

# Forged In The Flames Chapter 41

Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman

## Chapter 41 The Intruders (Nikolas POV)

I hurried out of the palace to see what was going on outside. I looked around and did not know what direction to go.

"Where is the attack?" I linked Gabriel.

"East border," he replied, and he seemed occupied, which meant he was fighting.

"Do you have help?" I asked him.

"Israel and some other werewolves are here. I do not think they are here to catch slaves, Alpha, even though it seemed like it. They are killing my people," he added, and I decided to move.

I linked my men at once and ordered them to move to the eastern border. I knew it was only a matter of time before they killed off the Werewolves defending the territory.

I moved quickly, knowing Aliana's father was there. I was scared that he might get killed. I know he killed my father, but I knew his death would break Aliana's heart. I loved her too much to allow that to happen.

I moved quickly and hoped they would hang on.

I shifted into Bane mid-way and pushed myself. I ran fast.

I needed to get there on time. I advanced and linked my men to hurry. I felt them coming, but I was far ahead.

When I got to the woods, I met a massacre. Werewolves were on the ground. Most of them had no business fighting but had to.

I saw Gabriel's grey wolf.

I could tell he was the one because he was the only Alpha in the clearing.

I lunged at a Lycan, and it stood on its hind legs to face me, but instead of aiming to attack with my jaws, I reached with my claws and cut his throat.

He fell immediately, and I used my hands to pull off his head. I always disincorporate my enemy's body parts to stop them from healing and surviving.

I looked around and aimed for the next one. My men finally arrived in wolf form, and I was more confident.

“Fall back!” I linked the werewolves. They were wounded and bound to be tired. I did not want to lose anyone. I also did not plan on letting any hunter survive. I watched the werewolves fall back while my men advanced.

Most of my trusted warriors were there, including Ingham.

“Wipe out the intruders,” I linked my men, and they went for the kill.

Gabriel did not fall back. I noticed he was still fighting, and that annoyed me.

“I said fall back,” I linked Gabriel with my command, and he froze.

One of my men hit the wolf coming at Gabriel, ripping out its arm, and Gabriel’s wolf moved back. The wolf was limping, and I could see it was severely injured.

“We will handle it from here. Your kind should return and get the necessary medical care,” I ordered him, and he howled and fell back. Most of the werewolves were injured, but they had done a number on the Lycan’s too. Gabriel was indeed a warrior.

I remained to fight the rest of the intruders.

My men did an excellent job, and we finished them off.

It wasn’t a fight since Gabriel and his team had already done a number on them, but I saw a few dead werewolves that made me know the magnitude of the battle.

The intruders were up to twenty-five. It had never happened before. Usually, hunters hunted in a maximum of five, this was an outright attack, and I did not need to guess where it came from.

“Search their corpses for clues. Bring whatever you find to me,” I instructed my men and began to head back.

While I walked, I wondered if that was the response from the Snow King. Sending men to come to Forest to kill my people was an act of war. This was a matter to take before the council.

King Fredrik had broken the law.

I had not done anything to warrant this, and he had no right to attack.

I got to the palace, shifted to my human form, and then went to my office. I had clothes there, so I slipped into shorts and a T-shirt.

“Alpha, are you right?” I heard Qusack in my head. The connection was faint, so I knew he wasn’t close by.

“Where were the three of you?” I linked him back.

“Grant and I went to check the projects in Woodland. We just got back. What about Abraham?” he asked, and I wondered where Abraham was.

“Abraham, where are you?” I asked my Delta.

“In the woods, Alpha, we are checking the men as you requested,” He said, and I realised he must have fought in the woods with me. I was too occupied to notice.

He had never worked closely with me before, so he was bound to skip my mind. It used to be Qusack, Ingham and Grant, but now it was Qusack, Grant and Abraham. I still needed to get used to the change. I knew Ingham fought in the woods, I saw his wolf.

“How many casualties?” I asked Abraham. “Seven werewolves. Three women and four young men,” He said, and I felt terrible because I knew they weren’t warriors.

I sat on my couch and did not know how to feel about the news. Werewolf or not, they were mine to protect, and I had failed them.

“I do not think they came to hunt, Alpha. I think they came to attack us,” Abraham said, telling me what I already knew, and I sighed.

“Very well, find out what you can and get back to me,” I instructed him, closing the mind link.

I decided to visit Gabriel to find out what happened before the attack. He could tell me something useful I could use when I lay my allegations against Fedrick.

Whether the a\*ss\*hole liked it or not, Forest wasn’t Snow, and he had no power here, so his men coming to attack people in Forest was a crime. It was against the Unity law, and his royal status did not give him immunity in that regard. I wondered what he would say his reasons were.

I left my office and decided to go and see Gabriel. I knew he wouldn’t be home, so I walked out of the compound and onto the road.

“Where are you,” I linked Gabriel, and it took a while before he answered. I figured he was far. If I were a werewolf, I wouldn’t have been able to reach him via the mind link.

“The clinic assigned to werewolves on the way to the market,” His response came very faintly, and I closed the mind link.

There was no point telling him I was coming. I liked surprising people like that to catch them if they were doing anything wrong.

“Do you think Gabriel staged this?” Bane asked, and I stopped a Cycle Rickshaw to get me there fast.

“I doubt it. His people died. It would only be a fool that would surrender to save the lives of his people, only to organise an attack that would kill them. I think he is lucky to be alive,” I told my wolf, and he was silent.

I did not understand what the werewolves were doing in the woods after I had explicitly told them not to go there. I was also grateful because if the attackers had entered the settlement, they would have been harder to kill, and more people would have died.

I was glad about how the matter turned out, but now I needed to create more security to protect my people.

Border security and some fences were necessary to keep the hunters out.

I couldn't underestimate the hunters' desperation, especially now that the price of slaves had increased in the market due to the scarcity of werewolves in other territories since they were still escaping to the Forest for safety. The hunters were bound to risk their lives to enter Forest so they could catch slaves. But deep down, I believed this was Fredrik's work.

We got to the hospital, and I alighted the Rickshaw. He asked me if he should wait, and I told him not to. I would prefer to walk back home.

I saw the clinic. It was an old warehouse. They must have created it for themselves. I wondered where all the health funds went. I planned to look into the matter.

I walked in and saw it was indeed a warehouse with beds. It wasn't a clinic.

There were sick Werewolves coughing, and they were understaffed and underequipped.

I remember Aliana planned to volunteer with her friends. Was this where she would be working?

I searched for Gabriel and saw him sitting on a hospital bed. Beside him was his friend. Gabriel's chest and head had been wrapped in bandages.

When he saw me, he got off the bed to salute me. Everyone in the hospital copied him. His action had drawn their attention to me.

“Please get back to work and rest. Ignore me,” I said, and they did as instructed.

I looked at Gabriel and moved close to him. “How did they come? What were you doing at the border?” I asked him, and he looked at his friend before answering me.

“The eastern border has always been known for trouble, and some people live close to that border. The residents sensed the unusual activities and alerted Israel and me.

We went to see what it was, only to find over twenty supposed hunters trying to get into the settlement. They had silver meshed nets and other slave-capturing equipment with them.

The moment they saw Israel and me, they came at us.

Unfortunately, the residents joined to help to give us a fighting chance. We tried to run back to save the lives of the unqualified fighters in our midst. But the hunters chased us, and that was how the residents got caught in the mess, forcing them to shift and fight. That is all that happened, Alpha,” He said all the time, avoiding eye contact out of respect, and I nodded.

“You mean I will find hunting tools in the woods?” I asked Gabriel, and he nodded. He also seems confident.

“Very well, thank you,” I said, ready to leave when I remembered to ask him something. “Has this always been the hospital?” I asked him, and he shook his head.

“The Lycans are the ones that use our hospital now. We just fixed this place in our free time. It serves its purpose,” He said, and I realised it wasn’t a clinic.

I did not remember giving such an order, but I kept it to myself. I planned to fix the problem, there was no need to discuss it with Gabriel.

From how he behaved, I doubted Aliana had told him who I was, but then again, they had not seen each other. She wouldn’t be spending time with him until the next day. I decided to allow Aliana to tell him because even if I wanted to discuss that with him, it would not be in public like this, just in case something embarrassing about my parents and the past that I wouldn’t want anyone to know came up.

After all, with how my mother had behaved, I was sure she was hiding something from me.

“I have something to discuss with you soon. It will be after you have seen your daughter. Try and see me in my office on Sunday,” I told Gabriel, and he said he would. He also looked very worried. I chose to leave him wondering.

I turned around to leave.

Once I stepped out and realised the distance I would have to walk, I began to regret telling the Rickshaw to go. I had thought walking would be a good exercise, but it did not seem like it now that I wanted to get back to the palace quickly.

I began grumbling about my stupidity and hoped a rickshaw would pass by so I could stop it and use it to return to the palace. It didn't seem like it would happen because of how isolated the road was, but there was no harm in hoping.

## **Forged In The Flames Chapter 42**

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### **Chapter 42 The Queen And I (Aliana POV)**

The night with Nikolas was explosive and intense. I wondered how he knew of the blacksmith.

Thinking of how he handled it made me laugh. Who would have guessed he would be that protective and jealous? It wasn't like I had anything with the blacksmith; the guy only promised to give me honour when Nikolas dumped me. I knew it would never happen because Nikolas did not seem like he would let go, but it was sweet.

Thinking of Nikolas's reaction made me laugh and gave me butterflies. I sat by the window gazing at the empty garden and hoped that Nikolas would soon be king and could do all he had promised me.

I could not wait to stop pretending.

I looked at the trees ahead of the garden and remembered the night of the full moon.

Our wolves had connected as if it were normal. There were no feelings of superiority coming from Bane. Our wolves and the goddess weren't the problems. The problem was the greedy people of our world.

The slave trade had made many Lycan's rich, and abolishing the Unity law would end their empire. I prayed that Nikolas succeeds and that we remain together. Even though I was prepared to walk away, I prayed it would never come to that.

Ania and Lisa joined me in the room. They were all smiles, and I wondered what the occasion was—most especially pessimistic Lisa, who always had something glum to say to take away the sunshine.

I left the window bench and went to join them in the sitting section of the room.

"What is the occasion?" I asked Ania, and she squealed.

“You haven’t heard?” She said, and I shook my head.

“Everyone knows the Queen is not allowed to mess with you. They say Alpha chose you over the Queen. Some suspect what is between you and Alpha is serious. They even claim you two might be fated. They say it is just like Olive and Mathias,” She said, and I frowned.

If Nikolas and I were fated, I would know. I have seen how fated people act towards each other, and we didn’t have that.

“I doubt we are fated, Ania. I would know,” I said, and Lisa laughed.

“Silly, Aliana. He will know, but you won’t. The pull will be stronger for him, but it will just be a tug or a strong attraction for you. I think you should ask him if you can,” She said, and I shook my head.

“I would not dare it,” I said, giggling.

“I doubt you wouldn’t dare anything with Alpha. Aliana, you have gotten away with everything you do to that man. It is as if he is a complete fool for you. Even Lisa has seen it now,” Ania said, laughing, and I looked at Lisa, whose cheeks coloured.

She nodded her head, and I smiled at her. “Anyway, enough about me and Alpha. What is our plan for the day?” I asked them, and they shrugged.

“Alpha has not instructed me to get us jobs at the werewolf clinic yet, so we just have to hang around. Luckily tomorrow is Saturday. We can hang with your father tomorrow,” Ania said, and I did not like that we would be in the palace. I dreaded seeing Nikolas’s mother.

“I hope we don’t bump into the queen,” I said, and their smiles dropped.

