

The Alpha: Claiming His Enemy's Daughter,

Chapter 171: EXHAUSTION AND NIGHTMARE

EXHAUSTION AND NIGHTMARE

If the attack hadn't happened, then Cane would have been a great parent to his ten years old son with his destined mate, who more than deserved the title of the Luna of this pack.

It would have been Leane who went to the capital city and had the ceremony. It would have been her name that would be engraved beside Cane's name, as the Luna of the Howling Wolf pack.

Her father had destroyed their lives and it was Iris that would take Leane's position.

Iris cried so hard as she kept asking for forgiveness for something that she didn't do, something that she couldn't prevent and something that she was not part of.

Meanwhile, Cane waited until she calmed down enough before he told her that they needed to go because it was almost midnight.

They returned to the pack house on the horse, the guard prepared one for them, thus they could be behind the fortress faster.

During their trip back, neither of them said anything, even after they reached the pack house, both of them went to their respective rooms in silence, there was no word to exchange. Both of them were deep in their own thoughts, immersed so deep in their own agony and grievances.

That night, Cane had his nightmare again.

It was the time around his three years of slavery, this dream looked very lucid with all the gruesome details that he really wished to forget.

Mason had this idea to abandon all the elderly of the Howling Wolf pack in the Goffa mountain. He then forced Cane to watch them being mauled by the monsters there.

Most of the elderly were those who were no longer able to fight and even too old to walk on their own and needed constant assistance.

Therefore, Mason deemed them as a nuisance and a waste of space and food. There was no fun in keeping them around, as they were too weak for any twisted entertainment in his mind.

In that case, he came up with this brilliant idea to get rid of them all.

And that was where Cane found himself, staring from the fortress, watching twenty three elderly people that he had known for his whole life being ripped apart by the monsters. Their screams kept echoing in his mind even when he woke up.

The fear on their faces... How they begged for mercy from Mason, who just kept laughing at their misery...

The smell of their blood...

It was a complete massacre, since none of them could fight those monsters.

In less than three hours, those monsters killed off those elderly without even leaving any bones, only leaving trails of blood in their wake when they finally left after they were done with their feast.

Cane sat down and closed his eyes, but the darkness only intensified his memories, thus he got off the bed and went to his study room.

"Call Mal and Lex," Cane ordered the guard, who was standing outside of his bedroom.

Mal and Lex were the spies that he found in the other pack during his journey to Moon Dew pack.

Cane tried to track down all the spies that were scattered in the other packs; he had been reconnecting the chain of information that his father had built, because this was important for his grand plan.

The sun had not yet appeared and the sky was still so dark, but the Alpha didn't have any desire to fall asleep again, without her around, those nightmares kept haunting him restlessly.

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The next day after her trip to the Howling Wolf pack grave, Iris didn't go out of her room, she spent her time sitting on the windowsill, staring into the distance. She had not yet mentally recovered from it.

Cane didn't have any bad intention when he wanted her to see his family, because after the ceremony, she would claim the position of the Luna of the pack and no one could say otherwise, nor could they question her status.

However, Iris' mind was all over the place, she was mentally drained and this cost her physic too, because she felt exhausted to even talk with Hanna.

Meanwhile, Hanna had tried everything to find out what had happened, but her missy simply dismissed her and told her to leave her alone. It was clear she didn't want to be disturbed.

At the same time, Hanna had her own conundrum and she couldn't discuss this with Iris because she was like that, thus most of the time, they spent their time in silence when they were together in the room.

On the other hand, Jace had been trying to pry about what was the plan in Cane's mind. He became so frustrated when Cane didn't start their preparations for their departure to the capital city, despite the decree being arrived three days ago.

"Cane, are you trying to push the King to his limits? Or are you trying to wage a war against the Crown?" Jace asked the Alpha with a frown.

Usually, he was the cold headed among the three, but this time, Ethan simply appeared not to care about his own predicament at all as he spent his time with all the people around him to his heart's content.

Other people might see him as his usual self, but in Jace and Will's eyes, he looked more like someone, who thought that they would never see these people again, thus he wanted to spend his time with them to the fullest, which could be said to be true, because his offense was too severe to be pardoned.

"If you really want to go on a war against the Crown, at least tell me, so I can prepare our warriors!" Jace was frustrated. The idea of going to a war was ridiculous, because the outcome of it was very obvious, but if that was what Cane wanted, he was ready to serve him until his last breath.

"No, there will be no war," Cane replied.

But, before the discussion could go any further and Cane could explain his plan, someone burst into the room without permission.

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A LESSON FOR ARIA

Before Jace could hear the explanation from Cane about what he was going to do regarding the matter with Ethan, someone interrupted them.

Jace didn't need to turn around to know who that was, because her scent was the first thing that hit him. He closed his eyes, trying to rein in his anger.

In the beginning, the Beta didn't think much about it, but it didn't take long for him to feel frustrated and now he was so angry because of the interruption.

"You can at least knock on the door," Jace said when Aria walked past him, but the woman just threw him a glance and strode toward Cane nonchalantly.

They were inside the study room, though there was no guard before the door, Aria must know Cane was inside. If not her, who else could enter his study room, a place where the Alpha would hold important meetings, without permission, or even a knock on the door.

"There is something important..." Aria was about to talk to Cane, but the Alpha looked at her coldly.

Aria had done this countless times and this definitely was not the first time for Cane to remind her to knock on the door.

It was a very basic thing and it had nothing to do with status or anything, but Aria seemed very confident to forget about it every time she entered the room. She didn't even put an effort into remembering that.

"Go out and knock on the door and don't enter until I give you permission," Cane said coldly. He didn't raise his tone, nor did he word it viciously, but it was enough to make Aria stop in her tracks. She was dumbfounded.

"I am sorry, I forgot, but this is an important matter..." Aria tried to explain herself, she stuttered, but Cane was firm with his stance.

