

To heal a Rogue #Chapter 1: The new heir - Read To heal a Rogue Chapter 1: The new heir

LYSANDER

The heat started at the back of my neck.

I had been warned. The Healer who attended to me, Cress, was at the foot of my bed just yesterday with her arms crossed and that look on her face because she partly knew I was going to ignore everything that she said. *"Please skip the ball, Alpha Lysander. Let the rut run its course, and stop pretending you are made of something harder than bone and blood."*

I had nodded. I had even said, "Of course." Then I had come here anyway, after getting the prescription I needed from her, because my uncle had asked me to, and I had never been particularly good at telling him no.

It felt subtle at first. The sort of thing you could blame on a crowded room or too many bodies pressed inside a space that was never meant to hold this many wolves.

But I knew what it was.

I had known for the last hour, ever since the tightness started rising up my jaw and my skin came to feel like it belonged to someone else. The suppressant I had forced the new healer to give me, because Matthias would never, was wearing off.

My rut was announcing itself with the patience of a debt collector, and it did not care that I was standing in the middle of a private gathering in my uncle's estate, dressed in clothes that abruptly felt too tight everywhere.

The main ball had wound down an hour ago. What remained was this smaller gathering, the inner circle, the people who mattered enough to stay after the grand chandeliers were dimmed while the servers stopped circulating with the good wine.

In truth, this was a different kind of meeting. Though it wore the costume of a party. I held my glass and watched the room and tried to concentrate on the low conversation around me rather than the heat climbing steadily up the back of my skull.

Then my uncle lifted his glass.

He did it the way he did everything, with a calm that filled the room before he even opened his mouth.

The chatter slowed, and eyes immediately turned in his direction.

"To my nephew," he said.

I became still. Why was he bringing attention to me?

It was odd, too. Because my cousin and the Luna Queen were not in this gathering.

They had not even been at the party. And that was strange because my aunt did love parties.

The gathering took their flutes and wine glasses and raised them high in response.

"After the tragedy that took his father," Uncle continued, "this boy stepped into his role

as his father's successor and held it together with both hands." He paused, and something moved behind his eyes. Pride, I thought. Then there was something else. It flickered for me to see before it vanished completely. "I believe he is going to be an extraordinary ruler."

The room paused along with me. Then they clanked their glasses together.

One even winked at me. If only they knew the sin I had committed.

Part of the reason I had come was that my uncle had been particularly quiet about what happened to my father, so when the personal invitation came out of the blue... I kept going through the motions about what that could mean... If that was a sign... But so far, he had been nothing but kind.

This glazing about my young-blood ruling brought my fears back to light.

But then... I heard my uncle say the most batshit crazy thing.

"Before all of you," my uncle said, after taking a huge swing at his liquor, "I am naming Lysander here, heir to the Alpha King's throne."

The small noise in the room died.

Such silence lasted exactly two seconds before it gave way to sound. But not a single voice broke the stillness.

It lasted for a second more. Before the great elders and the big-name Alphas started staring at each other.

Then, as quickly as the stillness fell upon us, it was broken.

"Over his own son?"

I heard those words specifically because someone said them without bothering to lower their voice, and once they were out, others followed, the same thought wearing different mouths.

I remained there with my glass in my hand and felt something cold thread through all that heat.

Not because of what they were gossiping about.

I thought about Fia.

Her vision came back to me in frightening clarity. Her vocal tone, her face, the particular certainty in her eyes when she had looked at me and said what she saw. She had implied this.

Yet, it had been something I believed could never happen or had to be interpreted in a different light. But... But...

My uncle had just made a declaration.

My uncle's voice surged back through the noise, and the room listened.

"My son and my wife are not here," he said simply. "There is a reason for that." He did not explain the reason, and no one pressed him. "But I have achieved my goal. Letting this circle of people I trust so much to understand and support my choice."

"But, Your Majesty, this is not a pressing issue at the moment," one of the great elders said. He was being careful and very political with his words. "You are full of life and I am sure you still have many years ahead of you."

My uncle smiled. "Well," he said, "who knows what can happen tomorrow?"

Something about the way he said it made the back of my neck tingle in a way that had nothing to do with my assaulting rut.

I put down my glass.

"I'd like a word," I said. My speech came out steadier than I expected, given that my skin felt three sizes too small, along with the warmth sitting heavy beneath my eyes now, the pressure of something I did not have much time left to contain. "Privately, if you don't mind."

My uncle looked at me for a moment, and whatever he found in my face seemed to satisfy him. "Of course." He turned back to the circle. "Continue enjoying yourselves."

The library was on the second floor, away from the heat of the gathering rooms. His retainer followed us by two steps down the corridor, which meant we were not entirely alone, but it was close enough. The library itself smelled of vintage paper and cedar, and the temperature was at least ten degrees cooler, which helped marginally. I stood near a window and laid my palm flat against the glass while my uncle settled into one of the chairs beside the desk and waited.

"You cannot do this," I said.

"I have already done it."

"Then undo it." I turned from the window. "You have a son. I have a cousin who has been preparing for this his entire life, and you know what this sort of announcement does to family. You know what it does to the stability of blood. I have Lily of the Valley, and that is enough for me."

My uncle looked at me with the patience of someone who had already run this argument through to its conclusion many times before arriving here. "You are the right choice, Lysander. Your Mother's son. If you will not accept it, then take it as a boon for what you did to your bastard of a father."

That made me freeze. "What?"

"Oh, I know. You expect me, of all people, to believe that some Omega took Wenzel out?" He then added, "But I do not blame you at all. I had wanted to kill Wenzel for how far over the edge he pushed my sister to. I never could. But you are ruthless, Lysander, and that is why I know my seat and the seat of the royal blood in your veins is safe in your hands."

"Did something happen?" I asked.

He did not answer. So I let him know exactly where I stood.

"You know what... I do not even care. I do not want the throne."

"Very few of the right people do."

I ground my teeth together. The heat was back, climbing the side of my face now, and the low tension that lived permanently in the base of my back was beginning to sharpen into something I was going to have serious difficulty ignoring for much longer. My rut did not understand politics. It did not understand dynastic maneuvering or the careful architecture of my uncle's reasons. It only understood that I was standing in a room while my body insisted I should be somewhere else.

There was also this sweet scent. Like fucking honey. Which usually repulsed me. But for some reason, it just felt so good to inhale. I wondered if it was some air freshener that the royal library used.

"Why not my cousin? If I am going to remotely agree to this... I should know something."

"Well, there is something," He finally said.

I arched an eyebrow. "Well?"

He met my eyes there and then.

"I'm infertile."

The word landed and stayed there. My uncle's expression did not shatter or crumble. There was a very slight constriction at the corners of his eyes, but that was it.

I stood frozen, and the fire in the hearth was the only thing in the room that moved.

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.