“She is a handful. We committed a huge crime by helping her out. We are lucky Alpha pulled us from her services. She is giving Gezel and Erica hell. She slapped Gezel this morning because of the temperature of the tea she served. The woman believes she is a queen. I doubt she got the memo. Alpha needs to control her because I doubt this place will be peaceful with her around. This is her second day, and we already don’t like her,” Lisa said, sounding angry.

“Well, look at the bright side. Thanks to Aliana, we have been exempted from her cruelty,” Ania said, and Lisa nodded.

“There was an assembly this morning, by the way. That was why we did not come early. Beta Qusack called an assembly,” Ania said with excitement, and I wondered what Beta Qusack must have said that would make her happy.

“Honestly, after what he did for us yesterday, I wished I was good at chess. He would have been a great catch. But that would be aiming too high, and that chapter is closed for me, thanks to Grant,” She said with annoyance, and I remembered the brand on her neck.

It would have been nice to see her with Qusack.

They would have complimented each other. Ania was gorgeous, intelligent and optimistic. I did not understand why her scent mattered. She was more Lycan than Were. Her father was the halfbreed. It shouldn't matter, but it did.

I did not want to discuss it, so I did not spoil our moods. The brand still profoundly hurt her, so I changed the topic.

“What was the assembly about?” I asked quickly, and she and Lisa beamed.

“I think you have made an impression on Alpha, Aliana. I think Alpha is crazy about you. All the Riverhead werewolves believe so, too,” Lisa said, beaming.

“Beta Qusack and Gamma Grant implored us to pretend to be slaves for the meantime every time we have an outsider in our midst. They said it would only be until Alpha becomes king,” Ania said, and I frowned at her. Pretending not to understand why that would be amusing.

“And why is that a good thing?” I asked, and she widened her eyes.

“I think Alpha plans to be king and abolish the Unity law in Forest. Once He does that, it would no longer be a universal law, and we will be equals in Forest,” She said, and I was shocked they figured it out already. These women were brilliant.

“The only reason he would do that might be because he wants to be with you officially. You cannot be his mate or Queen with the Unity law in place. And knowing your father's history with his father and what your father's actions have cost his family, he has no reason to be kind or grant us freedom.

Combining what Qusack said at the assembly with how he cautioned the Queen yesterday made me realise Alpha is doing it for you. He is changing the laws for your sake,” She said, tears of joy streaming down her face.

“If truly it is what I think, Aliana. Then Alpha's love for you might liberate all of us,” she said and hugged me tightly with gratitude.

“I hope it is what I am thinking because none of us deserves to be treated this way,” She said, and I wrapped my arms around her to console her.



Being a slave wasn't an easy thing. I had not tasted it as severely as they had. Nikolas had shielded me somehow, but I knew it wasn't easy. The Lycans were very mean and believed they were better than us. Liberation would be most welcomed by all on the receiving end of the cruelty of the Unity law.

While I held her, I wondered if the love Nikolas and I had for each other was strong enough to move this mountain.

We played cards and gossiped in the room. We were afraid to step out because of Queen Isabelle. I could not wait to see my father and tell him about her. I did not want Nikolas to hear what my father would say just in case it might be something he wouldn't like, so linking him was out of the question.

We were having fun until Ania suddenly dropped the cards in her hand with a worried expression.

"What is the matter?" I asked her.

"The Queen sent for the three of us," She said, and I shook my head vehemently.

"Hell no," I said, unwilling to see the woman.

I tried to link Nikolas immediately but could not reach him. It meant he wasn't in the building or close by. I wondered where he would have gone in a hurry without informing me because he always tells me when he is going somewhere.

I tried to link Qusack and met the same silence. Then I became apprehensive.

"What do we do? It seems Alpha and Beta aren't around," I said, and Ania nodded.

"The woman knows. That is why she sent for us," Lisa said, angry, and I decided to take my chances with Nikolas's wrath.

"Tell her we are not allowed to go to her by order of the Alpha, and we will wait for Alpha to give the orders before going to her," I said, and Ania looked very worried.

"If it turns to trouble. I will take the blame for it," I told her, and she looked at me briefly before deciding to trust me. I watched Ania link the Queen back.

"What did she say?" I asked when she had snapped out of it.

"Nothing yet," She replied, and I figured the woman must have gotten the message.

Five minutes later, there was a knock on our door. Then I heard Gezel announce the Queen's presence.

The woman was a hand full. I could not believe she had the effrontery to come to Nikolas's room. She knew Nikolas was not around.

Ania and Lisa became very afraid.

"Go and hide in the closet. I will face her," I told them, and they shook their heads.

"We will remain here to bear witness to whatever she plans to do," Ania said with determination, and Lisa nodded.

I was tempted not to open the door, but I knew that would be rude. So, I went to open the door against my better judgement.

I opened the door and bowed my head.

The woman was in a floral kaftan and looked very annoyed.

She pushed past me and walked into the room with her nose in the air.

I looked at Gezel at the door, and the woman was afraid. It was clear that she was no longer on the Queen's side. That was quick. I thought she would be her minion. I guess there was a level of wickedness that Gezel found unattractive, and Isabelle had it.

I left the door open so everyone could see what was going on.

"Slave," Isabelle called, and I knew I was the one she was talking to. I refused to reply. She turned to face me with a half smile.

"Your relationship with my son has given you some courage," She said, walking towards me. I stood my ground and remained silent.

"You might think you are more than what you are, but you aren't. You are just a piece of entertainment, something he to while away his time until a worthy woman comes along," She said, and I did not care about her words. I remained silent, so she would not quote me.

"Next time I send for you, you come like the dog you are," She said, and I remained silent.

"Are you dumb?" She asked me, and I shook my head.

"With all due respect, I do not work for you anymore," I said, and she slapped me. Her hands were so quick, and it stung.

"Is that how you address a queen?" She asked me, and I wanted to laugh because clearly, she was mad. Raven was annoyed, but I held her in. I did not want to be faulted.

“Nikolas is my son, and he will choose me over you. So do not think you have his ear and favour. You are just a phase in his life,” She said and yanked my hair, forcing me to my knees. I did not breathe a word. I dared not disrespect Nikolas’s mother.

“A tough one, I see,” She said, pulling my hair backwards to make me look at her face. “I will not let you take my son from me the way your father took my mate from me,” She said, pushing my head to the ground, making my forehead hit the floor. She laughed.

“Where is Qusack to save you now? I will make your life hell here. I will take my pound of flesh from you until you are empty, and guess what? Niko will not do a damn thing about it. I am his mother.

Whatever you share with him is irrelevant where I am concerned,” She said and spat on me.

“You have been warned,” She said, kicked me and walked out of the room.

Ania and Lisa rushed towards me. I stopped them from helping me clean up.

“Hurry, get me silver to hold,” I told Ania, and she frowned.

“I did not want to heal fast. I wanted Nikolas to see it,” I said, knowing his mother wanted it to be her word against mine, but I wasn’t going to give that opportunity.

Lisa rushed out and returned twenty minutes later with a piece of galvanised silver coin. I held it in my palm and felt the pain of the bruises I had sustained.

I went to sit on the couch to wait for Nikolas. I wanted him to see what she did to me, and I hoped he would draw the line officially because I doubted I would survive the woman if she was allowed to treat me like this.

Ania and Lisa tried to comfort me but deep down, I was sad because I did not deserve this. I did nothing to her. I cared for her. I never harmed her, even though the opportunity presented itself. I was angry because her actions were extreme. The anger made me cry, and I was inconsolable.

The doorknob turned thirty minutes later, and I handed the silver coin to Lisa, knowing Nikolas was about to walk in.

He stepped in, looking very angry.

I knew someone had told him what happened.

Ania and Lisa stood up to leave the room immediately.

He walked to where I was and lifted my chin to look at my face.

He was enraged.

He t\*ouched the bruise on my forehead, which stung a bit and made me flinch. He t\*ouched my cheek. I knew her palm had left a mark on it. He steadied his breathing.

“She came into my bedroom and did this?” he asked me, and I said nothing. Instead, I looked away. I did not want to be quoted. He had seen what I wanted him to see. It was up to him now to do what he felt was right.

“Why did she come here?” He asked me, and I knew I had to answer because he was mad. “She asked us to come to her room, but we said you had forbidden us from going there and that she should run it by you first. I guess our response made her angry, and she came here to beat me,” I said. My eyes were already swollen from crying, so I held my tears.

Nikolas did not speak a word to me. He just left the room. I did not need to guess what he would do, but something told me the queen was about to be put in her place.

## **Forged In The Flames Chapter 43**

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### **Chapter 43 Removing An Illusion (Nikolas POV)**

The walk back to the palace from the werewolf hospital was challenging. I planned not to make hasty decisions ever again. I returned to the palace and decided to head to my office, so Abraham could bring the report on what they found in the Estate.

I linked Abraham, and he told me he was on his way. There was an uneasiness about him, and I knew something was wrong. He arrived at my office in five minutes, and I could tell immediately that something was troubling him.

“What did you find that is troubling you like this?” I asked him, and he took a deep breath. “I hope you won’t take offence, Alpha. I would never do or say anything that would deliberately hurt you, but I heard something disturbing from Gezel when I returned from the woods. You can call her to repeat what she told me.” he said, and I got impatient.

I did not want to call anyone to my office or get into a matter other than what had already happened with the hunters in the woods. I had just walked a very long distance. I wanted to get everything over with and go to Aliana. “Tell me quickly. I do not have time, and I hope it isn’t anything that would waste my time,” I said, and he nodded. “I hope you won’t see it as time-wasting.

“Gezel told me because she wanted me to plead with you that, she had no hand in what happened this time. She said it was all your mother. That she was shocked to see it

unfold. She was even crying and requesting that I plead with you to move her elsewhere,” he said, and I frowned. The only time I have dealt with Gezel was for being involved with bullying Aliana. What did my mother do this time that made her feel the need to report herself and distance herself from it?

“What happened?” I asked.

“Gezel said your mother went to your room to beat up Aliana. She said awful things and hurt her badly; She also said Ania and Lisa were there, along with some guards. She said she had no hand in it,” He said, but I could not let him finish his words. I was on my feet immediately.

I moved quickly. I left my office, crossed the foyer, up the stairs and went to my bedroom. I did not bother to knock; I turned the knob and just entered. Aliana was on the couch. Her eyes were swollen with tears. There was a bruise on her forehead, and when I moved closer, a slap was printed on her cheek. Ania and Lisa left immediately. I was livid.

I could not believe my mother would do this after I had told her to stay away from Aliana. I told her to respect my boundaries and stay out of my business. The fact that I wasn't there to protect Alina made me feel like I had failed her. My mother had done it this time. I wasn't blind at all. Either she was extremely hateful, or she wasn't completely cured of her madness. Either way, this was unacceptable.

I walked out of the room to go and confront her; Bane was fuming, and so was I. She was my mother. She had her place, and Aliana was mine, and she had her own place.

I got to her room and learned that my mother was dining with the Lycans. I knew it was time for dinner, and I wondered why she was eating with the Lycans, but I did not care. The whole Queen thing had gotten to her head, and I needed to snap her out of her illusion. I entered the dining, maintained a calm exterior, and the whole place went silent. I saw Gezel and Erica serving my mother, and Gezel looked afraid, but I wasn't there for her. My mother saw me and smiled. “You finally decided to join us,” my mother said, smiling as if she hadn't done anything wrong.

“Who gave you the right to go to my room?” I asked her calmly, and everyone was silent. I looked around and saw that all my lycan officers were there except for Abraham, whom I had left in my office.

“Why are you talking to me like that?” She asked me, sounding hurt.

