



## 78 STITCHING ERIK

I watched as Alex rose to his feet. 1

He spat the blood out of his mouth and gave us all a dirty stare.

I expected him to expose me there and then, but he didn't.

Instead, he stalked off.

And no, he didn't fix his fly. He left it open, not caring much about anything or anyone.

All eyes turned to me once he was out.

Extremely weak, I sat down on a bench.

He could have ousted me.

I made known his claim about who I indeed was, but he hadn't.

Worse, he has told me that I will help him kill Xaden.

I put my face in my hands.

I was stressed and tired; so much in my head.



Expectations come from everywhere. First, it was from my pack, and I was to deliver information about Xaden's activities.

I had not been able to do that because I was illiterate. 2

Then there was Xaden, who had brought me here to torture me, even though he had no idea that hurting me did not affect my family.

And then there was the fact that I also had to bear with Alex because he had my secret.

Aurora was always staring down at me, ready to make another death attempt.

And then there was Princess Belle, the future Queen.

It was like everyone was out to get me. 1

I was exhausted.

Someone came and sat beside me, and I was jolted out of my thoughts.

It was Erik.

"I have some injuries." He informed. "You're the one who is to treat them, isn't it?"



I had completely forgotten that I was still supposed to treat the men.

I jumped up to my feet.

"Yes, yes." I nodded. "Forgive me."

Then, I rushed up to get the remaining supplies.

He had cuts and marks all over him.

"Thank you for what you did." I said this as I cleaned the wounds.

He nodded. "You're welcome." 3

I didn't know why Erik was pleasant to me.

Even without numbers, he has saved my life. 1

I couldn't take that out of my head.

What he always did for me. When should he hate me?

I knew he, too, would have a story about my father.

But here he was.

He was the kindest man I had ever met.



There was a silence as I took care of his wounds.

"Your wounds." I said. "How did you come about them?"

I thought they had said only Alphas were fighting in the forest.

"I fought in the forest. Although I'm Xaden's gamma, I'm also an Alpha. My pack still belongs to me." He said.

"I see," I said, then continued with the stitches.

I didn't say anything for a while.

Neither did he.

Then he cleared his throat.

"You know, Alex, don't you?" He asked me.

I jerked, but I hoped he didn't take notice.

"Y-yes. He was my betrothed's brother." I said.

After all, I was an imposter, living in place of my true daughter, Jessica. 1

"Alex has always been a wild one." Erik said. "I'm





sure he hates you because his brother was killed because of Xaden."

"It's expected." I said.

I was relieved that Erik didn't suspect anything.

He saw it as Alex being himself and me suffering for what had happened to his brother.

"Do you still love him?" He asked me.

"Who?" I asked, absolutely lost.

"You're betrothed, Dean. The one whose head was given to you in a box." He went into details, and I remembered the grotesque scene.

I shivered. "It's a love gone. No point crying over spilled milk." 1

And then I went on with the stitching.

I cut the thread and went on to resume another.

There were so many cuts on him that I wondered how many people he had killed tonight to get this many cuts.

I also wondered why their wounds didn't heal.



The wolves, especially Alphas, had their wounds almost healed.

They were not like me, who was unshifted and still had to deal with my injuries.

"It's the halo moon." He said.

"What?" I said I was lost.

"You're thinking about how we all have wounds." He said. "It's written on your face."

He cleared his throat and began. "The halo moon is to show the wolves their true strength. It's almost the weakest period in the life of a wolf. A slight mistake, and you could die instantly."

That makes sense now.

"How long does this last?" I asked him.

"About three days." He said. "It's for the entire day that the moon is present after the final ritual, then it will revert. Don't you know these things?"

I flustered.

Jessica would know. After all, she had been schooled on matters of being a wolf.





I smiled. "No, not really. Wolf culture was never my favorite, so I always deterred teachings."

The lies were becoming too much and coming out more smoothly.

"Well, it's not so dangerous—not as dangerous as a blood moon," he said.

I stopped what I was doing, and the needle dangled and pricked him.

"I'm so sorry." I apologized.

He had just said the blood moon.

That was what the voice had said.

She called me the daughter of the blood moon.

"Blood moon?" I asked. "What's that?"

"It's just a myth." He said. "A myth of an apocalypse. The end of the world."

I swallowed.

The end of the world?

Before I could ask more questions, the door burst open and Loren entered.



He walked up to me and Erik.

He looked down at the cuts that I had stitched.

He sniffed his nose and said, "It is much better than I imagined. How many are left?"

"About eight." I said I was turning to look around and count the men. "Seven."

He cut the thread from Erik's last stitch and kept it secure.

"How many more bodies?" Erik asked.

"About thirty," Loren replied as he examined the wounds.

I swallowed knowing there was still work to be done.