

09~ You Finally Heard Me

Zane's Point Of View

Pain shot through me first.

Not the sharp, clean kind of pain. Not the kind that warned of danger and then retreated. This was different. This was tearing. Like I was being shredded from the inside out. Like my bones didn't fit right beneath my skin anymore.

I gasped, collapsing forward, reaching blindly for him.

"Ronan..." My voice broke, cracked apart like glass underfoot, "please..." But Ronan shoved me back as if I'd burned him.

As if I was the mistake.

As if he hadn't been the one to taste my blood, kiss me like he wanted to devour every piece of me.

He didn't even look at me.

Just turned. Shoulders stiff. Jaw tight. Golden eyes burning with everything he refused to say, and then he was walking away.

Gone.

Abandoning me again.

My hands clenched at the air like maybe, if I reached far enough, I could stop him. Hold him. Beg. But even through the blinding pain, pride still burned in my chest like a second heartbeat.

I wouldn't crawl after him.



But God, I wanted to.

The heat in my veins twisted cruelly. My heart kicked painfully against my ribs, out of rhythm, wrong. I could feel something happening beneath my skin, bones twitching, joints aching, like my very body was arguing with itself.

The bond.

It was reacting. Responding to the cruel, twisted half of a connection that was now tearing itself apart with Ronan's rejection.

I tried to breathe. Failed.

The edges of my vision blurred, dark shadows curling in from all sides like smoke.

I was going to die like this. Not in battle. Not fighting. Not even from the scars of what they'd done to me before.

No. I was going to die wanting.

Pathetic.

The last thing I saw before the darkness claimed me... was someone moving toward me. A shadow. A figure stepping through the mist curling around my vision.

Not Ronan.

Someone else.

Softness.



The next time I opened my eyes, I was drowning in softness.

Warmth. Gentle fabrics. Silken sheets under my fingertips. A faint herbal scent hung in the air, clean, comforting, expensive.

Definitely not the infirmary. Not a cell. Not the dirt of some alley where they'd leave a corpse like mine to rot. I blinked slowly, chest still aching, breath ragged.

"Zane."

His voice pulled me fully back, threading through the fog in my skull like silk dragged across raw skin.

Miles.

He sat in a chair beside the bed, beside me, his usually sharp features softened with worry. For once, he wasn't wearing that perfectly rehearsed smirk, wasn't looking at me like I was a puzzle to be solved or a tool to be used.

Just... watching.

Present.

His hand hovered near my shoulder like he wanted to touch but wasn't sure if I'd break. "You're alright," he said, low, steady. "You're safe now."

Safe.

I didn't know if I believed that word anymore.

I shifted slightly, flinching as dull aches rippled through my limbs, like bruises forming on my bones instead of my skin.



"L..." My throat felt like sandpaper. "What happened?"

Miles exhaled slowly. "You were collapsing. Half-conscious."

I stared up at the ceiling, fury, shame, and hollow emptiness warring in my chest.

"I thought I was going to die," I whispered. "I wanted to die."

"Don't," Miles said sharply, surprising me. His fingers twitched once on the edge of the bed. "Don't talk like that. Not here."

"Where is here?"

He hesitated only a second. "My quarters."

That got my attention.

I blinked at him, realization slow but sharp. "You brought me to your room?"

He nodded, gaze unwavering now. "No one else will disturb you here. No guards. No nosy instructors. Not even Ronan."

My stomach twisted at the sound of that name, but Miles didn't stop there.

"This is my room," he continued firmly. "And while you're here... you're safe."

I opened my mouth to speak, to say something, anything about what just happened with Ronan... the humiliation, the heat, the rejection, but the words tangled, sharp and raw on my tongue.

Then, I heard it.



'You're not going to die,' a soft voice murmured in the back of my mind, low and steady like an echo in a long-forgotten canyon.

I flinched, heart seizing in my chest. I scrambled upright despite the aches pulling through my body. My eyes darted around the room, wild, searching for the source, but the voice hadn't come from the room.

It had come from inside me.

Finally... the voice whispered again, this time softer, tinged with amusement. 'You finally heard me.' Breath caught in my throat. "Wh-what the hell..."

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