Chapter 116

I hadn't learned anything. I hadn't learned a single damn thing. If anything, I regressed back to when I was a pup. Laying on back, my chest was heaving and I felt so much pain everywhere. Hector was sweating but I'm not sure I even hit him hard enough to bruise him. Instead, I felt like I was dying. Waving a hand in the air, I shook my head.

"I...can't...you win...holy..." I coughed, shaking my head.

Hector laughed and came over, holding out his hand from me to take it. "You did good. You held your own."

Scoffing, I reached out and put my hand in his. He pulled me up and I groaned, grabbing my side as I felt my muscles shift. Coughing, I leaned over a little to help alleviate the pain. It didn't really help though because the last hit had thrown me painfully on my back.

"I thought...you said you were going to handicap yourself..." I huffed out, trying to catch my breath.

"I was..."

I looked up as Hector was rubbing the back of his head, his other hand on his waist. I groaned again and shook my head. It was like I never trained. His movements were so quick sometimes I couldn't even follow them.

"What was the handicap? Not hitting vital points?"

I almost jumped when Auri put her hand on my shoulder. She chuckled through her nose.

"He was holding back power, speed, and of course trying not to kill you. You're a bit rusty, Zeke."

Suddenly, a warmth radiated from her hand and I looked at it as I felt my muscles start to hurt less. My eyes widened as I realized she was using magic. Auri was using fey magic. Looking up at her, I stared at her face but she was looking at my now bare chest. After a minute, she took her hand away.

"Stretch. See if that feels better."

I did as she said and sure enough, my muscles were a little stiff, but none of them screamed at me like they had a moment before.

"Auri, that was..."

Hector squeezed my shoulder before patting me on the back. "Keep that to yourself for now." He eyed her. "Usually, we don't use it durning training."

She huffed. "You beat him up. That was mean. Next time, use Vale."

I barked out a laugh. "Good luck with that one. He's not been training as much. More than before but not quite as much as he should."

Auri waggled her eyebrows up and down. "Maybe I should..."

"You will do no such thing, Princess. You can't kill the Alpha King just because you wanted a quick sparing session."

Hector was chuckling and Auri huffed. "Fine, fine. You're no fun, Papa."

It was so odd. Seeing this younger version of Auri. Sure, I'd seen photos of her with Bryan, Hector and Logan when they were younger. Standing in front of their old pack house or just together doing things. She was beautiful. Here, in the sun of the day instead of the dark club, it was so different. Her smile and the light in her eyes, said so much. They were exactly Vale's color and it was a bit shocking to see how much they were alike.

Without the scars, and almost like the past stripped away, she was easily Vale's twin or even younger sister. There were so many questions swirling around my head. All of them disappeared when Auri flicked the center of my forehead.

"Ask your questions later."

I snorted. "That obvious?"

She shook her head. "You were projecting, sweetheart. I could hear your thoughts."

My eyes widened and my face turned red. "Sorry. I didn't mean to."

"I know. Just be careful. I'm…a little more sensitive now to peoples thoughts and sometimes if I'm not careful, I end up reading them. But you shouting them at me isn't helping."

I nodded. "Got it."

"I'm glad you made up with Vale though. I was worried about that."

"I'm not sure if we made up yet. He's just not throwing me in the dungeon. Yet."

She laughed and looped her arm in mine. "How about we make breakfast for everyone? It's always a feat trying to feed all the kids. Then we can talk?"

"Sounds good."

We headed up into the house and she waved at Hector and Morgan. "Keep the kids busy while we make breakfast!"

"I want pancakes!"

"No, waffles!"

"No, oatmeal!"

Everyone seemed to groan at that suggestion.

"We aren't haven't oatmeal again, Felicity. We aren't old people."

The entire group laughed but the sound quieted down as I shut the glass door when we walked into the house. Auri

was already mulling around the kitchen, looking for ingredients. I walked in after her and pulled out some of the fruit I had in the fridge as well as on the counter.

"What do you think? You've got plenty of ingredients here. Definitely enough to make the horde we have to feed not go hungry."

I chuckled. "I'm not sure. I don't think I've ever fed this many people. I mean, your pups, plus you and Hector make nine. Vale and I, plus our pups makes fifteen. Bryan, Logan, Týr, and Jax make nineteen…" The number seemed too big to fathom.

"Don't forget Papa. He makes twenty."

Shaking my head, I pinched the bridge of my nose. "Nine. Nine pups."

