



103 AN ASSASSINATION INVESTIGATION (2)

Elena walked to the balcony and looked down. 1

"There are no ropes or anything," Xaden said, looking down.

"You have no idea what you're dealing with," Elena told him, and she went back into the room and went straight for the baths.

She opened the door, stepped down on her knees, and examined the woman's body.

Xaden, Erik, and Damian joined her.

The body was now partially pale, and her eyes were still wide open.

Her olive skin was now almost white because it had floated in the red water for so long, and her black hair hung in the water.

Even in death, she was lovely.

Elena looked over her and touched her head.

"There is a spot under her neck," Xaden



informed.

Elena looked at it. "You're right. This is a dessert wolf." 1

"What's a dessert wolf doing here?" He asked.

"They are outlawed."

"Outlawed doesn't mean they don't disobey and be in our presence." Elena said, further examining her.

She looked at the injury. "She had a painful and fast death. The wound isn't extraordinary. It's like she was killed with some poison."

She looked up at them. "How didn't you notice that she was behind you?"

"I don't know." Xaden said. "It was like my senses were deadened while I slept. Even she was on her tiptoes, and I would have sensed her no matter how perfect she was."

"She deadened your senses." Elena said.

"And not just that, she screamed, and I was pushed to the wall. It's like nothing I've ever felt." Erik said.



Elena stopped and turned to Erik. "You said what?"

"She screamed, and then I hit the wall." Erik said with a shrug.

She looked back down at the body. "We're dealing with a very reserved cult of desert wolves. I didn't even know they existed."

Damian went to the floor and picked up the blade that had been tossed on the floor.

"Was this with her?" He asked.

"Yeah, she was holding it right over Xaden," Erik said. "And that's what Xaden used to stab her."

She collected it and examined it.

She picked out her dead hand and pointed the blade in to pierce it.

There were veins of black blood erupting from the sharp point, and then it erupted back in.

"This is more dangerous than I thought." She said. "This blade was designed for you. And he can kill an Alpha in a split second, no matter how powerful or protected he is. It takes much time



to make and is almost impossible to administer. But if this blade had grazed your skin, you would have been dead in an instant.

Xaden felt a crawl on his skin.

"So, who would dare send a desert wolf to kill me." Xaden asked.

"It's not who. You have more Alpha enemies than friends, Xaden. So it's which of them." Damian remarked.

"Alpha Bale more than anyone." Xaden said. "I'm sure he put his daughter up to this."

"Jasmine had nothing to do with this."

Erik said, and Xaden looked at him suspiciously.

"Oh, what now? You know everything about her?" Xaden said.

"Don't even start." Elena stopped the brewing anger.

"How did they know where you would be here?" Damian asked. "Because last time I checked, you aren't supposed to be here. You're supposed to be getting ready for the ritual."



"They must have known beforehand," Elena said.

"Having a spy. You need to be more careful."

"I'll get to the bottom of this," Xaden swore.

"No, you won't," Elena said, stopping him from going out. You will keep this within, and you will only go out at night—when it's time for the ritual."

"Why would I do that?" Xaden asked. "You're making me look like a coward, and they would think that they succeeded in killing me."

She nodded. "Exactly. Let them think that they succeeded. Their misgivings would give away. Erik and Damian would launch a quiet investigation. I'll try to find a way to go around her and know where she is coming from."

"So I'm just going to stay here?" Xaden asked, baffled. "And wait for you till whenever you get back?"

"Yes." She replied as she patted him and saw that his shoulder was sown. "That's a neat stitch. Who did that for you?"

"No one." Xaden snorted. 3



He couldn't deny the fact that Jasmine's sowing his arm the night before had actually saved his life. 2

He would have been invalidated, and the wound would have grown to be infected.

If she hadn't been stubborn and sown and cleaned his wound, then he would probably have been too weak to fight.

And then he might have been dead by now.

"So what happens to her body?" He asked, and they all looked down at her.

"I'll sneak her up to Loren's quarters. I'll need some of his potions to work on her." She said.

"I don't want to just wait here like a child." He argued.

"No one wants you to wait here like a child." She warned him. "But if you truly value your life, you will remain here. Do you even understand any of this and what it means? A desert wolf from a very dangerous wolf cult was sent to kill you. You Xaden. Who wants you dead isn't making jokes. If they find out right now that you aren't



dead, then we don't know what other measures they would use. You must wait here. Don't do anything stupid. You've already done that."

And he felt a sting as he winced.

He knew what she was saying.

She was talking about the fact that he had gone to see the witch who happened to see her sister help him gain victory over his enemies.

She was still obviously angry with him.

She turned to Damian and Erik and instructed them To carry the body out and wrap it in a carpet.

They did, and soon they left:

Xaden sat on the bed, and for the first time in a long while, he felt alone.



FULL RETURN!!!



