

## Chapter 114

"That's a bit broad, sweetheart. You mean in the past year or before that?"

AJ rubbed the back of his neck. "I guess in the last year."

"I live in a house outside Lauwil, in Switzerland. There are times where I take a weekend or so and go to Germany to see an old friend but my home is in Switzerland. I've been there for a little over two years."

The tension in the room made it hard to breathe. When no one else asked another question, I spoke up, hopefully trying to get everyone to open up.

"Nine kids? Hector said he was marrying someone with nine kids and we didn't really believe him." 1

Hector chuckled. "Good to know no one believed me."

I shook my head and a few of the guys laughed.

Auri nodded as she smiled. "Yes, I have nine kids." She put up her hand as I started to open my mouth to ask another. "I know the follow up and I can answer it as well." Taking a sip of her drink, she placed the bottle down on the table and stared at it for a moment before answering. "As I made my way through the different labs that were set up by Oran, I started to find a few test subjects. All of them were under

the age of twelve. From what I found, the experiments had been going on for more than twenty years. The labs I found weren't new. They were well established places and sadly, had a mountain of bodies that they had discarded as useless."

She stopped for a moment, taking another sip before continuing. "Every so often I would run into child that was alive. I couldn't just leave them. They were the innocents in this and so, the more I hit, the more of my kids I found. Fey, vampire, wolves, witches, all of them so different and yet, we all shared the same pain and understand of being Oran's test subjects. Originally, I tried to find them more stable homes; homes that were within their own race. It didn't work out and I ended up with seven kids under my roof that I consider every bit my children as Týr, Vale, Syf, and Freya. I settled in Switzerland on the edge of a pack territory under the name Estel Storm."

"Why didn't you come back?" It was the first time Vale spoke and it sounded broken. He cleared his throat, hearing his own pain in his tone.

Auri pressed her lips in a thin line. "I didn't have a reason that I needed to."

Anger slammed into me from him and I locked my jaw against the onslaught of Vale's emotions.

"Us! We are your family! Your pack! You just abandoned us! Left us to navigate the bullshit that got thrown at us. From

your actions, from Oran, from the drug, for everything! You started this fucking war! You started it and then decided to fuck off!" Vale was yelling across the table.

If Auri was hurt or angry at his words, she didn't show it. "My war, you say." She hummed and leaned back in the wooden dining chair. Swirling the liquid in her bottle, she took a sip and sighed. "I suppose it is my war."

Vale scoffed. "You really are the worst."

"Vale." I was surprised when not only Hector but Logan chimed in as well.

Vale turned, looking at his father. "What? It's true."

Logan rubbed his forehead for a moment. "It's not and you know it. Auri and I fought our wars. We fought against the Nova. We fought against the BloodHunters. We even fought against the High Council. We did fight our wars. This...this isn't solely her war. She didn't start it."

"No. Really, you did by not killing Oran all those years ago."

Sighing, Logan nodded. "You're right. The consequences of my actions all those years ago caught up. I thought I could take them out and I thought if I was stronger and better, that I could do it alone." His eyes met Auri's. "But I was wrong. That lust for strength was my downfall and the consequences ended up being far more severe than I ever could have imagined. For that, I am sorry."

"It's a little too fucking late, don't you think, Dad." Vale sneered.

I put my hand on his leg and squeezed but he knocked my hand aside. Shame and sadness filled me, Faris whimpering in the back of my mind. A foot touched my leg and I looked up to see Auri giving me a small smile. Her gaze then snapped to Vale and her brow furrowed.

"What does it matter, Vale? Unfortunately, all of us have had to clean up the messes of the previous Kings. It's not easy being a leader. It's not easy making those decisions. It's also not fair but that's life. Don't take it out on your father or me for that matter. I've been trying to help behind the scenes. You have your leadership, your family, and your pack backing you now. Me being there was a crutch and I could do more in the field. You've managed to somewhat clean up the packs. You also have a tentative treaty with the other races. That was your doing, Vale. You managed that."

"I still needed your help!"

Auri leaned forward. "And I gave it! I didn't have to send Uriel to you. I didn't have to narrow down the places that Oran was hiding like the rat he is. You've done all this but you've been pruning weeds instead of taking it out at the roots."

