Chapter 85

I patted myself down and twisted around, feeling how restrained my movement was. I had leather armor, packed out with swords, knives, even two guns that was strapped to my ribs. I had no issue with guns.If I was going to survive this, then they would come in handy at some point. There were extra clips under my armor.I had other things such as needles and even some extra bandages stowed in different places .My combat boots rose up over my ankles and I stretched them out. It had been weeks since I donned on my full combat outfit.

Satisfied with my movement and all the options I had, I started unloading all my weapons into a duffle bag I set on the bed. I fumbled around for my phone, finding the two packs of cigarettes I had stowed before finally landing on my phone.

“It's time.”

The high pitch voice came over the speakerphone.'We're ready here.'

“If I don't come back, I expect you to follow through. Take what's in my account as payment for the job.”

Sorry. You'll have to come back. We charge more than what you've got.”I knew she was smiling.

“Stay safe. If it gets too bad, pull out.Don't risk it.”

I would say the same to you but even if you faced that who damn army on your own, you still wouldn't bail.'

“Take care Pipsqueak.”

'You too Huntress. Good luck. We will be in contact soon.'

I hung up the phone and shoved in back behind the armor I had on. I heard honking and grabbed my bag, zipping it up and skipped down the stairs. Closing the door and locking it, the Jeep was pulled up in the front.I tossed my bag into the back and jumped into the back as well. My foot caught and I slammed into Hector who was sitting the far side in the back

“Shit, sorry.”

“Someone's excited.” Hector picked me up off of him and placed me on the seat.I sat down, making sure my bag of weapons was stowed properly.

“Everyone safe?”

A silence came over as Logan pulled out of the front and headed back down the road.

“Denise is safe. She's at her parents and she called me from there this morning.”Bryan filled me in.“Leandra and Zachary are missing since yesterday.”

The silhouette of Logan with the sounds of the Jeep showed a tight grip on the steering wheel.

“I'm sorry.”

“I have a feeling we will see her. Our scouts confirmed the entire court was with the Alph King, minus her.”Logan's voice was low.

“We can do our best to see if we can't save Zachary.”I said truthfully.

I saw him nod but he didn't reply. We bounced along, the roads quiet. The cities on this side of the territory had been emptied and moved to safer locations further away from the fighting.

The Alpha King set up to the West of the territory. His army and Micah's vampires were all stationed not far.

“The captains already set up?”

“Yeah. They are all set.We've got a pretty good force on our side.”Hector answered.

“Astra, you never said where you were going to situate yourself.”

I smiled.“I do better alone. I don't have to worry about allies getting in the way. So I'll probably situate myself in the middle of a shit storm and work my way through it.”

Hector chuckled.“Gonna launch yourself into the fray?”

“You got a cannon? I've always wanted to try. I've only ever done it from tops of cars.”I winked at him.

The three of them laughed. It was almost like time hadn't past. That it was the four of us again. Minus the war, and the fact that I was being allowed to fight or be anywhere near the fighting. But now, it felt like how it was supposed to be. How I had wanted it to be.

We pulled up and the amount of sounds and smells made me wrinkle my nose. I could see waves of light all over the place. Illuminating tents and cars and a mess of people walking around. It had taken us about a couple hours to reach the far west side but I was surprised at the scale. I pulled my bag from the back and jumped out of the Jeep.

“I need to go to my post.” Bryan came over and pulled me into a hug. I set down my bag and hugged him back. He kissed the top of my head.” Stay alive, Auri. No matter what. I won't forgive you. Not a second time.”

I squeezed him tight and buried my face in his armor.“I'll do what I can but you need to stay safe. For Denise. For Logan. For the pack. Don't do anything stupid. Use your head. Outsmart them all.”

He nodded and let go. I heard him clasp hands and hug Hector and Logan in turn.I watched as his footsteps highlighted in white, drifted out of view. Hector was up next. He hugged me and spun me around.

“Don't do anything I wouldn't do.”

I raised an eyebrow.“That doesn't limit me a whole lot.”

Hector chuckled.“If I can, I'll try and find you. We make a good team.”

“Just look after yourself.Don't worry about me.”

He kissed my head as well.“Too late Auri.”

He also clasped hands with Logan and walked off to his post. I stood there, watching his figure walk south. Logan came up behind me, also looking in that direction.

“They will be okay.”Logan stated but his voice was quieter than normal.

“If they aren't, I will destroy everyone in that army.”

He chuckled and placed a hand on my shoulder.I brought my hand up to cover his. He was shaking slightly.

