

Broken by One, Desired by All

C - 3

Zane's Point Of View

My lungs burned. The cold air bit into me with every inhale, and the only sound louder than the beat of my heart was the chaotic rustling of leaves behind me... footsteps. Dozens of them. Fast. Determined. Unforgiving.

I didn't dare look back.

But then... crack.

Pain exploded in my leg as something sharp and hard struck behind my knee. I crumpled forward with a gasp, hitting the earth with a heavy thud. My satchel flung from my shoulder, spilling its meager contents across the dirt like my scattered hopes.

"No... no" I hissed through clenched teeth, trying to rise. But another boot slammed into my ribs, forcing a scream out of me. A second. A third. A fourth.

The footsteps stopped. The woods held their breath.

Laughter broke the silence.

Rough hands grabbed my arms and yanked me to my knees. My eyes were barely open, vision swimming with tears and blood, when I croaked out, "Who... who are you?"

The one gripping my collar leaned in, his breath sour with bloodlust. "Thought you could run, Omega bitch?"

I spit in his face.

He punched me. Hard. My head snapped sideways. I tasted blood. "Still got fight in you?" another sneered, slamming his knee into my gut.

I doubled over, coughing, but didn't drop. I wouldn't give them that. But it didn't matter. They kept coming.

Fists rained down... across my ribs, my face, my back. I fought back, teeth bared, clawing, kicking, but there were too many. One pulled a silver knife, dragging it across my arm just deep enough to make me scream.

I collapsed to my knees.

"Why?" I gasped, choking on blood and rage. "Who sent you? What the fuck do you want?!"

That's when I heard her.

"Well, well," came the syrupy drawl. "Still breathing? I told them you'd be a cockroach, hard to kill and too pathetic to matter."

I lifted my head slowly... and there she was.

Lily.

Her golden curls were perfectly arranged, her velvet green dress far too elegant for the hunt she had orchestrated. A cruel smile curled her lips as she stepped closer, crouching just enough to meet my bloodied gaze.

"You...?" My voice was hoarse. "Why...?"

She let out a breathy laugh. "You really are dumb, aren't you? Of course it was me. I told Ash's father the exact time and place. I made sure he caught you both in the act."

My chest tightened.

"I knew the only thing standing in my way was you." She leaned closer, voice low and sharp. "Ash was... obsessed. Maybe not in love, but enough to be stupid. I couldn't have that. So I took care of it."

I looked into her eyes. There was no remorse. No hesitation. Just ambition.

"You're a threat," she said simply. "And I don't like threats. Not when I've worked this hard to get where I am."

I stared at her, panting. "So what? You're going to kill me? To protect your crown?" She laughed. It was cruel and elegant, a sound that didn't belong out here among blood and dirt.

"Oh, darling," she whispered, leaning closer. "I'm not just protecting my marriage. I'm climbing. Step by bloody step. Until I have power no Luna has ever wielded. And you? You're a loose end. A very dangerous one."

She continued, rising to her full height again, hands clasped delicately in front of her. "Now, Ash is mine. Future Alpha. And me? Future Luna. Soon, I'll be attending the Magic Academy, where only the most powerful are chosen. But I had to clean up this... mess first."

"You won't get away with this," I rasped, coughing up blood. "Ash... he knows..."

“Ash?” She laughed again, louder this time, tilting her head back. “Oh, darling. Ash doesn’t care. He doesn’t even look for you. He didn’t stop them from locking you away. He didn’t stop them from beating you. You’re nothing to him now.”

I shook my head slowly, aching with disbelief. “He... he loved me.”

“No,” she said simply. “He used you. And now you’re inconvenient. So...” She turned to the masked men surrounding us.

“Kill him.”

Panic surged through me. “Wait! Please...” But they were already on me. One grabbed my arm, twisting it behind my back until I heard the unmistakable pop. I screamed.

“Please!” I sobbed. “Stop! Please, I’m begging you”

“Not here,” Lily said coolly. “Dump his corpse outside the borders. Let the rogues finish the job. Or the wolves. Or the elements. I don’t care. I just don’t want to see his face ever again.”

The wolf holding the blade sneered and stepped forward.

“No more waiting,” he growled. “Say goodbye, Omega whore.”

He raised the knife high.

And then, the air cracked.

It lifted. Floated.

“What the fuck?” one of the wolves muttered, stepping back.

Light exploded from the watch. Not soft. Not warm.

Blinding.

White-hot. Like a star detonating in the palm of the earth.

The wolves screamed, shielding their eyes. The clearing lit up like day. Trees bent backward. Dust whipped into a frenzy. My body... my broken, battered body, felt like it was weightless, floating inside something... otherworldly.

The watch spun faster and faster, its surface glowing with golden veins. A thin, circular sigil burned into the earth beneath me, ancient runes spiraling outward like a magic circle only the gods could read.

“Stop it!” Lily screamed over the wind. “Break it! BREAK IT!”

But no one could move. They were frozen in place. Paralyzed. The light surged again. I could feel it flowing through me.

And then... nothing. The world tilted sideways. The cold disappeared.

And then... Darkness.