

Chapter 11 The Moonlight Ball

ELIANA.

"Shit!" I cursed, immediately throwing myself to the ground as I crawled behind the table, making my way into the curtains that split halfway across the room. I was panting heavily from my lips although I tried my best to be silent. The door was left open for a while.

Someone had walked in.

My heart pounded against my chest as I clutched my lips with my hands. I heard the sound of approaching footsteps move even closer and terror creeped into my eyes. I remained as still as a sculpture as a shadow drew across the room, heading toward my father.

It was when I peeked a second time that I saw her.

"Nora?" A soft gasp escaped my lips. She walked right to him with her face buried into a book in her hands. But she halted when she got to my dad's table—our dad's table. The thing is after my mum died, Sienna bore two more children for my father—one was Jaxon, and the other, about twenty years old now was Nora.

She could be quite invisible in the Pack, usually just throwing her complete self into whatever book she was reading at that time. It was all she ever did for the short time I knew her but she was different now.

Her hair was a darker shade of brown, long and fluffy across her shoulders and she was dressed in an emerald blue gown to suit the theme of the night. I could how much she dreaded it with each step she took. She was quite relieved to be away from the dance floor.

But she did more than take a deep breath as soon as the door closed.

She halted for a moment as if trying to sniff out a distinct scent in the room, she could sense that someone else was there, someone close. I wasn't sure how sharp her wolf was or whether or not she'd even gotten it but in that moment, I was afraid.

I remained as quiet as I could out of fear that she'd be able to sniff me out. Silence ravaged the atmosphere until some footsteps were heard from the room above. Nora resumed whatever she was doing, perhaps admitting that the scent was probably coming from upstairs.

I heaved a sigh of relief.

She placed the heavy spined book that she was reading on my father's bed stand and she pulled out something from her pocket. On her left side, she poured him a glass of water but in her right hand was a sachet of something. Something powdery that she emptied into my dad's glass.

He wasn't looking, his eyes were faced down or maybe he didn't care.

Nora was quick, handing him the glass of water and then throwing glances nervously around the room. "Here" Her voice echoed and she stuffed the glass between his lips, emptying the water down his throat. My father choked for a second but she helped by patting down his back.

Finishing the entire glass was no easy feat so when she was gone, Nora placed the empty to the table and threw whatever that was in her hands into the trash. She smothered her dress for a second in the mirror before she walked out of the room.

As soon as she closed the door, a heavy exhale fled my lips. I didn't notice how much I was holding my breath until she left. So as I climbed from behind the curtain, I panted slowly. The first thing I did was walk up to my dad and I had to hold his head up because of how terribly sleepy he'd gotten in a matter of seconds.

My eyes darted to the glass and I picked it up.

There was something in there, something that she'd given him. And I knew better than to assume it was his medicine because of how suspiciously she threw glances over her shoulder. I walked to the trash and picked up the sachet of whatever she poured into his drink.

And my heart stomped with a realization.

Could they have been poisoning him all this time?

"Dad!" I grasped his hands, shaking him a little but his head fell back and his eyes closed. "Shit" I cursed, slipping it into my pocket. I was about to get out anyway when my eyes suddenly caught something across the table—it was Nora's book which she had forgotten behind.

My heart seized in my chest as I looked back at the door. "Shit!"

I wasn't quick this time because immediately the doors drew open again, Nora walked in and her eyes locked into mine. She screamed like she'd seen a ghost while sheer horror plastered across my face.

"What...what are you doing here?" She stuttered, reaching for her phone but I picked up my pace and brushed past her shoulders. I ran out of the room and down the corridors, heavy breaths echoing from my lips as I grasped the ends of my gown.

Nora should have never seen me.

if she knew I was back in Oakland, it wouldn't take long until Jaxon did too. My heart was pounding and a migraine steered through my head, so the million thoughts that raced through it. But I didn't stop running, in and out the doors, gliding through the bodies across the Ballroom floor.

Sprinting down the stairs, I weaved through the labyrinthine mass of people, my hair flying behind me like a flag of desperation. I threw several glances back and one too many times, I swear I saw a flash of Nora's eyes far behind. But yet it was as if I could feel her breath on my neck.

I focused on increasing my speed and getting out of there as fast as I could. Before I came flooding out the front doors, I brought out my phone to dial Adams so he could bring the car up front. But he wasn't picking.

Adrenaline burned through my veins as I ran out onto the roads and looking around, he was nowhere to be found. Neither was picking up his phone. I came to a halt for a second, running my hands through my hair.

My heart was beating so fast that it could jump out of my throat at any time. The street was dark, even with the lights that dimly shone. It wasn't safe here. "Fuck! Fuck" I cursed. Where the hell was Adams?

I threw myself behind nearby shrubs, from where I saw Nora run out the same doors I'd come out from. Panting heavily, she looked around and I could tell she still searched for me, only missing me by a hair's breadth.

