

Forged In The Flames Chapter 51

Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman

Chapter 51 Contemplating (Aliana's POV)

I had never been so scared in my life. My heart was thumping while I walked towards Nikolas' room. I dreaded how he would react to my request. I wished it was a lot simpler than this. I fought my tears and tried to compose myself.

I entered the room and sat to think of how I would table the matter before Nikolas. Since he took over the pack, I had dared not discuss my father with him. After speaking to Isabelle, I realised he had separated his dealings with me from my father.

It was easy because I did not get involved with how he ran the place or treated my people. I was on my best behaviour and did my best to please so my people would have an easy life.

I did not plan to fall in love and hope for a future with him, it all happened in the process, and we have been building our relationship gradually. I was worried that discussing this issue with Nikolas would cause a setback. He wasn't the type to be driven by emotions. His love for me would not make him bend where my father was concerned. I knew I was in trouble. It would be wrong to sit in silence while my father wasted away.

"We have to talk to him about it," Raven, my wolf, said while I sat on the couch to think of what to do.

"Our mother is gone; we can't afford to lose father too," She said, and tears streamed down my cheek because she was right. If I hold my tongue and refuse to speak out of fear and my father dies in the process, I will forever blame myself and hate myself for my cowardice. I would also harbour resentment towards Nikolas and not feel the same anymore. If I dared to speak to him about it, he might take offence and end our relationship. Other than his scent, nothing is connecting us. His mother would support and help him with his resolve, and that would be it. My father would still be worked to death.

I might not blame myself in that scenario, but I would still be broken.

The best case was that he listens and sees reason, and that scenario was the least likely.

Nikolas's hatred ran deep, and meeting Isabelle, I could see that it was in his blood to hate so deeply.

He would not let my father off the hook.

Qusack was his closest friend and had his back always. If he could decide not to listen to Qusack, then who was I to talk to him about it?

The dilemma was so profound that all I could do was weep.

I remembered the image of my father lying on the bed and wondered how much more he could take before he finally gave up. He was at his best every Saturday, hiding his problems from me. Today I saw him in his true condition, and it broke my heart.

I cried for a while and soon decided to be courageous.

I planned to talk to Nikolas about it. If he ends our relationship because of it, I will adjust and move on.

I could not remain silent, fearing that he would break my heart. My father's life was more important than my heart's desires. If my father dies, then nothing will matter. Nikolas's plan to change the law would mean nothing to me because I would have no one. There was no guarantee we would end up together. With Isabelle in the picture, anything could happen.

The whole issue made me feel sickly, and I rushed to the bathroom to throw up and shower.

That would be the second time I would be throwing up. I began to suspect I might have caught something. Visiting the werewolf hospital was important. I knew the health care system was substandard, but they should be able to run a simple blood test to determine what was wrong with me. I took a cold shower to cool down.

Ania and Lisa stayed briefly in town. They returned two hours after I had left them. They came to my room with food. None of them was chatty because they knew my predicament.

Ania placed the food tray on the table and sat beside me on the couch, where I had been since I showered. I had sat there waiting for Nikolas to return. I knew I wouldn't see him until nighttime, but I sat there gathering the courage I would need.

"How will you handle the situation?" Ania asked me, looking concerned. Lisa was plating the food, and I told her not to. The smell bothered me, but I could not tell her that. I know they had prepared the meal with love. It would be insensitive of me to tell them the food stunk. I told her I had no appetite, so she quietly put it away.

"I do not know what to do," I answered Ania, tears streaming down my cheeks.

"I am afraid. Since I have been with him, I dared not bring up my father. I have been suffering in silence. I am not happy about what he is facing, but this is just too much," I said, and she held me so I could cry.

I had just spoken my truth. I had been suffering in silence since Nikolas took charge. He had been cruel to my father, never letting up. He went easy on others but ensured my father and his officers paid dearly.

I dared not bring it up for fear that he might revoke all privileges. I also did not want it to seem like I was trying to exploit our relationship and manipulate him.

“Alpha might be cross if you bring it up, especially now that you know his reasons for his hatred,” Lisa said, and I nodded.

She was right.

It would have been easier if he wasn’t Mathia’s son. I would have braved it, but knowing who he was and what he believed made it more complicated.

“What would you do if the conversation did not go well,” Lisa said, and I understood her reasons for asking. It was always wise to brace up for the worst outcome to be prepared.

“I do not know,” I said, wiping my tears.

“I doubt I would have any option at the end. He has the upper hand,” I said, and she bowed.

“I can’t tell you to be silent and wait and see. If your father’s case worsens, you won’t forgive yourself. Still, I can’t tell you to speak up, Aliana, knowing how Alpha can sometimes be. He might take it as if you want to control him. Even his mother, whom he loved so much and carried about for nineteen years, dared not control him. I am worried about your predicament, Aliana,” Lisa said, and Ania just held me.

