

Defy 571

Chapter 571: Crazy King

For a moment, there was silence. Elijah stared at Dominic intensely, his face so blank and unreadable that Dominic began to question why he had come here in the first place.

The heavy stillness gnawed at him until, just as he was about to speak, Elijah suddenly burst into laughter. It was a long, hysterical sound that needed no explanation, the kind of laughter that told Dominic without words exactly what he was: a fool.

And just like that, it destroyed whatever courage he thought he had brought with him.

"I mean, come on," Elijah said, lounging back and clearly enjoying this, "you've been planning this for a while. That means you didn't need my permission at all."

Dominic's frown deepened. Elijah's words were ambiguous, leaving Dominic unsure if the king was mocking him or secretly on his side.

"Your Majesty, I would never dare!" Dominic dropped his head even lower, his voice shaky. "Asher is your heir. I would never make such a move without your explicit order."

"So, in one word..." Elijah said slowly, as if savoring it, "you want me to turn a blind eye while you murder my heir."

Dominic swallowed, but pressed on. "Accidents do happen, Your Majesty," he said carefully, his words laced with meaning. "Undoubtedly, you'd have to investigate the accident to appease the people. All I'm asking is that you ensure it isn't traced back to me."

Elijah's expression shifted, the puzzle finally falling into place. His lips curved in dark amusement. "Ah, you want me to provide them with a scapegoat." A chortle slipped past his throat as he fixed Dominic with a predatory stare.

Dominic didn't speak, but the glint in his eyes was all the confirmation the Alpha king needed.

"You have quite the nerve," Elijah said, his voice dropping to a cold, menacing edge, "coming to me with such a wicked idea, Beta Dominic. I could have you killed on the spot for even suggesting such treachery against my heir."

"A heir that is a thorn in your side," Dominic countered, peering up from his position on the floor. "You know what Alpha Henry was, Your Majesty. And now, his son seeks to rule. Unfortunately, the apple does not fall far from the tree."

He straightened slightly, desperation and defiance in his eyes. "We, the West Pack, do not want him. And that is why we've come to you for help."

"And who exactly do the West Pack members want as Alpha? You?" Elijah mocked. "The one who dreams of being crowned Alpha without even putting up a fight?"

Dominic's face burned with embarrassment, but he forced himself to go on.

"I am confident of winning. However, Asher Nightshade has been known to have a few tricks up his sleeve. We are simply trying to ensure there are no loose ends."

He added, "Besides, there would be far fewer resources spent if father and son were buried on the same day."

"Damn," Elijah said, feigning horror. "I mean, I'm no saint, but I have to admit that is one sinister plan."

"Your Majesty," Dominic said tightly, his tone clipped, inwardly seething at Elijah's endless taunting. "If I am made Alpha, the West Pack's resources will be yours. I would never resist your authority, not like Henry did. Together, we could work better. Far better."

"Until you come gunning for my throne next," Elijah said coldly.

"Your Majesty, I would never—"

"Power is addicting, Beta Dominic." Elijah emphasized his title, his fingers brushing the golden lion ring. "You gave me a golden lion for the West Pack. Who's to say you won't offer a golden dragon for my throne?"

He leaned forward, his voice now dangerously low. "You think I care for the petty games played in the West Pack, but I don't. My battlefield is much larger." His eyes were amber now, flashing with the anger of his wolf, "And you dare suggest I sacrifice my greatest ace, Asher Nightshade?"

Dominic's throat went dry. "No, I... Your Majesty..." he stammered, his words tumbling over each other. In that moment, he realized just how foolish his plan had been.

He had thought Elijah didn't care about the cardinal alphas. And he was right, Elijah didn't care about them as people. But he cared about power. The existence of the cardinal alphas infuriated him, yet he needed them.

The wolves were still recovering, their numbers fragile and the bloodlines diluted, while humans grew stronger every year. Elijah wasn't about to risk losing the only weapons—the cardinal alphas—that could secure the future of the wolves should a second Great War happen.

"Forgive me, Your Majesty!" Dominic was smart enough to back down when the situation called for it. He bowed deeply, his voice trembling. "I must have lost my mind even thinking such a thing."

"Nah," Elijah drawled lazily, waving a hand, "you didn't lose your mind. You were just greedy. But don't worry, since you gifted me the lion, which I like, your sins are forgiven."

Dominic's mouth fell open, speechless.

What kind of king was this?

Still, he swallowed his pride and took the lifeline Elijah had given him.

"Thank you! Thank you, Your Majesty," Dominic gushed, bowing repeatedly. "Since that's the case, I'll pretend this conversation never happened. You are truly a magnanimous king!"

Elijah rolled his eyes. "I believe this conversation is over."

"Ah—yes!" Dominic scrambled to his feet. "Thank you, Your Majesty!" he said once more, but Elijah wasn't even looking at him anymore, fully absorbed in admiring his new ring.

The instant Dominic stepped through the door and it shut behind him, his expression hardened coldly. He was furious.

This was an epic fail. To think he had put his faith in that dumb king!

Dominic had no choice at this point. Tomorrow, he will win by any means necessary. His life was on the line now.

"Keep an eye on him," Elijah instructed Christian. "Cockroaches like him never rest until they meet their ultimate demise."

"As you wish, Your Majesty," Christian replied, bowing his head in obedience.

Then, as if recalling something important, Elijah added, "Ah, yes... now, what were you telling me again about my lovely niece, Violet...?"

Chapter 572: Elijah's Intention

"Griffin Hale and Violet Purple are in the North pack," Christian reported to him.

Elijah's eyes narrowed. "Go on."

"It took a lot of confirming on my side," Christian continued, "but it's true. Violet is now mated to Alaric Storm. She currently bears three bonds with your heirs."

"Impossible!" Elijah shot to his feet, shocked. "That can't be."

"I know, Your Majesty," Christian said quickly. "I could hardly believe it myself. But it has been verified. Some members of the pack were present when it happened."

Apparently, Zara Storm opposed Violet and clashed with Alaric over her. I don't have all the details yet, but from what I've gathered, they personally witnessed the mating process, and saw the rune appear on Violet's body with their own eyes."

Elijah didn't show even a trace of emotion at the news that his heir and Violet had mated in front of the North pack. No, they could mate in front of the entire world and he wouldn't so much as blink.

What truly stunned him was the third bond.

A freaking third bond.

No one in the entire history of werewolves had ever possessed three bonds. This wasn't just rare — it was an abnormality. Where others foolishly called it a blessing, Elijah saw it for what it was: something dangerous. Whether this anomaly would ultimately benefit him or destroy everything he'd built, he couldn't say yet.

Slowly, Elijah sat back in his seat. His earlier agitation vanished, and was replaced by a calculated calm as he stroked his jaw, deeply in thought. "So Violet Purple is collecting my heirs, one after the other."

"That seems to be the case, Your Majesty," Christian replied carefully.

Elijah's gaze sharpened. "Have you found anything about her mother? Who is she? What is she?" he emphasized.

Christian swallowed. "I'm afraid, Your Majesty, I have no clue. Your brother, Angus, has always kept a low profile since his disgrace, and Violet's mother even worse. It's as if she literally doesn't exist."

