

Chapter 123

HENDRICK

I cringe as I feel the sharp tip of the metal instrument pierce into my skin.

"You were always my favourite." The memory of his gravelly voice rumbles through my head, making me take a deep breath.

I open my eyes, finding Artemisia leaning against my shoulder as she has fallen asleep during the ride. Fynn is lying in a horrendous uncomfortably-looking position, only to have his head in her lap. I chuckle thinking about how important it must be to him to be close to his baby and beloved to put up with such an unpleasant sleeping position.

Remembering how lonely he must have felt in the last few years as he was treated as an outcast in his own pack after his attack on Cayden, I'm glad he found her. She gave him the home back that he deserved. Even if he acted like an arrogant idiot all the time, and the wolves weren't strong or courageous enough to bully him, I know that it must be hard for him to be ignored and cut out like that.

I caress her hair, wrapping my arm around her gently to pull her closer to me to give him a bit more space.

Unfortunately, I must have triggered a nightmare as Artemisia startles awake, fighting against me as if she wanted to push me away.

"Hey, Missy. I'm here," I say quietly, grabbing her wrists to make her stop thrashing around. "Everything is alright."

She looks up at me, blinking herself to reality as I study her face. "Oh, I'm so sorry."

"Don't worry," I sigh, and she rubs her eyes sleepily*Ww.n(ø)vélw(ø)Řm.com*

Looking around, she caresses Fynn's hair. "Where are we?"

"We just passed the border to the royal pack's territory. I guess we will be at the palace in about four or five hours," I explain, making her groan.

"I hate long car rides," she sighs. "And palaces even more."

I laugh, loving how she leans into my hug. "Well, the high council's court is just a few steps away from the palace, so we should be thankful they don't let us sleep in cells. Also, don't let Finnegan hear you. I don't think it is appropriate for a princess to hate a palace."

She shakes her head, giggling cutely as she murmurs something about me being an idiot.

"I got you," I say, as I see her fighting to stay awake. "Sleep! You need to be well rested when we arrive. You don't want them to think we drugged you, or something like this."

She gasps lowly, looking at me with a sad expression. "Why are they doing this to me?"

"I don't know. Just see it as your family being worried about you. I mean we are a bit sketchy if you look at it," I chuckle, making her squint her eyes at me.

Signing, she leans her head against my shoulder. "Yeah, but still."

Her eyelids are heavy, and her eyes keep falling close as she looks into the void. I can literally hear her thoughts running in her head and I wait patiently for her to form the question she wants to ask me.

"How did you know... I mean, how did you recognise the herbs in the tea so well?" she asks, moving her head from one side to the other. "Well, except for the Belladonna, that one I know why you know it."*www.Nö(v)élw(ø)řřm.co(m)*

I grin, pressing a kiss onto the top of her head. Even if I feel like wanting to share everything with her, she would be the only one I ever told about who I really was.

And I know that I would be sharing it with Finnegan too as he has been acting as if he was asleep since she tore him out of his sleep by having the nightmare*W©(w).n©VelWøřřm.com*

"I have just been around for a long time," I answer her, making her groan.

She sighs exhaustedly, closing her eyes. "You are a very bad liar, Hendrick."

Chuckling, I hug her closer, feeling how she drifts back to sleep in my arms.

And God, how awesome that feels.

By the time we get to the palace of the Alpha King's residence in the south, the sun is already back, shining high in the sky.

We get out of the car, and as the wolves are stretching themselves, I pull the hood of my coat deeper to cover my face.

Even though I don't burst into flames when in contact with the sunlight, the sun is still exhausting for me. Artemisia's blood gave me strength enough to not enable it to weaken me too much, but I would need a lot more to be my usual bubbly self.

As the men are keeping each other from shifting in front of the royal palace, I walk over to Artemisia, who is rummaging through her bags.

"Maybe you forgot it at home," Ramona says as she watches her friend go through the bags which were transported in the car with Cayden, Logan and Darius, who is one of the warriors.

"No," Artemisia pushes out a sigh, tugging her curls behind her ear. "I'm sure that I packed the sweater into my suitcase before we left."

Ramona pulls out a cardigan, holding it towards Artemisia. "Take this. You will certainly find the other one later when we are in the room."

I chuckle under my breath as Artemisia pouts, and I turn away to look at the palace, just to see our welcome committee coming out through the large wing doors.

My face falls as I see the blond bitch walking towards us with a broad grin, pulling an entrance as if she was the queen herself.

"Fuck," I curse, moving fast to reach Cayden, who is still standing with his back turned towards the palace while watching his brother spar with a warrior playfully.

And even if I love how relaxed he is, not even having recognized the bitch's scent, I'm still concerned about the moment when he will.

"Remember to stay calm," I tell him through clenched teeth, making him lift a brow at me. "Remember what we are here for. And what's at stake for us."

"I don't get wha-" He distorts his face confused, just until her honeyed voice interrupts him.

"Welcome, Ladies and Gentlemen. I hope you had a pleasant journey. I am the lady-in-waiting of the princess and will be your host as the royal family is residing in their second summer residence at the moment. Oh, it's so good to see you all again."

Cayden's eyes widen even before he turns around to check if his ears aren't failing him.

And if it's really Rachel who just spoke.