“Know that you will have our support no matter what. If Alpha truly loves you, he should be able to let go of his grudge to make you happy,” Ania said; I know she was telling the truth, but I had come to understand that Nikolas wasn’t the type to be controlled by his emotions. He knew how to separate things. Talking to him would be a huge risk.

Soon they left me alone. I sat on the couch, and when sleep finally came, I gave in.

I felt someone carrying me, and my eyes opened gradually. I was in Nikolas’s arms, and he was about to place me on the bed. He looked at me and smiled.

“You fell asleep on the couch.” He teased me and placed me on the bed. I managed a weak smile and sat up.

I could see that he had showered because his hair was w*et, and he was wearing only his shorts.

"How was your day?" I managed, and he sighed.

"Hectic. The military quarters in Timber are finished." He said, and I smiled.

"You must be overjoyed," I said, and he nodded. "Now, we have a training facility for warriors and a place to build weapons. There are some tools I would need to import from Hill. I just hoped the new trade deal I am going into with them would go well," He said, sounding happy.

Food was on the table, and I realised Ania and Lisa must have served the food while I was asleep. It did not smell right, but I did not speak about it.

"Come on, the food will get cold," He said, and I shook my head.

"I overate in the afternoon," I lied, and he frowned.

"Were you worried we would have dinner with my mother tonight?" He asked, and I shook my head.

It was a plausible reason, and I would have laughed under different circumstances, but I couldn't. I was preoccupied with my father's predicament and wanted to handle my strange illness alone.

"I will have to increase the working hours for the builders in Riverhead. I think they are lacking behind. The builders in Timber started their project at the same time as those in Riverhead. However, they have finished already, and the project here is still ongoing. I relaxed the laws because of you, but it seems some of them are lazy about it," He said and forked food into his mouth.

I could not speak because my father was one of the builders in Riverhead. I did not know if this was the right time to speak, but I doubted if there ever would be the right time.

"I want to discuss something with you," I said, leaving the bed. He tried to look at me from where he sat on the couch, and I walked toward him.

"What is it, Little wolf?" he asked with a smile.

My heart was beating, and I felt beads of sweat on my forehead. I was afraid that this would be it. I will cross the line tonight, and we will go back to the beginning.

The smell of the food did not help matters either, but my empty stomach assured me that I would not throw up.

"Here we go," Raven said in my head. I could feel her apprehension too. It would s*uck to say goodbye to what we have.

Forged In The Flames Chapter 52

Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman

Chapter 52 Anger and Resentment (Aliana's POV)

Nikolas raised an eyebrow waiting for me to speak. My mouth was dry, but I dared not drink water. I did not know if I should sit beside him or talk to him standing. I did not know what to do.

"What is the matter?" he asked me, sensing something was wrong.

"I..I.." I started and swallowed to compose myself properly. He put down his food and looked at me with a frown.

"I want to thank you for everything you have done for me and my people," I started, and he frowned.

"I am grateful for your kindness and leniency," I said, and he looked confused.

"Knowing who you are, I respect your kindness. I know you have every reason to be angry and hate us, especially my dad. I am grateful that you allowed us to live," I said, and he frowned at me.

"What is the meaning of this, Aliana? Did my mother say something to you?" He asked, and I shook my head.

Even though I had a lengthy conversation with his mother, with her talking for the better part of the duration, her words weren't why I was acting the way I was. I was afraid because of what I was about to tell him.

I shook my head and fought my tears. They were tears of uncertainty and fear of failure.

"No," I said and swallowed, ensuring I did not cry.

"You are a strong and powerful man, and I can never take advantage of your kindness. I can never reach for what you are unwilling to give, and I will always be content with where you place me. I will never try to manipulate you for selfish reasons or take advantage of your love towards me," I said, and he got up and advanced towards me.

He pulled me into his arms and held me.

"What is the matter, Aliana? Tell me because you are making me nervous," He said, and I bowed my head, unwilling to look into his eyes. If I did, I would lose the courage to speak, and I needed all the courage I could get.

"It is about my father," I said, and he pulled away from me. I did not look up to look at him. I had started speaking; I might as well spill.

"He isn't doing well. He can't continue to work. He will die," I said, and he was silent.

"Please find something less strenuous for him to do. I know you hate him, but he is all I have left. Please. I swear he will not plot against you or do anything to hurt you," I said and looked at him, and his face was expressionless.

I knew he was a bit annoyed, and I could feel it. "Did Qusack put you up to this?" He asked me, and I shook my head.