He continued. "My sources say there isn't a single trace of Violet's DNA within reach. Even at her previous school, when they conducted mandatory health checkups, her blood caused complications. According to their report, Violet's blood spoiled almost instantly after being drawn. It branded her a freak, and eventually, they gave up trying. They had no choice but to leave her alone."

"A creature whose blood spoils the moment it's drawn?" Elijah murmured, thinking. "Definitely not a werewolf. Perhaps a witch? Her blood could have been spelled, hidden so it can't be traced."

"The boys must know," Christian pointed out. "Relationships that tight are built on shared secrets. Secrets they know you should never discover."

Elijah's lips thinned. "Griffin, Roman, and Alaric would never speak. Not when they see me as a threat to her. As her mates, they'd protect her at any cost. That leaves only Asher. But Asher—"

"Would never utter a word," Christian finished, the words slipping out before he could stop them. Realizing his mistake, he quickly bowed his head. "Forgive me, Your Majesty."

"You're right," Elijah said, brushing off the apology with ease. "Asher would keep his silence, even with a knife at his throat. And if my memory serves me, he once had a relationship with Violet himself." His eyes gleamed dangerously. "Something tells me she's not done collecting my heirs. Asher is next."

Christian asked with anticipation. "What would you have me do, Your Majesty?"

"Tell the men not to make a move," Elijah ordered. "Just keep watch. Report every detail of their movements to me. If Asher is to be mated next, they'll return to the West pack soon enough." A cold smile touched his lips. "And when they do, we'll have ourselves one big family reunion."

"What would you do, Your Majesty?" Christian asked, burning with curiosity. "Would you kill Violet Purple?"

Elijah's lips formed what wasn't quite a smile. "Depends on whose side she stands on, mine or Angus's. That will decide her fate. Until then, she needs to learn some discipline. Also, about Caspian..."

Earlier that evening, Caspian had excused himself, claiming a family emergency that required his immediate return to the North pack.

Elijah said, "The North has always been secretive with their actions, and Caspian is a spineless fool, completely under the thumb of his wife. I want every detail about the confrontation between Zara and Violet. Find out what happened, Christian. Leave nothing uncovered."

"Of course, Your Majesty. I'll get to the bottom of it," he promised with determination.

"Good. That will be all for now," Elijah said, rising to his feet. He staggered slightly, perhaps from the excess wine or the sheer weight of responsibility pressing down on his shoulders.

"Do you need help, Your Majesty?" Christian offered, but the glare Elijah sent his way was enough to shut him up immediately.

If there was anything Elijah despised, it was even the smallest sign of weakness.

"Have a good night, Your Majesty," Christian said instead, bowing his head respectfully.

Without another word, Elijah sauntered into his bedroom. Once inside, he removed the golden ring and placed it carefully in its case. He peeled off his clothes and stepped into the bathroom, letting the warm water wash over him as he bathed.

One would think that after such a long day, sleep would come easily. But when Elijah returned to his bed, it didn't. Instead he turned and tossed for a while until he couldn't take it anymore.

Elijah pulled out his phone and placed a call to his wife, Beatrice.

Would she even be awake? Most of all, would she even pick up?

Deep down, he knew he had been an asshole, especially to her. No wonder she hadn't bothered traveling with him, knowing they'd only end up fighting.

The phone rang, each second stretching painfully, and just when it seemed she wouldn't answer, her sleepy voice cracked through the line.

"Hello...?"

Elijah froze. What was he even going to say? Why had he called her in the first place? All he knew was that he felt like talking to someone, and she was the only person who came to mind.

Technically, she was the only one he had.

He cleared his throat. "Hello?"

Elijah heard soft ruffling on the other end, guessed she was sitting up.

"Sorry for interrupting your sleep," he said.

"I'm up anyway," Beatrice replied, her voice steady as she fully woke. "Tell me then, what did you do this time?"

Elijah's brows lifted in surprise. "You think quite highly of your husband," he said with dry sarcasm.

"You're calling at two in the night, your majesty. Either you've done something really stupid and need validation for your actions, or..." she trailed off knowingly.

He was supposed to feel insulted, but instead, Elijah found himself sinking deeper into his bed, oddly at ease.

"I haven't killed anyone," he said lightly. Then added with dark humor, "Although someone's likely to die tomorrow. But hurrah, not by my hands."

"That is kind of encouraging," Beatrice said dryly. "Tell me more."

And just like that, Elijah found himself actually enjoying the conversation with his wife for the first time in a very long while.

Chapter 573: Dominic's Secret

"Beta Dominic was just spotted leaving Elijah's quarters, and from the look on his face, he didn't look happy," Jeremiah reported, handing a phone to Asher.

Asher Nightshade took the phone, his lips curving sardonically at the secret shot of his father's ambitious beta storming out of the Alpha King's room.

"I guess his cowardly little plan didn't go well," Asher mocked, handing the phone back to Jeremiah.

"Obviously," Jeremiah said. "That didn't look like a happy face to me."

Asher moved calmly and perched himself on the edge of his desk, his long legs stretched out casually in front of him. "Elijah might be an asshole, but he's a shrewd piece of shit," he said coolly. "He hates my guts, but he also needs me. Dominic's biggest mistake was not realizing Elijah has trust issues. If Dominic is bold enough to plot my death, Elijah knows he'd have no problem plotting his own king's death when the opportunity comes."

Asher's hand reached for the chessboard set up beside him. His fingers closed around the black king piece.

"After all," he continued darkly, "becoming Alpha of the West Pack is just one move closer to the Alpha King's throne."

With a flick of his wrist, Asher knocked the white king to its side. His eyes gleamed with dangerous satisfaction.

"Checkmate."

Asher rose up. "What about the other matter I asked you about? Did you find out anything?"

"It was short notice," Jeremiah admitted, reaching into his coat, "but I did find out some things. And, Alpha, you're not going to like it." He handed Asher a large brown envelope.

Asher took it without a word, ripping it open. Inside were photographs, receipts, and documents, which he fanned out across the table, his slitted grey eyes narrowing as he scanned the evidence.

Jeremiah began explaining, "Dominic has been siphoning pack resources for years. Not just simple theft, I'm talking about funds meant for rebuilding villages after rogue attacks, supplies for orphaned pups, medicines for the sick, all of it disappearing into his pockets. While everyone else was struggling, he was living like a king behind your father's back."

Asher's jaw clenched as he flipped through the photo and paper evidence. While Henry was busy forcing women into submission, making his own life miserable, and obsessing over his precious reputation, he didn't even see his own beta bleeding him dry.

"And it gets worse from here," Jeremiah continued. "He's neck-deep in the black market. This isn't just smuggling weapons or silver contraband. Dominic's been running an underground network with Alpha Marlow...." He paused, his eyes filled with disgust, "They operate like loan sharks. Families in debt come to them for help, thinking they'll save them. But when they can't pay back the interest, which is nearly impossible, their children are taken as 'collateral.'"

Asher froze, his eyes snapping up from the documents. "Collateral?" His voice was deadly calm now.

