

### 3. Cold chains, cold rage

Alana.

“No, please! Leave me alone!” I cried when I woke up in the middle of the night and saw my father's guards putting chains on my ankles and wrists. “What are you doing?! Please, stop! It hurts! It hurts!”

But no matter how hard I begged them to stop, no one was listening to me. It's always been like this. I am like their toy, not that I have one to play with but Sophia mentioned to me about it and I exactly felt the same.

“Shut up, will you!” My stepmother hissed, revealing herself from the dark covering her nose to prevent the shitty smell that I have from reaching her. “You need to be bound to the chains before you run wild and disrupt the banquet for the alpha prince.”

My tears fell. How can she even think about that when I am already locked in here? I hate the chains. Their cold temperature gives me rashes and that feeling of more loneliness. I remembered that my father used to put chains around my neck to prevent me from eating and swallowing.

“But I am not going anywhere else in this prison. Please, don't tie me up like this. Don't treat me like an animal.”

My stepmom's face glowed when I said that. I think I even saw her smile at me. “But you are an animal, Alana. You killed your own mother, remember? You are a killer at such a young age so we are just making sure that you can't do anything possible. These chains will not be broken by a monster like you no matter what you do.”

I shook my head desperately while the guards were putting more chains on my wrists. “I am not a monster. I am not a monster!”

I recalled my father telling me that I am a murderer and that I killed my own mother.

“I did not kill mom. Please believe me! Please.”

I moved from side to side trying to break free from the chains so one of the guards handed my stepmother a leash and she started whipping me.

“Argh!” My fresh wounds reopened again with her every strike and I could only whimper in pain.

“You are a monster and a devil incarnate! You are cursed and you are not going to transfer your unluckiness to my daughter, you understand me?!” She released another batch of strikes, uncaring about my cries of pain. “She is going to be the alpha prince's wife!”

I breathed hard while shutting my eyes tight.

“I do not understand you. I will never be a hindrance to Sophia because I am imprisoned here. I do not even have an idea how to live outside.”

She lifted my head using the sole of her high-heeled shoe. “And you should be. A creature like you is no match for my daughter Sophia!”

Her sharp heel pierced my chin, causing an abrasion there.

“Tighten the chains! Make sure she cannot escape from it no matter what!” she ordered the waiting guards who quickly got on their heels and tightened the chains on my feet, making me bleed more than I already was.

“Done luna!” they said in chorus.

“Ahh! Please, loosen them up a bit! Please! I am begging you!” I cried when I felt the chain poking at my bones.

I'm used to feeling pain but this one is especially painful.

Minerva caught my hair and used it so I could look at her eyes.

“If you do not shut your mouth, then I am going to tighten it even more and I will tell your father just how hard-headed you are. You want that, huh?”

Just thinking about my father beating me again stops my sobs. His whip is more painful because he is stronger but more than that, what makes me more scared and sad is the fact that my own father is doing it to me.

“No... no!”

Minerva grinned. “You want to get beaten?!”

I shook my head erratically and buried my face in the dirt. “No!”

She let go of my hand and stood up.

“Good, now you'd better stay here and shut your ugly mouth.”

Before she leaves, I raise my eyes that are already blurred from the cuts on them.

“Why are you doing this to me? Why are you treating me so badly?”

I've been meaning to ask her that since she began maltreating me. Did I ever do something bad to her? I did not remember anything. I wasn't even there at her wedding with my father. Was I mean to her daughter? Never because all I wanted to do was to play with Sophia; that never happened because she hated me to the core.

Minerva stopped moving and turned back to me.

“Because your father does the same thing to you. You, Alana, are the biggest curse of his life, that's why he hates you.”

My tears fell. “But I am his daughter too, right? He is my father.”

She laughed maniacally. “You still think like that after what he did to you? No Alana. You are no longer his daughter. Sophia is his only daughter now. Look at yourself. You are ugly, smelly, and dirty. No one would be able to love you no matter what. Anyone who tells you otherwise is only fooling you.”

My innocent eyes watered as insecurity hugged me tight. I am motherless and now fatherless. No one will love me. No one will ever love me now.

“R-Really?” My voice cracked and I stopped struggling against the chains.

“Really so be a good girl and shut your mouth here while we entertain the alpha prince outside. Remember, no matter what happens, do not answer anyone's question, you heard me?”

I silently nodded. No one will ever love me. No one will. My own father wasn't even able to do that so will other people. I am the most unlovable person in the entire world.

“Okay Minerva,” I agreed in a whisper.

No reason for going against it.

“Good and you can't die yet, okay? We still need you so hang in there, our little doggy, understand?”

Dog. That is all I ever am to them. And I will continue to be for the rest of my time.

William.

The second the door opened, a big hand clutched my heart and did not let go until I surveyed the whole room. I felt the sweet fragrant smell in the room that overpowered the scent of combined blood and rotten food on the floor.

“No way...” I continued uttering as I stepped into the room, my heart beating like crazy. “There is no way I would find her here in this doomed place.”

“Alpha prince,” Lucas stopped me from entering. “Do not come inside the room. This is a new place and even if it's under your father's domain, we still don't know much about this mansion. A trap inside could be waiting for you.”

“Let me go, Lucas. I have to confirm something inside. Her scent is calling for me.”

He gasped in shock reading the excitement in my eyes. “Don't tell me you found her already in this kind of place? Who would be able to survive in this kind of place, alpha prince? Surely, she is a servant, a slave, or an abused woman.”

I clenched my jaw and my face darkened when I heard that. That is possible! My heart twisted into a deep pity for whoever is inside the room and cold rage for those who did this.

“That, I have to find out.”

I entered the room without hesitation, without any light and wearing only my yearning heart.

The smell intensified and it's like I have already tasted a slice of heaven. I swallowed as I went into the room, surprised that I could almost sense a pulse.

I reached the wall and felt it with my palms taking in the heavenly smell before smashing the wall with my own fists.

“Alpha prince! No!” Hephaestus yelled but it was too late.

The wall has been destroyed and inside a tiny compartment, in the darkest room I've ever seen, was the woman I have been looking for the whole of my lifetime.

“Mate...” I snarled and ran to her but I stopped dead in my tracks when I saw her in her worst condition.

The woman with the longest hair I've ever seen covering the whole of her face is on the dirty black floor, chained to the ground without any consciousness. Her body is only clothed with a small garment that has been worn out in age, showing the cuts and injuries she sustained from obvious whips of abuse.

My whole body trembled as I scooped her up in my arms, not knowing what to say or do.

My only mate, whom I have waited for decades and prayed for the moon goddess to give me, is in the worst kind of situation I've ever witnessed. Surely, death is the easiest punishment for all of them!

Slowly, I turned around to the pale Hephaestus, my eyes burning with anger.

“Who on the fuckin' earth did this?! Tell me now!”