"Don't come in without permission."

Jace remained silent on the side, he was quite surprised to see Cane being finally fed up with this attitude of hers. It was a simple thing that they could overlook if they were only talking about trivial matters, but when you were in the middle of something important and got interrupted, it was a normal thing to be very pissed off, especially when this happened constantly.

"I..." Aria wanted to retort, but then she bit her lips and walked back to the door. She closed it and knocked on it, but there was no answer from inside.

Aria knocked again, but she didn't get the permission, thus she needed to wait until Jace came out.

"No, there will be no war," Cane continued from where he left off, as if there was no interruption in the first place and Jace was glad that he finally taught Aria some discipline, so she could learn not to do that again.

After all, it was common sense to do.

"So, what will you do about it? By making the King wait for a long time, you are really testing his limits. You'll make things even worse, if you march to the palace under his wrath." Jace sounded very anxious about the unknown.

It was not because he was afraid of the King or anything, it was simply because Cane refused to explain things.

If they really would go to a war against the Crown, he wouldn't step back and would fully support him, despite the result. But right now, he couldn't help feeling anxious with a lot of questions in his mind and this guessing game about what Cane might do, simply drove him insane.

"I am waiting for news from Nexus," Cane said.

Ethan had told him everything about the six spies of Cane's father they met during their journey, though the Beta condemned them for disappearing in time of need for years when the pack had fallen, albeit there was not much they could do to fight against a whole Blue Moon pack, he couldn't deny that they really needed to build the chain of information again. It was a vital point.

"What news are you waiting for?" Jace narrowed his eyes.

"Something that can threaten my uncle."

Jace chuckled when he heard Cane calling King Aeon 'my uncle', because it sounded like he was mocking him instead.

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"Miss, you need to see this! Come here! Quick!" Hanna's face was red, her eyes lit up and she was very enthusiastic, which made Iris unable to refuse her when she finally dragged her out of the bedroom, after she holed herself up in there for three days straight.

She had been very gloomy during these few days and Hanna couldn't stand her being so sad like that.

"Where are we going?" Iris was panting, as she tried to match her pace with Hanna's, but she was too fast for her.

"We need to go faster, or else, we will be late," Hanna said, as she turned her head toward Iris, while they were running.

"Late for what?!" Iris felt like she was about to cry again when her lungs started burning, but she didn't get the answer from Hanna and she didn't have any other choice but to run with her.

Hanna literally dragged her along, looking very impatient.

They went through the main hall, the front yard and then the small woods next to the pack house. It was so cold this morning, but for the first time, Iris didn't feel the chill, because sweat started to form on her forehead, as she tried to run alongside with Hanna.

After whizzing past several trees, they finally reached a cleared area, where Iris could see Ethan and Ania scooting down near a mound.

Hearing them coming, both of them whipped their heads in their direction and waved their hands frantically, asking them to run faster.

Iris was lightheaded, she was out of breath and felt like she was going to collapse at any given second.

Ania then stood up and excitedly rushed toward Iris, she took her other hand to make her move faster. Iris felt very frustrated when they rushed her like this without saying anything.

"Come here! Quick! You are going to miss this!" Ania chirped.

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IT'S A NEW LIFE

Aria ended up waiting for almost two hours when, finally, Jace came out of the study room. He looked helpless when he saw she had been crying, while she was waiting.

"Cane wants to see you," he said simply, while Aria glared at him and wiped her tears with the backs of her hands, as if it was Jace who had made her wait for hours.

Seeing that, the Beta shook his head and went away. He had a lot of things to do and didn't have time to indulge in the problem with Aria.

Inside the room, Cane was putting back a book that he had just read and glanced over when she approached him.

"I am sorry, Alpha. I will remember it next time," Aria said, lowering her head. She looked ashamed. She had said the same line in the past several times when Cane reminded her about this trivial matter, but she kept forgetting about it.

This time, it was different, there was a consequence that she had to face, thus she would be careful with this next time.

"What do you want to say?" Cane turned around and looked at her. He didn't look angry, nor did he look disappointed, but he seemed so distant, as if Aria was staring at a different person entirely.

"There is a problem in the orphanage," she said in a small voice. "A little girl fell sick three days ago and today, we found two other children suffering with the same symptoms."

Cane frowned. Shifters didn't usually get sick, even though the little ones didn't have the same healing ability like that of an adult shifter, but their immunity to illness was above average humans.

"Has Grace been informed?" Cane started to walk toward the door, while Aria followed behind him, she looked glad that the Alpha took her words seriously.

"Yes, Grace has been informed, Ardand also came this morning to check the situation, but neither of them could find out the reason for their sickness." Aria needed to half run to catch up with him.

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"Come on! Come on! You are going to miss this!" Ethan was being impatient, he seemed even more childish than Ania right now.

By the time Iris finally squatted down next to the gamma, she was out of breath, but then her eyes widened when she saw what actually they wanted her to see. She couldn't believe that she got to witness something like this.

Below the mound, there was a hole, it was a rabbit hole, where they were watching a rabbit give birth to five bunnies!

Iris was lucky, because she managed to witness the last bunny being born. They were so small and their skin was pinkish and wrinkly.

"They look like mice!" Ania exclaimed, she frowned. "Where is the fur?" She blinked her eyes, confused. "Are they really bunnies?"

"Silly, of course, they are bunnies, when they grow older and eat enough, their fur will grow," Ethan explained.

"But, maybe it's a mistake, maybe they are really mice," Ania insisted. In her childish mind, bunnies would look just like rabbits, only much smaller in size. "They are not cute."

Ethan and Hanna laughed when they heard this, while Iris was mesmerized to witness the birth of a living creature.

It's a new life.

There would always be a new life that you could cherish. The dead would remain the same, but the living needed to strive for themselves and those they cherished.