"I haven't seen Beta Qusack today. I went out and noticed my father was around, so I went to check on him. He had received treatment and was sleeping," I said, and he went to sit on his couch.

"And you somehow figured it was the mason's work that made him sick," He said, and I shook my head but dared not speak Israel's name. It was already going wrong.

He sighed.

"Aliana, I care about you a lot, and the only reason this relationship has thrived is that we have been able to keep our private matters out of it. I have kept my hatred for your father out of it, and you have kept his predicament out. Why do this now? Don't you think I know he is suffering? Do you think I want to make life easy for him? He killed my father. My mother and I grew up in the woods because of his mutiny. It is a miracle that I am alive. It is a miracle that my mother is alive. How can you ask me to take it easy on a man that ruined lives?" He asked me, and tears rolled down my cheeks.

"Do not do this, Aliana. Do not try to use what is between us to get me to do things I won't normally do," he said, and I shook my head.

"I will never dare it. I will never try to manipulate you. I will never try to use..." I said, and he cut in.

"So, what do you call this, Aliana?" He asked me, and I was speechless. If he put it that way, it did seem so, but I did not know what to do.

"If you were in my shoes, would you take it easy on him?" He asked, and I shook my head.

"I won't, but he is innocent," I said, ready to tell him what my father had told me.

He growled at me, and I stepped back.

He was enraged. I knew I had crossed the invisible line with my words, and there was no going back.

“Don’t you dare, Aliana,” He said, and I stepped back until my back was against the wall. Were we back to the beginning again?

“He didn’t do those things. He told me how it all happened. He didn’t,” I said, and he growled some more.

“What did he tell you?” He commanded me, and my body shuddered.

His command came with force and rage, and it made Raven cower.

“He didn’t fight your father and kill him. My father was just caught up...” I said, and he interrupted me. I looked at him, and his eyes were pure black.

“Tell me what the bastard said. Tell me what the traitor told you,” he ordered through gritted teeth, and I nodded.

“Gamma Giles believed Leon and some Lycan were trying to usurp power. Leon was your Uncle, your father’s half-brother. He wanted to be king, but your father did not know. Your father loved him,” I said, fighting the command so I could organise my words.

“My father and Giles warned your father, but he wouldn’t have it. They tried to let it go, but when they discovered they would move against your father, my father and Giles decided to intercept.

What was meant to be a series of arrests turned into a fight, and Giles killed Leon in the process.

Your father felt betrayed, and that was the beginning of the feud.

Your father did not kill Giles for the crime immediately, he wanted to investigate the matter, but all the officers implicated in the plot were killed by poison. That made your father believe the werewolves were trying to isolate him and take over. Giles and all the werewolves working in the kitchen were killed. He didn’t stop there.

Your father decided to sign the unity law. The law that he had fervently kept away from Forest. Your father was the one that sealed our fate by signing that law and making it universal, but my father knew it was because he was grieving.

King Mathias stopped funding the werewolf Military and sent them to battle with nothing but their wolves. They were dying and sent letters to complain about their condition. He did not respond to any.

As if that wasn't enough, your father planned to sign a slave trade deal. Your father planned to sell werewolves to Snow.

So, the werewolves came to my father to plead with him to help liberate them.

They only wanted to emancipate themselves from your father and settle in Woodland.

They sent him a letter saying they would like to go and live in the Woodland, away from everything. Your father did not respond, and when he finally did, he sent them a nasty letter threatening all sorts of things. The werewolves had it, so they decided to march together to the palace to demand that your father let them go to Woodland.

Unfortunately, your father thought they were coming to fight him. Because he did not have a vast army, he decided he would attack them mid-way with silver-glazed swords.

That was what caused the fight," I said.

My heart was beating fast. I hoped I did not miss any detail because I was nervous while I spoke.

"They fought, and the werewolves gained ground. Your father fought my father into the woods. My father got the upper hand but did not kill him. That was when your father realised he had been deceived, but the damage had been done.

According to my father, he believed your father never got the letters and wasn't aware of what was really going on.

Anyway, he had two options, surrender and leave or die in battle; he chose the most honourable way out.

He pierced his heart with his sword and fell on it. My father rushed to him to pull out the sword. When the others came, they believed he had killed the king because he pulled out the sword, and it was in his hands, but he was mourning his friend.

This pain has stayed with him since that day. He still weeps for his friend...." I said, and Nikolas growled.

"Lies," He yelled, and I had nothing to say.

"Please investigate before..." I said, and he growled.

"Aliana, do not make me lose my temper with you. I love you but don't push me. Not because of him," He said, and I nodded and remained still.