“I will talk to you however I please. Have I not warned you to stay away from Aliana and her friends? Did I not tell you she was off-limits? Did I not tell you to mind yourself?” I asked her, and she frowned.

“So, the b\*itc\*h said I did something to her, and you are here to do what? Discipline me?” She asked, and I realised the whole Queen thing had gotten to her head. I was her Alpha. Son or not, I was her Alpha, and she was bound to respect me. How would she respect me as King if she could not respect me as her Alpha? I doubt she would want me to have a queen with her behaviour.

“Leave us,” She ordered everyone.

“I give the orders around here,” I corrected her, and everyone sat still. She looked stunned. “You just regained your health yesterday, and no one likes you. Everyone is uncomfortable around you. That speaks a lot about your character when you were queen,” I said, and she looked hurt.

“All this because of a slave? Do you know what she did?” She asked me, and I nodded.

“You asked them to come to you, and they told you they can’t come based on my orders, and if you want them to come, you have to clear with me first,” I said, and she was silent. “Then you decided to go to my room and beat her up after I had warned you to leave her for me. I was the one that took Forest. How I choose to enact my revenge is completely my business,” I said, and she stood up.

“I am only trying to protect you son. Her father was your father’s friend, and look what he did,” She said, and I laughed. “You can’t protect me, mother. I grew up on my own and learned to live on my own.

Created a new family alone without you. I do not need you to protect me, mother.” I said, and she was shocked.

“All this because of a werewolf b\*itch? Where was she when I carried you, gave birth to you and took care of you? Her father stole our home and left us....” She started, and I shut her up.

“Enough with the lies! We grew up in the woods because your brother would not take you in, and I think I can see why. I should have known. The amount of venom you planted in me at a young age was wicked. It might not seem like nothing then, but seeing you now, I know you weren’t any different in the woods either. Do not pin this all on Gabriel. The wolf is paying for his part in the crime. His people have died for it, and his daughter has been ruined by me for it. She is his only family, and that is how I choose to enact my revenge. Your behaviour is why your brother turned you away. Gabriel sent you off with your maids and told you, you could return with your child to claim Forest, but you never did. I know the hunters were your brother’s doing, as he is still doing now, so spare me the lies.” I said, and she was in shock. Everyone was in shock. I had revealed something the Lycans did not know about the uprising and Gabriel. I was afraid there might be more to the story that would make me ashamed of my lineage because of my mother’s behaviour.

“Do not blackmail me with what you did for me, Mother. I have paid my debt if you want to go that route. I did not bury a knife in your heart. I was ten, yet I risked my life to keep you even though you almost took my eye and killed me! Yes, you did this to me. Not the battles, not Gabriel or Aliana; you gave me this scar,” I said, and she gasped.

“I cared for you for nineteen years. I took you everywhere I went and ensured you were cared for. When we came here, Aliana, Ania, and Lisa cared for you until you were healthy enough to regain your sanity. I am sure they regret it even if they do not say it because you have somehow, in two days, managed to make yourself their adversary,” I said.

“I hit her because she was being disrespectful. Gezel was there,” She said on the verge of tears. My words had cut her deeply. She looked at Gezel to back up her claims.

“Tell him what the Slave did?” She barked at Gezel, and I looked at Gezel to see if she would have the effrontery to speak.

“Speak!” she yelled at Gezel, who was shaking with fear.

“We we we... went to the room and knocked on the door. Aliana let her majesty in,” She said and looked at me.

“The queen asked a series of questions, and Aliana did not respond, so she took offence, and that was when her majesty grabbed her hair and forced her to her knees. She said what she wanted to say, pushed Aliana’s head to the ground, kicked her, and walked out. Ania and Lisa just watched,” She said, and my mother got pissed.

“Why, you piece of shit,” She said, advancing towards Gezel.

“Don’t you dare!” I ordered with my command, and she froze.

I did not know I would have to do this to her, but she had left me no choice. “You went to my room and beat up a woman for no reason, simply because you were angry. If what they did hurt you, why didn’t you take it up with me? What made you think you had the right to go to my room, enter my private space and beat Aliana?” I asked her.

“How dare you say I have no right to enter your room, yet you have slaves there. A werewolf b\*itch and two halfbreeds. Have you forgotten about the Unity law?” She asked, and I laughed.

“Aliana has every reason to be in my room. She is my mistress. On the other hand, you are my mother and have no reason to get involved in my business, especially in the bedroom department. So, I am warning you now. Let this be the last time you will enter my room; send for Aliana, Ania or Lisa. Let this be the last time you will lay your hands on Aliana or anyone, Gezel and Erica inclusive. From tonight, no one will refer to you as a queen again. You need to face reality, mother. You are no longer a queen and thus

are not above anyone here. I also noticed that you are too idle, and that is why you have the time to cause havoc. I am, at this moment, removing Gezel and Erica from serving you. If you need anything done outside the basic chores, do it yourself like the rest of us. I do not owe you shit, Mother. You gave me life, and I preserved yours. Do not mess with me and my authority ever again," I said, and people were surprised I looked at everyone.

"Everything I said today is binding. Henceforth refer to her by her name, while the slaves will refer to her as Luna in an honorary capacity only. She is not the queen and will never be. That position is reserved for my mate if I ever ascend, nor is she, Luna.

That position is also reserved for my mate, the woman that would bear my mark and have my children. She is just my mother, and that is all," I said, tears streaming down her face, but what I was doing was necessary, or she might cost me dearly at this pace.

"Every time you misbehave, I will remove a privilege from you. Let this be a warning, dear mother. Do not aggravate anyone here ever again. I wouldn't have gotten Forest back without the people in this room, and you would have died if it hadn't been for the woman you beat up today. Learn to be grateful even to the slaves. We wouldn't all be here if they had fought back," I said.

"You should have left me to die," She said, and I chuckled.

"You can denounce my pack and return to the woods," I said.

I did not mean it and did not want her to go feral again, but I needed to stop her from emotional blackmail. I needed her not to know my weak spots because I knew she would use them to her advantage.

Doing this hurt her, but I need her to learn a little humility and gratitude. She stormed out of the dining room. I did not want her to crumble what I had built all my life, and I did not want her to keep doing things that would make people hate her.

Contrary to her words, Lycans were likely to revolt faster than werewolves. I could not let it get to that. I was doing this to protect her and everything I built. It was hard, but it was necessary.

Referring to Aliana as my mistress and belittling what we have as part of my revenge was hard, but I could not trust my mother with the information of how I really felt. How long would I have to keep up the pretend? I was ashamed of myself and felt a little weak, but there was too much riding on my Kingship that it was only wise to hold on and pretend a little longer.

I walked away after she left and returned to my bedroom.



Aliana was on the couch when I entered, and she did not utter a word to me. I just went to the bathroom to wash the day's stress off my body.

## **Forged In The Flames Chapter 44**

**Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman**

### **Chapter 44 A tricky One (Nikolas POV)**

I stood under the cold shower for almost forty minutes. I contemplated whether I was too harsh, but I knew I had done the right thing. I eventually turned off the water and returned to the room. Aliana was still on the couch, and I could smell her fear. I wondered why she was afraid. I wasn't mad at her.

"Have you eaten," I asked her, trying to ease the tension? She shook her head, and I linked Ania to bring us food.

Still tying on a towel, I went to sit beside her on the couch.

"She won't trouble you again, Little wolf. I guess the Queen Title got to her head. It is time she faces reality now. I have told everyone not to call her queen," I said, and she was surprised.

While telling Aliana, I realised that Aliana and her friends could not call my mother by name due to the Unity law. It was either they called her Mistress or Luna. I decided to settle for Luna. It would be honorary until I have fixed the issues.

"Won't you shower?" I asked her touching her bruised forehead. It had healed a bit, but it would take a few more hours to heal completely and not show.

I stood up to lead her to the shower. I wanted her to relax and know that everything was fine. We got the shower, and I took off the towel I had and gently helped her remove her clothes. Checking her body, I saw the bruise marks of my mother's kicks close to her ribs on her side. I touched it, and she flinched a bit. I turned on the water and pulled her close to my chest to hold her.

"She won't hurt you again," I told her, and she broke down in those minutes. I doubt the beating was the only thing that hurt Aliana. My mother's words must have cut deep, along with the fear of what was to come. Aliana was still afraid I would leave her eventually because what we had seemed hopeless. Everything I had set out to do so we could be together would be impossible. I could not blame her. Still, everything happening pointed in that direction, especially my mother, but I will just have to keep reassuring her until I have done everything I promised. I pulled away to look into her eyes.

“I do not break my promises, little wolf. It will always be the two of us,” I assured her, and she nodded.

I held her under the cold water for a while. Before we decided to leave the shower. Ania had brought the food and left. It was displayed on the table for us to eat. She must have let herself in when no one answered her knock.

Aliana and I changed into something comfortable. I wore shorts, and she wore my I - shirt with nothing under.

The day had been hectic for both of us. Relaxing and letting go of the stress was the best thing to do. We finished dinner, and I took the plates out.

Aliana only ate a little. But I did not make a fuss about the issue. I was sure she would be okay by tomorrow. It wasn't long after dinner; we went to bed. Sleep came quickly because I was exhausted.

I woke up early, and Aliana was still asleep. As much as I wanted to stay, I had much-unfinished business to attend to. I never received the report on what Abraham found in the woods.

Remembering Abraham made me realise I kept him waiting in my office. Qusack must have linked him to retire to bed. I went to freshen up, showered and headed out. On my way to my office, I linked with Qusack, who told me he was already there. It was typical of him.

Qusack had no romantic attachment, unlike the others, and it did not seem like he would get attached to anyone anytime soon.

Understandably, he would be the first in my office every time and would never reject or hesitate to do a job. He had much time and no attachments. It was an excellent quality for a beta, but as his friend, I knew it was a lonely life. In the past, it seemed okay, but now that I have Aliana in my life, I know he is missing out on a great deal.

What brought Aliana and me together was divine and beyond us, but had I rejected it, I wouldn't have had this. I prayed Qusack would someday find someone to bring sunshine into his life. Someone he can relax and be himself with. Someone he would not need to pretend to impress. Someone that would see him and want him, flaws and all. Someone that would give him absolute love without reserve.

Someone that would be his little wolf, just as Aliana is to me. I hoped it would happen for him and kept my fingers crossed.

I entered the office and saw Qusack sipping coffee on the couch.

“Still sleepy,” I asked him, and he shook his head.

"I just love the aroma. The werewolves roast it so well. It is just delicious," he said with a smile, and I went to sit on my chair.

"How are you feeling?" he asked me with concern, and I knew he was talking about Aliana and my mother.

"Torn," I confessed, and he sat down.

"I do not understand your mother, but her rage blinds her. Aliana is completely harmless; what she did was unnecessary. I hope the measures you took will fix the problem, and she does not make an enemy of you," he said, and I sighed.

I hoped so because I needed her to face the council and her brother and confirm I was Mathias's son. I also needed her to help me with the Kingship. I wondered if she would choose to work against me because of this. I shouldn't think this way, it shouldn't be plausible, but her actions made it so.

"What about Aliana?" he asked, and I sighed. "She was badly bruised and shaken. She could not eat last night. I hope her mood improves today," I said, and he nodded.

"She is in the worst situation ever. I must commend her strength," he said, and I frowned at him to elaborate. "She is a werewolf in love with a Lycan that would one day be King. A Lycan that hates her father for a good reason; now, his mother hates her and wants her gone. In her head, she is afraid you might have to choose, and to the world, we know the obvious choice. There is no way her heart can be at ease," Qusack explained, and I understood his point.

"I have assured her," I said, and he nodded.