"It's beautiful," Iris said. She felt slightly better. "Thank you for showing me this."

"Ugh! I feel like I want to eat rabbit meat," Ethan groaned.

"Ethan!" Ania and Hanna hit his shoulder for his comment. How could he say something like that at a lovely moment like this?

Thankfully, Iris was not aware of what the three of them were arguing about...

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"Alpha," Aliana greeted Alpha Cane politely when she saw him enter the room. She was Jace's sister and ever since they returned to the Howling Wolf pack, she had been in charge of the orphanage.

Most of the children here came from the Blue Moon pack. They lost their parents and siblings from the monster attack last time that happened when they were still there.

"What happened here?" Cane asked, while Aliana walked beside him and gave a rundown of the events that had happened in the orphanage. As for Aria, she walked behind the two of them. She didn't look happy to be left behind like this, but she kept her mouth shut.

Based on what Aliana told him, the sickness started with Emma, a little girl around the age of four, she suddenly got a fever and fell unconscious the next morning.

Grace was called, but her fever didn't go down and she remained unconscious, until two of her roommates fell sick with the same symptoms as her.

"Alpha, I don't think it is wise for you to enter the room, if the illness is contagious, it will put your life at risk," Aliana reminded him, before Cane opened the door.

Yet, Cane didn't heed her warning and pushed the door open, he walked inside, where Grace and Ardand were discussing something.

Both of them immediately greeted Cane and told him in detail about what they had found, which was not much, and also their analysis.

"There is nothing wrong with them, but we can't use healing power on them. This case is almost like Luna Iris', but feels a little different," Grace muttered to herself, after she and Ardand explained everything.

"What do you mean it is the same as her, but different?"

"Luna Iris' body rejects the healing power because of her constitution, as if she was born that way, but for these children, it felt like there is something that prevents us from using the healing power." It was Ardand, who answered Cane's question.

Meanwhile, outside of the door, Aria stared at the three children with conflicted eyes, before they turned determined. She had already reached this point, there was no turning back for her now.

Aria fiddled with the small needle between her fingers in her pocket.

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MY KITE!

"Alpha, it will be better if you do not stay for long here, just in case," Ardand spoke carefully. He was worried about the same thing as Aliana.

If something happened to Cane, they didn't know what to do, especially when they really didn't know what was going on with these children.

Seeing their worried faces, Cane finally stepped out of the room. It wouldn't do any good if he too fell sick. Moreover, he couldn't help with anything by staying inside the room with them either.

The orphanage was a two storey house with around twenty small rooms for the little children. Because the number of the rooms didn't meet the number of the children, they actually allocated one room to every three or four children.

Their ages range from infancy to twelve years, while those above twelve years old could join the rank of the warriors, work in the orphanage to look after the little ones or find other work.

"Why are you here?" Cane asked Aria when he walked toward the yard, where children were playing with the six adults who looked after them.

As far as Cane knew, Aria was not really fond of children. She might not realize it, but Cane was an observant person, thus it was easy for him to tell.

"I have been helping Aliana around here, a week after you left for the Moon Dew pack," Aria replied honestly. She looked demure when she said that.

Cane glanced at her, a complicated look flashed in his eyes, but it disappeared quick enough when he felt something bump into his leg and out of instinct, he bent down to hold it.

It was a little boy, around the age of four. His cheeks were round and his hair was as black as charcoal. He blinked his big eyes and then pointed his finger at a tree in the middle of the yard.

"My kite!" he said in a chirpy voice. "My kite!"

"You should call him Alpha," Aria chided lightly, but there was a smile tugging up the corners of her lips.

However, the little boy didn't understand the concept and tugged at Cane's pants, while jumping up and down, saying the same thing. "My kite! My kite!"

On the other hand, Cane didn't heed Aria's words and simply carried the boy in his arms, as he walked toward the tree that the little boy pointed out with his stubby finger.

"My kite!" The little boy wailed. His kite was stuck on a branch of this tree and he couldn't reach it, thus he looked for the tallest person there. Of course, because of his height Cane was easy to spot on.

"Oh, I am sorry, Alpha, did he bother you?" Carla, a young girl, around the age of fifteen came running to see the little boy in Cane's arm.

"Carla, what are you doing? Hurry, take him..." Aria chided lightly, but she didn't have a chance to finish her sentence before Cane spoke.

"It's okay," he said curtly and then leapt with the little boy in his arms to one of the branches, near where the kite was stuck. He let the little boy take it and hug it.

Cane did all of that with ease, even when he landed back, he didn't look like he used any effort, while the little boy laughed giddily to get his kite back.

Cane then jumped down and let go of the little boy, as he ran toward Carla and showed her the kite.

"Say thanks to the Alpha," Carla said softly, caressing his head.

"Say thanks to the alpha," the little boy parroted what Carla said.

"No, say; thank you Alpha," Carla chuckled.

The little boy pursed his lips because he didn't know what he had done wrong. "No. Thank you alpha."

A rare smile played on Cane's lips, as he stretched out his hand and caressed his chubby cheek. "Don't lose it again."

The little boy stared at Cane and spoke with all seriousness that a four year old child could muster. "You will get it for me, if I lose it."

This time, Cane laughed, which stunned Aria, because she hardly heard him laughing. The sound was so pure and filled with mirth. Probably this was the first time they heard the Alpha laugh like that.

"Sure, I will." Cane nodded and watched the little boy skip away with his kite, Carla then nodded at Cane and resigned herself before she ran to catch up with him.

His features looked serene and for the first time after a long time, Aria could see Cane's warm side again. This was the man that her former missy loved. Aria was Leane's personal servant when the two of them realized that they were mates.

She came with Leane to accompany her to enter the Howling Wolf pack and stayed by her side. Therefore, she knew Cane more, especially his warm and loving side. The way he looked at his mate, filled with love and affection.

His soft side that she thought she would never see again.