"Who will I ask? There is no one to tell me what really happened. Your father is lying because of what has happened. I am sure he told you this after I had taken over the

pack. If it was true, he would have told everyone the truth and not taken credit for my father's death," he said, and as plausible as it sounded, I knew my father didn't take credit for it, but he never spoke of what happened in the woods either.

"Do not make me choose, Aliana," he said calmly, and I nodded quickly because everything had gone wrong. I somehow regretted telling him.

"I won't go easy on the man that killed my father and ruined my life. I will reduce the workload not because of your story but because he spared my mother's life, and I hate that you are crying. I will reduce his workload but do not bring this up ever again, Aliana. Do not spoil my mood like you have done tonight," he warned me, and I did not know what to say.

I did not request that he reduce the workload. It would not help my father, but I figured that was the best he was willing to do.

"Since I am Idle most of the time, permit me to go and care for him. I promise I will not raise my problem where he is concerned again," I said quickly because I knew my father would need a lot of care.

Nikolas was silent.

"Is it that bad?" He finally asked me calmly and gently, but his anger had already shaken me. I just nodded in response.

"I will have my doctor check him and decide based on the doctor's report but do not ask me to feel sorry for him, Aliana. I love you but hate your father, and you know it. Do not ask me to bend more than I have already. You can visit and care for him but make sure you are back by six in the evening," he said, and I nodded and wiped away my tears.

He approached me and held me.

"You should stop shaking. I can only get angry, Little wolf. I can never hurt you," he said, but I could not relax.

"You are burning up," he said, noticing that I was ill, and I shook my head.

"It is nothing, really," I said, and he sighed. Then rested his forehead against mine. He exhaled, and I could feel the difficulty in his countenance. He was about to go against himself. He was battling himself. I could see it, and I wondered what would happen to me should he lose control.

"I will do as you have requested and stop him from working, but do not ask me to do anything else for him again," he finally said.

I wrapped my arms around him and released my tears of relief. He wrapped his arms around me and held me.

“I am sorry I yelled at you, little wolf. My demons still haunt me,” he confessed, and I held him tighter.

I felt relief and sadness at the same time.

I was relieved because I had gotten what I wanted; I was sad that he did not believe what I told him.

I hoped Qusack’s investigation would yield something substantial. I hoped he would find out something that would vindicate my father.

Nikolas took me to the bathroom and u*nd*ressed me under the shower. I must have been burning up because he turned on the cold water.

I was definitely going to visit the clinic tomorrow.

I did not need anyone to tell me something was wrong with me. He held me under the shower, and we were both silent while the water cooled down my body’s temperature.

Forged In The Flames Chapter 53

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Chapter 53 Heart Felt (Nikolas’s POV)

I held Aliana under the running cold water, and everything she said raced through my mind.

I had known it would come to this. I was surprised she had waited this long before discussing her father’s predicament with me.

Unknown to her, I had received various reports requesting I go easy on Gabriel because of his health; even Qusack had discussed it with me. Qusack had brought it up yesterday during our private talks, and I had shut him down. I thought Aliana had discussed the matter with her Qusack before meeting me.

The fear in her eyes got to me, and the fact that I had made her cry got to me. I knew I had to control myself. How can I say I love her when I am unwilling to listen to her and make her happy?

The fear of losing her father showed in her eyes, and even though we had separate opinions on the matter, I had to let her have her way.

I knew if I refused her request, she wouldn't be happy. I cursed at the difficulty of the situation.

Somehow, I believe the fear of discussing her father with me had made her sick.

Bane and I were mad at ourselves for using our command on her. She was a beta werewolf; it was too much for her to handle. I do not know why I ordered her the way I did. I needed to watch my temper when with her.

While I held her under the shower, I thought of what she told me her father told her about the event.

It sounded plausible, but could he prove it?

If he did not go on for years, making people believe he had liberated the werewolves of Forest by defeating my father in a battle, I would have been a bit lenient. But the story that was spread among the werewolves and the Lycans was that he led a mutiny against my father and killed him. He might have told his daughter this so he could seem innocent. I would not let my love for Aliana cloud my judgement where Gabriel was concerned.

He was still my enemy, but I would no longer trouble him. I will let him be and ignore him.

I will let him live so Aliana will not be alone.

I aim to please her, and that is what I would do.

No amount of hatred would keep me from making the woman I love happy. Other than killing Gabriel and ending his lineage, I had done everything I had promised and set out to do. I had done everything except ascend as King, and I was on it.

Ending Gabriel's Lineage would be wrong since he was the one that saved my mother's life and gave me a chance to breathe. I would give him back that gift of life.

I held Aliana under the shower, and soon she began to shake from the cold.

I will have to have her tested in the morning. I cannot let her fall sick. I needed her to be healthy and strong.