"The odds are against her. She has no choice but to hang on to your words even if she does not believe them; it is all she has.

Her kind hates her; no one would dare be with her after this. She has no choice but to hang on to your words. I hope this works out for you because two people who care about each other should not have to go through all this. The painful part is that your mother should love you enough to let go of her grudge. She should make your life easy and let your problem only be with the outside, but I doubt she is capable of that, and knowing she is Fredrik's sister, I'm not surprised." He said, and he was telling the truth.

He advanced towards the table, then dropped a letter before me. From the seal, I knew it was Fredrick. I had expected his response would come today, but I had also guessed the attack was his response; the letter's content would determine that.

I opened it, and it read. "Nikolas,

I never received any letter of your complaints about my hunters. Now that I know what happened and do not want us to be on bad terms, I will call my men to order and tell them to seek a permit from you before they come and take slaves from Forest.

As you know, the slave trade is how most hunters survive, and desperation due to scarcity of these resources might prompt them to do unruly things.

Be assured they will seek a permit from you before entering. I hope Forest and Snow can trade with ease henceforth," It read, and I frowned at the letter.

This bastard had just backed me into a corner. Telling me that his hunters would seek permission to come and catch my pack members as cattle was presumptuous of him. I never told him that Forest would sell its residents or we were interested in the slave market.

As things were, it was best that I table the matter at the council. If I write Fredrick to inform him that I would not indulge in the slave trade and that his hunters should source for slaves elsewhere, he might turn it to war. I must find a way to deny his request without crossing the line with him.

Qusack collected the letter and read it. Just then, Abraham and Grant walked in and greeted us. Qusack passed Fredrick's letter to them, and they both took turns reading the letter's content.

"Are you planning to trade with them?" Grant asked, and I shook my head.

"I have to find a way to decline without giving Fredrick cause to fault me," I said, and Grant nodded.

"I agree with you on this one. Treating them as lesser in society is one thing, but seeing them as commodities is another. Not that I sympathise with them. After all, they betrayed your father, but it isn't Forest's business if Snow is running out of slaves.

Had they treated their werewolf residents well, their werewolves would not leave and would have gladly done their work. Since we relaxed the laws in Forest, the productivity rate has gone up and is still rising. We need to shut this request down," Grant said, and I was surprised he was taking the side of the werewolves for a change. He saw a different side to them that he did not know existed.

"You can stylishly decline during the council. Simply say that as much as you would like to approve his request, you can't because you need werewolves to build your projects, and you do not have enough of them in Forest. Thus you are also looking for an addition to the number already available.

Also, tell them that even though Forest was rumoured to have the highest number of werewolves, the battles, hunters and reduction in reproduction have reduced their numbers drastically.

Inform them that it would be advisable that all interested in getting more slaves to source for slaves elsewhere, but you are open to trading gold and other natural resources with him," Abraham said, putting the entire thing together brilliantly. I liked it, and I decided I would use that.

Since we had already reached out to the council for a hearing, we just have to wait for a response and see what happens.

"So, what did you find in the woods?" I asked him, and Abraham nodded.

"Only four out of the attackers were hunters. The rest were military people from Hill and Snow. I could tell from the crest on the pieces of their clothes found on the ground that they must have shredded when they shifted suddenly to fight," Abraham said and placed two things on the table. One was a golden crest belonging to the Hill, and the other to snow. While one was a triangle, the other was in the shape of a snowflake, the shape was precise, and I knew a unique mould was used to create them.

"So, they came to kill people?" I asked, and Abraham shook his head.

"There were silver meshed nets in the woods, as Gabriel had said. Based on my observation, this was an act of desperation.

The hunters were friends and were from Hill and Snow, respectfully; they must have come with military forces to guarantee the success of catching werewolves to sell.

As you all know, the cost of buying a slave has increased due to the scarcity of free werewolves. I think they were trying to ensure success in their venture," he said. I wondered why Hill hunters and warriors would try to capture people in Forest after we were at the point of forging an alliance with their King. King Aleksander did not mention the desire to get slaves from Forest, nor did anyone write to me to request permission. I wondered what was happening, but I needed to be extra careful.

## **Forged In The Flames Chapter 45**

**Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman**

### **Chapter 45 It is Saturday (Aliana POV)**

I woke up in a lonely bed. Nikolas's side was cool, so I knew he had left early. I did not know if it had anything to do with what happened yesterday, but I hoped he was fine.

What transpired between Isabelle and me played in my mind. I was grateful that Nikolas handled it instead of finding ways to manage it.

He chose me, and that boosted my confidence in what we had. I wanted him to be King and hoped everything would work out.

I felt nauseous even though I was a bit hungry. I went to the bathroom to look at my reflection in the mirror. My complexion was a bit pale, and there were beads of sweat on my face. I felt warm, too, so I turned on the water and damped my face with cold water to make me feel better.

I tried a breathing exercise, and it worked.

The issue with Isabelle must have shaken me to make me feel sick, but I could not let it spoil my day.

It was Saturday. It was time to visit my father.

I knew Ania and Lisa were ecstatic about it because they visited some friends living in Riverhead on Saturdays too. It wasn't part of the agreement, but Nikolas decided to allow it so I could get some privacy with my father. I was grateful for it.

"Good morning," I linked to Nikolas. Wanting to hear his voice to complete my morning. I wished I had seen him in the morning, but he had an important matter to attend to.

"Sleep well?" he linked back, and I giggled a bit. He always gave me butterflies, and as every day passed, I let down my defences more and more. He affected me so much that I could not hide it anymore. I was in love.

I looked at my reflection in the mirror. I was blushing. How could he have such a strong hold on me? It was an amazing feeling.

"Yes, you?" I finally replied.

"I held you all through the night," he replied, telling me he slept well.

"I know you are excited to see your father today. Try to have fun and relax, okay. My mother won't trouble you again," He linked me and sighed.

"Thank you," I said, and he was silent.

"Do not make me miss you too much," he said, telling me not to linger into the night, and I giggled.

"I won't," I replied, and the connection was closed. I could tell he was busy, so I did not want to prolong our conversation. Nikolas was very kind to me. I appreciated his kindness.

I got dressed and headed out of the room. I saw Gezel at the bottom of the stairs and did not want to get into any altercation with her.

I did not look in her direction and tried to walk away quickly when she stopped me.

I really did not want anything to spoil my mood for the day. I had much to discuss with my father, and my mental state was crucial when I got to him.

"May I have a word with you, Aliana?" I heard Gezel say, and she sounded nicer than usual. I wondered what was up her sleeves. Even though Nikolas protected me and had my back always, I did not want to occupy his time with trivial matters.

"Yes, Gezel?" I asked as nicely as I could. I did not want to come across as bitchy, but there was a possibility she wouldn't say anything nice. "I want to apologise for yesterday. I had no hand in it. I also want you to know I do not hate you and won't trouble you again." She said, and I fought the urge to roll my eyes.

Of course, she would not trouble me again. After seeing what Nikolas would do, there was no point in continuing to be a bully. She had no choice but to be nice.

"There is no need to be nice to me because you fear Alpha. Honestly, I do not want that. If you are ever nice to me, it should be because you want to, not because you are afraid of punishment. I know you had no hand in what transpired yesterday, and I do not hold you accountable for it, but please, you do not have to pretend to like me." I said, and she nodded.

"Honestly, I do not hate you, Aliana. Most of us are just jealous. Alpha is a big catch, and none of us could attract his attention, but you did it easily. It is as if it was ordained by the moon. It is enough to be jealous over. We are taught from a young age to hate werewolves, and they are beneath us. It is a must for us Lycans. I cannot tell you I have had any issues with a werewolf, and being mean is tedious, so I want to be nice for a change and be myself. Since it is clear that Alpha is relaxing the laws around here, I hope we won't only be civil but can be friends too. I do not want to hate werewolves for no reason anymore," she said, and I smiled at her. I wasn't buying it and would not give her a chance to hurt me, but I didn't have to be a bitch about it, either. If she was being genuine, then it must have taken a lot for her to wait for me by the stairs.

"Okay," I said, not knowing if it was appropriate.

I just wanted to get out of the place and see my father. I was too hungry for this and could not keep my father waiting.

“Well, I have to go now. Thank you so much for clearing this up. It means a lot to me,” I said, smiling and hurried to the front door and left the building.

I did not know what Gezel and Erica had up their sleeves, but it was clear that two days with the ‘queen’ had done a number on them. I chuckled while I walked towards my father’s house, Imagining the horror they would have gone through having to serve the ‘queen’. Too bad for them.

I got to my father’s house and knocked on the front door.

“It is opened, princess,” I heard his voice, and I knew he must have spotted me from the glass by the side of the door. So I figured he was in the kitchen section.

I entered and looked towards the kitchen counter. My father had outdone himself. There was a spread of food on it for breakfast. My stomach growled, and I was hungry. The food also smelled delicious.

“Good morning, Daddy,” I said and went to hug him. He kissed my forehead and smiled at me.

“You reek of your boyfriend,” he teased, and we laughed.

“How is he, by the way?” My father asked, and it was an odd question.

“He is fine,” I said, and he nodded.

I noticed a bandage on his wrist. I touched it immediately, and he let me.

“What happened to you?” I asked, surprised at what I was seeing.

“Hunters attacked the Eastern border yesterday. They killed a few residents, but Nikolas and his men came to the rescue. I heard the hunters came with warriors from Snow and Hill,” he said, and I gasped.

I could not believe that Nikolas did not tell me he went to fight.

I suddenly felt selfish because all he had dealt with was my issue with his mother. How was I to know it was a miracle that he was alive? I was mad that he did not tell me.

“What is the matter, princess?” My father asked, pouring me a glass of juice. I lifted the glass and took a sip.

“He did not tell me he was in a fight or anything like that,” I said, and my father nodded.

“Well, now you know. Maybe he didn’t want you to have that look on your face,” He said, pointing at my face, and I frowned at him.



“What look?” I asked, putting down the glass and touching my face.

“The one you have on right now. The look of worry,” He said, and I laughed. Maybe he was right.

We ate quietly, and I kept searching for openings to tell him about Isabelle. I did not want him to choke on the food, so I let us finish breakfast.

We did the dishes together, and my father wanted us to work on his vegetable garden in the back.

It had been a long time since we did something like that together. I looked forward to it. I was feeling a bit nauseous, but I tried to control myself. I did not want my father to worry, but as things were, I would have to remain indoors when I got back.

“Do you know werewolves are escaping Snow and coming to Forest?” he said while tending to the aloe vera plant.

“Why?” I asked him, yet to figure out what I wanted to tend to in the garden. The nausea was preventing me from bending down. So I stood and looked around.

“Well, it is believed that Forest is still safe for werewolves,” he said, and I frowned because that was not a good thing. If Forest is labelled as safe for werewolves, then it means the unity law isn’t enforced in the Forest, which can affect Nikolas’s coronation request.

“That is not true,” I argued, and he laughed and stood up.

“Well, it is, darling. Compared to the others, we have it well. It was almost like the time of King Mathias when we were free,” he said, chuckling, and this was my opportunity to chip i t in.

I watched my father laugh and looked around his small garden. He, too, was wondering what plant to tend to next.

“Speaking of the Late king, Do you know that Nikolas is his son?” I mentioned quickly, and he looked at me in total shock. I nodded so he would know it wasn’t a joke.

“His mother is Queen Isabelle, the feral woman I was caring for. She gained her sanity two days ago.” I said, and he ushered me back into the house. I could feel his anxiety and his shock. He was an alpha, after all, so his mood was affecting me.

“Are you serious?” he asked me gently, and I nodded. He led me to the sitting room close to the couch by the entrance. The house was small, so there wasn’t much space.

