

Chapter 67 - The Ambush

"When the going gets tough, put one foot in front of the other and just keep going. Don't give up." — Roy T. Bennett

Kiya

The element of surprise. It was the sole advantage our opponents have, and it worked swimmingly. Many pack members panicked from the chaos, grabbing their children and/or loved ones as they fled to the underground bunkers. Bodies of all shapes and sizes spilled into the packhouse alongside the storm of hurried footsteps, barely covering the screams and disembodied roars outside.

I must be out there. I needed to be in this battle. Damn the doctor's orders; people's lives were on the line! Sucking in a deep breath, my chest expanded with my resolve. Hiding was not an option. I was here to do my job and I won't let some poison stop me from doing so. I sucked in a deep breath and bolted out my bedroom door.

Dodging the panicked bodies, I emerged onto the grisly battlefield. Zombified rogues spilled from all corners of the woodlands, group after group. Just like the previous battles. All warriors fought valiantly,

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cutting down their numbers as fast as the enemy replenishes them. But it came with a price.

Many held injuries. There was no shortage of red spilled. My friends and ranked wolves fought harmoniously on the front lines, killing every rogue on sight. The stench of decay was worse than before, now mixed with fresh blood.

My observations violently halted when Abigail, our formidable fighter, dropped to the ground with a deep gash on her stomach. Jackie howled in pain and volcanic anger, charging into the beasts with murder on her mind. This insanity had to stop! I ran to Abigail and dragged her away by the shoulders towards the stairs. Iron assaulted my nose and a retch came out of my mouth. She whimpered weakly with my every step, pressing her hands against the wound that rapidly flowed with blood.

"It fucking hurts..." Abigail moaned, eyes squeezing shut. She *never* cursed, which enforced the gravity of the situation. I stripped off my buttoned-up shirt and pressed it against the wound as hard as I could, despite her blood seeping through the fabric and between my fingers. Being in a bra didn't matter. My friend's well-being outweighed my self-consciousness.

"Stay with me, Abi! You're going to be okay!" I

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whispered, tears pricking my eyes. I darted my head around, hoping to find someone not being man-handled by a rouge to help me.

"Orion!" I shouted, spotting him near me. Immediately, he jogged up to me, eyes widening at the state of Abigail. "Take her to the pack hospital, now!"

"But what about you, Delta Kiya?" He asked. After our showdown a while back, Orion gave me nothing but respect. "You're recovering, you can't fight!"

"Don't worry about me. Take her, or else Beta Jacqueline would rip you apart for not helping her mate!" Picking Abigail up, I thrust her into his arms. "Now, go!"

As if a greater power influenced him, Orion ran towards the hospital, dodging the calamity. Praying silently for Abigail's recovery, I donned my fighter face and joined the battle. Punching, stamping, flinging, and tearing the rogues apart as I could.

I was angry. Fire pumped through my veins, powering my muscles faster than adrenaline. My friend's pained face imprinted in my mind, failing to stifle the powerful emotions within me. I could feel Jacqueline's sadness and frustration over her

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beloved, Galen and Darien's struggle, and Sapphire's pain.

The enemy grew stronger. They learned a lot since our last encounter.

One rogue suddenly struck my arm with their decaying claws, slashing through brown flesh. Four slash marks presented themselves on my upper arm, blood gushed down like a raging river. Another got me on the leg and used their unfathomable force to headbutt my stomach. I went flying onto the dirty ground, dust flying on impact.

"*Goddamnit!*" I shouted in my head, wincing at my open wounds. Now, I looked like many of the warriors, bloodied and nearly defeated. Zombies advanced towards me, rotten jaws drooling bright green and red. Their hollowed eyes bared down into mine, pushing the reminder they're soulless creatures.

They're reanimated to fight and to kill. That's their purpose. But, why? Who was commanding them?

Before any could grant me death, a pitch-black wolf barreled hard into them. His jaws tore through them mercilessly, his large body shielding me from harm. Many fruitfully fought him but fell to his Alpha

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might. No one challenges the Alpha and lives.