Jeremiah nodded grimly. "The children are given to wealthy humans with twisted appetites to indulge, and violate them. Some of those kids are barely past their first shift, Alpha."

The papers crumbled under Asher's hands when he fisted his hand. "How," he growled, "the fuck did I not know about this?"

He was so fucking furious!

Jeremiah said. "Because Alpha Henry didn't care. He only cared about power, and the pack's image. As long as the West Pack looked strong and he stayed at the top, the wellbeing of the people didn't matter to him. He practically gave Dominic free rein to run his things."

Asher laughed bitterly, the sound devoid of humor. "And that's why the other Alphas want him to take my father's place. If Dominic becomes Alpha, they can keep their filthy business running without fear of exposure."

He added under his breath. "No wonder that pig Marlow has so many concubines than he can handle."

Jeremiah said. "There wasn't enough time to investigate the rest of the alphas but I'm sure I'll find one or two dirt on them. Most of all, since Dominic can't destroy you now, he'll make sure your head rolls tomorrow. Your death will clear his path completely."

The fury slowly vanished and a dangerous smile spread across Asher's face.

"Oh, don't worry," he said, his eyes sparking with a wicked idea. "I'll make it easier for him."

"Do not underestimate him, Alpha."

"Who said I was underestimating him?" Asher replied, "On the contrary, it seems my reign would be a bloody one. I would need to do a thorough cleansing."

Although that was a necessary one yet Jeremiah still swallowed at the thought of the violence to come. It seemed the West Pack was about to descend into turmoil, and the coming months would be anything but peaceful.

"If Dominic has his hands in the black market, then I have to be prepared for anything." Asher instructed him. "Keep a careful eye on him tonight. I want to know everyone who steps in or out of his room, where he goes, who he talks to."

Jeremiah nodded, listening intently as Asher went on.

"And don't just focus on him. I want reports on the other Alphas of the West pack as well. If there's a secret meeting tonight, I need to know about it before they even finish their first toast. I want to have the leverage to crush him publicly tomorrow."

"Yes, Alpha." Jeremiah bowed his head slightly. But then he hesitated, glancing at Asher with concern. "And what about you?"

Asher's brows drew together. "What do you mean, what about me?"

Jeremiah took a breath, then said plainly, "You need rest."

A humorless laugh escaped Asher. "Rest? This is a critical period, Jeremiah. If I take my eyes off them even for a moment, it could cost me the West pack. There's no room for sleep. Go and fulfill your task."

Jeremiah turned to leave, his footsteps brisk, however, he stopped after a few steps. Slowly, he came back, his jaw set in defiance.

"That's exactly why you need to rest," Jeremiah said firmly. "You're not a machine, Alpha Asher. That mind of yours needs to be sharp, not clouded with exhaustion. If you want to defeat the sharks circling for your head tomorrow, you need to walk into that arena at full capacity. Not like this."

Asher blinked at him, caught off guard. He opened his mouth to respond only for the door to swing open with a creak.

The both of them watched as Roman casually strolled in with a pillow tucked under one of his arms.

"Don't worry about that," Roman announced. "I'll handle it."

Asher let out a groan. He did not sign up for Roman's hassle tonight. Unlike him, his beta was absolutely delighted.

"Oh, thank God," Jeremiah said as if it was good news. "I'll set up security and make sure not even a cockroach steps into this room tonight."

While Jeremiah continued discussing security, Roman slipped into the adjoining room where the bedroom was and casually tossed his pillow onto the bed.

Roman had expected that by the time he returned, Asher would at least be preparing for bed. Instead, he found him seated at the desk, hunched over his father's computer.

Roman came to stand before him with a frown. "Why the hell are you not in bed yet?"

Asher didn't even look up. "Just thirty more minutes," he muttered distracted. "I just need to—"

He didn't finish because Roman's hand came down hard, slamming the laptop shut with a force that made Asher jerk back in surprise.

"I was —!" Asher was about to raise his voice when he noticed a sudden change in Roman's demeanor that set his instincts on edge.

"What's up with you?" Asher demanded, narrowing his eyes.

But Roman didn't answer right away. Instead, he stepped closer with such intense focus that Asher found himself instinctively leaning back until the edge of the desk dug into his lower back.

Then Roman leaned in, his face stopping just inches from Asher's, close enough that he could feel the heat of his breath. The move was so unexpectedly seductive and intimate that Asher froze, utterly weirded out and flustered.

"Roman..." Asher's voice came out low, tight. "What the hell are you doing?"

Roman's tone dropped to something dark and serious, almost dangerous as he murmured, "I'm kind of horny right now. So either we go to bed peacefully, or you'll be taking Violet's place in my life."

The implication sank in immediately.

Asher's eyes widened, and his brain supplied a very clear image of exactly what Roman meant.

"You're disgusting" he cursed under his breath, his entire body jerking upright as he bolted away like a startled cat.

Roman burst into laughter, throwing his head back as he watched Asher rush into the bedroom, about to slam the door shut.

"No, don't do that. Wait for me, darling!" Roman rushed after him while laughing his guts out.

But Asher shut the door right in his face, cursing him six ways to hell. How was he friends with this idiot?

Chapter 574: Asher Will Die

"You do know this is madness," Roman said wryly, watching as Asher drew a small amount of his venom into a syringe.

"It's called mithridatism," Asher answered with sass. "A very solid backup plan." Without hesitation, he jabbed the needle into his arm and pushed the plunger.

Roman flinched as if he too felt the sting. "I might not know all your science crap, but I do know how my venom works, mister. And all I can tell you is that you're taking a huge risk here."

He watched with mounting anxiety as Asher leaned back on the bed with a groan, his breath hitching as his heartbeat began to race.

Roman's venom paralyzes upon contact, but when ingested into the body, it followed a predictable timeline:

For the first five minutes, one would experience a burning sensation, rapid heartbeat, and intense dizziness.

Then the five to fifteen minutes, there would be violent muscle spasms, temporary blindness, and total loss of limb control.

From the next fifteen to thirty minutes, the victim's organs would shut down, while experiencing agony so severe it drove him into a coma.

And finally, after thirty minutes, it was death by cardiac arrest as the nervous system collapsed.

From the day Roman arrived at the West Pack, he had been reluctantly supplying Asher with venom. Of course, he'd tried to discourage him, but this was Asher they were talking about. No one could change his mind once it was made up. Well, no one but Violet.

Asher was microdosing in small, controlled amounts over time, forcing his body to produce specialized antibodies. These neutralized the venom before it could spread, gradually building immunity.

The danger, however, was immense.

If the dose was even slightly too high, the venom would overwhelm his system and kill him long before his body had a chance to adapt. Thankfully, Asher was a smart, lucky bastard.

However, this wasn't a permanent solution either. Since Roman's venom was organic, it evolved with him. His body could subtly change its composition without his conscious control, meaning even a fully immune Asher could still be caught off guard if the venom mutated.

So to stay protected, Asher had to keep taking fresh doses, or his antibodies would become outdated.

"Are you timing me?" Asher asked with a hoarse voice, breathing heavily. His skin had lost its color, sweat breaking out across his forehead.