“She has been giving me hell since she regained her senses,” I said, and he frowned.

“Isabelle is supposed to be in Snow. I told her to go to the Snow,” He said, arguing with me.

He was shocked. It is hard to believe that she was the one. I could understand his feelings.

Mathias was his friend, and he believed he had done right by Isabelle by setting her free and sending her off to her brother.

“Well, it seems, the Snow King did not take them in, and they had to live in the woods,” I said, and my father sat on the chair gradually. I could understand he was in shock. Tears were streaming down his cheeks, he was hurting.

“What did she say happened to her?” He finally asked me, and I chuckled.

“Other than beating me up and telling me she is protecting her son from me and you, of course, she hasn’t spoken a word to me,” I said, and he looked at me in shock.

“She beat you up?” He asked, and I nodded.

“Nikolas was furious, of course, and put her in her place. She hates me. She hates us.” I said, and he sighed.

My father was in deep thought, and I did not need to guess what was in his mind. It was guilt. I saw it in his eyes. He blamed himself for their suffering.

“Father, is everything okay?” I asked him, and he looked at me.

“Did you tell Nikolas all I told you?” He asked me, and I shook my head. He nodded and sighed. “If you set her free, why would she visit so much hatred on me?” I asked him, and he looked at me with worry in his eyes.

“It is not you she hates, Princess; it is me,” He said, and I already figured that out.

“Why would she hate a man that saved her life and set her free? It wasn’t your fault that they grew up in the wild. That was her brother’s fault,” I said, and he shook his head.

“If Mathias had not died, she wouldn’t have had to leave,” he said, and I understood that part, but I also knew that my father did not kill him, and the werewolves did not attack.

“If he had not gone mad and tried to kill all werewolves, none of it would have happened,” I said, seeing my father wipe away his tears.

“Nikolas is Mathias’ son?” was all he managed. It was as if he was still in shock.

“I really failed Mathias,” he said and began to weep.

I did not understand why my father would say that.

He had set Isabelle free so she could have

Nikolas. He saved her life. Nikolas wouldn't be alive if it weren't for him.

"I have to see Isabelle," he said, and I shook my head.

"I do not think it is a good idea," I said, remembering my few encounters with her.

"I think she is still mentally unstable," I said. "She had to live in the wild for many years. That can do anything to anyone, Princess. I need to see her and tell her what really happened to Mathais so she would stop hurting," He said, and I shook my head.

"No, you do not, father. The person you need to see and speak to is Nikolas. Tell him what you told me. He is open-minded he would understand. Isabelle's mind is twisted. She might turn it against you. She is a monster," I said, and my father was silent.

"They did not deserve the life they had. This was their home. She should have returned when Fredrik sent her away; I would have protected and kept them. I would have kept them at the cost of my life for Mathias's sake," He said, and there was a knock on the door.

My father wiped away his tears while I went to see who it was. To my surprise, it was Qusack, and the look in his eyes indicated he had heard all that we discussed.

## **Forged In The Flames Chapter 46**

**Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman**

**Chapter 46 From A Beta to Another (Aliana POV)**

I stood still at the door, and Qusack looked at me. He had a knowing look in his eyes, and I did not know how I would play it off.

"Good morning, Beta," I said quickly and moved away from the door so he could enter. "Alpha asked me to come and check on your father," he said and moved to where my father was.

"Please have a seat," I offered, and he reluctantly sat.

"Should I make you a cup of tea, Beta?" I asked him, and he shook his head, accessing my father with his eyes.

"How are you feeling, Gabriel?" Qusack asked, and my father nodded.

“Better than I was yesterday.” He said, and Qusack nodded.

“Alpha wants me to thank you for defending the border yesterday. He is looking into the health care facility to improve it to standard. We had no idea of the state of the werewolf health care system, but we will ensure it is improved,” Qusack said, and my father thanked him with a smile. He looked at both of us and relaxed in the chair. I wondered what else he wanted to discuss. I wanted to continue to pretend he hadn’t heard what my father and I discussed. I hoped I was imagining it.

“Would you like coffee?” I asked, wondering why he was lingering, and he shook his head. He looked at me and accessed me.

“You do not seem well, Aliana. You look pale. Won’t you go for a check-up? Maybe you didn’t heal well.” He said, and I felt a bit embarrassed and shook my head.

“Thank you, Beta, but I feel fine,” I lied, and he smiled and nodded, dropping the matter. I wondered why he wouldn’t just leave.

“Keeping secrets from Nikolas is unwise, Aliana. Do not give him a reason not to trust you. He is already moving mountains for your sake,” He said, and I was stunned by his words.

I wasn’t keeping secrets from the Alpha.

“I am not, beta,” I said, worried about why he would put his words in that form.

“But you are,” he said and looked at my father. “I want you to tell me precisely what happened between King Mathias and you. I have heard your conversation with your daughter, but I need you to explain it. Anything that will affect Nikolas is my business,” he said sternly, and I knew he wasn’t playing.

We weren’t enemies, but he exuded dominance that made me uncomfortable.

My father told him all he had told me. He did not miss a word. Qusack was shocked at the magnitude of information my father had unfolded.

“Are you sure this Leon planned an uprising?” Qusack asked him, and my father nodded.

“We tried to tell the King about his half- brother, but he won’t listen. We did not mean to kill anyone, but it all got out of hand that night, and Giles paid the ultimate price,” My father said, and Qusack nodded.

“Where was Olive and her child buried? Who attended the burial, and who saw the corpses?” Qusack asked. It was a weird question, but he must have had reasons.

“Leon did it all. The King was too distraught.” My father said, and Qusack nodded.

“Was Leon friends with Fredrick?” Qusack asked, and I wondered how Fredrick tied into this matter.

“With all due respect, Beta. I am uncomfortable answering this question. I mean no harm or malice towards the Alpha and his mother. Please, it will help if I know why you are asking. I do not want to get into more trouble, and I do not want anything that would harm my child,” my father said, genuinely concerned for my safety.

“I do not mean any harm, Gabriel. I am investigating the queen, Fredrick and the past. There are some irregularities, and I am trying to piece them together. Nikolas has no clue, of course. It is a personal project between Gamma Abraham and me. Knowing what you know would help us better because what we have is extremely one-sided.” He said, and I wondered why Qusack would want to investigate the past.

“Why are you doing this?” I asked him, and he nodded.

“If Fedrick is Nikolas’ uncle, he should not be against his coronation. Moreover, Fredrik is trying to claim that Nikolas isn’t the heir.” He said, and I was surprised.

“That’s absurd. Isabelle was pregnant when I sent her to Snow,” My father said, sounding a bit offended.

“But was she having an affair?” Qusack said, and my father could not answer because she was. 2

“It was rumoured that she was close to Leon,” My father said, and even I could tell he was hiding something.

He was a bad liar.

“Whatever you tell me will remain between us. I want to know the truth so I can help Nikolas. He is my best friend, and I want him to succeed. He really loves your daughter, and because of that alone, he would need all the help he can get to succeed and abolish the Unity law in Forest.” Qusack said, and my father was in shock.

I was shocked that Qusack knew what Nikolas was planning. They must be really close.

“He wants to do that?” My father asked quietly, and Qusack nodded.

“That is the only reason he is trying to be King,” he said, and my father could not believe it.

If it had come from me, he would have said Nikolas was deceiving me but coming from Qusack, the second in command, was something else.

“Queen Isabelle had a lot of flings, and Leon was one of them. Everyone knew how unhappy she was because Mathias could not get over Olive, but Nikolas belonged to Mathias. She deliberately got pregnant. The midwife who attended to her was Gwendolyn, who became my wife. When Isabelle got pregnant, she had no flings,” my father said, and Qusack nodded.

“In your own words, tell me what you think happened between you and King Mathias,” Qusack said, and my father sighed.

“I believe there was a miss communication between us. I believe someone intercepted our communication, and Mathias was misled to believe we meant to harm him. His final words to me when he took his life in the woods rang and stayed with me,” He said, and Qusack nodded.

“Would it be far-fetched to believe Isabelle did it?” He asked, and my father shook his head.

“It could not be her. She had nothing to gain,” My father said, and Qusack nodded.

“But her brother did. The same brother that refused to take her in when you set her free. The same brother that has been trying to take Forest for a while now. The same brother that does not want Nikolas to ascend. The same brother that we are fighting,” Qusack said, and none of us could speak.

“What are you saying?” I asked Qusack, and he smiled.

“Like I said, I am investigating something. I will like to know where Olive and her child were buried and the people that attended this burial. I will also like to know where your correspondence with King Mathias was kept. If you remember anything about the incident of the past, please inform me,” Qusack said, and my father sighed.

“I had suspected Isabelle, too, but it never added up. Leon wasn’t a problem until she came, and he was the one that brought her.

Could it be possible that she was the one that advised him to rise against his brother?” My father asked, realising where Qusack was heading too.

Qusack shook his head and smiled.

“All insinuations Gabriel. I am conversing with you because I know I can trust you. Contrary to all that has been said about you, I have watched you and Aliana for a while now, and I know you aren’t the enemy. I hope Nikolas will see it too

I plan to investigate this matter thoroughly and clear your name. It is essential for the sake of Nikolas and Aliana’s relationship.

“In the meantime, I will advise you to keep your head down. I have seen how Isabelle has reacted to Aliana, which made me realise she has a personal issue with you. Do not get in her way, and do not get involved in anything that concerns her. I will protect you to the best of my ability,” Qusack said, and my father nodded.

“She hates me because I caught her with Leon and turned her down when she tried to get with me. Like I said. She was a very disturbed lady, always in Olive’s shadow, so she lashed out by trying to get the people closest to the King. I was his Beta, so I was high on the list. I wouldn’t say I wasn’t tempted back then. I was single, and she was gorgeous, but she was Mathias’ mate. That held me back. She hated me for turning her down, but I doubt if she ever acted on her hatred,” my father said, and I did not want to laugh. The high and mighty Isabelle threw herself at a werewolf. It would have been epic to see.

Qusack laughed.

“I had figured that part out with how she treated Aliana, but good to hear it directly from you,” he said and stood up.

“Are you going to tell Nikolas?” I asked him, and he shook his head.

I know he had said he won’t before, but I just wanted to be precise.

Qusack finally left us, and everything felt unreal. I could not believe his mindset.

“He is a true beta,” my father said after Qusack had left.

“Nikolas is lucky to have him. With someone like that, it would be hard to destroy him,” my father said, but he still sounded worried.

He said he could not understand why Isabelle did not return after Fredrick denied her entrance to Snow.

I planned to ask Nikolas that question when the opportunity presented itself.

One visible thing by the time I was leaving my father in the evening was that he looked like a lot of weight had been lifted from his chest.

He thought he had failed Mathia’s heir by handing Forest to Nikolas. He was happy that he had returned it to the rightful owner.

I hoped Nikolas would succeed and the hostility against my people would stop. I also could not wait for us to be together.

## **Forged In The Flames Chapter 47**

## **Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman**

### **Chapter 47 Sit And Talk (Nikolas POV)**

I returned to my room after dealing with the affairs for the day. I knew Aliana would not be there, but I hoped she would not linger in her father's house because I needed company. I needed her company.

I planned to visit Woodland and spend two days there with Aliana. A change of scenery might help our relationship, and I knew she would like it too.

I could not get over the image of her bruises in my head and the fact that she just took it. What happened to Aliana was a reality for the werewolves.

While my mother beat her, she dared not retaliate. I could just imagine my mother taking it too far. Aliana would have just taken it like when Ingham decided to make an example of her. Abolishing the Unity law was crucial.

