

Chapter 50

I walked across the ballroom, not seeing anyone other than Emanuel and Iliana. Her chest pushed out when she drew a sharp breath watching me fight my way through the crowd. Her brown eyes turned round as they glimmered like a hundred diamonds and she reached out her arms.

"Hazel, oh thank the gods,"

We embraced in a hug that felt like it would never end. I wouldn't mind if it didn't.

"I was so worried about you," she whispered. Iliana moved her head, her hands tightened around me and I felt her heart beating manically. Her hold wasn't entirely out of love and worry, there was something desperate in the way that she clambered onto me and didn't let go. Something frightening made her hold on, and I wasn't going to let her go. I wanted her to feel safe with me.

"Do you know why I'm here?" Her voice was barely a whisper, I only heard certain words and had to puzzle the others in on my own.

Trixy was with me, eagerly awaiting an expiation and when I pulled back I could feel my heart physically dropping.

She stepped back next to Emanuel whose eyes were narrowed and his features were tense. He hadn't made a joke yet, the clown of all Alphas, the one who would lay down the world from his shoulders to make you smile for even a second and pretend that all was alright.

"Is everything alright with you two?" I asked.

Iliana circled her arm in Emanuel's and he pulled her close.

They were both visibly tense and worried. Emanuel kept looking around like he was waiting for someone to attack and he had a strong smell of cologne when usually he'd reek of bourbon at functions such as this.

Without sparing me a glance, Emanuel turned to Iliana, "I'll be right back," he said and squeezed her hand before walking off to join the other Alphas and make his presence known to the council members.

I felt the worry and ominous glances from Iliana and waited for her to speak up.

Her eyes darted back and forth like they were following a ball that bounced around the room and I couldn't tell what she was watching. They eventually stopped, zeroed in on someone behind me, and widened with fear dripping down her reddened face.

I knew who it was without turning around. The way that the hairs rose on the back of my neck and a chill ran down my spine from the energy he emanated. The satanic ways that he enjoyed inflicting pain weren't necessarily locked into physical abuse, it was the way that he played with your mind, got into your head like a bug, and twisted your notion of reality.

Nevertheless, I looked over my shoulder - Darian was still standing with the council members and they were talking amongst each other, laughing as only rich powerful men could, but Darian's eyes were ruthlessly searching Ilianas.

There was no way that I was letting him get to her again. I might just be a toy to him, his puppet, but I knew that with this many important people around he couldn't afford to screw shit up which meant that I, for once, held some power.

I grabbed her arm and pulled her behind me, past the groups of people who reached out their hands wanting to introduce themselves, and out into the hallway which led to a smaller den. The wall was rounded and the space was empty except for a small tabletop with a lamp on it.

Iliana's lip quivered like a leaf and she hugged her arms, gently stroking them to self-soothe.

"What is going on?" I asked more sternly.

She had to tell me or else I couldn't help her. But she didn't need to worry, I wouldn't let anything happen to her, she knows that right?

Though it did make me wonder; if she were so afraid, why did she come?

"Normally at this ball, the Alpha's are free to choose which mate they want to bring after the Hunt. It's never had to be the chosen one from the latest Hunt."

She was saying things that I was already aware of. Everyone was aware of this. This ball was talked about everywhere amongst pack members and many dream of one day being present for it.

"Right and Emanuel chose to bring you," I smiled when I spoke, glad that Emanuel had decided to bring her.

But Iliana shook her head so slowly that I thought she was going in slow motion.

She looked around one last time to make sure we were alone and leaned in.

"He was told to bring me specifically. The invitation was very clear—"

The tapping of light steps came closer to the den and I hated how scared she got. I grabbed her arm and pulled her close, I wanted her to feel safe in my company. I would never let Darian touch her again and seeing the fear he's instilled in her only further proved the type of man he was. With a core of pure evil and a passion for inflicting pain, everything he touched quivered beneath him and only when you were drowning in pain would he pull you up long enough to draw a breath before dunking your head back down.

From around the corner of the hallway, Elise came in. She stopped and did a shake of her head when she saw us, startled by there being other people here. Elise took in Iliana's appearance and her soft smile quickly turned sour like a mother who'd seen a wounded pup.

"What is wrong, my dear?" She reached out her warming hands around Iliana's shoulders, standing beside her and tossing me a worried glance.

"Nothing, I'm okay. I should get back," Iliana stressed and smiled but it wasn't her smile, not the one that reached her eyes and made her tinted cheeks look like glossy cherries as they rose.

"You will do no such thing, come with me and we'll get some more refreshments for the guests. You look like you could use a break from the lot of them,"

Something about Elise's voice soothed you without her even trying. The warmth that emitted from her felt like a tight hug and for a small amount of time, she made you feel like everything would be okay.

"Go, I'll tell Emanuel where you went and we'll continue our talk later—somewhere more private," I promised.

Iliana walked off with Elise and down the hall where I could no longer see

people here. Elise took in Iliana's appearance and her soft smile quickly turned sour like a mother who'd seen a wounded pup.

"What is wrong, my dear?" She reached out her warming hands around Iliana's shoulders, standing beside her and tossing me a worried glance.

"Nothing, I'm okay. I should get back," Iliana stressed and smiled but it wasn't her smile, not the one that reached her eyes and made her tinted cheeks look like glossy cherries as they rose.

"You will do no such thing, come with me and we'll get some more refreshments for the guests. You look like you could use a break from the lot of them,"

Something about Elise's voice soothed you without her even trying. The warmth that emitted from her felt like a tight hug and for a small amount of time, she made you feel like everything would be okay.

"Go, I'll tell Emanuel where you went and we'll continue our talk later—somewhere more private," I promised.

Iliana walked off with Elise and down the hall where I could no longer see them I heard her laugh ripple through the air, making my heart smile.



Comments



Support



Share