Roman's lips twisted sardonically. "Of course. How could I miss timing your grand descent into glory?"

"Sadist," Asher called him through gritted teeth.

"Masochist," Roman fired back smoothly, never looking away from his phone's timer.

His expression hardened as he watched the seconds tick by. "Four minutes," he announced, counting down as if sheer willpower alone would keep Asher alive.

Then Asher's body jerked violently, his muscles seizing under his own skin. His pupils blew wide before rolling back, leaving only the whites visible. His breathing hitched and turned to desperate, shallow gasps.

"Asher...?" Roman was anxious now. Although this was not the first time he had witnessed this, it still didn't make it any easier to watch. If anything went wrong tonight, there would be no undoing it.

"W-wait..." Asher rasped, dragging in a ragged inhale that rattled in his chest. Then, as quickly as the spasms had begun, his body went slack. His pupils came back into focus, and his breathing evened out.

Roman exhaled, only now realizing he'd been holding his breath. "Five minutes on the dot," he said, one part relieved and impressed at the same time. "You did it."

Without a word, Asher dragged himself upright, drenched in sweat. He reached for the bottle of Roman's venom, flicked out his black claws, and dipped them into the liquid. Aside from a biting numbness, there was no trace of the usual paralyzing effect.

A huge grin spread across his face. "It worked."

"Congratulations," Roman said, the edge in his tone unmistakable.

Asher looked up at him. "What?"

Roman's jaw tightened. "When I gave you my venom, the plan was to use it on your traitorous alphas, not on yourself. That was the whole point."

"Why?" Asher teased, tilting his head. "Scared that your venom won't work on me anymore?"

Roman's eyes flashed with fury. His voice rose, "My venom isn't static. All my body has to do is evolve, and you're—"

"The venom is for Dominic," Asher cut him off. "Dominic is more experienced than me. However, I'm an Alpha by birth. I'm stronger. He knows that. And that's why he'll try to squash any possibility of me winning tomorrow."

Asher continued, "Jeremiah found out that Dominic dabbles in the black market. When I went into Patricia's head, I saw things that convinced me he has something up his sleeve for tomorrow's match."

Roman's eyes narrowed. "So the venom—"

"—Will give me a narrow victory," Asher finished, staring at his now dried claws. "At least, I hope so." He looked up at Roman, his voice quieter now. "If anything happens to me tomorrow—"

"Nothing will happen to you, Asher Nightshade." Roman's voice rose like a growl. "You will defeat that traitorous bastard and come out victorious. You're the last bond. Do not fail our mate."

Asher was stunned by Roman's sudden outburst, then he beamed. "Fine. For Violet."

"For Violet!" Roman echoed, even louder this time. "Now," he sighed, exhausted, "can we go to bed?"

"Yes, I just need to wash—" Asher was still speaking when Roman tackled him straight onto the bed.

"Roman Draven, get the fuck off me, right now!" Asher roared, thrashing beneath him.

But Roman only tightened his grip, wrapping around him like a possessive girlfriend. Or rather, like a giant octopus. When Asher realized struggling was pointless, he froze in disbelief.

Roman grinned and his head on his chest, saying with a sultry voice.

"Just sleep, darling."

Asher stared down at him, utterly horrified. Then, with no other choice, he muttered curses under his breath and did exactly as Roman said.

And perhaps, Asher did have good reasons to be wary of Dominic, because at that very moment, the man held a

strange, blood-red pearl in his palm. He placed it into his mouth and swallowed it.

The effect was immediate. Dominic's body convulsed, veins crawling up his neck and into his eyes until they bulged grotesquely. A guttural, animalistic growl ripped from his throat as his irises glowed red before returning to normal.

The surge of raw power that followed was intoxicating, and overwhelming.

Dominic's lips twisted into a feral grin. He felt unstoppable.

Asher Nightshade was going to die in his hands tomorrow.

Chapter 575: Forever Promise

Electricity had been restored to the North pack, but the lights kept fluctuating, and straining under the surge, because somewhere in the packhouse, a certain North Alpha and his mate were having an electrifying round of sex.

Pleasure like Violet had never known before coursed through her like white-hot fire as Alaric ate her out with single-minded intensity. She hadn't expected him to completely disarm her until all she could think about was his mouth on her body.

"Yes, just like that," Violet moaned, biting down on her lips as Alaric took her completely into his mouth, sucking her as if he couldn't get enough. Sheer ecstasy washed over her, threatening to drive her insane.

One would think that after over five rounds of sex, she would be satisfied. But that didn't seem to be the case. The moment Alaric laid a hand on her, it ignited a burning fire deep inside her, one that demanded to be quenched. And like actors on a stage, they couldn't help but follow the script—loving and worshiping each other's bodies with relentless passion.

"Mine," Alaric growled, the sound vibrating through her, sending shivers straight to her core and making her clench with need. Wetness gushed between her thighs, and Alaric licked every drop greedily, leaving none to waste.

He lifted his head from between her legs, his eyes burning with hunger. "You don't know how long I've waited for this moment," he said, his voice rough with desire.

Violet couldn't decide what was sexier, the wetness glistening on his chin from eating her out, or those electric blue eyes swirling with raw power. The air around them was so charged it felt alive, and they could practically inhale lightning.

Energy crackled invisibly across their skin, setting the hairs on their body on edge, but neither of them seem to care. They were too far gone, delirious with pleasure.

"Please, Alaric," Violet begged with a hoarse voice. She was so close that even the faintest touch would send her over the edge.

"Please what, Violet?" Alaric taunted, his eyes dark and consuming as he loomed over her. "Tell me exactly what you want from me."

Her breath hitched, her eyes flashing golden as Thalia's presence surfaced. "Take us, mate," she demanded, her voice filled both with command and longing.

"You mean like this..." Alaric's voice rumbled seductively. He sent a controlled amount of electricity to his fingertip, the tip glowing blue and trailed it slowly up her belly, leaving a tingling path in its wake.

"Alaric!" Violet screamed his name, her back arching violently off the bed as if her body couldn't decide whether to escape or chase the sensation.

A gasp tore from her throat, and to her own shock, a breathless laugh escaped her lips. The sensation was a beautiful torment, fire and lightning dancing beneath her skin.

It hurt, and yet she couldn't help but crave more, her nails digging into the sheets, and her lips parted with a ragged plea she barely recognized as her own.

"Yes..." Violet mewled, writhing beneath him. Alaric's fingers trailed higher, his movement unhurried, until he reached her breast. He circled one, then the other, teasing her with maddening precision.

When he returned to the first and brushed his thumb over her nipple, a sharp jolt shot through her. Violet cried out, her back arching off the bed again while her core wept for relief.

Alaric's touch was like an electrified rush straight to her brain, sparking every nerve ending alive. It was intoxicating, like a drug she couldn't get enough of.

Alaric closed his lips over her nipple, sucking hard before trailing his tongue around it in circles. His other hand gripped and kneaded her remaining breast, folding it possessively in his palm as if it belonged to him alone.

Violet's eyes fluttered shut, a shuddering gasp tearing from her throat as waves of pleasure tore through her. She couldn't help but bury her fingers tightly in his hair, yanking and pulling, while her hips ground against him with reckless need.