Aria pressed her lips into a thin line before she touched Cane's shoulder. He was still squatting down in front of her, so it was easy for her to use the small needle.

"What's that?" Cane whipped his head around toward Aria and then stood up. He felt something prick his shoulder.

"There is an ant on your shoulder, so I swatted it away," she replied smoothly.

Cane said nothing and then walked away. He didn't leave, but sat down on the bench, under the shadow of the tree, while Aria sat next to him. Both of them watched the children play around.

It was so peaceful, Aria thought it would be nice if they could be like this forever, or maybe in the future they could sit together like this, while watching their own children. It would be a beautiful picture.

"Aria."

"Yes?" Aria tilted her head, staring at him sheepishly.

"Next time, refrain yourself from chiding them over trivial things."

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SHE IS BAD LUCK!

"Next time, refrain yourself from chiding them over trivial things." Cane didn't like it when Aria was about to scold the little boy for something that was so insignificant earlier. He could tell that she was only holding back because he was there.

"I am sorry about that, I just thought that the boy bothered you, since you looked so troubled and worried with the problem of the strange illness." Aria lowered her head, she looked remorseful, but Cane didn't prolong the topic and kept his silence.

He enjoyed the innocent laughter of those children and how their voices chirped happily. Their world must be so beautiful and pure if they could still laugh like that after all they had gone through and how they lost their families.

Cane hoped, one day, he would find that kind of peace too.

"Do you know the name of that little boy?"

Aria gave a start at that random question. "What? The boy that approached you earlier?" She asked, but actually, she was trying to remember his name. "James," she blurted out the first name that came to her mind, because she couldn't remember that little boy's name. No. She didn't even know his name.

Moreover, Cane wouldn't know his name either, right? There were so many children here.

"No. His name is Archer," Cane said simply. Aria spent three weeks in the orphanage, so she must remember some of them, even if she couldn't remember them all.

"Ah, I mixed it up with another boy's name. I will remember that."

Cane said nothing, but continued to sit there in silence.

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"What happened to you?" Jace noticed there was something unusual with Cane. He looked a little bit pale and was unusually sluggish. "Are you listening?"

"Hm?" Cane raised his head and stared at the Beta. "I am fine."

Jace shook his head and put away the scrolls of reports in front of him. "No, this will not do. You need to take a rest. It is almost midnight."

This time, Cane didn't refuse, as he went to the bed, which was another surprising thing for Jace to see how obedient the Alpha was being. Probably, he was really in pain.

But then, his expression grew fearful, as he remembered something important.

The Beta rushed toward the door and issued an order to the guard there. "Call Grace here immediately!"

He remembered that this afternoon Cane went to the orphanage to see the children that mysteriously fell ill. Their symptoms were the same as his now. At night, they got fever and fell unconscious the next day.

Was the childrens' illness really contagious? If that was the case, his sister, Grace, Ardand and most of the children in the orphanage must have been infected by now.

Jace looked at the Alpha's complexion and he became restless. He was not sure whether this was contagious or not, but he couldn't let anyone come closer to this room.

Meanwhile, Iris was sleeping soundly when she suddenly woke up feeling unwell. Her ears kept ringing painfully and she heard the howling sound so close, as if the beast was right next to her.

Iris looked around her room, the fire in the fireplace was the only source of light, while the moon shone brightly in the night sky.

This was not a new moon, but why did she hear this sound so vividly? Did something happen to Cane?

The only time she could hear was the time when Cane shifted into his lycan form. But for some reason, she could hear his beast now. Was this the same? Did he shift into his lycan even if it was not a new moon?

Plagued with a lot of questions, Iris immediately got off the bed and rushed toward the door that connected their rooms. She was only wearing a thin nightdress while her auburn hair bloomed around her little face with big curls that looked messy, but she couldn't care less about her appearance right now because her concern was Cane.

Something was not right.

"Cane?" Iris called him. This was the first time for her to use this connecting door, but she was surprised to find there were a lot of people there.

Jace, Grace, Ardand and Aria. The four of them circled around the bed, as they were talking about something that she couldn't read.

When her voice rang inside the room, all of them whipped their heads around toward Iris, who emerged from the door, barefooted. She looked clumsy and worried.

"What happened here? What happened to Cane?" Her heart palpitated when she sensed the tension inside the room. It was so thick and suffocating.

All of them were silent, unsure how to answer her question, but this made Iris grow restless. She quickened her steps toward the bed to see for herself what was going on with Cane.

However, as Iris got closer to him, suddenly this wave of uneasy feeling crashed over her senses, leaving her completely senseless for a few seconds, as she staggered back. She was a little bit dizzy, because of this ominous feeling.

Seeing that, Jace was about to step forward to catch her, because she looked like she was about to faint, but Aria beat him to it.

She rushed toward Iris, but not to help her, instead, she pushed her harshly. "Stay away from him! You are bad luck for our pack!" She screamed at the top of her lungs, her eyes were so red because she had been crying. "I have told you before that you are bad luck! Go back to your pack!"

"Aria!" Jace held her hand, just in case she tried to attack Iris again, while Grace immediately rushed forward to help Iris to stand up.

"Are you okay?" Grace asked Iris.

"Throw her away from this pack! She is unlucky!" Aria shouted.

Meanwhile, Iris raised her head. She looked calm, but surprisingly, she glared at Aria the next moment. She didn't do anything, but why would she always blame her?

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RETALIATION

Iris was very anxious. The howling was laced with anguish. It tugged at her heartstrings painfully, and sounded like a wounded animal and this made her feel on tenterhooks.

The sound was calling for her desperately. It was different from the howling that she heard every new moon. This time, it was way more unsettled.

"Throw her away from this pack! She is unlucky!" Aria shouted. She glared down at Iris, who fell to the floor, because she pushed her too hard. "This is Gerald's curse for having her as the Luna of the pack!" Aria's voice echoed inside this silence room.