We left the shower, and I wore her a bathrobe to keep her warm.

While I attended to her, I began to fear she had been poisoned or exposed to something that would make her sick.

I began to suspect Erica, Gezel and my mother.

My mother's peace talk did not fool me. It was weird for her to think she could fool me, knowing she was connected to me now. I could easily sense her lies.

I knew she loathed Aliana. If she could have her way, she would end her life. She would do it in a heartbeat without remorse.

"Won't you come to bed?" I heard Aliana say.

She was still sniffing from the tears that she had cried. I did not know I was frozen on the spot until she snapped me out of my thoughts with her words.

I looked towards the bed, and she was under the covers. Her nose was red, and her eyes were swollen. I had made her cry. I felt guilty. I went to the closet, put on my shorts, and then joined her in bed.

"So, you want to sleep in the bathrobe?" I asked her, and she shook her head and removed the robe.

We were under the sheets, so I pulled her into my arms to warm her with my body.

I kissed her neck where a mark should be, and she moaned slightly, snuggling into my arms "I am sorry I made you cry, Little wolf. Please do not fear me. The world can be afraid of me but not you. I can never harm you," I whispered to her, and she held on to my arms around her waist tightly while she pressed her body against mine.

"I am sorry I made you mad," she whispered.

Her voice was raspy and tired. I had outdone myself in the fear department.

"I do not want you to think I want to control you. I can never dream of it. I would have remained silent if it weren't life-threatening. I know you hate him, but he is all I have," She said and sniffled.

"You have me, Little wolf," I said, but we both knew it wasn't certain. To be with her, I would have to jump many hurdles. We would have to hide our emotions, and I would have to pretend until I got the kingship.

To everyone, she was a slave and mistress.

To me, she was everything, but no one would know that until I had achieved what I set out to achieve. That way, we can live our lives free of judgement and prejudice.

"It took a lot for me to discuss it with you. I was hoping to tell Qusack to talk to you about it, but I did not know what would happen. I promise I won't get involved with your methods again, but please look into what my father told me. I want to know the truth too.

If it isn't too much trouble, it would be nice to know the truth," She said gently, explaining herself, and I held on tight.

I did not have the time to look into the matter. All my time now was aimed towards securing Forest and taking the crown. I had everything planned out. I will strive to be crowned once I protect Forest from Fredrik.

I planned on buying favours by opening a trade deal directly with alphas from all regions. I do not intend to give Aleksander or Fredrick a monopoly. I also planned to search for and open business with independent lands and territories that do not fall under Snow and Hill. Though they are far away, expanding the trade would bring good fortune for us.

Once I have the crown, I will abolish the Unity Law in Forest and set my own rules in my kingdom. The Unity law will no longer be a universal law. There will be no slavery in Forest, and Lycans and werewolves will be allowed to mate and be together.

They will have equal importance and opportunities, and hopefully, Aleksander would follow in my footsteps so Fredrick would be alone with his unity law. Once that is done, I will publicly proclaim Aliana as my queen, and we can freely be together and start a family. This way, there will be no need for war or death.

Fredrick might feel deceived, but that will be his problem. He will have no choice but to trade with us still, regardless of the situation.

I held on to Aliana tightly; I just needed her to hold on a little longer.

"Once I get the crown, you wouldn't doubt my love, Little wolf. You wouldn't doubt me," I promised her.

"I do not doubt you, but I would rather you are alive and well while we remain a secret than to have the Snow King come for you and your birthright because of me. My love is willing to make a sacrifice because I know you will do the same," She said quietly, and her words cut me deep. It made me wonder how deeply she had thought of it all.

"Why would you say this?" I said, and she turned around in my arms to face me.

"I had a discussion with your mother, and she told me you must settle down to get the crown," She said, and I tightened my jaws. I had warned my mother to stay away from Aliana.

"She did not upset me, Nikolas. She was just worried for both of us," She said quickly, but I knew my mother meant harm.

"And what did she tell you were her concerns?" I asked, wanting to hear the vile thing she must have told Aliana.

"I should let you settle down with a Lycan to get your crown. She asked me if I was willing to subject another woman to misery because I will always be in the picture," She said, and my mother had a way with words. She had indirectly told Aliana I would have to marry someone to get the crown and that Aliana would be a bad person if she remained in the picture.

She wanted Aliana to lose faith and confidence in me. I really wonder how my father managed with her. There is no way she developed this sneaky conniving behaviour overnight.

People don't become manipulative suddenly.

I wondered about the things she must have done while she was queen. Too bad no one ever said anything about her.