I watched as she placed her phone against her ears.

"You wouldn't believe who I just saw," Nora muttered to whoever was on the other end of the line but most likely, it was her brother, Jaxon. They were usually so close and inseparable.

And even though she hated the Pack and everything that came with it, she also loved her brother, some might even say to a fault. So much that she would do anything for him. She could kill for him.

Which was why it was so terrible that she'd seen me in the first place.

I closed my eyes, drawing myself up the shrubs. I couldn't take the road back home, it was too risky. So I stuck to the forest until I was able to get a hold of Adams. I called him again, the umpteenth time that night but he still didn't pick up.

"I'll be waiting for you" He had assured before leaving and it was unlike him to not keep to his word. A bolt of panic flashed across my face in that second. I kept calling him as I dragged my feet across the earth. It was awfully quiet here, besides the creaking of the crickets and the birds chirping in the trees, the whistling waves in the nearby river.

I walked more and more into the chilly night, folding my arms across my chest. Minutes passed, and then an hour. Maybe two. I sat down on a rock, resting after walking for so long. I didn't realize how far I was from my Pack now but I could still see the fireworks light the skies from the Ball. It was well into midnight which meant the party was coming to an end, but never before a burst of fireworks would erupt, commemorating that the Alpha had found his bride.

I wondered for a moment who the unfortunate woman was and dreaded what life she was about to live. They were celebrating Jaxon tonight and it left a bitter taste in the back of my throat, knowing he'd just moved on with his life after all the terrible things he'd done to me.

It rubbed me off the wrong way that he was even celebrated at all.

Monsters like him should be exiled and punished for all their wrongdoings, not hailed as the next-in-line Alpha. But I get it, like Nana said, they were all scared of Jaxon. And there was a time in my life when I was afraid of him too, more than anything else.

But he not only drew the line by trying to take everything that belonged to us, but by—I pulled out the empty sachet of white powder that Nora had poured into my father's drink—it was possible that all this time, it had been them poisoning him.

It would make sense as to why no one knew what was wrong with him.

But I wondered what Nora stood to gain as she wasn't even interested in Pack hierarchy and titles and all of that. But like I said, she could kill for her brother, and by now, it was no question that she'd told him about me.

Barely drawn into my thoughts, I noticed something immediately dash across the corner of my eyes. I sprang from the rock, looking tensely over my shoulders. A sharp scent trickled up my nose, one I wasn't quite able to decipher because of how quickly it whistled past.

But the air in the forest had suddenly grown tense and my stomach tied into a knot. I looked around me as the moon cast its ominous glow over the tangled trees. Something in my gut prompted me to immediately start running again which I did.

Slowly, I picked up my pace as adrenaline fired in my heart. Sprinting through the underbrush, I could feel something trailing right behind me.

Was it Nora? Did she find me?

Ot was it Jaxon?

I ran through the woods, my panicked breaths mixing with the haunting howls that echoed through the trees just then—it was a Wolf, I realized and that made me even more scared. As I ran, my heart pounded against my sternum, beating like a drum.

None of this would've happened if Adam had picked up his call.

"Help!" I wasn't sure what I was yelling out for, but it was the obvious thing to do. I didn't want to die, I didn't want to be devoured by whatever was behind me. "Somebody help!" I screamed at the top of my lungs as tears formed in my eyes.

One moment when I glanced back, I caught its lucid eyes through my blurry vision and it all happened so fast. The wolf lunged itself at me and I tumbled across the earth. I tried to fight it off, kicking and screaming but its hot, rancid breath seemed to singe the nape of my neck.

Twigs snapped and leaves rustled as I came tumbling down. I caught a glimpse of its ferocious eyes but then I realized we were headed toward the edge of the cliff. "No!" I screamed, trying to maneuver my way around its beastly frame. I closed my eyes as my life flashed behind them.

I came really close to falling over but then I came to a sharp halt.

And as soon as I felt a hand wrapped around mine, it hit me. That touch, that sensation buried in the depths of my heart that I hadn't felt since six years ago. It hit me like a storm in my face. I was too scared to open my eyes but I felt my body being lifted up in the air.

As soon as my feet grazed the ground, the air was still against my skin and there was a sharp sting where I'd wounded myself. Finally, I opened my eyes, and his aura enclosed around me like a compelling shell. I heaved a deep breath out of my lips as I turned around.

And when our eyes met across the forest, the fireworks hit the skies in that moment and time itself seemed to pause. A torrent of emotions surged within me. He was human now, breathing heavily from lips as his gaze intensely stared at me.

"Denver" I called his name softly as tears welled in my eyes. I wasn't sure why they did or whether or not this was even real.

He was just standing there and my heart fluttered in a way that it had never done before. He had changed but not so much that I wouldn't recognize him. And then finally, he parted his lips to speak.

"It's you." His voice thundered with a furrow coming between his brows and a hard lump slipped down my throat. "It's really you." He echoed.