"Enough, Aria!" Grace said sternly, as she helped Iris to stand up.

"What?! Even now, you are unable to tell?! We shouldn't have brought her here! The attack of the monsters, the storm, Ania was poisoned! All of that is because she is bad luck! The Moon Goddess will not bless our pack with a person like her here!" Aria was indignant, she pointed her finger at Iris' face.

It was not the first time for Aria to call Iris bad luck. She blamed her for whatever bad things that happened in this pack blindly, even if it sounded so crazy.

"Nonsense!"

"Don't be ridiculous, Aria!"

Grace and Jace talked at the same time. They didn't have time to indulge her jealousy when they didn't know what happened to Cane.

However, Aria didn't want to stop, she kept cursing at Iris, while crying, even though Jace tugged at her hand and tried to pull her out of the room.

"I will not go anywhere if she is still here!" Aria was enraged. She pulled her hand out of Jace's grip.

Seeing this, Jace could only sigh deeply. He then looked at Iris. "Go back to your room, Iris, we will handle the situation here."

It would be better not to have the two of them in the same room, after all, they couldn't help with anything if even Grace and Ardand were flabbergasted with this situation.

Aria was stubborn, but with Iris' mild temper, it would be easy to persuade her, right? The rest of them were also thinking the same. But, to their surprise, they were wrong.

"No," Iris replied. Her voice was curt and clear. She looked as stubborn as Aria right now, as she glared at the mistress.

Her short answer left them stunned. They didn't expect Iris to be difficult as well.

"Iris, this is not the time..." Grace tried to talk to her not to escalate the situation, because they knew how obstinate Aria could be.

"No, I need to check on him," Iris blurted it out without a second thought, as she moved toward the bed, where Cane was sleeping in discomfort.

For other people, what she said sounded like the most ridiculous thing to say at this moment. What did she need to check? She sounded like a healer or something, someone who held a certain power to analyze the situation and Cane's condition.

However, they were not privileged to understand how Iris felt right now.

It was not only the anguish in the howling that kept echoing in her ears, the sound that none of them was aware of, but also this strange feeling that tugged at her heart. The sensation that she felt when she sensed a magic stone, but it felt more ominous.

Iris couldn't explain this and they didn't even ask her when they forbade her to come closer to the bed.

"No, Iris, it can be contagious, it is better for you not to come closer," Grace said, as she held her back.

But, it was Aria, who was way more aggressive to stop Iris from approaching the bed, she broke free from Jace's grip and rushed toward Iris. She grabbed her hair and yanked it as hard as she could, which made Iris' scalp feel like it was on fire. It burned.

Tears started to form in Iris' eyes because of the pain.

"ARIA!" Jace roared, he grabbed her hand and shouted at her face. This time, he used his authority in his voice, though it was not as strong as the Alpha's, he was still the Beta of the pack. "LET HER GO!"

Aria was startled, as she was forced to let go of Iris' hair.

Grace immediately rushed toward Iris and looked at her with worry. She tried to cast a healing spell on her head to alleviate the pain, but it didn't seem to work, while Iris held her head, tears streamed down her cheeks.

"Get out of this room!" Jace glowered at her, but she was as stubborn as ever.

"I will not go anywhere if she is still here!" Aria pointed an accusatory finger at Iris.

Jace was about to tell Iris to go back to her room, so the two of them could get out of here and let Grace and Ardand work.

However, he only saw a flash of auburn and the next thing that they knew was, a slap landed hard on Aria's cheek, the sound of it echoed inside the room, which stunned them all.

This was the last thing that they expected from Iris, since she was not a violent type.

Even Iris herself was surprised when she slapped Aria, but she didn't feel any regret. What the mistress had said was very cruel and her burning scalp agitated her.

Aria held her aching cheek in disbelief, anger flickered in her eyes, as she was ready to shift into her beast form and tear her apart!

But when the room fell into silence, there was a series of knocks on the door before it was opened with urgency.

"Grace, you need to come with me, quick!" Aliana said hurriedly, tears streaming down her eyes, her face was so red because she cried too much.

"What happened?" Grace asked, as she approached Aliana, who was standing at the door, she didn't dare to enter the Alpha's bedroom without permission.

"Emma died! She died!" Aliana cried her heart out.

The first child, who had fallen ill, had died.

The Alpha: Claiming His Enemy's Daughter, Chapter 177: SACRIFICE

SACRIFICE

Aria hugged herself at the corner of her room, she blanched as she recalled the fact that Emma had died because of the strange illness that she suffered.

"No... that's not me. It was not because of me..." She kept repeating the same thing over and over again, as she hugged herself. Her whole body was trembling violently. She couldn't think straight.

Aria had to use a lot of effort to rein in her guilty feelings, so no one would be suspicious of her, because they must know that the death of a child that she wasn't even fond of wouldn't be able to affect her like this.

When Dalia entered the room after she heard what happened in the orphanage, Aria raised her head and immediately rushed toward her. She couldn't stop shaking, her fear turned into anger.

"What ACTUALLY HAPPENED! HE SAID NOTHING ABOUT THE CHILDREN DYING!" Aria roared and this made Dalia hastily try to calm her down.

"Lower your voice, Mistress, lower your voice, we can't let anyone know about this!" She said in panic, as she kept staring at the door, afraid that it would burst open all of a sudden and they would find out what they had done. "Calm down first."

Dalia held her hand and sat the furious Aria down on the sofa, as she huddled her body again. She hugged herself and her eyes were not focused.

"The child is dead," Aria repeated the words. "The sorcerer said no one will die, those three children are to be sacrificed, but he needs only their souls, but they will not die..."

Out of jealousy, when Cane went to the Moon Dew pack with Iris, Aria and Dalia went to the Riverside pack to meet with a sorcerer. The man claimed that he could sever the mate bond between mates, but said some kind of sacrifice had to be offered.

