CHAPTER 7-2

Axel sat there, his gaze fixed on me. As soon as he finished his beer, my father swiftly grabbed another from the fridge. It was only then that I peeked inside and noticed it was packed with beer—more alcohol than food—which made sense given Martha's recent outbursts.

"Everyone, get out," Axel commanded.

People started to shuffle out of the room, and I got up to leave as well. But as I passed by Axel, he reached out and wrapped his arm around my waist, halting me. "Except for you," he added.

"Well, you said 'everyone,'" I countered, settling back into my chair across from him.

He continued to fixate on me, as if trying to piece together something puzzling, though it was clear he was struggling.

"You're not afraid of me," he remarked.

"Your reputation certainly precedes you, but you don't come across as as intimidating as people say," I shot back.

"How can you be so sure? We've just met. You have no idea what I'm capable of," he replied.

"I know exactly what you're capable of, but that doesn't mean I'm afraid. I don't believe you're going to hurt me," I replied.

"You're hiding a fugitive. Why wouldn't I hurt you?" he countered.

"I'm not hiding anyone. I told you where he was. I didn't call before because I was freaking out about it all day," I explained.

"You didn't hesitate when I asked you," he pointed out.

"I'm not going to die because of him. I simply don't care about him enough," I insisted. He nodded slightly, his expression unchanged.

"Are you scared at all?" he inquired.

"Only if Atticus isn't at the cabin. That's where I sent him, but I have no way of knowing if he stayed there," I said.

"Alright. We'll find out soon enough," he replied.

"Does Alpha Gideon know you're here?" I asked.

"He does," Alpha Axel confirmed.

I could sense something was bothering him, but he wasn't sharing. He remained focused on me while I leaned back in the chair, meeting his gaze.

"You're looking me in the eye as we talk," he remarked.

"Yeah? So what?" I replied.

"No one ever does that," he said.

"Is that supposed to scare me?" I asked, raising an eyebrow.

"No, it's just the truth," he replied.

With his shoulder-length curly brown hair and dark goatee, I had to admit—he was quite attractive.

After finishing his beer, Alpha Axel stood up to grab another from the fridge, but I noticed he was curiously scanning the kitchen. When he returned to his seat, it was the first time his gaze wasn't fixed on me; instead, he was inspecting the cabinets.

"Why are there locks on all the cabinets?" he asked, glancing around the room.

"Martha doesn't want me helping myself to their food when they're not around," I shrugged, trying to downplay it as no big deal.

"What?" he replied, looking puzzled.

"She doesn't want me eating their food," I reiterated.

"What do you eat, then?" he inquired, genuinely curious.

"Whatever I can buy with the money I earn from work. I've got a mini fridge and a few other items in my room that I picked up myself. I've even set up a little kitchenette in there so I can make my own coffee," I explained.

"They really expect you to live like this? You're not supposed to be treated this way at 17," he said, his eyes momentarily flashing black before returning to their rich forest green. I shrugged it off.

He didn't look happy; in fact, he seemed a bit angry as he glanced again at all the locks on the cupboards. I noticed his eyes glaze over, realizing he was mind-linking with his warriors.

"Well, it's your lucky day. They found Atticus," he said, refocusing on me.

"What are you going to do about him now?" I asked.

"I'm not sure yet. But you need to start packing," he ordered, standing up and looking down at me.

"What?" I exclaimed in disbelief.

"You're going to your room to pack your things. You're coming home with us," he insisted.

"What if I don't want to?" I countered.

"Why would you want to stay here with all of this?" he asked, gesturing toward the kitchen cabinets.

"Maybe I have friends here that I don't want to leave and a job that I enjoy," I responded.

"I don't care. You're coming home with us. Now go pack. I'll be waiting out front," he said, moving toward the door. He paused to watch me head down the hallway to my room before stepping outside.

I shut my door, grabbed a suitcase, and began urgently tossing my things onto the bed. Then I paused, retrieved my savings box, took out all the cash, and stuffed it into my bag. Peeking out the window to ensure that Axel's crew was nowhere in sight, I quietly climbed out and hurried away from the house,

+5 Points

hoping to stay out of their view.

I kept running until I was confident they were well behind me. Eventually, I spotted a house. After taking a moment to gather my thoughts, I walked up to the front door and knocked.

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