She wanted him right now.

Alaric growled when he noticed her antics, seizing her hips, and stilling her movements with a grip so firm it made her gasp.

His storm-blue eyes blazed as he stared up at her.

"My mate," Alaric breathed, his voice rough with awe as he reached out to cup Violet's face.

His hands trembled slightly, as though he feared she might vanish if he didn't hold her close. To Alaric, this moment still felt like a dream that he might wake up from soon.

Violet leaned into his touch, her heart pounding as warmth spread through her chest. The bond between them thrummed with life, pulsing like a second heartbeat beneath her skin.

Through that bond, she felt the depth of his love, the relief he had at having her back, his possessiveness, and even the words he couldn't bring himself to say. She understood him completely, and he too, her.

Violet vowed to him. "No one will ever separate us again, Alaric. Especially not your mother. Not now, not ever."

Alaric's eyes burned with equal determination. "I won't let that happen either," he growled possessively. "You're mine now, Violet Purple, and nothing in this world will take you from me."

And to prove his point, Alaric nudged her hips wider and positioned himself between them. Violet's heart raced wildly, thundering in her chest with raw anticipation.

Then he intertwined their fingers together, locking her hands above her head with a possessive grip. His electric blue eyes burned into hers, and with one single powerful thrust, he drove into her.

Violet gasped, her back arching off the bed as the overwhelming pleasure rolled through her body. Her walls clenched around him, the sensation too much. Alaric stilled, giving her a moment to adjust to the size of him.

"Breathe, my love," he whispered gently.

Violet nodded, her nails digging into his hands. "Move," she begged him.

At her plea, Alaric began to thrust into her, slow and deep at first, his pace torturous. Violet writhed beneath him, panting, her moans filling the room.

"Faster," she urged him.

Just like that, Alaric's control snapped.

His pace quickened, thrusting into her harder, deeper, and more relentless than the last. Their groans and cries tangled together, a primal symphony of pleasure and possession.

The bulbs overhead began to flicker violently as the raw power between them surged. Sparks of blue lightning danced in Alaric's eyes, his entire body crackling with the energy, as though he were a god of thunder himself.

"Mine," he growled, thrusting harder, his voice reverberating through her very soul.

Their lovemaking built to a fever pitch and Violet clung to him, drowning in the storm of sensations, until at last Alaric's climax ripped through him like a supernova.

She screamed her pleasure while Alaric's roar shook the walls as every bulb in the room blazed with blinding light, before shattering into pieces, raining sparks and glass across the floor.

Beyond the room, Ace shouted out of exasperation.

"Not again, Alaric!"

Chapter 576: Nothing Without You

Aside from the electricity cutting out across the North pack again, there had been eight separate electrocution incidents inside the packhouse alone.

Two innocent workers had been struck by stray lightning outside.

Five others were shocked senseless just by reaching for a doorknob.

And the last unfortunate soul had been standing near a power source at the wrong time and learned the hard way what "high voltage" really meant.

Thankfully, no one had died—yet. But it was safe to say everyone in the North pack was praying for the mating fever to be over soon. At this rate, it wasn't just their nerves on the line. Their lives were at stake.

But that was the least of their problems that night. Alpha Caspian's arrival alone, paired with the crushing tension in the air, confirmed the situation was not just serious, it was dire.

Ace had no idea what he'd been expecting when he briefed his father and recounted everything that had happened, but the grim, unreadable look on Caspian's face left him uneasy.

He could count on one hand the number of times he had seen his father truly angry. That alone made the silent elevator ride down to the holding cells deeply unsettling, the seconds stretching out like a noose tightening around his neck.

His father didn't say a single word the entire ride. The silence pressed heavily between them, so thick it felt suffocating. Ace kept glancing at him, wondering what was going through his mind, but Caspian's face gave nothing away.

When the elevator finally dinged open, they stepped out into the corridor. The cold, sterile air of the underground cells wrapped around Ace, prickling his skin. They stopped at the last door with two guards standing at attention outside, tense and watchful.

The bitter irony hit Ace like a punch to the guts. Just days back, Alaric had been the one locked behind these walls. Now it was their mother.

What the hell was happening to their family? It felt as though everything was getting out of control.

"I'll go in alone from here," Caspian announced with a clipped tone.

Ace didn't protest and obeyed without question. Instead, his gaze shifted to the guards, satisfied that help would be available should things come to blows.

Alpha Caspian went in.

Luna Zara was sitting on the edge of her bed when the door snapped open. Her head whipped toward it, eyes widening at the sight of her husband.

"Caspian!" she gasped, rushing to him.

Zara threw her arms around him, holding onto him as though he were her hero.

"What took you so long?" she demanded breathlessly. "I've been waiting for you while these insolent children dared to treat me this way! You have to release me right now!"

But her desperate words fell on deaf ears. Caspian didn't move, or return her embrace. It was as if she weren't there at all. His eyes were disturbingly hollow, and there was an uneasy, chilling aura around him.

It made Zara hesitate.

"Caspian..." she pulled away from him, goosebumps breaking out across her arms. "What's wrong?"

"Why did you do it?" Caspian asked, his voice brittle, as he struggled to hold back his anger.

"What?" Zara blinked, confused at first, but then her expression hardened. "It was the necessary thing to do."

"Necessary?" Caspian scoffed. "You used a Mnemosyne Crown on our son!"

"And so?" Zara snapped back, her eyes flashing. "I thought you, of all people, would understand why I did it! If that's the case, why did you send him back to the North pack in the first place?!"

"Because I thought you both would talk it out like you used to," Caspian bit out, his fists clenching, "not try to erase our son's memory!"

"Not all his memory!" Zara shouted, her voice rising. "Just his memory of that witch, Violet." She spat the name like poison. "The North stays together, Caspian! That girl doesn't even need to step foot in this house and she's already tearing our family apart!"

Her chest rose and fell rapidly, both of them glaring at each other like enemies rather than the famous romantic couple of the North.

Caspian's voice trembled with fury as he ground out, "I told you to shut down that project!"

"I perfected the Mnemosyne Crown!" Zara thundered back. "If my traitorous son, Ace, hadn't pulled that stupid stunt, you'd be staring at the results right now!"

Caspian stared at her in stunned disbelief. "You don't even understand what you've done wrong, do you?"

But Zara only stood taller, her posture radiating defiance. "I did nothing wrong! Everything I've done is for this family, for this pack! All of this—" she jabbed a finger at Caspian's chest, her voice breaking with rage—"because I took charge when you were too much of a coward to move your useless ass!"

Bam!

It was as if an explosion went off inside Caspian's head. He stared at his wife, his blue eyes so icy cold they could freeze her where she stood.

"What did you say?" His voice was dangerously low.

Zara stared back without a shred of fear, her own blue eyes blazing with fury.

"You heard me right, or do I need to spell it out for you? I have been the backbone of this pack! You couldn't have done a single thing right even if I let you. Why do you think our parents matched us from the very start? You might have had the brains, Caspian, but not the guts. I am the reason the North Pack is what it is today!" she finished, her chest heaving.

