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Rhys

I found myself in her room, frowning as I pretended to inspect the place as they fixed the door. I also instructed them to include a connecting passageway to my room and conceal it from her.

Her room felt like home. Everything was perfect, from the pale blue gradient on her walls to the silver bookshelf and the window nook. The room was bathed in her scent that my wolf had grown to obsess over.

When I ripped the doors away and bathed in earlier, I stopped short at the transformation. It was beautiful and much like her. She was sleeping soundly in my room now, and I itched to go and check on her. But that was against the rules I gave myself and everyone.

It was as if I'd fallen into a trap that I had set for myself, and the worst part was that I wasn't sure I wanted to escape the trap.

Without even trying, she called me, and I couldn't help but answer.

I ground my teeth as the bitter memory of her drifting away. We thought she had fallen asleep, but suddenly, she started choking and gasping for air. Her wide-open eyes turned golden to show that her wolf was present. I'd never been so terrified before.

I swear that if anything happened to her, I would have been the first Alpha to wage war on Creekside under the guise of looking for the Crest. I would have gone after Creekside and set it ablaze. I would have personally hunted that fool and ripped his greedy guts out.

The fact that I meant everything I thought was what terrified me the most. What had she done to me? What influence did she hold over me? It made me want to go crazy on her behalf.

There was also jealousy beating in my chest. I hated how her reaction to just the mention of his name showed that she was still attached to him in some way. I hated that she may have died because of the heartbreak. It made me wonder if they were still connected.

Did he really reject her? I guess he did. But was she truly over him? What if she still thought of him? Did she see him in her dreams?

I was eager to know how she truly felt about him. What was it that

warranted such a reaction for fucks sake? I wanted to plunder her memories, even the tiniest ones, and destroy everyone that made her hurt.

Who knew the extent of her relationship with him? It had to be so deep that she went crazy after being rejected.

An image of how cruel he had to be formed in my head. He used the poor girl. Oh, how I wanted his head on a stake.

But then, did I even have any right? I was her husband, but I never regarded her as anything. So why was I even beating myself over someone that I wanted out of my life?

"Marcus is delaying his departure," Kaden said as he strode into Dawn's room.

"What?" I bellowed.

"Yeah. He's nowhere to be found."

"Get me, Princess," I growled, storming out of the room.

Marcus was an unreliable shithead. This further confirmed my belief that he had a dirty trick up his sleeve, and I didn't understand what he wanted. Firstly, he picked the most unlikely and unsuitable female and shackled her to me, then he suggested going out instead of me, and now he was single-handedly sabotaging everything.

"What is it?" Princess grunted as soon as she stepped into my office.

She looked annoyed and impatient. I narrowed my eyes on my cousin. She'd never been one to willingly come to the pack house. Princess lived a glamorous life that was very different from what she was portraying here. It was suspicious that she abandoned all that for Dawn, someone she barely knew.

I'd known Princess all my life, and never had she accommodated anyone of lower class than her. I was ready to overlook it because she kept Dawn company and seemed genuine about it. But now that her father had started acting up again, I had questions.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

She scoffed. "What type of question is that Rhys?"

"A straight one," I replied, my voice clipped. "Why are you here?"

She must have heard the seriousness in my tone, and it was either that or that my wolf was present because she straightened and took a deep breath.

"What do you want to know, Rhys?" She asked carefully.

"Everything," I responded. "Take a seat, dear cousin and explain why you came here, why you're still here, and why your father is acting up suddenly. Because we both know that you're not one to make sacrifices like this unless something really big is involved."

Her breath hitched, and she gravitated towards the chair.

"I'm not making any sacrifices." She hissed.

I smirked, "Princess, you've been in my pack house for weeks without throwing tantrums about missing your grand mansion and fake friends."

She bit a lip and twiddled her fingers. "What if I wanted a change? What if I was tired of all that toxicity!" She suddenly shrieked.

I raised a brow and folded my arms. This was the Princess I knew, not the nice, calm, and collected person who had been roaming around my pack with Dawn.

She took a deep breath, then another. "Look," she said through rushed breaths. "I was tired. I was tired of all that. Those people weren't real. They weren't. I was spiraling. I was depressed. Then, I noticed that my father was hatching a plan. I knew he was working on something. He was going around researching different women. He caught me lurking, and when I asked him, he told me he was getting me someone who would understand me. When he finally picked Dawn, I thought that she was the most beautiful and graceful being ever. I was excited. Imagine my surprise when I found out that he made her your wife."

I was stunned, but I didn't show it. I needed her to reveal more.

"So I came here immediately. And then I find out that you don't even want her..." she trails off.

"What is your father planning?" I cut in.

She chuckles, "Whatever he wants. I don't know. But it has to be huge, isn't it? He has asked me to keep tabs on Dawn, though. She doesn't seem to be following through with his plan. She accused him of ruining her life the other day."

My heart skips a beat. Ruining her life? Shouldn't she be grateful? Does it mean she is still hung up on her former mate?