The sorcerer only said about sacrificing their souls, whatever that meant, not their lives! But one of them died now!

"What if Cane dies...?" Aria couldn't even bear that idea. If something bad indeed happened to Cane and he ended up losing his life, what would she do? How could she live with the fact that she had killed the only person that mattered to her?!

"Mistress..." Dalia tried to urge her to stop panicking, because if someone saw her like this, she would be implicated as well. The punishment would be severe if they were found colluded with the dark magic users, even the royals would get involved in this matter, since dark magic was banned in this continent.

Heavens knew what would happen to them if the people from the palace got involved in this matter.

"Prepare a horse! Quick! I need to go to the Riverside pack!" Aria sprang to her feet.

"Mistress!" Dalia cried out. "If you go now, they will know there is something wrong and if they become suspicious, it will be the end of you! Please consider!" Dalia was so scared.

"Enough!" Aria roared angrily. "Cane can die at any moment!" This reason alone was enough to silence Dalia, she looked aggrieved. She didn't want the Alpha to die either.

"But, the sorcerer said that he will be like this, right?"

"That quack sorcerer said no one will die!" Aria countered. "But, can't you see? A girl already died!"

Aria didn't have any patience left, as she strode out of her bedroom swiftly. She walked so fast, as she raised her dress.

On the other hand, Dalia too panicked hard when she couldn't find Aria. The journey to the Riverside pack would take half a day, which meant Aria would be missing for a whole day. What would she say if someone asked about her whereabouts?

The only way for her right now was to find Bian. She needed to think of a solution! After all, this was her idea!

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Grace and Ardand went to the orphanage to see Emma's body; they hoped they could figure out something after they saw the poor child's corpse.

Meanwhile, without Aria around, Jace couldn't stop Iris when she said that she wanted to check on Cane.

The Beta left her there with Ethan and Will to guard Cane. In case something happened, they needed to rush to inform the healer about it, while he needed to take care of something urgent on behalf of Cane. He needed to take care of the situation in the orphanage too and made sure the news did not leak, just in case it would lead to chaos.

Ethan leaned over and tapped Iris' arm. "Touching him will not arouse him."

Iris immediately stopped, her eyes widened and there was a tinge of red on her cheeks when she read what he said. "I am not a pervert!" She retorted with a hiss, while Ethan gave her a wolfish grin.

"You keep patting him. Don't take advantage while he is knocked out cold," Ethan couldn't stop teasing her, because the situation was so tense and quiet.

It didn't mean he did not care about Cane's condition, he absolutely did, but everyone had their own way of dealing with the tension.

"I am not!" Iris retorted again, she looked a little bit embarrassed, but her hand still hovered above Cane's shoulder. "I feel... there is something on his shoulder."

Ethan arched his brows. "What do you mean by you feel there is something on his shoulder?"

Will, who was leaning his body against one of the pillars of this four poster bed, listened to their banter silently. He was very quiet and was deep in thought, as if he had been praying solemnly.

"I don't know, but..." Iris was hesitant, her finger brushed on his shoulder again, over the same spot that Aria had pricked Cane. "There is something here..."

Ethan glanced at Will, who was frowning as well.

"What do you mean there is something there? What is in there?" Ethan leaned over, his expression became serious.

Iris bit her lip, she was thinking hard about it before she spoke. "There is a shard of magic stone there."

The Alpha: Claiming His Enemy's Daughter, Chapter 178: DARK MAGIC

DARK MAGIC

"There is a shard of magic stone there." Iris lowered her eyes, she stared at the exact spot she could feel the shard was at. She couldn't determine from what element the magic stone was. All she could sense was how ominous the feeling it gave off was.

"A shard of magic stone? Are you sure?" Will asked, but then he tapped on Iris' shoulder because she was focusing on Cane's shoulder. He repeated his question when he got her attention.

"Yes, I am sure. There is a shard of magic stone there, here." Iris pointed at the spot, exactly how she pinpointed the location of the magic stones when she was in the mines.

Will and Ethan had witnessed her strange, but useful ability. They didn't doubt her, but how could a shard of magic stone be found there?

"How can a shard of magic stone be there?" Ethan frowned. "Is that harmful?" Aside from mining the stones and knowing those precious gems could be used by healers and magic users, they literally didn't know anything about them.

As shifters, such information was of no use for them.

It was Will who took the initiative to go and call Grace over, because he thought this was something that was related to Cane's sudden sickness. "I will

go and get Grace." He rushed out of the room immediately and returned with the healer less than half an hour later.

Grace looked pale, as she asked Iris anxiously. "Are you sure it is a shard of magic stone?" Her eyes widened in fear.

"Yes," Iris replied, nodding her head to emphasize her answer.

Meanwhile, Grace immediately took a seat on the edge of the bed on Cane's left side and looked at him more carefully now, but she couldn't sense what Iris felt. She neither had Iris' ability, nor was she a magic user.

"Can you point it out for me?" Grace asked again, her face was full of concentration. She didn't doubt Iris when she said she sensed a magic stone, because she had heard how she found forty five magic stones in less than an hour and also the water magic stone that saved Ania's life during their journey back to the Howling Wolf pack.

"Here." Iris showed her the same spot that she had shown Ethan.

Grace checked the spot with so much concentration before she finally felt it. It took her more than ten minutes to feel the strange power there. Without Iris pointing it out for her, she would never be able to find it at all.

"This is not good," she said in a trembling voice, which alerted Will and Ethan.

"Why? What happened?"

"How can a shard of magic stone be buried in his flesh?"

Both of them asked simultaneously, but Iris paid close attention to Cane's complexion. She still heard the howling of the beast and this left her restless. The mate bond between them had started to grow, thus she could feel his pain through the bond.

"Having a shard of magic stone inside one's body is not a good sign," Grace said, her expression was beyond pale. "The magic stones can be used as media for dark magic."