For a long moment, Caspian didn't speak. He simply stared, empty and shocked, as the woman he called his wife stripped him bare with her cruel words.

"Is that so...?" The words slipped past his lips before he realized he'd spoken. He rubbed his temple, still reeling.

"I couldn't have done it without you..." he repeated slowly, before his gaze locked with hers, their icy blue eyes colliding.

"We'll see if that's true, then."

"What?" Zara was caught off guard by his tone.

Caspian straightened, his eyes hardened like steel, his voice cold and final.

"I've summoned the council. You will stand trial for your actions. And afterward..." he paused, letting it sink in, "you can rest assured I'm pressing for a divorce."

"What?!" Zara screamed, the word ripping from her throat like a feral animal.

But Caspian had already turned and started to walk away.

"Caspian!" she called after him, before it rose into a furious shriek.

"Caspian! Come back here now! You do not dare!"

She bolted forward, but the heavy door slammed shut in her face.

"CASPIAN!" Her scream reverberated through the walls, raw with rage and disbelief.

Chapter 577: The Spy Amongst Them

Alpha Caspian was on a rampage tonight, and right now, Finn—Alaric's beta—was the next unfortunate soul caught in his wrath.

"So, where were you all this while?"

He interrogated him with a glare so sharp it could cut through bone, his tone carrying the promise of violence if he didn't like the answer.

Finn swallowed. "I was back at Lunar Academy."

"Back at Lunaris Academy when Alaric was in danger?" Caspian fired at him.

Finn shifted on his feet uncomfortably. "With all due respect, Alpha Caspian, Alaric has always been a bit of a loner and never wanted me to follow him around. That was his wish."

He rushed to add, "I could count the number of times Alaric has gone off the radar and come back in one piece. Moreover, someone had to be around to put the pack in order."

"Really? Is that so?" Caspian's voice grew icier. "So you left him alone simply because he commanded you to? Or was it because you enjoyed playing leader at Lunaris, holding the pack together there, rather than being concerned about my son's welfare?"

"I was concerned, sir!" Finn shouted immediately, panic creeping into his tone. "I did ask about Alaric, and Luna Zara told me everything was fine."

"Your Alpha returned all the way back to the North pack and you didn't bother following him. Nor did you send even a delta to find out what was happening."

Caspian's gaze hardened, his words merciless. "To me, this reeks of negligence."

"No, no, Alpha Caspian, that's not—"

"Your position as my son's beta will be reviewed," Caspian cut him off coldly. "A better one will be chosen for him. Thank you for your service thus far." He marked something off in the book before him with finality.

"No, Alpha Caspian!" Finn dropped to his knees, desperation in his voice. "I can still do better! Just give me one more chance!"

But before he could plead further, two guards stepped forward, seizing him by the arms and dragging him away. His cries echoed in the corridor, but Caspian didn't flinch, not a single trace of remorse on his face.

It was safe to say that after Caspian was ruthlessly berated by his wife, he was taking the welfare of his pack a little personal.

"Next!" Caspian bellowed, his voice like thunder.

Meanwhile, Finn—now stripped of his position as Beta—slipped away to a dark corner of the packhouse that night.

He glanced around carefully, his eyes wary. When he was certain no one was in view, he pulled out his phone and dialed a particular number.

The line rang for what felt like forever. Just as it seemed the call would never go through, it connected.

"I'm out," Finn said immediately.

"What do you mean you're out?" the other voice demanded, rough with irritation.

"The incident ruined everything," Finn spat, frustration dripping from his tone. "I've been demoted. I'm no longer Beta. Which means I won't be able to get as much information as before."

A tense silence followed on the other end of the line.

And yes, the mysterious voice belonged to none other than Patrick.

What no one in the pack suspected was that the quiet, loyal Finn, was the little spy who had been feeding Patrick scraps of information this entire time.

"What are you going to do now that I've lost my position?" Finn demanded, frustration in his voice.

"What could you possibly do now? You promised me that working for you would grant my family and me great power in the end. I've done everything you ever asked of me, and this is where I end up?"

Patrick's voice came calm and cold, ignoring Finn's outburst. "What is the situation at the pack right now?"

Finn gritted his teeth. It was always like this with Patrick, he offered no comforts at all, just commands.

"It's total chaos," Finn said bitterly. "Zara is imprisoned. Alaric and Violet are in the middle of mating fever, while Alpha Caspian's tearing through everyone."

He muttered under his breath, almost a growl, "For years, he's been more invested in his tech toys and experiments than the pack itself. Now, suddenly, he decides to play Alpha?"

But Patrick did not care about Finn's outburst, saying instead, "I want you—"

He never finished because Finn heard a sudden clatter ring out in the distance and got distracted.

Finn's head snapped toward the sound, his werewolf ears twitching instinctively. His entire body went taut, a growl building in his throat. Someone was there and had probably been listening to the conversation.

His pulse was pounding as he moved slowly, his muscle coiled tight. If he was exposed, it would ruin everything.

Finn rounded the corner in one swift motion, ready to strike, only to freeze when a rat scurried across the floor and disappeared into a crack in the wall.

He let out a deep breath, forcing his racing heart to calm. Still, he wasn't entirely convinced and his keen eyes swept the darkness, searching thoroughly.

After a tense moment of finding nothing else, he finally relaxed. However, just to be safe, he checked a few more areas before turning back, this time heading straight for the main path. He wasn't foolish enough to linger.

As his footsteps faded, a soft thud sounded from the top of the stone wall, as a small figure hopped down with stunning agility.

It was Hannah.

She crouched low, clutching the necklace around her throat as her chest heaved with relief. The entire time she had been holding her breath, praying Finn wouldn't notice her.

For once, she was grateful to have witches as siblings, especially for the artifact that hid her presence. Without it, she would have been caught for sure.

"Thank you, Ziva," she muttered under her breath, even though that sister of hers was a total bitch.

Straightening, she cast one last glance in the direction Finn had gone before melting back into the darkness, her mind already racing with what she had just overheard.

Following Violet purple was not easy because danger seem to be her middle name.

Chapter 578: One Day At A Time

Hannah cursed under her breath when a hot itch burned beneath her skin, knowing exactly what that meant. Ziva had placed a magical mark there, not just to alert her when they needed to talk, but to torment, and constantly remind her who really held control here.

She hurried to a secure, isolated spot within the North house and pulled a compact mirror from her pocket. The small, circular piece was no larger than her palm. It was so simple and unassuming that no one would think twice about it even if they caught her holding it.

The outer casing was plain white, its surface smooth and innocent-looking, though a trained magic caster or a fellow witch would immediately sense the powerful enchantments woven into it. Inside, the top held a magnifying mirror, while the bottom was a regular mirror that gave a flawless reflection.

Except when Hannah whispered the activation spell, the reflection shimmered and Ziva's unsmiling face appeared, her sharp eyes filled with authority and disdain.

"Well?" Ziva demanded, her voice cutting through the night like a blade.

Hannah fought the overwhelming urge to roll her eyes. Instead, she forced her tone into clipped obedience, speaking through gritted teeth. "I just arrived today. You certainly don't expect me to have information for you already."