Neron's wolf, Onyx, turned to me, golden eyes carved from concern. His snout nuzzled into my stomach, good feelings overriding the sinister pain "I-I'm fine..." I say, patting his snout. Slowly, but surely, I rose from the ground. Onyx's nose didn't leave me until I was steady on my feet.

He disappears behind the stone statutes, and Neron appeared before me wearing only boxing shorts, "Kiya, what are you thinking? You shouldn't be out here!"

"Well, I am!" I huffed, my wounds starting to gradually close. "Neron, what the fuck happened? How did these beasts get past the border patrols?"

"They killed them." My jaw dropped. "It's an ambush. We didn't know of the attack until they sounded the horn, but by then, the rogues were less than half a mile from our grounds."

"Fuck!" People were dead! The patrols were blindsided, and Zircon Moon has no further defense besides us! The battlefield was growing, increasing in brutality and violence, blood, and guts staining the once lush-green grass. "We'll deal with this after the fight."

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"No, *I'll* deal with this after the fight. You need to go back inside to safety." His hands grabbed my shoulders, holding me still. "You're not fit to fight, not while recovering from poison."

"Recovery is the last thing on my mind when Abigail's in the hospital, bleeding from her belly!" I shrug his hands off me. "I cannot sit and hide while everyone I care about is risking their lives out here!"

"But you cannot risk your health alongside it, Kiya!" Neron brushes his hand through his frazzled hair, his eyes carrying the weight of the world. "For once, listen to me! Get out of here! I'm losing wolves as we speak, and I can't bear to lose you in the process!"

"What a beautiful display of a lover's quarrel. I wish I could see more, but alas, there are more pressing matters." Both of us jerked our heads to the gruff voice owner and for that moment, I wanted to vomit my breakfast.

The bastard reeked of death. Just like the wolves, his skin was patched like a sewn-up doll. Glowing purple outlined the fleshly blotches, giving him more of a menacing look. He walked through the battlefield towards us, ignoring the calamity that went around him. The undead wolves kept everyone else busy, allowing for their master to make his grand entrance.

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Deep growls erupted next to me from Neron, his face contorting in deep anger and loathing. Blue flashed to gold and gold flashed to black in rapid succession, his large hands balling up into fists. Red painted his skin, fury erupting beneath the epidermis. "You...!"

"Surprise, Neron. Happy to see me again?" The man quirked an eyebrow. Dead blue squared onto me. "I've come for the girl. Hand her over and I'll let you live."

Neron jerked me behind his muscled body. He was large enough to shield me completely from him, giving me a full view of his rippling back muscles. Not a blemish in sight. After this was over, I wanted nothing more than to run my hands over him, every crevice and bulge. Wait, what the hell am I saying? Kiya, focus! My stomach did backflips and the edges of my vision blurred, reminding me that I'm in the middle of a battlefield. This was no time for tomfoolery. Pain rocketed through the gashes on my arms and the cacophony of blood-curling screaming and grunts faded into background noise.

"Like hell, I'll be handing my mate over!" He shouted with raw power. "How the fuck are you alive? Dad killed you three years ago!"

"Oh, please. Nephew, you know by now that the demons of the past never escape their victims. A very handy tool called necromancy magic revitalized

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me to both exact my revenge and to bring the girl to my master."

Wait a damn minute!

Nephew? He was Neron's uncle? The notorious Zain! He was the one who killed Luna Celeste and Nuria, then pinned their murders on me. Holy shit!

"Now, be a good boy and hand the bitch over."

"Hold up! No one calls me a bitch!" I growl from behind my safe wall.

"Kiya, don't," Neron warned, "Get inside and let me take care of this." Before I could respond, he charged towards his uncle like a football player, tackling his reanimated body to the ground. Fists met with flesh repeatedly as Zain's skin rippled and crumbled.

Zain was somehow stronger than Neron. He threw the Alpha's body off like a ragdoll, thrusting his decaying claw into his chest. The motion caught Neron off guard, he gasped in pain as Zain's hand retracted. Neron kicked away from him. I covered my mouth, horrified at Neron's injury. I balled my fists and fought the urge to run to him as he feebly tried to stop the bleeding. If I ran to him now, I would be caught too.

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Zane's evil gaze landed back upon me, but a large figure barreled into him before he could take a step. Johnathan. I could feel the anger rolling off his skin.