Vale scoffed. "You've done nothing but shed light on how awful you and Dad's leadership really was. You've done

nothing but prove your own incompetence.”

Auri closed her eyes and sighed. Hector moved his chair back and got up. He poured a glass of wine and brought it back to the table, setting it in front of her. No one dared to say anything. She finally opened her eyes, her amber eyes looking at Vale.

“What are you looking for from me, Vale? I understand you’re angry. I understand you feel like I abandoned you. I can’t go back and change those feelings. Apparently, I can’t reason with you either. So what are you looking for from me?”

Vale was taken back by her question. He reached out and tapped the edge of his beer bottle against the table. Part of me knew his feelings were justified. Auri hadn’t called, hadn’t checked in, hadn’t done anything to reach out to Vale for years. All of us were left in the dark, only to watch the wake of destruction before she disappeared completely. He deserved to at least talk to her at some point. Now, though, he was acting like a petulant child.

‘Vale? Did you...?’

The mind link snapped shut on me and I physically recoiled. He didn’t look at me though, his brow furrowed as he started at the bottle in his hand.

“I want my mom back.”

Auri cocked her head to the side. “Vale, I’m here...”

"No. I don't know you. You can talk. You look younger than I am. You have no scars. You're not blind. Everything that makes you my mom is gone. I don't know..." His hand motioned to her dismissively. "...this. This person...I don't know. It's like you've just decided to wipe away your identity. Like you've been gone this whole time, off being happy for once as this new you. Leaving your scars behind."

Auri reared her head back as though Vale had slapped her. Tears filled her eyes and I'd seen her cry before, but it wasn't often. Usually, it was when she spoke of the past. Everyone was gobsmacked at what Vale said. Logan was the only one not looking at the two of them. His head was down, a frown plastered his face.

"Vale, how could you say that? You know what your mom went through...she was in hands of Oran. Just like I was. Months she was stuck..."

Vale turned to me. "How do we know she was tortured? Or done whatever to? There isn't anything wrong with her. She is apparently all healed and better than ever. Hell, I don't even know if you went through..."

My fist connected with his cheekbone before he finished the sentence. My chair had fallen back and my chest was heaving. Faris was growling and baring our teeth at our mate.

"Don't you fucking dare, Vale. You know what I've been through because I've showed it to you! Is that what it's going

to take? For your mom to let you live the pain she went through? Because I bet you my title that what she went through was far worse than anything I did." Vale was clutching his left cheek, looking at me wide-eyed. "I get that you're upset. I can understand your feelings. I feel them coming from you. But you don't get to minimize the suffering of others just because we don't look like we've suffered. That's heartless."

"I...I just..."

Tears filled my eyes and I shook my head. "Fuck you."

Turning, I walked around my chair and headed down the stairs. I almost ran into one of the girls bringing food up the stairs. I apologized, first in English and then amended to Italian, before walking out of the restaurant. It was a struggle as I fought against the flow of festival-goers heading to the main road but I managed to get into the lesser populated roads. Pulling up my phone, I called a taxi and continued to make my way further away from the festival to make it easier on the taxi to get to me.

Once the taxi pulled up to where I was waiting on the corner of two major streets, I gave him the address of the pack house and settled back in the seat for the ride. Vale was completely out of line. I deserved his anger and so did Auri. We all made our choices and unfortunately our relationships would now suffer until we managed to mend them but that didn't give him the right to be cruel. Not when I had been

through so much and I couldn't imagine the pain that Auri had gone through.

Looking down at my hand, it was red and still shaking. I held it tightly with my other and looked out the window of the car. Faris whined in the back of my head and I sighed.

'I know. We'll figure it out. He's our mate. It will work out. Eventually.'



**MishanAngel** Author

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*Hey guys! Sorry for big break. I'm working on it! After a month filled with doctors visits and hospital visits for my little 8mo old, I think we've settled into a more comfortable weekly schedule moving forward. So look out for more updates, sooner rather than later! Also, check out my socials.*

*I'll honestly say, I hate social media but I know it's important to keep people updated and have information about upcoming books or chapters or anything like that. SO! I am working on being better with that. I intend to post on the insta and the X when new chapters are posted. I also decided to do like a Weekly Update as well of what I was working on that week and any information I wanted to give out. That will go up on the insta. You can see that under MishanAngel!*

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