with them with no remorse. Clement was the youngest in his family of three so the chance of him taking on that title was close to nil. But Jake was one of the most ruthless leaders we've heard of. Their sister, Iris, was no better than Jake, using her brother's position to force men in her pack to sleep with her."

She paused when she met Xandar's disgusted look. Lucianne then said, "At least Greg's intercourses with those different women every night was consensual. Anyway, back to Forest Gloom. So, uh...a few of their own pack members started leaving and moving into packs where they have friends or family members to take them in. Many didn't have this alternative. So, they

went to Clement in secret, asking him to challenge Jake for the title. Clement was very pessimistic about it. But then, he heard that Juan had become our Alpha, and he heard how Juan was challenging ruthless Alphas for their packs."

A smile graced Lucianne's features as she continued, "Alpha Clement snuck out of his pack one day and came to us. I was there when he presented his case to Juan, Hale and Beta Preston. He pleaded with Juan to challenge his brother. After we mind-linked between ourselves, we offered him a different solution, that we trained him to take down his own brother and claim his pack instead."

She chuckled lightly before she said, "Darling, you should've seen him. He was as white as a ghost! We could feel his fear in Juan's office." She took a moment to steady herself before she uttered, "Alpha Clement wasn't scared to die. He was scared to let his people down by dying. Juan offered him a space to train with us..."

"With you." Xandar said as he held her tighter.

Lucianne rolled her eyes before she concurred, "With me. He uh...he said we were wasting our time because he felt that the only way to take down an Alpha is by asking another Alpha to do it."

Xandar scoffed as he said, "Looks like you proved him wrong, my feisty little freesia."

Lucianne blushed at the way her mate called her before she resumed her story, "Blue Crescent had no intention to show off but to prove Alpha Clement wrong, and to give him hope, I had to spar Juan and Preston at the same time just to show him that there's no need for an Alpha to take down an Alpha. After our spar..."

"After you beat Juan and Preston."

"Xandar, you don't have to keep saying things like that to keep me flustered. It's really hard to focus on the storyline when you do that."

"Hm...your facts weren't very clear so I had to fill in the blanks. Go on, my love." He said as his nose nuzzled her scar again.

"Darling, no. It tickles!" Lucianne was already starting to giggle at the sensation.

Xandar groaned and said, "Fine. I'll just smell your hair then." After greedily taking a whiff, he prompted Lucianne, "So, what happened after you beat them both at once, my love?"

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Lucianne tried to stay focused while Xandar took in her scent so intimately, and said, "Alpha Clement...definitely didn't try to mask his shock." Xandar took comfort in the fact that Lucianne referred to the Alpha by his title. It meant that she kept her distance from him, which was good enough for now.

Lucianne continued, "For the few weeks after that, he trained with us. His partner was always Juan. Juan even clocked in more training hours just to get Clement prepared as quickly as possible. When he could beat Juan three days in a row, he went home and challenged his brother. And he won when Jake surrendered. Jake took Iris and a few of their friends with them. They were cast out as rogues, never to return. We haven't seen or heard from them ever since."

He buried his nose in her hair, taking in her scent to calm his anxiety and insecurity before he asked, "Did you like him?"

"Clement? Well, he's nice but..." before Lucianne could finish, Xandar's Lycan emitted a low, murderous growl.

Lucianne looked up at him and was met with his angered onyx eyes. With a soft gaze, her small hands traced up his hard chest to his neck before going up to his jaw and chin. She then started to gently and slowly stroke his cheek and traced the features on his face.

His bushy eyebrows; his broad forehead; his well-defined nose; his lips. Xandar's animal emitted an appreciative growl as the sparks from Lucianne's touch calmed its being. The onyx shades were diminishing as he took in the sight of his beautiful mate seated on his lap, with his arms fastened around her small body. Her soft gaze quieted the bubbling volcano in him. And his animal purred in bliss as Lucianne's hand made its way to Xandar's thick hair.