"I have told you I won't settle down with a Lycan for the crown. Forget what my mother said. Right now, I am going easy on her because I need her to back me up against her brother at the council. So, I told her what she wanted to hear. I won't settle down with anyone. I can't subject you, myself and whoever the unfortunate person would be to a life of misfortune and heartbreak. None of us would be happy. That much I have come to understand. Do not let my mother get into your head, Little wolf." I said and looked at her.

Her eyes were teary. I guess it was hard for her to imagine me with someone else. I liked that; it meant the feeling was mutual.

"You promise?" she finally asked, and I kissed her forehead.

"I promise," I said, and she snuggled into my arms.

Her body was warm now, and she seemed to have stabilised. I planned to have the physician check on her in the morning.

Morning came, and I was first to get out of bed. Getting to the office early was important because things were happening quickly. I looked at Aliana, and she was deep in sleep. Her hair was messy, and she looked sexy wrapped in the sheets. I imagined her naked body under the bedding and immediately had an erection.

I felt like a bad guy because I knew she was ill. I wanted to wake her with pleasure and bury myself inside her, but I decided against it and headed to the shower. A cold shower would have to do this morning. I knew it would make me a bit cranky the entire day.

I showered and returned to the room to dress up. I was about to leave when Aliana woke up. "Good morning," she called out with a weak morning voice.

"Morning, Little wolf; how are you feeling?" I said and went to meet her in bed.

She smiled at me. Her eyes looked beautiful and innocent, and her messy hair looked s*xily dishevelled.

\”I will send the pack doctor to check on you,\” I said, k*issing her forehead. She shook her head immediately.

\”I plan to use the werewolf clinic,\” She said quickly, and I frowned. The place was just a warehouse in disrepair that needed renovation. \”Why there?” I asked her, and she smiled at me. \”I am sure they can run a simple test. Besides, let’s keep up appearances until you get your crown.\” She said and smiled.

\”This should motivate you to fix up the place, your Majesty,\” She teased, and I laughed. I had already asked Qusack to oversee the renovation of the place, so it was no big deal.

\”Very well, make sure Ania and Lisa go with you, and if they do not have what is required, let me know so you can use my doctor,\” I said, and she smiled and nodded.

Knowing she was uncomfortable about her morning breath, I k*issed her on the cheek and left the room in high spirits.

I had so much to do.

Terminating Gabriel’s employment was the first on the list. I did not want Aliana to come home crying again.

Forged In The Flames Chapter 54

54 The Summon

Nikolas’s POV.

I went to the office and was surprised to find Qusack and Abraham there. Grant wasn’t there as usual. He wasn’t an early bird and was late for everything, so there was no need to wonder about him.

\”Good morning, Alpha,\” Abraham greeted me, and Qusack did the same. I responded and sat on my chair.

Three envelopes were on my table; one came with the council’s seal. It was yet to be broken. \”This arrived in the night,\” Qusack said, pointing at the note from the council, and I lifted it up.

\”By the way, terminate Gabriel’s work. He is slowing the workers down with his illness. I do not want him working as a mason anymore,\” I told Qusack.

I made it seem as if I was irritated that Gabriel's illness was slowing down the project. No one needed to know my soft spot for Aliana except for Qusack, and the look on his face said he figured it out because there was an 'I-told-you-so' expression on his face.

"Where should I put him?" Qusack asked me, and I shook my head.

"Nowhere he is old and sick. More of a liability than a help. Just put him on a weekly allowance to get by," I ordered, and Qusack nodded.

"Have the doctor examine him. I can't let him die on my watch. He understands this place better than any of us," I said, and Abraham nodded in agreement.

The whole pretence was for Abraham's benefit.

Qusack was the only person I trusted who would not judge my choice to be with a werewolf. I couldn't say the same for others.

"I will ask Grant to handle it," Qusack said, and Abraham volunteered immediately.

"Why?" I asked Abraham.

"He is Aliana's father, and you know Grant won't be careful. I will do it. She might be your mistress, but I doubt she could make you happy if anything happens to her father," he said.

I nodded, feigning boredom at his words, but he had a point there, not the one I was trying to prove, but a good point nonetheless.

I opened the letter from the council, and it read.

"Alpha Nikolas Kowalski, we hereby summon you to the council tomorrow, the eighth day of August, to come and plead your coronation case. The meeting will be held at the palace in Ice Hill in Snow at three in the afternoon.

Our host will be King Frederick Semenov.

King Aleksander Zieliriska and others will also attend.

Kindly come with two of your officers, your nominees, to represent Forest in the council. As you are yet to be named King, you will also represent Forest on the committee.

Please bring all evidence to support your claim as the rightful heir of Forest through the Late King Mathias Kowalski. We look forward to seeing you.

Committee Leader Alpha Olsen Sadowski,"

It read, and I stood up immediately.