She chuckled as I watched her take out a few different pans and our mixer. "Not all of them are pups. And not all a single one of them isn't a mix of something."

My eyes widened. "A mix? Like a mix of magical races?"

I watched her as she took out a ton of ingredients and started to work. "I think we could do crepes, with fresh cream. You have a few containers of heavy cream that look like they are going to expire soon. Then have some fruit. I have juice for my kids. You have some for yours. We might need something else though…a protein? Like bacon or sausage?"

Leaning down, I took three packets of frozen bacon out of our freezer drawer. "I have this but it isn't thawed."

Handing it to her, as soon as she touched it, I watched as the frost melted away and the packets heat up to look like they just came out of the fridge instead of the freezer.

"Perfect! Thank you! I think that should be okay. We don't normally eat a huge breakfast, so this should hold everyone over."

"Auri."

I stared at her as she looked up at me from pouring some flour in a bowl. "Yes, Zeke. A mix of magical races. All of them. Including Hector and I."

My eyes widened and I watched her as she started to mix a batter together. "Including you and Hector? What does that mean?"

"It means, Oran wasn't out to only torture us. He's a scientist, and a mad one at that. He wanted to build…" She paused, her mouth turned into a frown. "He was trying to create a master race or something. Who the hell knows what's going on in his head. But his labs were set up to do just that. Those kids out there…" Auri looked up and out the window at all the kids dogpiling on Hector and Morgan. " They all have been through hell, but only were alive because some small part of his experiment worked."

"Then I..."

Her eyes met mine. "You weren't there long enough for them to strip you of everything before they started to experiment. Luckily, they would test your compatibility as well, which takes time. Not that they wouldn't have used you. They would have. It just wouldn't be as extensive as..."

"As what?"

We both turned our heads at Vale who was walking towards us. I hadn't even heard him come down the stairs. I wondered how much of the conversation he had listen to.

"As he did with Hector and I."

Vale came over and kissed me on the cheek before he grabbed some coffee and walked over the door. "So he experimented on you?"

There was a slight relief I felt after he kissed me. Part of me worried that he was too drunk to remember that he wasn't as mad or angry with me as he had been. The kiss was a bit of an offering of peace and a weight lifted off my shoulders.

"Yes." Auri turned around, facing away from him as she started to pour the batter into the pan for the crepes. "Zeke, sweetheart, do you mind starting to whip the cream?"

I nodded and walked behind her to where she had set out the mixer and the multiple cartons of heaving whipping cream. I started to pour them in and whip on a low speed.

“Add some sugar and a little vanilla too. That will make it extra good.” Auri leaned back and set the bag of sugar and the little bottle of vanilla next to me.

“Can I help?” Vale came over and rolled up his sleeves.

Auri pointed to all the fruit on the counter. “Those need to be cut up into bite-sized for the kids. But keep them separate.”

Vale laughed. “I know. Reagan is such a picky eater sometimes. She hates anything touching.”

“Oh goddess, Fel, Wendy and Bast were the worst for the longest time. I swear. I had it easy with you kids.”

Vale chuckled. “Mother, we just felt bad when you were in the kitchen. Everyone used to say how good your cooking was despite being blind and so we felt bad that even if we didn’t like it you had to go through so much more trouble to make it.”

Auri snorted out a laugh. “Whatever worked. Glad my disabilities were good for something.”

Vale and I laughed with her. I set the mixer to high and we lapsed into a silence for a while as we cooked. Auri had the biggest pile of crepes I’d ever seen and it look me four batches to finish off the heavy cream. Vale had chopped all the different fruit and put them into bowls, setting them on the bar when he was done.

"Where are we going to put everyone?"

Auri chuckled. "I thought we could sit outside. It's a nice day."

"We don't have the chairs or the table and I'm not sure I want the kids sitting on the grass."

Shaking her head, Auri tapped my shoulder. "Take over. I'll get us a table."

I switched with her, and watched as the crepe cooked in the pan. Vale was quiet until the door shut as Auri walked outside.

"What is she going to do? Conjure a table out of thin air?"

Flipping the crepe and adding it to the pile she had going on the side, I stood next to him. Our eyes were on her as she stretched her arms over her head before cracking her knuckles. Sure enough, we watched as a tree sprouted and grew right in the middle of the deck. It spread out wide and flat as it created a table in the shape of a U that all of us could sit at. Vale dropped the knife on the counter and it clattered against it. My eyes were glued on the beautiful table that just had been grown for us.
"Apparently, that's exactly what she was going to do."