With a small smile, she leaned in and pecked a kiss on his lips. Lucianne then pressed her forehead gently on his as she whispered, "I'm with you, my indecent beast. Only you." She was saying those words more to his animal than to Xandar himself.

Xandar relaxed a little. Only a little. His lips moved to her jaw and traced her skin up to her ear where he muttered in his deep, husky voice, "Should I know anything else about Clement?" The hateful way he said the Alpha's name did not go unnoticed.

Lucianne chose her next words carefully, "I doubt so, darling. Apart from collaborating as allies, we never kept in touch." ①

That was good news for the King. "Does he have a mate?"

"He did." Lucianne responded in a whisper.

Xandar's head moved away from her neck, and he locked eyes with her when he questioned, "Did?"

Lucianne nodded sadly. "His bonded mate was the former Beta's daughter. They were engaged but two days before the wedding, Alpha Clement received an anonymous heap of evidence in an envelope, showing that his mate cheated on him with someone from another pack while they were together. So, he rejected her and was left heartbroken for quite some time."

"You two seem to have something in common." Xandar said in a dissatisfied tone. 2

Lucianne rolled her eyes. "Don't discredit me, Xandar. He went through one rejection. I have five of those under my belt. And what is it with you? I was never intimate with Alpha Clement. We have only ever been friends. Honestly, my King, why are you making a big deal out of this? You don't see me getting angered over your intimate past."

"That's because I don't have one, Lucy." Xandar said firmly. 7

Lucianne snorted in disbelief. "You expect me to believe that in your one hundred and seventy eight years as Prince and as King that you were never intimate with any other female? That your first experience of intimate love is with me? You expect me to believe that you're a virgin, Xandar?"

"Yes." Xandar affirmed his assertion, his eyes peered into Lucianne's doubtful black orbs like he was asking her to believe him. 1

"Yeah, right." Lucianne averted her eyes because she felt a slight discomfort in her chest. Just the thought of Xandar choosing someone else was capable of breaking her into pieces. She knew that he was never intimate with Kelissa Kylton but that didn't mean there wasn't anyone else before her.

Many Alphas have numerous sexual partners before finding their mate. Xandar was the King! There was no way he hadn't already slept with a long line of women before meeting her. Sure, there wasn't any intimacy but that didn't mean that there wasn't any casual sex from time to time.

Lucianne didn't know but she bit her bottom lip as her arm slowly went across her chest, like she was shielding her heart.

Any remaining jealousy and anger in Xandar vapourized in an instant when he watched her demeanor change. It was painful seeing her arm going across her chest like that. He was the last person who wanted to break her heart, and his Lycan sighed in regret in his head before it made his human part hold her closer. Very cautiously, he removed her hand guarding her heart and planted a deep, assuring kiss on her temple before guiding her head to lean against his chest.

With his other hand, he dialed Christian's number and waited. Lucianne didn't know who Xandar was calling. She just assumed it was something about the government or the rogue Lycan. After two rings, Christian's voice came through the other end of the line, "What's up, cuz? And why didn't you just mind-link me?"

Lucianne had a 'what are you doing?' look when she faced Xandar.

Chapter 102

With a cheeky glint in his eye, Xandar said, "You'll know soon. And remind me, Christian. How many women have I been with before our Queen?" 2

Lucianne flinched a little away from Xandar at the words 'how many women'. But Xandar's arm reached out to trap her body and pressed it back into his, his clear lilac eyes locked with her anxious black ones.

Christian took a moment before responding, "Is this a trick question? Cuz, when have you ever..." he paused, and his voice took a teasing twist when he said, "Oh, wait. I think I get it now."

Lucianne was flustering in embarrassment. Even so, she took the liberty to utter a not-so-confident "Hey, Christian" through the line.

Christian chuckled before he said, "Didn't believe that you're my cousin's first and only love now, did you, my Queen?" Xandar was smirking cockily at his mate as he held his phone.

Lucianne braved through the embarrassment as she said, "In my defence, it's unbelievable, for the both of you, in fact. Being who you guys are."