My heart was thumping in my chest. I looked at the clock, and it was seven in the morning. 1

I was glad I woke up early.

Snow was six hours away from Forest by road. We could make it for the meeting if we left in an hour.

"What is it?" Qusack asked me.

"We have been summoned to attend the committee meeting. It will commence three this afternoon in Fredrik's palace in Ice Hill Snow. I have been ordered to bring two officers that would represent Forest on the committee and evidence to support my claim as the rightful heir," I said, and Qusack widened his eyes.

"That is sudden," He said, and I nodded.

I knew exactly what was happening.

Not everyone knew that my mother was alright. I doubted she had gone out since she felt better. Fredrick must know his sister is mentally unstable. He made the hearing quick, knowing I won't be able to prove my claims due to my mother's mental health. He will be surprised to see my mother alive and well.

"Fredrick must really be eager to discredit you," Qusack said, and I knew he, too, had done the math.

"He would be in for a shock," I said, and Qusack looked worried.

"If you are leaving, then we should start preparing now," Qusack said, and Abraham sighed with worry.

"You reek of Aliana, Alpha. They will know you have been with a werewolf," He said and sighed. "By now, it isn't a secret that werewolves are in Forest or that they roam freely even though we uphold the unity law. Besides, as an ordinary leader, I am allowed to sleep with as many werewolves as I like," I said, and he frowned. "It will be a hard sell, but you have a point. Let's just hope King Fredrik won't have the bright idea to use this against you," Abraham said, and I understood his fear.

I wondered if my mother would side with him because of her hatred for Aliana, or would she testify that I uphold unity Law?

"You and Qusack will be coming with me. I will leave Grant in charge," I said, and Qusack was confused because I was supposed to take Grant with me, not Abraham,

but Abraham is learned and understands the law. I needed someone to easily twist things in my favour should an argument occur.

"I need Abraham's brains," I said, and Abraham laughed at how I put it. It was funny too.

"Okay, I will handle the transportation and preparation while you prepare. I hope your mother is ready for the long trip to Forest," Qusack said, and I nodded. I got up from the table in preparation to leave.

"Won't you read the other letters?" Qusack asked me, and I had forgotten about them completely.

I picked up the first one, and it was from Piotr.

"Hello Nikolas, I will be visiting you Wednesday, the thirteenth of August. I will be coming with my servant. I wanted you to know before I show up. She is a werewolf and very pleasant.

I promise she won't be in your way. I hope I won't be violating any laws by bringing her along.

She knows how to tend to me better, and I would not want to trouble your staff.

I await your response on the matter. Thank you.

Ps, Fredrick is trying to get my father to work against you. Be careful. My old man has no balls, but I am sure you can handle it." It read, and I sighed.

I did not need to guess that this servant might be special.

I planned to allow him to come here and relax. It was okay.

If Piotr would be the next Hill king, it would be stupid to reject his friendship.

Besides, I kind of liked the guy. He was jovial and didn't take things too seriously. I needed that kind of friend. One that would always see the bright side of life.

I was also grateful for the heads-up about his father. Could it be possible that Aleksander was aware of the Hunters that came to my forest with warriors to attack my people? With what his son had written, I couldn't put it past him. I would just have to be careful. I picked up the last letter, and to my surprise, it was from King Aleksander.

"My boy, Nikolas,

I hope you are well.

If Fredrik has his way, you will be summoned to a meeting on the eighth of August.

Fredrick is trying to discredit you on various grounds.

He said you disrespected him by sending hunters to Snow to hunt for Lycans and werewolves; he said he has proof.

He is also trying to claim that Isabelle isn't your mother and that you are holding her feral self captive to pretend she is your mother so you can claim the throne.

He told me that his spies say you do not respect the unity law and thus cannot be trusted to have the best interest of Lycans in mind if given power.

He has discussed these things with me extensively and has requested I support the motion to deny your request.

Unfortunately for him, I know you are a Kowalski, and I hope you can prove it.

I plan to be neutral for now to avoid a war with Snow.

Please position yourself properly and make powerful friends from Snow to frustrate

Fredrick's efforts. It won't be easy, but you will figure it out. Please remember your promise on trade. Thank you," It read, and everything was confusing.

I did not have the time to think of both letters, but one thing I was sure of was that Aleksander was assuming a neutral stance on the matter, and Fredrick was trying his best to discredit me.

I did not understand his qualms with my mother, but I planned to beat him at his game

I handed the letters over to Qusack. It was seven thirty already.

I rushed out of the office to speak to mother.

"Where are you?" I linked her.

"Good morning, Niko," she corrected me, and I felt ashamed that I did not greet her.

"I am sorry. Good morning," I said, and she responded.