"I don't blame her though. You treat her like she's a spec of dust, Lex does even worse, the nobles hate her because she's not one of them, and the commons and omegas see her as some sort of entertainment. She may have been suffering where she was from, but at least she was part of the pack. Here she's like some sort of exhibition whose life depends on you and my father's recklessness."

"I thought she was doing pretty good! Everyone loves her!" I growled and slammed my desk.

She winced and then glared at me. "Because she saved the kids. But that's it. The nobles want one of them as your Luna. Soon, they'll get fed up with everything and try to toss her out. So I came up with a plan."

I leaned forward, intrigued by this new side of Princess.

"I'm going to protect her," She declares. "She'll have me at her side at all times for these three months, and when the three months are over, we can move away together."

My jaw falls open slightly.

"Yes," She says, her voice raising slightly. "You don't want her right? You don't want her. So leave her to me."

Realizing that I needed to take charge of the conversation, I cleared my throat.

"Your father," I said, "What does he have up his sleeves? You said he asked you to watch her."

Princess rolled her eyes. "Don't you get it? I'm on your side. I'm not telling him anything about Dawn. He knows it. He's trying to get under my skin."

I rubbed my face. Nothing she said answered the many questions on my mind. Frustration crept in.

"What use are you to me if you don't know the root of his plans?" I grumbled.

Princess's eyes glinted with a mischievous light that I was used to. "Let's make a deal," She said, "He's searching for the crest. My father has always believed he deserved all the power in the world. Promise me that you'll

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leave Dawn alone when all this is over, and I'll tell you more."

I sighed. It was too late to make such a deal. I didn't think I was capable of leaving Dawn just yet. Besides, it was looking like she wasn't just a random pick anymore. Marcus was very methodical with these things.

What neither of them knew was that Dawn and I had met before now and had carnal knowledge of each other. They didn't know that she was racing mad when she came up to me boldly. I thought it was better to keep to myself until I understood just what was going on in my pack. At least I had something. Marcus wanted the Crest.

"That would be all, Princess. Thank you."

Her eyes widened. "You didn't agree to my deal?"

I feigned disinterest and waved my hand at her, "You get bored easily, Princess. I don't care what belongs to Dawn when this sham is over, but I'll be worse than her former pack if I hand her over to you. She has already gone through enough trauma. When this is over, she'll be free."

I tried to hide the seriousness in my tone but failed woefully.

Princess smirked and nodded, "Fine. I'll accept that. But this means that I'm no longer on your side. I'll do whatever is best for her."

With that, she stood up and left. I felt weird. It felt like I'd entered some sort of competition where the price was Dawn.

It was awkward. I didn't know what to do with it or even say. I sat contemplating for several minutes before I decided that Princess and her antics were not worth my time. Hopefully, she would lose steam and go after something else, like she always did.

The most important thing now was finding Marcus before he did something stupid with his ambitions.

Like clockwork, Kaden rushed in. "We've found him." He panted.

"Where?" I asked, jumping to my feet.

"We found him coming out of the forest. He claims to have gone for a run."

I rolled my eyes. "I need to speak to him now," I grunted, dashing out the door.

"That's going to be a problem," Kaden said, causing me to screech to a stop.

"He insists on leaving the pack with the scouts now."

I ran my hands through my head. That wolf was sneaky as hell! I suspected that he knew that Princess was going to tell me of his plans for the Crest and that I was going to use my authority to keep him from searching for it.

Marcus! I screamed into our mind.

There was no response.

"They are in wolf form," Kaden added when I began pacing about angrily. "They cannot respond."

"Fucking hell," I screamed. "That bastard is going to ruin everything!"

Kaden blinked and looked around.

"He's going after the Crest." I growled, "He seems to have planned it down to the Tee."

Kaden blinked and swallowed. "I-I sent the spy after them." He stuttered.

"That's not enough. Send more. Let the training begin. Cut out everything else. Every member of Golden Crest must train. At this rate, war would land at our doorstep soonest. I'll notify our allies, and we need all the information we can get."

"Noted, sir," Kaden said. His face was tight with emotion.

I stopped short as Dawn's scent teased my nostrils. A picture of her sleeping peacefully flashed through my head. I immediately altered my course towards my Lair.

"Is she awake?" I asked before I could stop myself.

Kaden shot me a skeptical glance before saying, "Not yet. I'll notify you as soon as she is." He responded

But I was already heading back to my room.

A hand reached out and stopped me.

"You asked me to keep her out of your sight." He said strongly.

I shrugged him off, hating that my words were coming back to bite me.

"Yes." I snarled, "But I need to get her out of my room. I take it that they are done with the repairs in hers?"

His eyes widened, and he nodded. I walked off immediately to my room, where I found her sleeping peacefully.

My eyes fell on her mouth and then her profile, wishing I could brush my lips on it. I shook my head before lifting her sleeping frame and taking her to her room.

I lay her on the bed and promised myself that it was the last time I would interfere in anything concerning her.

She was a distraction, and I had a war to win.