“I have to meet with the Captains. Make sure we are all set. One final check.”

I nodded and turned to him, his hand slipping from my shoulder.I smiled at him.“Go.Your pack needs their Alpha.”

Logan took a deep breath and gathered me to him. He buried his face in my hair. I brought my hands up and hugged him, holding him tight.”

Be strong Logan. You have to, for them. You're going to feel it all. Just like you did before. The mindlinks breaking. You need to stay strong though. Don't lose your head or your balance.”

He was trying to stop shaking.“And you? What do I say to you? Don't be stupid? Don't die? Don't tear his head off without me?”

I chuckled.“I can't promise any of those, you know that. But I will try to make a conscious effort on that last one.”

“I love you Auri.”Logan breathed into my hair.

“I know Logan.You have to stay alive. No matter what. No matter if I go down. You have to stay standing after all this.”

“I can't promise that.”

“Bryan and Hector deserve to have you a little longer. Your pack deserves that. After all you've done to protect them. You can finally have peace after this.”

“I will find you.”

I shook my head.“If I need to, if you need me,I'll find you.”

Logan kissed my head again before letting me go. He balled his fists up at his side when he stepped back. Nodding, I watched him stride off in the direction that Hector left. Picking up my bag, I headed straight through the camp. I did turn some heads, especially since I had forgone the blindfold today but I wasn't in the mood to hide. Not when I knew there was a very high possibility of me dying.

It took me about ten minutes but I made it to the territory edge. The camp stopped about 75 feet away from the actual line. I put my bag down and got down on one knee. My hands pressed down against the ground and I listened. I could feel the vibrations of the camp behind me but I could also feel how far the other camp was.

The trees behind me were what I knew but I never ventured past the territory when I would run with Bryan or Hector.I had run the patrol trails but never further.I stood and slammed my foot down with as much strength and watched as the sound reverberated and I could see the silhouettes of the trees. They weren't as dense and just further out, there was a large clearing.I sighed.

“Luna.”

I turned my head.“Captain Everett, I'm not to be called Luna.Astra is fine.”

“You say that but here you are on the front lines of a war on our territory.”

I rolled my eyes.“What's up? Aren't you supposed to be meeting with Alpha? You shouldn't even be out this far.”

“Hector said you needed a cannon.”

I paused for a moment before bursting out laughing.“How far you think you could launch me?” He came closer and grabbed me by my shoulders, easily lifting me off the ground.“If you take a running start, I would say pretty damn far.”

I shook my head.“It would require you to be right in the front though, to make the best use of the distance.”

“I'm not stuck in one position.I can move back after.”

I bit my lip.It would be funny as hell.“Alright. When we begin, I'll find you.”I smiled.

“Luna?”

“Captain.”I growled.

“Leave some for me.”

I shook my head and patted him on the arm.“No promises.”

He left to go back to the camp and I pulled out a pack of cigarettes and a lighter from the other side of my armor.I lit one, staring off into the direction of the enemy camp. That's when I noticed someone headed towards me.I looked back but no one seemed to catch it. I walked over the territory line and towards the figure. We stopped about 15ft away from each other.As I got closer, I knew exactly who it was. I took a drag of my cigarette.

“Max.”

+30 BONUS

“Auri, I had hoped you weren't going to show up.”

“Why? Thought I might kill you?”

He sighed.“No, I just didn't want you to get hurt.

I tapped my eyes, the Nova I knew was showing him the galaxy.“I don't feel anything.”

You're alive, that's what matters.I don't regret my choice.”

I sighed and pulled out another cigarette, lighting the new one with the old butt before I stamped the old one out.“Max,I'm dying.”

“Auri, you can make it through . . . ”

“No Max, I'm dying. The moment I'm off Nova for a couple weeks, I'll die. The healing potions have been compounding in my body.I don't know if I healed wrong or what but that last one Micah gave me did something.”

He strode towards me, closed the distance in seconds.“What do you mean?”

Blood, throw it up if it gets bad enough. I'm dying.The Nova freezes whatever damage but even the few house off it are rough.”

“Then take the Nova, Auri.Just do what you're doing now.”

I shook my head.“It's not living.Max.I feel physical pain but I don't feel emotions.I don't want to keep losing myself. To one day not even know what it means to be a person anymore.”I looked up at him.“Literally going back to being little bird.”