Ziva's expression didn't soften in the slightest. If anything, she said callously, "Your usefulness to this family is beginning to dwindle, Hannah. You do realize I can have you replaced. Don't think for a second that distance keeps you safe."

"Violet now has a third mate," Hannah confessed.

"What?!" Ziva's face twisted with ugly rage. "That certainly can't be true."

"The news is all over the North pack," Hannah said flatly. "And I've confirmed it. Violet Purple and Alaric Storm are in the middle of a mating fever right now."

"What is even so special about that girl?" Ziva muttered bitterly under her breath. "All she does is collect dick like some whore."

For the first time, Hannah saw the jealousy shining in Ziva's eyes. The mighty, untouchable Ziva was threatened by Violet's very existence, though she herself didn't realize it.

"Why are you staring at me like that?" Ziva snapped.

"Nothing." Hannah quickly pursed her lips together.

A sharp, burning sensation suddenly flared beneath Hannah's skin, making her yelp and almost drop the mirror. She scratched at the mark in agony, glaring at Ziva through the reflection.

"Don't even think of defying me," Ziva sneered. "You're only out there because I deemed it so. Violet cannot save you. The only reason that bitch is still breathing is because Father wouldn't let us loose on her. Otherwise, she'd have been ripped apart by now. So be a good little doll, do your job, and you'll be rewarded."

She added with a dark tone, her face hardening into pure malice. "And don't you ever dare lie to me again."

"Ahh!" Hannah screamed as a fresh wave of torment seared through the mark. By the time she blinked the tears from her eyes, the mirror had gone dim meaning Ziva had severed the connection.

"That fucking bitch!" Hannah cursed through her teeth, rubbing at the mark, but it only worsened the throbbing pain. The skin was raw and swollen now. She should've known this mission would be hell from the very beginning.

Suddenly drained, Hannah slid down the cold wall and wrapped her arms around her knees, curling in on herself. A single tear escaped, trailing down her cheek.

This mission had given her a desperate hope that she might be free from her family soon. But now, it seemed freedom was nothing more than a cruel dream.

"You, there!"

A guard shouted as a beam of torchlight flashed directly in Hannah's face. She hissed under her breath, raising her palm to shield her eyes from the sudden glare.

The guard was on her in an instant, boots thudding against the ground. "What are you doing here at this hour?" he asked with suspicion.

Hannah lifted her tear-streaked face, letting her reddened eyes and shaky breath sell the illusion.

"S-sorry, sir," she stammered. "It's my first day on the job and I couldn't sleep. Everything here is just so overwhelming."

Hannah had studied about werewolves

and knew they were incredibly skilled at detecting lies. Thankfully, she was so good at lying it had become second nature to her. Hence, it was not difficult to play along.

"You work in the kitchen." The guard noted, his gaze taking in her uniform.

"Yes, sir."

And yes, the uniform she had stolen earlier to blend in. Hannah thought to herself.

The man's posture eased a little as he lowered his defenses. Of course, he could scent that she was human. Wolves rarely saw humans as threats, which worked perfectly in her favor.

"I know how rough the first day can be," the guard said with a sigh, sympathizing with her. "But you should head back to your station. The packhouse is in disarray tonight, and you don't want to get caught up in it."

"Of course, sir." Hannah sniffled, making a show of wiping her eyes. "You're so kind."

The compliment made the man blush. He gave a small, awkward laugh. "It's nothing."

"Go on, then." He said, gesturing to her to leave, "Take it one day at a time."

Hannah turned and started walking away casually.

"It's that way," the guard called after her, pointing in the opposite direction.

"Oh! Right!" Hannah laughed lightly, slapping her forehead. "Where is my head tonight?"

She faked a sheepish grin and quickly corrected her path, disappearing into the night while the guard watched, unsuspecting.

However, the moment Hannah was sure no eyes were on her, she scaled the walls with a bit of difficulty thanks to the snow. However, she held on, her fingers finding every hold, and it wasn't long before she reached the roof of the nearest building.

Once atop the roof, Hannah finally breathed, the tension leaving her shoulders. She crouch down, staring at the dark night sky that would soon give way to the first light of day.

The guard had been right.

She would take this one day at a time.

Chapter 579: Connect With His Root

The guards in front of Zara's holding cell were doing their duty when a strange-looking ball rolled to a stop at their feet.

They tensed immediately, turning toward the direction it had come from only to see a familiar face.

"Finn?" one of them called, confused.

But Finn only smiled sinisterly and gestured downward.

The two guards glanced down, and that was when they noticed the odd-looking ball was now beeping with light.

The beeping stopped abruptly, followed by a sharp hiss as the ball cracked open. White vapor spilled out, but in seconds, the vapor thickened into heavy smoke, rapidly spreading and saturating the entire corridor.

"What the hell?!" one of them coughed, swiping at the smoke in a futile attempt to clear his vision.

Meanwhile, Finn calmly pulled a compact filtration mask from behind his back and strapped it securely over his nose and mouth. When the smoke reached him, it rolled harmlessly past, unable to penetrate the filters, and left him completely unaffected.

The two guards tried to run, but it was already too late. The wolfsbane smoke invaded their lungs, burning and paralyzing them from the inside. Their legs buckled as they gasped desperately for air, and within moments, both collapsed to their knees, completely unconscious.

Finn stood over the unconscious guards, the smoke swirling ominously around him. With them out of the way, he stepped forward and entered the holding room.

Zara was asleep when the door creaked open and her eyes snapped wide at the intrusion. She jerked upright, startled, trying to make out the figure standing there.

"Luna Zara." Finn's voice was eerily calm, as he slipped the mask from his face and shut the door behind him with a click.

"Finn?" Zara blinked rapidly, her vision clearing. "What are you doing here?" She asked, surprised.

However, Zara's instincts were already prickling. Something wasn't right. It was highly unusual for Finn to seek her out at this hour, when most of the packhouse should have been asleep.

"Look at you," Finn looked her over, his tone controlled and almost pleasant in a way that made it all the more unnerving. He slowly tsked, shaking his head. "How the mighty have fallen."

Zara was not blind to the sarcasm dripping from his words, and she felt a chill run down her spine.

"You're right, I look a mess," Zara admitted, intentionally playing it cool as she lifted her wrist, displaying the suppressor cuff as if it were a piece of jewelry instead of a shackle.

At this moment, she looked nothing like the collected, calculating Zara Storm.

Her blond hair was tangled and unkempt, falling wildly around her face. Though she had just woken from sleep, exhaustion clung to her features, making her appear worn and vulnerable.

"Tell me then," Zara said, forcing her expression to stay neutral, "what brings you here?"

At that, Finn let out a slow, unsettling smile. He could smell the sudden spike of fear in her pheromones. She was putting on a brave face, but he knew the truth. Deep down, some part of her already sensed the inevitable. She could feel her end creeping closer.

"I want to tell you a story," Finn said as he stepped closer.

It took every ounce of Zara's willpower to stay still when he sat beside her on the edge of the bed. His aura was dark, heavy, and suffocating, pressing down on the small room like a dark cloud.

"What story are we talking about here?" Zara asked nervously.