What if I am not there?

What if the Lycan that is hurting her takes it too far?

I was afraid, and the need to abolish the law felt urgent.

I entered the room and sat on the couch to think about everything happening. Fredrick was a huge problem for me, but seeing the crest of Hill warriors on the scene and knowing some of the warriors were from Hill bothered me.

Although I had sent a letter to King Aleksander to inform him of what I had learned, I knew I could not trust him. The truth was they both wanted the same thing; the resources of Forest, and they would do anything to get them.

I did not know how far Aleksander was willing to go, but I knew Fredrick would do anything to get his hands on Forest.

I did not know if I could trust King Aleksander, but I planned to take the matter to the joint council. Since Forest had no representative in the joint committee because of the werewolf situation, I would have to place my people there. I planned on nominating Qusack and Abraham as representatives. I do not know if I need to be king for that to happen, but I will find out on that day.

"Alpha, your mother hasn't left her room or eaten all day," I heard Erica's voice in my head, and I did not want to deal with this. I just wanted to relax and spend time with

Aliana. Bane and I needed peace. I wondered why my mother loved to seek attention this badly. It had just been two days, and I was tired already.



I did not want to seem insensitive to her, so I got up and decided to go and check on her.

When I got to her room, I knocked a couple of times, and no one answered.

"Mother, it's me," I linked her so she would know I was the one at her door. She came to open the door for me.

Her eyes were swollen, and it was evident she was crying. I stepped into the room, and the curtains were closed. It was dark. There was no light but that of the lamp by her bed. She went to sit at the foot of the bed without saying a word to me. I knew she was acting hurt, but I decided to humour her.

I stood looking about the room. I decided to sit on the couch that faced the bed to talk to her.

"Mother, what is the meaning of this?" I asked her calmly, and she sniffled.

"You emebarrssed me, Niko. You belittled me because of a girl. You stripped me of my title and said no one should help me. You gave people a reason to disrespect me because of a girl," She said, and I already knew that was the case.

"Yes, mother. I did ah that for a good reason. You have to accept your reality. You are not a Queen anymore. You are my mother. If I ever succeed and become king, you won't be Queen. I also do not want to be an evil bastard. A little kindness would go a long way. Beating and insulting people is wrong. You even terrorised the Lycans too. If you make an enemy of your subjects, they will not have your back when the time comes.

I had these people when I was nobody. A lot of them lost their lives fighting my cause. They helped me get my revenge and take back my home. The survivors are all I have, and they deserve respect. We wouldn't be here if it weren't for them.

As for Aliana that you beat up, you would be dead if it weren't for her. She had no reason to care for you, but she did. She did not even know who you were. To her, you were the mother of the man that killed her people, humiliated her and her father and took over their territory. I took her from her father so she would have no honour and no children. I took her to make Gabriel suffer, but she still cared for you. The least you could do was be grateful for her kindness. But instead, you chose to be mean and beat her up." I said, and she wiped away her tears.

"I do not want anything bad to happen to you, Niko. I am afraid that they will harm you like they did your father," She said, crying, and I nodded, understanding her point, but I also knew that Aliana would not harm me.

"I know there is more to that story because if they truly did what you claimed they did, then why would Gabriel tell you to return with your child when I am of age and that he will hand over to me?" I asked her, and she nodded.

"I could not come back. Fredrick was hunting me, and Gabriel killed my mate. What if he changed his mind and killed us? I needed us to be safe. He might have only said I could return because he believed I would not, knowing how badly my brother wanted Forest. He might not want the death of a pregnant woman on his hands. I needed to be careful. I did not trust him," she explained, giving a plausible explanation for her actions.

I moved close to her and held her hand.

"I love you, mother. I do. I love you so much that I could not kill you. I carried you for many years, hoping you will come through. Please do not make me regret my prayers. You should seek ways to make me happy and make my life easy. Not complicate it," I said, and she looked at the floor.

"You cannot be with a werewolf, Niko. Whether she helped me or not. It does not matter. You cannot be with a werewolf. It will work against your coronation request. Word gets out that you are with a werewolf; they would move against you. I know Fredrick; he has wanted to get his hands on Forest for a while now. Do not give him a reason to succeed," she said, pleading with me, and I sighed.

I did not know if telling her how I felt was safe.

"I plan to keep Aliana as my mistress. She makes me happy." I said, and she was silent. "I can't help the fact that I am drawn to her. Had she been a Lycan, I would have claimed and married her. She has a hold on me, one I can't shake off," I confessed and sighed. I needed my mother to accept Aliana. I needed her to give Aliana a chance. It would be nice to have both of them and not have to choose.

"If truly you love me, you will give her a chance," I said, and she looked at me with tears streaming down her cheeks.

"To what end, Niko? How can I love the daughter of the man that killed my mate? Will that not be madness?" She asked me, and I disagreed because I had learned to separate the two.

"You can love the woman that makes your son happy and nursed you back to health," I said, showing her a brighter perspective, and she shook her head, disagreeing.

"What will now happen when it is time to ascend, and you are to have a queen?" She asked, and I sighed.

"I will follow in my father's footsteps. I will be without a queen and keep a werewolf mistress. There is no law against that," I said, and she disagreed.

“You will need a Queen. Someone to birth an heir.” She said, and I knew she would not bend. Something in her eyes let me know I was wasting my time. Knowing I needed her to support me for the coronation, I decided to play it safe.

“After I become king, I will see that I marry someone. But I will still keep Aliana with me regardless. Do not ask me to give her up completely because I won’t,” I said, and she sighed and looked at me.

“You should not subject a fellow Lycan to the kind of heartache your father subjected me to,” She said with tears streaming down her cheeks.

“Although I never met Olive and did not know her, Mathias put me in her shadow, calling her name in his sleep, always

reminiscing about her. He never gave me a chance. I was just there to fill a void,” She said with tears in her eyes, and I realised she had a lot bottled in. She never told me any of this. She pretended her marriage to my father was rosy. I guess circumstances had taken her down memory lane.

“It will be wrong to make someone live in another’s shadow.” She told me, and I sighed.

“That is the best I can do. I am sure we will find a balance when the time comes,” I said to her, and she gently touched my cheek and smiled. Maybe she knew I was lying, but I needed her support. It was complicated; I needed to make false promises to get my way. My mother was indeed a difficult woman.

“I hope you know what you are doing, Niko. I hope you understand what you are doing. You have two choices to get that crown and the recognition you need. Obey the Unity law or declare yourself king by force.

If you try to forcefully crown yourself, my brother will come for you, and you do not have the might to push.

I doubt the werewolves would help you.

I genuinely wonder how Gabriel managed to keep Forest all these years. I might be wrong about Fredrick, but I know he will convince Aleksander so they can join forces and come for you. He is forceful like that.

Obey the unity law. It is our only option to reclaim what has been lost. If that girl truly loves you, she will understand,” She said and sighed.

“Even if you try to hide it, I can see that your heart beats for her, and I suspect you two are fated,” she said, and I was in shock. How could she figure it out? The thought that she figured it out and still gave me a hard time annoyed me, but I controlled my temper.

“Do not be surprised. I know that look. Your father had it in his eyes every time he spoke of Olive. The way you protect Aliana jealously, the stories about your sudden behaviour change, and how the girl has gotten away with so many things you would not normally condone say it all.

Do not lose your head, Niko. She can't feel the bond the way you do. Do not let it control you. Think straight and think of how you would have behaved without it. Do not let it cloud your judgement and make you lose your head. I am begging you. It doesn't ever end well,” She said, and I held my tongue.

I could not deny it or confirm it. I just remained silent.

“So, will you eat now?” I asked her, changing the topic, and she sighed and shook her head.

“To show you that I am willing as long as you do the needful when the time comes, I do not mind having dinner with you,” She said, and I was about to disagree and protest when she spoke quickly.

“I know you eat with the girl. I am willing to join you two. I won't create trouble for you. There is really no point fighting a battle I would not win. I have missed nineteen years already. Alienating myself from you because of this would be insensitive. I am willing to try for the sake of peace but do not expect me to be accommodating towards Gabriel,” she said, and I wasn't comfortable with it. The fact that I had no reason to deny her request put me in a tight corner.

“Aliana is yet to return from an errand,” I said, not wanting my mother to figure out I let her spend time with her father.

“Then I will wait,” she said, and I felt as if I was in a dilemma.

## **Forged In The Flames Chapter 48**

**Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman**

**Chapter 48 She' s Back (Nikolas POV)**

I sat in my mother's room speechless, thinking about what to say to cancel dinner. I did not know how it would go if I should allow it, and I did not know if I should allow it at all. It felt off.

I really wanted to have a peaceful night with Aliana, make love to her and forget all my troubles, but I doubt it would be so after dinner.

My mother seemed incapable of peace and had a lot of anger bottled up. To think her ill feelings towards Gabriel remained in her mind even though she went feral was disturbing.

I wondered how deep her hate was, and I did not want to guess because I knew that the dept would be immeasurable.

Her sudden need to try and accommodate Aliana was suspicious, and I knew it would not yield anything productive, but a small part of me was willing to give it a try and hopeful she was being sincere.

I knew it would be wrong not to give my mother a chance, especially after seeing that she had extended an olive branch. I sighed after deliberating about it for a while.

“Very well, Mother, I will invite you to dinner in the dining room when Aliana returns. Please, I do not need stress right now. I hope you will not cause trouble,” I said, and she feigned being hurt, and then she smiled.

“I dare not, Alpha,” She teased me like she did when I was a little boy, promising me that I was an alpha and would own my pack one day. Little did I know she was right. It was no longer a tease but the truth now, and I was grateful for the memories.

Had my mother not gone feral, I might have had more blissful moments with her. Seeing her in a bad light was hard, but I knew there were many things I might not like when I found out. I braced myself for it.

“I will excuse you so you can freshen up and prepare. I am sure Aliana has returned or might be on her way back,” I said and stood up.

I left the room wishing I had not agreed blindly, but I couldn't take it back. I kept my fingers crossed that it would end well.

I returned to my room, and true to my prediction, I heard Aliana in the bathroom.

I was glad she had returned, so I took off my clothes and went to join her in the bathroom. There was no way I was taking her to dinner with my mother without t\*ouching her.

I did not know how the dinner would go, and I did not want to spend another night like last night. I was filled with the need for her and wanted to explore what was mine. She had made me wait and lingered at her father's. I planned to tease her for it.

I got into the shower, and she turned to look at me. Her hair was matted to her head because of the water pouring on her. She looked wet and s\*exy.

I turned off the water and looked at her wet body. The bruises had disappeared, and I was glad they weren't as serious as they looked.

"Did you miss me?" I said, pulling her close to my n\*aked body. She giggled and shook her head, and I felt my c\*oc\*k twitch, rising, ready to remind her why she should miss me. "Aliana," I teased, tasting the skin on her neck, and she m\*oaned sweetly. I felt her buckle her knees and placed my l\*egs between hers to keep them apart.

Rubbing her lady part with my t\*high, I made her m\*oan sweetly.

"Did you miss me, little wolf?" I asked, and she m\*oaned again before letting a breathy yes escape her lips.

She smelled of mint tonight, and I breathed her in.

Her scent usually oscillated between peppermint and mint. I think it depends on her mood.

I knelt in the shower and spread her l\*egs apart to taste her. I had missed her the whole day, and here I was, showing my appreciation.

I tasted her c\*lit with my tongue, and her m\*oan was sweet. I felt her body shudder at my t\*ouch, giving me more confidence to lick and s\*uc\*k on the nerve bundle.

She shattered in no time.

I felt her tense, calling my name and m\*oaning.