"You don't stay dead, do you?" He roared, resuming Neron's onslaught. His undead brother cackled madly like a madman as if this was all just a game to him. Smirking, Zain kicked his brother off him with both his feet ramming into his stomach toward a group of rogues who dogpiled him, ready for slaughter while the rest of the decaying mutts continued to attack soldier and pack member alike.

I was paralyzed with fear. Battle never scared me, in fact, I've enjoyed exerting my energy in fights. The battlefield was the one place where I felt alive. Artemis thrived when defending the people she loved and so did I. But, now, I felt like a helpless puppy. My friends were hurt, and more and more people fell in the ambush. Zain had me in his line of sight, his monstrous grin reigning triumphant on his face. Madness glittered behind his decayed blue eyes, the only sign of life in this man. ¹

He has me right where he wanted me. ⁴

I watched the rogues' puppeteer rise to his feet, still cackling. My eyes widened as I saw black smoke billowing out from his mouth, turning the bright atmosphere into a bleak, cloudy one. Smoke wasn't the only thing wiggling out from his mouth.

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Tentacles. That's all I could describe the dozens of flailing, fleshly grappnels sprouting from his mouth. Zain's body ripped down the center, the sound so awful that I gagged. Flesh and limbs tumbled to the ground in sickening, gushy masses that were nowhere near human.

Zain had been dead for a long time, but what came out of him was as alive as I was.

Dark magic. Its foreboding, heavy energy swirled madly like a hurricane around a hole of pure blackness. The tentacles continued to flail madly, until they wrapped around my arms and torso, jerking me towards it. I felt like a chained dog, fighting against restraints. I let out the loudest scream of my life, desperately using my strength to pull away.

I dug my heels into the ground as hard as I could, but the earth split from the force of the pull. Whatever the hell this thing was, it was much stronger than me. If it pulled me inside that black hole, who knew what would happen to me?

I cannot let this happen!

As I struggled, two powerful arms wrap securely around my waist, jolting me backward. My back pressed up against the hard and blood-sticky chest

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of Neron, who grunted with effort, "I got you! I'm not letting anything happen to you!"

I believed him. I honestly believed in Neron's statement. He was ignoring his pain and the obvious hole in his chest, he put it aside to stop the black hole from swallowing me up in its black magic. It became a game of tug-o-war. The grapnels pulled forward, and we pulled away, the same force in different directions.

My mind went hazy with effort and desire. Desire to escape. My eyes watched as the rogues gained the upper hand over my friends and Zircon's wolves, sending them down into the ground, shedding needless blood in an act of superiority.

This can't be happening!

We were losing. We were on the losing side of this war. Neron was behind me, fighting hard for my safety. My friends continued to battle for the gold medal of victory with valor pulsating through their veins. Abigail was fighting for her life in the hospital.

I couldn't give up! This wasn't the end! I wanted to protect—no, I *needed* to protect everyone! I didn't want anyone to fall into the evil hands of these

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undead rogues and Zain's mysterious end game!

I wanted everyone to live!

My eyes shut tightly as my muscles slowly weakened, lactic acid replacing my adrenaline. Artemis, who was fighting alongside me, was also growing weaker. My body was ready to surrender, but my mind was still in a war. Neron's voice in my ear told me to keep fighting but his words did nothing to revitalize my muscles. The weakness was settling in. My body grew limp.

"Moon Goddess! Selene!" I prayed, eyes fluttering close *"Please if you can hear me, we need help! I need help! There has to be something you can do!"*

Suddenly, her face appeared in the back of my mind. My Moon Goddess. My creator. Celestial grey eyes gazing at me with all the love and comfort of the universe. Her dazzling smile sent warmth throughout my body, breaking down all the barriers I've put on my powers. They come crashing down, freeing all from imprisonment.

"Indeed, there is, my child. Are you ready?"

"Yes," I say without hesitation.

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"Then it is time, my avatar, for you to awaken."

A flash of bright white.

Violent surges of power pulse through me.

I screamed.

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I am so sick of her forgetting
she has freaking powers, you'r...

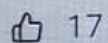



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she needs to snap the fuc out
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