"Oh, don't worry. It's a love story. An all-time favorite." His tone was mocking now, laced with venom. "Romance. My mother's favorite story, or at least, of the love of her life."

Zara managed a polite, brittle smile. "I'm not usually a fan of romance, but let's hear it." Inwardly, she was stalling, desperately hoping someone would sense the danger and come to her rescue.

"Oh, you're going to love this one," Finn promised, his voice dark and twisted.

"So, nineteen years ago, or so," Finn began his story, "young Alpha Caspian was in love with a fair maiden named Anna."

Zara swallowed hard. She hadn't reached the end of the story, but she didn't need to. The pieces were already falling into place. She had heard that name before, but did not look into it. After all, she was Luna. Caspian's legal wife. Her position was solid. Why bother about Caspian's past?

"Anna was from the South Pack, wolves known for their free spirit. She traveled to the North pack to experience its traditions firsthand. But while she was here, she met a brilliant young North prince who swept her off her feet. Theirs was a whirlwind romance, full of promises and plans for the future."

He paused, his gaze cutting into Zara's. "And then came the news. Caspian was to marry another woman."

Zara stiffened, her lips pressing tightly together.

"The North stays together," Finn said mockingly, quoting the very words he had heard countless times. "And Caspian, your lovely husband, was not brave enough to fight for the woman he loved. So, like a coward, he gave her up. Instead, he settled for you, the perfectly groomed, politically safe cousin. You were the ideal match to preserve the bloodline."

Finn leaned closer, his voice dropping to a venomous whisper. "Caspian's mother personally sent Anna away to prevent any hindrance to her precious son's marriage. But what they didn't know was that their callous little move shattered a young woman forever."

His jaw tightened, "My mother tried to rebuild her life. She married an innocent wolf from the North pack hoping to fill the void Caspian left behind. But she could never recover from that heartbreak. Her love, her obsession with Caspian, twisted into rage. And all that frustration was poured into her young son. Me."

Zara's breath caught in her throat, everything dawning on her.

"My mother's obsession destroyed her marriage," Finn continued coldly. "Eventually, my father had enough. He brought me back here to the North pack, so I could 'connect with my roots.'"

Finn let out a bitter, hollow laugh. "Roots. What a joke."

Chapter 580: End Of The North Pack

"I even wrote him a letter!" Finn roared with rage. "I wrote him a fucking letter explaining who I was. Who my mother was!" His chest was heaving now, breath ragged. "The least he could have done was seek her out, apologize, or something. Anything! I don't know, he could have tried to make it up to me."

Finn let out a harsh, bitter laugh. "But instead, some months later, I get chosen to be Alaric's beta..." He spat the title like it was filth. "He couldn't bring himself to apologize, but he had no problem making me serve the very son who's living the life that should have been fucking mine! Is that how much of a joke I was to him?!" His laughter grew wild, edged with disbelief and pain.

Zara's face hardened. "So let me get this right, you're angry because your mother didn't get an apology?"

Finn shot to his feet, shaking with restrained fury. "I'm angry because you all ruined my mother's life. You ruined me!"

"Oh please, fucking grow up." Zara rolled her eyes, her tone razor-sharp. "Everybody goes through hard shit in life. The fact your mother let one failed relationship dictate her entire existence? That's on her, not anyone else. It's her fucking fault, not mine, not Caspian's, and certainly not my sons'. If there's anyone who owes you an apology, it's your fucking bitch of a mother. Go get it from her!"

Finn went utterly still while she spoke, his face blanching. It was as if he couldn't believe those words had just come out of her mouth. Then, slowly, his features twisted into rage, only for his face to smooth back into eerie calm.

By the time she finished, his lips formed a chilling smile. "You're not scared."

"Scared of what?" Zara spat, venom dripping from her words. "Your cowardice? Or the fact that you'll never amount to anything?"

She scoffed. "For a second there, I was almost scared you were Caspian's bastard child. But to think you're here bitching because you're not the Alpha's heir? Pathetic."

She tilted her chin, her voice cold as ice. "You're even more cowardly than my husband, and that's saying a lot. Now, if you don't mind, get the hell out of my sight. I need to continue my sleep. I have a council judgment to tackle tomorrow."

For a beat, there was dead silence. Then Finn burst into dark, manic laughter.

"You really are as cold-hearted as your reputation precedes you, Zara Storm," he said, his tone almost admiring. "I really made the right choice coming here."

A sinister laugh escaped his lips again. "Even in the face of death, you're still playing it cool. I love that. Mad respect." He mock-saluted her.

Contrary to Finn's words, Zara was scared as hell. But she wasn't going to cower in front of this boy. If she went down tonight, she'd do so fighting.

"I could have waited until tomorrow to watch the fall of the North pack," Finn began his disturbing confession, "To see you and your precious family die together."

His smile darkened. "But after the way you treated your son's mate, it kind of triggered something in me. I wanted to see the look on your face as I took the life out of you. I want you to know you were killed by one of those children you so arrogantly look down on. I want to see your blood coat my fingers..." His voice dropped to a hiss. "Would it be red, or black like your cold-blooded heart?"

Zara gulped nervously. But one thing stood out in his words. "What do you mean, the end of the North pack?"

Finn's smile widened, his eyes gleaming with malice. "Oh, that. I had a little help. You remember Patrick, don't you?" He began to pace, his voice rising with manic excitement. "He treated me back at Lunaris Academy. Said there was something wrong with my head. Maybe he's right. But I didn't care, not when he offered me the one thing I wanted most: to see the North burn."

He gestured dramatically as he explained, "Out of all four packs, the North is the most technically advanced, and a fortress. If Patrick destroys the North, the others will fall like dominoes."

He shook his head thoughtfully, "Of course, the west pack is a strong one. But Henry's death is stirring a bit of political unrest at the moment. One move, they go down. Once the North falls, then the West, and finally the East... the south then is a piece of fucking cake. They're hopeless."

For the first time, the blood drained from Zara's face. She had thought this was a foolish boy's revenge — something she could handle — but this was far bigger than she'd imagined.

"Patrick hates our kind!" Zara snarled through gritted teeth. "He'll kill us all and you'd still side with him? Betray your own people?"

"Oh, I'm you're people now," Finn mocked her.

He said, "I told you. I don't care. Wolves have committed atrocities for centuries. Maybe it's time our reign ended."

"And now...." Finn slowly reached into his coat and drew a silver-laced dagger, the blade gleaming coldly in the light.

"Are you ready to die?" he asked casually, as if it was a normal thing.

He advanced on her with slow steps, his voice dropping to a chilling drawl. "Don't worry, Luna Zara. It'll be a long, painful death."

Finn lunged at her with a feral snarl, but

Zara reacted on instinct, diving off the bed just as he reached her. His momentum sent him crashing into the mattress while she rolled to her feet, her heart pounding in her chest.

With a burst of adrenaline, Zara swung her fist at his face. Her punch connected solidly with his jaw, snapping his head to the side, but without her wolf's strength, it barely slowed him.

Finn turned back to her with murder in his eyes.

Zara didn't give him the chance to recover and drove her knee upward, slamming it hard between his legs.