She writhed her back against the wall, grinding her c\*lit against my mouth. The pleasure and release had wholly taken over her body, and I loved it. Not wanting to waste it, I stood up and gazed into her lustful eyes. She wanted more.

Standing, I slip my fingers between her l\*egs to caress her lips. I feel her body trembling with need and anticipation. I rubbed her sensitive bud gently, increasing her hunger while my c\*oc\*k throbbed with need.

I had anticipated this all day, burying myself inside her and showing her how much I wanted her. Blurring the lines between us and erasing the barriers that kept us apart.

Barriers that forced us to hide our affections and desires.

I kneaded her sensitive flesh and caressed her walls with my fingers. She m\*oaned with anticipation.

"Nikolas," my name escaped her lips.

Her mind thought the same as I swam the same ocean of desire, lust and love; all intertwined until there was no distinction between them.

I licked her earlobe and nibbled a bit.

Her pussy clenched on my fingers, making me chuckle a bit at the eagerness and impatience of her desires.

“Your pussy is greedy, Little wolf,” I moaned into her ears, imagining my cock inside her, and she moaned in response, writhing with pleasure.

“The better to make you come,” she responded, and even though I was caught off guard, her choice of words drove me off the edge, dirty and precisely what I needed at the moment. I hoisted her up, growling.

Ready to be a savage under the shower.

Her submission gave me permission to delve in with my cock.

I drove deep, trying to relieve our needs and desires.

My hips moved on their own, and I thrust with reckless abandon. I did my best to give her all the pleasure and ensure no pain. My impatience prevented me from slowing down, and she cried, demanding more, encouraging me to do the right thing.

I thrust back and forth in her juicy pussy while her walls milked my cock senseless, taking the pleasure straight to my head. My brain had turned to mush, and all that replaced it was an undiluted pleasure.

I knew I could never let go of this. I continued until I felt her shake with ecstasy and her pussy clenched from her release forcing me over the edge too.

I shot myself deep inside her, burying my cock deep into her, letting her pussy swallow me whole and milk me for all I could give. It was explosive.

Slowly the orgasm subsided, and I let her down while we panted under the shower to catch our breaths.

I held her in my arms for a while, trying to catch my breath and steady my heartbeat, which was beating fast. This was indeed worth the wait.

“Miss me,” She said and looked up. I looked at her honey-coloured eyes and chuckled deeply.

“I told you not to linger,” I reminded her, and she smiled.

"Maybe you should punish me then," she teased, and I chuckled.

"We will see about that Little wolf; we will see," I said, reaching for the control to turn on the water.

I helped her wash her back and part of her body with the washcloth, and she did the same. Her t\*ouch felt like electricity on my skin, making me contemplate going at it again, but I did not want to keep my mother waiting. We rinsed off the soap and exited the shower.

"Wear something simple; my mother wants to have dinner with the two of us tonight," I said quickly, rushing through my words because I dreaded her reaction. She stopped what she was doing in the closet and looked at me.

"Are you serious about it?" She asked with disbelief, and I nodded.

"Your mother hates me, Nikolas. I do not want to get into any more trouble with her. You do not have to impose," She protested, and I shook my head. She thought I was the one that was imposing.

"I did not impose; she requested that we have dinner together. She also promised to be of the best behaviour," I said and went to her, where she stood completely n\*aked.

I pulled her close to my body, k\*issed her sweet spot, and then s\*uc\*ked it gently. A m\*oan escaped her lips, and I fought the urge to take what I wanted. I knew I was being manipulative, but I was really hopeful that I could have them both in my life without

having to choose. I needed Aliana to also make an effort.

"Please give her the benefit of the doubt. If she messes up, I will take you away from there, and you will never have to deal with her again," I said, and she studied me for a bit before relaxing.

"Okay. I will trust you and do as you say," She said and reached for a yellow dress I had given her. It had a Bohemian style and was short. It had yellow flowers on a plain white background. It looked decent and straightforward, but Aliana looked gorgeous in it. It complemented her hair and eyes, and her skin looked milky against the fabric.

I assessed her in the dress. It hugged her body in the right places, and her c\*leavage showed the fullness of her b\*reasts. I wanted to grab and s\*uc\*k on them but controlled my need. There would be time to explore her body some more after dinner. I just hoped it would go well, but I braced to be disappointed. That way, I prepared myself to make it up to Aliana if things should go south between my mother and her.

We got dressed and headed to the dining room. On my way there, I linked with my mother, who said she was already there. I wondered how long she had to wait.



# Forged In The Flames Chapter 49

Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman

## Chapter 49 Dinner (Aliana's POV)

I was nervous about the dinner. I did not trust Isabelle. Why would she want to have dinner with me? The only reason I had not come up with an excuse not to attend was that I did not want to disappoint Nikolas. I could see that he really wanted his mother and me to get along.

I doubt it would be possible, but many impossible things have happened lately, so there was no harm in trying.

We met Isabelle at the table in the dining room, and she was smiling. I greeted her quickly before I sat down. Nikolas sat at the head of the table. Isabelle sat on the right side, so I sat on the left, which placed me opposite Isabelle. It was a very uncomfortable position because I dared not raise my head and look at her.

"It took you long enough," Isabelle told her son, and Nikolas laughed.

"I was busy," He said. Heat rose to my cheeks when he said those words because I knew exactly what he was busy doing. He was busy doing me.

"I see," Isabelle said, and food was served.

We ate in silence, and I was completely uncomfortable. I wanted dinner to be over so we could return to our bedroom.

"Aliana," Isabelle said, and I cringed at the sound of her voice.

I could still remember her words when she came to Nikola's room. I did not want to seem difficult, so I looked at her. I knew my face showed worry, and I had all the reason to. This woman hated my father and me. She also believed Lycans were superior to werewolves. My being at the table was all shades of wrong to her.

"I apologise for how I treated you, and I want to thank you for taking care of me," She said, and even though I wasn't fooled by her gratitude, I smiled and bowed my head. There was no way I would fall into her trap. Nikolas wanted us to get along, and she obviously did not want to be estranged from her son. I knew I could not trust her words, but I had to be civil.

"I do not take offence, Luna. Thank you for allowing me to be at this table," I said, and she smiled.

I wondered if her eyes were always cold when she smiled or if that look was reserved for me. "Well, that went well," Nikolas said, and we continued to eat.

"What have you been doing with your free time Aliana?" Isabelle asked me, and I knew I needed to find something to say.

"I have requested to work at the Werewolf Clinic; I hope to resume tomorrow," I said quickly, and she sighed.

"Pity. I was hoping to spend some time with you to get to know you," She said, and Nikolas cleared his throat.

"That won't be necessary, Mother," Nikolas said, coming to my rescue. I could see that he did not trust his mother either.

"Well, I was just making an effort," Isabelle protested, and he nodded.

"I appreciate it, Mother, but you do not need to spend time with Aliana," he said, saving me from the awkward moment.

"Very well, I hope we can be cordial," She said, and I looked at her and nodded gently.

"Yes, Luna," I said, and she sighed.

The dinner went by silently and was a bit too awkward for comfort. It was as if everyone was walking on eggshells. The food tasted bland, and I could only chew and swallow, so I did not attract attention.

Once dinner ended, Nikolas decided to call it a night. Isabelle wanted us to linger, but he refused.

"I have a busy schedule tomorrow, and Aliana will resume work in the morning. I will see you during the day," Nikolas said quickly, and she was silent. I knew he was trying to avoid lingering because he was yet to prove my request to work in the clinic.

"The least you can do is walk me to my bedroom," She said, sounding as if Nikolas was being unfair. I gently pulled away from Nikolas and bowed to her to bid her goodnight.

The woman already hated me. There was no point compounding the problem. I was lucky that Nikolas was kind; if not, my entire race would have been in trouble, and Forest would have been hell for us. I could see why Qusack suspected her. It wasn't my business; I prayed I would not get caught in the mess eventually.

I did not know I was holding my breath and shaking until I had put a great distance between us. While I tried to catch my breath, I started feeling nauseous.

The whole ordeal at dinner had unsettled my stomach. It wasn't great that the food would waste, but I needed to throw up.

I hurried to Nikolas's bedroom and went to the toilet to empty my stomach's content.

I sat by the toilet seat and vomited all the rice and vegetables I had for dinner. It wasn't much, so when I was done throwing up the food, my stomach began to hurt trying to throw up food that was no longer there. I felt my body temperature rising.

I picked myself up from the floor, flushed the toilet, and removed my clothes. I turned on the cold water in the shower to cool down.

Dinner wasn't a good idea, especially after the intense love-making session in the shower. I hoped this would be the first and last time Isabelle would invite me to dinner.

I exited the shower, and my body temperature improved, but I was weak.

There was nothing a little sleep wouldn't cure, so I slipped on Nikolas's T-shirt with nothing underneath and crawled onto the bed to sleep.

Nikolas entered thirty minutes later, and from how he sighed, it was clear something was bothering him. I did not know what it was, but I hoped it had nothing to do with me or my father.

He took off his clothes, leaving only his shorts, and got into bed beside me.

"Did you enjoy dinner?" he teased; I nodded. Which made him tickle me.

"Liar," he said, and I laughed.

With that action, I felt better.

Being near him made me feel better, and knowing we would have a good night's sleep put my mind at ease.

Morning came, and just like most mornings, Nikolas was not in bed. I knew he had gone to his office, so there was no need to trouble him. I did not know what I would spend Sunday doing but roaming about the palace wasn't a part of it. I dreaded bumping into Isabelle. She might be nice to me in the presence of her son, but I doubted she would be receptive in his absence.

Lisa was the one that served my food that morning because Ania had to go to town to get something. I did not know who sent her; it wasn't my business.

"Do you think she would stay long?" I asked Lisa, and she shrugged.

“Honestly, I did not know. We were prepping to come here when suddenly she told me to go ahead and that she had to get something in town. It also seemed urgent. I didn’t ask her questions; I just nodded and did as she said. She is my boss, after all,” She teased at the end, and we giggled.

I never knew we would be friends, but here we were, talking and laughing. There were no barriers between us, and I knew I could trust them.

Ania came in an hour later, and we decided to check out the werewolf hospital to while away time.

I tried to link Nikolas but soon figured he was not in the building. I wondered where he was off to, but I did not bother to check because it wasn’t my business.

On my way out, I bumped into Isabelle, and fear engulfed me because I did not know what she had in store for me. She smiled at me, and the three of us greeted her.

She looked relaxed, and her eyes were glowing. It wasn’t cold like the few times I had encountered her. In fact, she seemed like a different person altogether. I wondered if she was on something or had a personality disorder. Either way, I was on my guard.

“I want to see you in private, Aliana. I need to discuss something with you,” She said, and I looked at Lisa and Ania, hoping someone could say something to save me from her.

“Luna, Alpha said…” Ania started, and Isabelle smiled.

“If I hurt her, my son will be cross with me. I do not plan to do anything like that. I just want to talk to her,” She replied to Ania and looked at me.

“If you will be Nikolas’s permanent mistress, the least you can do is speak to me, Aliana. I promise I won’t bite.” She said, and I knew she had backed me into a corner.

“Join me in my room,” She said, and I reluctantly followed.

“We will be at the door,” Ania said, following behind, and I was glad.

I followed Isabelle reluctantly, and when we got to her room, my heart began to beat fast. I saw Erica walk out with a smile. She greeted the Luna but did not spare me a glance. I was expecting Gezel to follow but soon found out Erica was alone. I wondered what Erica was doing in Isabelle’s room, knowing Nikolas had pulled away all the staff serving Isabelle. Maybe they had somehow become friends.

I stepped into the room, and she closed the door.