"Dark magic is banned in this continent," Ethan interrupted.

"Banning something didn't mean it would completely disappear from a continent," Will said, which made sense.

"What now?" Ethan's eyes turned sharp. A myriad of thoughts flashed in his mind as to try and pinpoint who could be the person that had inflicted Cane with dark magic. It must be someone close to him. Based on Grace's explanation, this kind of magic needed a direct contact. Not many people had direct contact with Cane.

"We need to find the sorcerer or get a magic user strong enough to get rid of the dark magic."

"I will tell Jace about it." Ethan immediately rushed out of the room, but when he saw a guard outside, he gave him an order. "Call Aria, I want to see her in the Alpha's room now."

"But, the mistress went out of the pack," the young guard replied.

"Where did she go in the middle of the night?" Ethan didn't like the possibility.

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"There is no magic user in this part of the kingdom, as far as I know," Jace said after he sent people to find out the nearby magic users secretly and even sent a letter with the fastest hawk to their men in the Diandem Wolf pack, which was the southernmost pack. However, even if their men really could find a magic user there, it would take days for them to reach here.

The sun finally rose at the equator and the fire in the brazier and the fireplace had been put off, but there was no significant change in Cane. He was still unconscious while the howling that Iris heard only became more and more unbearably painful.

"Why don't we just take it out?" Iris suggested, she wanted the beast to stop being in pain. The mate bond that they shared made it hard for her to endure it, because she was in pain as well.

"What do you mean by taking it out? This is dark magic that we are talking about, you can't just touch it. People fear the black magic for a reason," Redmond chided Iris lightly at her suggestion.

He heard about what happened and came here because Iris was here.

Yet, Iris actually pretended she didn't read what he said. "We can make an incision on his shoulder and I think I can take it out."

"Barehanded?" Redmond chimed in again. He could care less about Cane's condition, but as someone that had pledged his loyalty to Iris, he couldn't let her be reckless and put herself in danger. "Didn't you hear what I said?"

"You know, she can't," Will said in a matter of fact tone and shrugged his shoulders when Redmond glared at him. "If you don't like to be here, you can go, you know."

Redmond huffed. He didn't like to be here, but Iris was here and just now she suggested a ridiculous idea, thus how he could go?

"We can do that, right?" Iris looked at Grace.

The Alpha: Claiming His Enemy's Daughter, Chapter 179: THE CURSED BEAST

THE CURSED BEAST

"We can do that, right?" Iris looked at Grace expectantly, as she waited for her answer.

Unfortunately, Grace shook her head. "No. We can't do that." Grace then proceeded to explain why she couldn't do that. "We are dealing with dark magic and you can't recklessly touch the media that contain it. We don't know what will happen to you if you pull it out or what will happen to the Alpha. In any case, one needs the same amount of power to counter it."

And as a healer, Grace had different power from a magic user, and was not qualified to resolve this problem.

"It is a pity that we don't have a magic user here," Will murmured, but then he raised his head and looked at Redmond. "Doesn't the Blue Moon pack have a magic user?"

All of them turned their heads and quickly looked at Redmond, but the warrior rolled his eyes. "You killed him during the battle," he said simply.

At that, it was clear they didn't have any chance to find one in the Blue Moon pack.

Silence ensued inside the room, as each was deep in their own thoughts. If something really happened to Cane, they would be doomed. The King would

be the first person to gobble up the two packs down his throat happily, because Iris, as a luna, wouldn't be able to hold her ground.

The future looked so bleak with Cane lying on the bed, after being cursed by someone close to him. It must have been someone that he knew, since he wouldn't have let just anyone touch him, nor would he have let his guard down.

Not to mention Cane had neglected the summons to the palace, since he had his plan in motion, but with him unconscious like this, Jace dreaded the worse.

It was Grace who finally broke the silence, she stretched out her hand and tapped on Iris' arm, who sat across from her, to get her attention. "Can you take a look at the other two children in the orphanage? I want to know if they have been cursed as well or not."

The symptoms the children and Cane showed were the same, but Grace wanted to make sure about it. After all, they couldn't do anything until they found a magic user to dispel the curse.

"Okay," Iris agreed. She had heard about the two children in the orphanage and felt her heart bleed for Emma, the first girl who was inflicted and died a few hours Ago. Right now, Ardand was there to look after the other two children.

Reluctantly, Iris let go of Cane's hand that she had been holding. She could still hear the howling of the beast and was desperate to figure out a way to help lessen his pain, but none of her suggestions were doable since it was dark magic, which was a ground that they couldn't touch recklessly when they didn't have ample power or knowledge over it.

"I will check with the messenger and figure out how to get a magic user here," Jace said, as he followed Iris and Grace out. It would be Will who would look after the Alpha.

However, they barely took two steps away from the bed when they heard a loud, dangerous growl from Cane and Will shrieked.

Grace and Jace immediately turned around hearing that, but Iris turned around because the pitiful howling turned into a feral roar in her head.

"What the hell..." Jace muttered when he saw the Alpha had woken up. He was kneeling on the bed, but there was something wrong with him because it was a fighting stance that he took.

Out of instinct, Jace stepped forward, shielding Iris and Grace behind his back, so did Will, he took a few steps back, creating distance between them, as he felt danger emanating from the Alpha.

"Cane?" Jace tried to call him. "Are you okay? Do you know what happened?" He asked him, hoping his wild guess was not true.

Cane's eyes were the color of red, they were not golden or black, but the same color when he was in his lycan's form.

The lycan let out a low, dangerous growl when Jace kept shielding Iris out of his sight. He couldn't see her but could sense her scent, and this agitated the lycan.

However, how was Jace supposed to know that? He didn't understand that the cursed beast only wanted his mate. And so, he stood in his way, because the Beta saw him as a threat and his first instinct was to protect the two women behind him from the lycan.