"Ah, yeah. Kings and Dukes do get a lot of offers." Christian said. "But it was all rather a turn-off if you asked us."

This piqued Lucianne's curiosity. She leaned into Xandar's phone as she asked, "What? Why?" Xandar had already started running his fingers through her luscious curls at this point, feeling the softness in her hair that always softened his heart.

Christian then said, "Think about it, my Queen. If you were born into some high position and you get all these offers, would you be convinced that they're there for who you are and not what you are?"

Lucianne rolled her eyes at the question. "Of course not. But that's me!"

"It's us too, Lucy!" Xandar exclaimed firmly. His desperate lilac eyes locked with her black orbs, begging her to believe him. His hand in her hair had stopped moving as his entire being focused on assuring her that he was never intimate with anyone before her.

There was a moment of silence before Christian's cheeky voice rang through, "Cuz, chill. Annie didn't believe me when we had this talk either. And let me remind you, Greg was feeding her with lies back then. You're having it way easier than I did."

Lucianne relaxed a little when she heard that Annie was in the same boat as her years ago. Xandar then retorted his cousin, "I wouldn't say that, Christian."

Lucianne's eyes widened in fear, and there was a cheeky glint in Xandar's eye again before he continued, "Do you have any idea how many men she has attracted..."

"No! That's enough. Give me that." Lucianne cut Xandar off mid-sentence as she tried to reach for his phone. He swiftly held it away from her, and she started climbing on his body just to reach for it as Christian's uncontrollable chuckles rang through loudly from the other end of the line,

When she was close enough, Xandar dropped his phone in his other hand and his free hand held his frantic mate by her hips. Her embarrassed but fierce eyes locked with his amusing ones before Christian finally stopped his laughter and said, "I can't say I'm surprised, cuz. She's still attracting them anyway. Maybe it's a tie between us. We both have it equally hard with love. I had Greg and Annie's colleagues. And you have...well, every mateless creature." And he continued laughing.

"That's not true!" Lucianne shouted from a distance of the phone.

"My Queen, just because you don't see it, it doesn't mean it isn't true. So uh, cuz, how many men was it again?" Although the question was directed at Xandar, the three of them knew that it was to tease Lucianne.

Lucianne started reaching for the phone again but Xandar locked her body in his embrace as he said, "I don't know. I'm still counting."

Then something hit Lucianne, "I wasn't intimate with whoever you have in your head, Xandar. If we're talking about attraction, then let's start counting yours. Between us, I already know who's going to have the higher number."

Christian's contemplative voice rang through, "Oh, this is gonna be tough. Do we have to bet? I honestly don't know which one of you will win."

Lucianne looked at the phone in frustration as she would Christian if he were in the room. "Christian. The King or the Gamma. Which do you think?"

"Uh... gosh, this is hard." Christian continued to ponder in seriousness before he said, "The Queen! That's the answer! I knew that was a trick question!"

"It wasn't a trick q—" Lucianne's protest was silenced by a sweet peck on her lips, which sent a course of pleasurable sparks into her being, calming her irritation and annoyance.

Christian then said, "Cuz, why are you fussing over this again? It's not like she had a boyfriend when she met you like Annie did when I met her." Lucianne smirked victoriously at Xandar.

Xandar sighed in frustration, "Christian, the whole point of calling you was to get you on my side."

"I am but don't you think you may be overreacting? The Queen is practically blind to all the hearts she's stealing anyway. Annie wasn't. Be grateful, cuz."

Now, both Lucianne and Xandar wanted to protest what Christian just said. But then Annie's voice came soft in the background, "Is that Xandar? Why didn't you two just mind-link?"

Christian chuckled lightly before explaining casually to his mate, "Do you remember that talk we had about me never being with anyone else before you, my Duchess?"

"Yeah." Annie's voice was louder now, standing closer to Christian's phone.

"Well, the King is having that talk with the Queen now. She didn't believe him when he told her either."

There was only silence for a moment as Lucianne covered her face with both hands in embarrassment. Everyone waited for Annie's response.