Max dropped to his knees.“All this time . . . . ”

“You should have let me go. I was begging you to let me go but you had to choose a long and painful death for me instead.You had to leave and destroy what little I had left.”I threw down my cigarette and ground it into the dirt.

“I couldn't watch you die Auri!”

“Are you looking at me now Max?” My words were bitter.“You're watching me die right now. Micah is going to die on that battlefield and I pray to the goddess that you aren't next to him when it happens.”

I started to turn but he grabbed my hand and pulled me to him.He buried his head in my chest and wrapped his arms around me.

“I'm sorry.”

I looked down at Max. Putting my hand on his head, I combed through his hair a few times. It had gotten long. He started to shake and I squatted down. I put my finger under his chin and lifted his face up.

“You know I've already forgiven you even if there is still a taste of bitterness. I loved you Max. Nova makes me not feel it but when it recedes I know I still feel love for you. Micah spoke to me after you left, saying that it was his final revenge against me. Max, he used you to break me again and Micah knew it he got me.”I could feel the tears on his cheeks as I stroked them with my thumb.“You fell into his hands because of me. He was after me, not you. He still molded me into this.into Astra. He will pay and he will die for it. Then I will unmake what he's done.”

“What it.”

I shook my head.

“Auri.” He pulled me to him and I nearly fell.But he held onto me, my head on his shoulder.

“Contact Morgan for me, once this is done.I almost killed him when he came into the territory. I would be sad if you both went through the rest of eternity not as friends. It wouldn't matter at that point about me.”I pushed myself away from him.

“After what he did? Never.”He growled.

“If you remember, I was the one who stabbed myself. I ignored your protocol warning.I saved your ass.”I smiled.“So suck it up for me.”

I stood and I could hear a few people who were gathering at the territory line.

“Go back Max. I better not find you on the battlefield next to him.If you do, I'll assume you've taken his side.”I started to walk away but I picked up the two butts in the ground.I stuck them into my shoelaces to throw away later.

“Auri,wait!”

I still walked away from Max, leaving him on the ground. He didn't come after me. It didn't take me long to cross back into the pack territory.

“Everything okay?” Captain Lila walked over to me.

“Yeah.”I nodded, looking back at the new empty space.“You can tell Alpha that Astra was meeting with her ex.”Chuckling, I winked at her. “That will get his panties in a bunch.”

She giggled and then went silent for a minute.” He's on his way.”

I barked a laugh.“Tell him to sit his ass back down.I took care of it. I don't need him.”

She nodded and waited another minute.“He said fine but don't do it again.”

I rolled my eyes.“Men.” I've about had it up to my eyeballs with them.”

She laughed.“I know what you mean. My mate thought I would just give up being a captain to produce pups with him.”Lila shook her head.” Jokes on him, he's back with our pup while I'm here.”

I laughed and patted her on the back.“Glad to have you, Captain.”

“You too Luna.”

“Both you and Everette, I'm going to kick you for calling me that.”

“You will always be our Luna. You've proven yourself more times that any of us. Even now.” She nodded to me as she walked away, dispersing the people who had gathered. I plopped down on the ground and pulled out another cigarette.I faced the empty forest, trying to memorize the tree placements as far as my waves of sounds would go.

Just as I finished my second one, Logan came up next to me. He squatted down, staring at me intensely.

“You have other things to do Alpha than stare at a rogue sitting on the edge of your territory.”

“Max is over there?”

Inodded.“Of course he is. He's probably the right hand of Micah by now. I told him he'd better not be there next to him when my hands snuff out Micah's life.”I wrinkled my nose.

“You okay?”

I scoffed.“Logan, I'm on Nova. I don't feel anything.”

“Yet your sitting here, smoking on what looks to be your fourth?”

“Look, I'm impatient.I can feel that. Feel being so close. I've also simultaneously have a crew breaking into a BloodHunter building to steal information. So I'm a little wired.”

“You hear back from them yet?”

I shook my head.“I won't hear back probably till next week.”

“Need anything from me?”

“Go be Alpha.Quit bothering this rogue.”I smiled at him

He stood up, but not without leaning down and kissing my head.“I'll have Captain Lila add you to her food and housing. Since your in her section of the camp.”

“You don't have to. I probably won't sleep.”

“At lease have some food, okay?” He sounded off. 1

I leaned back and looked up at his tall figure. Why do you sound so sad?”

“Sometimes I feel so useless to you.”

“Logan.”

I watched him shake his head.“I need to keep moving. Try to get some rest.” He walked away from me and I sighed.

“Men.”I mumbled, lighting number three.