Jace could see that Cane was going to attack.

"Cane?" Jace called again, but the next thing that happened was; Cane leapt in the air and landed in his lycan form, which shocked Will, Redmond and Grace. They didn't know about this secret! "Shit!" Jace cursed under his breath, as he shifted into his beast as well to stop the lycan.

The two beasts' bodies collided, but the lycan was too strong and the brick-colored beast couldn't hold the impact, as he was hurled away. His body hit the wall and left a dent on it.

Grace freaked out, she had never seen a lycan before, let alone think that they even existed, since it was the cursed form of a shifter who mingled with dark magic!

The healer fell on her butt, unable to move a finger, because she was too scared. She felt her heart stop beating when the lycan ran past her.

It was not her, who was the target, but Iris.

Easily, the lycan scooped Iris' body and burst out of the door, disappearing into the night in a heartbeat.

It was not a new moon, how could the lycan appear now?

"Wh- what is going on?" Will was too shocked to react. "What was that? Was that the Alpha?" He turned his head to look at the bed, hoping the Alpha was still there, out cold, but the bed was empty.

The Alpha: Claiming His Enemy's Daughter, Chapter 180: I DON'T WANT HIM TO DIE

Ethan's expression looked very scary at this moment. His goofy self was nowhere to be seen. He looked like a beast who was going to rip apart his enemy. His whole body emitted a very dangerous aura, as he stared down at Bian and Dalia.

"Repeat what you said just now!" Ethan hollered, his brown eyes looked menacing when he glared down at them.

"Th- the mistress went to the Riverside pack... to- to look for the sorcerer, she wants him to retract the black magic..." Dalia stuttered. She stumbled with her words, but she couldn't bring herself to speak any more and glanced at Bian beside her.

Both of them knelt down in front of the Gamma, shivering in fear.

Meanwhile, Ethan was having a hard time reining in his anger. It had been his problem for a long time now. He could turn one hundred eighty when he was triggered.

And right now, these two women just told him that it was Aria who had done all of this. She created this huge ruckus that resulted in the death of an innocent child before endangering the Alpha's life as well!

"This is treason!" Ethan barked at them, which made them hit their heads on the ground, crying for forgiveness.

"Have mercy, Gamma Ethan!"

"Please, have mercy on us!"

Mercy? They just told him how they instigated their mistress to seek a helping hand from a dark magic user to cause a rift between Cane and Iris, which now had gotten out of hand completely!

"She cursed the Alpha! And the two of you will not leave unscathed!" Aria was to be blamed for what she had done, but these two were the instigators. Without their wicked ideas messing with her emotions, Aria wouldn't have done it!

Black magic!

This was not the first time Cane touched such a thing! What would happen to him now!? Aria could kill him without her knowing it, or have made things even worse for Cane! That stupid woman!

"Guards!" Ethan roared angrily and two guards entered the room hastily. They looked fearful, because they were not used to the gamma losing his temper like this. Ethan used to drink and fool around with them, thus to see how serious and humorless he was, they felt like they didn't know him at all. "Bring them to the dungeon!"

They cried out loud, as they were dragged out of the room. They were currently in Aria's bedroom, where Ethan interrogated the two of them about the disappearance of the mistress. There was no way they didn't know where she was and Ethan could smell something was wrong with the entire situation, especially seeing how dismissive they were.

"Gamma Ethan! Please, have mercy!"

"No! Not the dungeon! Not the dungeon!"

It was cruel to put them back in the dungeon after what they had gone through, but what they had done was beyond unforgivable! The Alpha could die just because of such an impulsive decision!

They were not aware that Cane had already touched dark magic once and how it almost cost him his entire life, but now they did this to him. Ethan couldn't imagine what would happen to Cane now.

Once the guards had dragged Dalia and Bian out of the room and locked them in the dungeon, Ethan went to find Jace, to let him know about this, since it was only him and Ameer, who was aware about Cane's situation.

Yet, before he could go find him, he heard the commotion and his heart almost stopped beating when he saw the lycan fighting four guards with Iris in his arms, as he tried to flee in the mountain direction. From afar, Ethan could see Jace and Will chasing after him in their beast form.

However, they were not a match for the cursed beast, as he easily broke from them and set off to the Goffa mountain.

Ethan knew the situation had escalated pretty badly.

Without a second thought, Ethan shifted into his beast and chased after the lycan along with the others. The only thing in his mind was; did they know it was Cane?

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It was almost noon when Aria arrived at the Riverside pack. She immediately rushed toward the sorcerer's hut and banged on his door loudly, kicking it and hitting it without any reservation because she was scared that she would be too late to save Cane.

Thankfully, she was skilled enough with horses, thus she didn't need to wait until they prepared a carriage for her or fear she would alert the other people in the pack because she went out in the middle of the night.

She didn't stop until the door opened and a man in the middle of his thirties appeared, he looked neat and clean.

"Are you trying to tear my door down?" He asked languidly, looking amused by how angry the woman before him was.

Yet, Aria was having none of it, as she pushed him inside the hut. She shoved him to the side and started to lash out at him.

"One of the children died!" She roared. "What have you done to them!? You said it was harmless! You said nobody will die!" Aria was out of breath, her fear left her breathless.

She didn't mean any harm to Cane. She didn't want to harm him! But, if the child died, the same thing could happen to Cane too!

"Break it! I don't want it! Break it!" Aria hit the sorcerer's chest out of frustration, bawling her eyes out.

Meanwhile, the sorcerer let her hit him as she liked without even trying to stop her, because it could help Aria calm down.

It took more than half an hour for Aria to stop before she flopped to the floor, her face was so red because of tears and her hair was messy.

"Can I talk now?" The sorcerer asked her softly, he reached out his hand to wipe away her tears and caress her cheeks.

"Lift it, I don't want him to die," Aria sobbed.