The smile on her face did not fade, and she stared at me as if she was trying to figure me out. I stood still, afraid of moving. My breathing was steady, and I planned to keep it that way. "Are you in love with Niko?" she asked me, and I looked at her surprised. It was none of her business, really.

"I know it is a shocking question, but I must know." She said with a sigh.

"You see, it is easy to give in to your captor. He came here, killed your people, humiliated your father, and took over your home. He took your honour and rendered you useless. You will never be mated, you will never have children, and you will never know what a claim is like. I find it odd to believe you love him. I believe you have given in to your fate and chosen the safer option. I might be wrong, of course, and that is why I am asking you this," She said and sat on the couch in her room.

"I want to know that you are in love with and not just pretending to love him because you believe you have no choice," She simplified, and I remained silent.

I did not know what the safe answer would be. I did not know what she was playing at, so I worried. She sighed, a bit frustrated.

"I am sure you know of the unity law," she said, and I nodded.

"Do you know why it is called a Unity Law?" She asked, and I remained silent.

"It is because the Kings of the region came together and agreed that the rules and regulations laid would be law in all three kingdoms, and even they would have to abide by it. It is called the Unity Laws because it is a set of rules and regulations applicable in all three regions that no king is above," She explained, and I sighed.

"According to that law, you cannot be mated to Nikolas, neither can you be his equal. According to the law, you are beneath him, a slave and thus are not worthy of love and respect from him or any Lycan. You are to be bought and sold for whatever reason," She said, and I almost clenched my fists.

"I did not make the law, but I was there when my husband chose to sign it because of your people's treachery. Until then, the law was only recognised in Hill and Snow. Forest was a haven for your kind until your father and his friends decided they wanted it all. Anyway. I didn't call you to upset you, and I just wanted to know if you understand your predicament," She said, and I nodded even though I had a lot of things to say to her. Even though I wanted to call her a liar and tell her exactly what my father told me. Even though I wanted to walk out. I controlled my anger and nodded. I had to be obedient, and Raven had to remain calm for the sake of the future.

## **Forged In The Flames Chapter 50**

**Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman**

## Chapter 50 Delimma (Aliana's POV)

I controlled my temper and remained still, not wanting to give her something to work with. It was hard, and I felt sick, but I restrained myself. "I am glad you know this," Isabelle said and smiled.

"Yes, Nikolas is crazy about you. He dishonoured me for your sake. His love is strong, and I know it is true. His passion for you is honest, and his desires for you are unmatched," she said and stood up.

"Yet he has a duty to his bloodline and his people. He must take back what your father destroyed. He must restore his crown, which would not have been lost if it weren't for your father and your people," She said and sighed. "He must take back that crown, or Forest would be fair game. I know the last thing you want is for Nikolas to go to war with the Snow and Hill kings because he will fall.

I can tell you that they both want Forest because of its resources," she said, walking towards me. "Niko does not have the army or the might to push back if they come. Maybe he would have if the Werewolves were on his side. Still, I have been told that your warriors are no more due to the battles they fought defending the territory from my brother and trying to stop my son from taking what is rightfully his. Serves them right, I suppose," She said, t\*ouching my chin to look into my eyes.

She stared at me for a while, studying my eyes "Honey colour," She said with a whisper.

"Beauty, they say, is in the eyes of the beholder, but you, my dear, do not need a beholder to shine," she said. Even though it seemed like praise, I did not appreciate it because it was coming from Isabelle. She gave me the creeps "Nikolas will give up his crown for your sake if it comes to it. He cares that much for you. What do you think will happen when he does that, and the vultures come calling? What will happen to him and your race when he falls?" She asked me, and I fought myself from imagining the outcome even though it seemed plausible.

"For your race to thrive and for Forest to continue to be a safe haven for you and your kind, Niko has to be king," she said, spelling out the truth. It was a truth I knew too.

"I will do all it takes to help my son gain his crown. I am willing to support him all the way. Are you willing to do what it takes, Aliana? Can you put aside your selfish desires for him and allow him to ascend peacefully? Do you love him enough to want what is best for him regardless of your desires?" she asked, letting go of my chin while my eyes danced in confusion. I looked down.

"I want what is best for him," I managed, and she giggled.

“For Niko to be king, he has to obey the unity law. He also needs a queen by his side and not a mistress. It is either that or he takes the crown by force,” She said and looked at me.

“I called you here to speak to you, Aliana, because my son will never let you go. I also know you will hold on to him tightly because there is nowhere to go,” She said; somehow, she was right, but I loved him too.

I dared not say it, though.

I did not want her to have something she could use against Nikolas and me. I did not know what Nikolas had told her and how he planned to play the game. My silence would have to do for now, but her words stung severely.

“Let us put it this way. For him to ascend, he must make alliances and travel a lot. Some nobles will offer their daughters and other things if they do not see a woman beside him.

Will you be able to take it?

Will you subject another woman to suffering by sharing her husband with her as his mistress?

Will you ruin a home for your happiness?

I am asking you this because I suffered in my marriage. Though my husband’s mistress was dead before we got together, he never saw me.

I lived in her shadow and shared him with her ghosts all through. There was no day I was fulfilled in my marriage, and I did many things I wasn’t proud of to fill the void.

Looking at what you and Nikolas have, I sense he is willing to do the same with you. I believe, in your case, you will be around, so his wife would not have to compete with your ghost,” She said, and I was silent.

I didn’t want to imagine Nikolas with anyone else, so I shut it out completely, even though it brought me tears. The truth of her words brought tears to my eyes, and they fell freely. There was no point fighting them. Though silent, my tears eased the pain a bit.

“It is either he goes that route or declares war, and I know you would not want him to fight a war.

He is bound to lose Aliana, so I will ask you again. Do you love Nikolas,” she asked me. I managed to look at her while wiping away my tears and decided to answer it as honestly as I could.

“Yes, Luna, with all my heart,” I said in tears, and something faltered in her eyes.

“Then do not be in his way for the crown, Aliana. Do not give Fredrick a reason to deny him his right. Do not give Fredrick a reason to march here with his troops and slaughter us. I am asking you to walk away when the time comes,” She said, and I shook my head.

“He won’t let me go, and I belong to him,” I said, and she sighed.

“Nikolas plans to keep you as his mistress while he marries a Lycan queen to get the crown. Are you okay with that?” She asked me, and I nodded.

“Whatever makes him happy. I am a werewolf, after all, and I have no say in these things,” I told her, but deep down, I minded and held onto Nikola’s promises to me.

I knew he would not break my heart, and he would fix everything.

If I have to pretend to be a mistress or a s\*ex slave so he can get whatever he wants, so be it, but I knew he won’t be taking a queen.

I did not owe her an explanation and refused to tell her our plan.

So I will cry and tell her what she wants to hear.

She will believe me and be at peace, but I will keep my hopes up and pray everything Nikolas has planned turns out the way he wants because, in the end, it will just be us, and I was patient enough to wait.

“Very well, I am glad you aren’t disillusioned. Do know you can come to me for anything. I learned Gwendolyn was your mother,” she said, and I nodded.

“She was my midwife, and we were friends. She knew my secrets and kept them. I apologise for the way I treated you yesterday. It is just that being here without Mathias breaks my heart. You should know exactly how I feel now that you are in love. Although our love was one-sided, he was all I had, and Gabriel took him from me. Niko has pleaded with me to separate the two, precisely what I would do. I won’t trouble you, Aliana, but I will plead with you not to say or do anything that would Jeopardise my son’s chances of becoming king.

Fredrick and Aleksander have spies everywhere. No one should know what Niko feels about you or that what you have is more than s\*ex because they will use it against him.

It is wrong for him to sleep with or even have your scent, but it is excusable since he isn’t king yet. Please do not give them something to use against my son,” she said, and I nodded.



I had nothing to say about that because Niko and I were careful too. I hope he gets the kingship soon because I hate the fact that we have to pretend.

“Very well, Aliana. Thank you for your time, and I appreciate your sincerity,” She said, and I nodded.

“If you want to discuss anything with me or ask me anything because I know your father might have told you stuff, feel free to ask. I won’t take offence, and I will be happy to explain. It gets boring around here; I would not mind a bit of a challenge from you,” she said, and I nodded.

There was nowhere in hell I would tell her what I discussed with my father. Even though she seemed nice to me, I knew I could not trust her still. So, it was best to be on my guard where she was concerned.

I left the room, and the look on Ania and Lisa’s faces showed they heard everything.

“Honestly, I was worried for you in there,” Ania said, squeezing my hand for comfort.

“Do you trust her?” She asked me, and I shook my head.

“Hatred that strong does not dissipate overnight, Ania. I know she is planning something. She might have realised she can’t control her son, so she is trying to keep her enemy, which is me, closer,” I said, and Lisa laughed.

“And here I thought I was the only pessimist among us. I must say you must have put up a hell of a performance for her to think she got you, Aliana,” Lisa said, and both she and Ania laughed.

I could not laugh because Isabelle had indeed gotten to me. Her words had cut deep and stung because they were true. I just hoped everything would go well and not come to war because Nikolas needed to get the crown so we could all be safe.

I would rather be his mistress than for Fredrik to be our king.

There will be no freedom or safe haven for werewolves and Halfbreeds. I do not want to be in a world like that.

Besides, Fredrick would have to defeat Nikolas first for that to happen. That also was an unwanted outcome. I will start praying harder and doing all I can to ensure his success.

We stepped out of the palace and decided we would go to town. I noticed my father was home, so I went to check on him.

I knocked on the door, and to my surprise, Israel answered it. I frowned, wondering what Israel was doing in my father’s house.

“Good afternoon Israel,” I said, and he smiled at me.

“Where is my father?” I asked, and he told me to keep my voice down.

“He is in the room sleeping. The nurse just gave him his meds and left now.” He said, and I became scared.

I rushed to his room, and true to Isreal’s words, my father was on the bed sleeping. Israel gradually pulled me away from the door and led me back to the living room.

“What happened?” I asked Isreal, and he sighed. “Your father collapsed on sight this morning while he was working.

The work is too rigorous for him, and his hours are too long. I doubt he can take it anymore. We have written Alpha Nikolas several times to replace your father, but he refuses to answer. Maybe you can plead with him on his behalf,” He said, and my heart sank.

No matter how much Nikolas cared for me, I dared not discuss my father with him. How will I tell Nikolas to take it easy on my father when he believes my father is the one that ruined his life?

“How do I tell him?” I asked Israel. It was a rhetorical question because I knew he had no answer.

“You have to figure it out, Aliana, because if he continues like this, he will die. He is too old for this,” Israel said, and I became scared because I was torn.

I loved my father and believed everything happening to him was unfair. I decided I would talk to Qusack about it.

The last thing I wanted was for Nikolas to feel like I was taking advantage of our relationship.

His mother said he told her to separate the two, meaning he can only be with me because he has somehow mentally separated me from my father, but that is an illusion because my father would always be a part of me. I hoped Qusack would be able to do something about it.

“I will talk to Qusack about it,” I told Israel, and he shook his head.

“The Beta has already pleaded with the Alpha on the matter. You have to talk to the Alpha directly. He might listen to you,” he said, and fear engulfed me. It was a daunting task I suspected would not end well, but I knew I had no choice but to try.

Since Nikolas did not give me permission to see my father that day, I could not sit with him. Israel told me he would be there and send his wife the next day when he goes to work. I had no choice but to leave.

Suddenly I did not feel like going to town anymore.

I told Ania and Lisa to go without me while I returned to the palace to wait for Nikolas in his room.

I was afraid, but I knew I had no choice but to discuss it with him. Hopefully, it will turn out well.