"I am in my room having breakfast", She replied.

"I am on my way to you" I said, closing the link.

I hurriedly ascended the stairs and moved past my room and Aliana's old room. I wondered if Aliana was still in bed or had left for the clinic. I did not have time to check.

I walked briskly until I arrived at my mother's room.

I knocked once and entered before she permitted me to enter. I wasn't patient.

I saw her with Erica.

They were laughing about something, but the moment I stepped in, Erica stood up and bowed her head.

She excused herself immediately, and my mother told her she would call her when we were done. She left, and I did not have time for a lengthy discussion.

"Are you dressed and prepared for the day?" I asked her, and she frowned and nodded.

"Good. You are coming with me to Snow. A committee meeting is being held at three in the afternoon today, and I want you there to back me up," I said, and there was fear in her eyes. She shook her head immediately, and I wondered what her deal was.

"I am not ready to face him," She protested.

"But you will because he is hell-bent on discrediting me. He claims I care for you, so I can pretend you are my mother. He is claiming that I am not obeying the unity law and I do not have the interest of the Lycans at heart." I said, and she shook her.

"But he is right about that last part," She cut in, and I sighed and looked at her. Whose side was she on?

"Are you saying you won't help?" I asked, and she shook her head.

"I am going to help you, Niko. But I am not ready to face him," she said, and I cut.

"And what, mother? I spent my entire life trying to get this, and now that I need you to help me finish it, you are coming up with excuses? What happened to everything you asked me to promise you? What happened to everything, Mother?" I asked her, feeling irritated.

"People died for this cause, and all you can tell me is that you aren't ready?" I asked her, and she shook her head.

"I did not mean it that way. I am not ready to face my brother. It will bring back bad memories," She complained, and I realised how myopic and selfish she was. I was indeed unfortunate.

"Your feelings are irrelevant. Right now, what is standing between us and the crown is your brother. If you do not follow me to the committee, you have failed me, and I will regret trying to keep my promise to you," I said quickly because I was annoyed.

"But did you keep your promise, really, Niko? Gabriel is alive, and you are screwing his daughter. You might end up having halfbreed pups with Gabriel's blood in their veins for all I know, so how have you kept your promise?" She said, and I looked at her. My temper was getting out of hand, and I tried to keep myself in control.

"Do not go there. Had Gabriel not let you go, we would not be here. I am sparing his life because he spared ours. He has paid for his crime, and I have taken everything from him. It is okay if you will not help me based on that. I will be content with just being Alpha of Forest," I said and was about to turn away and leave.

I wasn't going to allow my mother to blackmail me. I sensed she was planning to bargain, and I wasn't open to it.

"I will come with you. But you have to promise that you will do all it takes to take the crown peacefully. I do not want to witness another war," She said, almost in tears, and I looked at her.

I understood her point. She did not want her brother to attack us.

"As long as no one is trying to force me to do anything I do not want to do, then you have nothing to worry about, Mother. I will be patient and take the crown peacefully," I said, and she smiled.

"I learned Aleksander has a daughter. Have you thought of a union with her? It will make it easier," She said, and I started laughing.

She had not gone to the committee yet, we had yet to know where it would lead, and she was already thinking of marriage.

I somehow knew Aliana was still her problem, but I swallowed my words and chose to humour her. I had my eyes on the goal. Once I have achieved it, I will do as I like.

"Lena is dating Miles Gordon. Olive's son, I suppose. The very son your brother is raising as his own and is planning to pass on as the legitimate heir by discrediting me," I said.

I got the desired effect because shock and rage registered on her face.

"Also, King Aleksander would not allow me to marry his child for the sake of power. So she is out of the question. And before you speak, know that I requested for her, and he denied me," I lied.

Technically I just asked, but I could live with the white lie.

"When do we leave for the meeting?" She asked me, fuming with anger.

I had struck her where needed. She was reacting as desired.

"Now," I said, and she nodded.

"Meet me at the entrance in fifteen minutes," I said, and she nodded and went to her closet to get ready.

I left her room.

While I walked away from my mother's room, I imagined the toxic relationship she must have had with her brother.

Honestly, the two were more like adversaries than siblings.

I wondered what must have gone wrong between them.

Somehow I believe Forest was right in the middle of it, but only time would tell.

Forged In The Flames Chapter 55

Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman

Chapter 55 After He Left (Aliana's POV)

I would lie if I said I wasn't nervous about attending the clinic. The thought that something might be wrong with my health bothered me. I laid back down on the bed as soon as Nikolas left. Sleep swooped in, and I did not wake until ten.

Lisa and Ania were in the room playing cards when I woke up. There was a tray of food on the table, and I knew there was a possibility its content was cold.

"She is up," Ania said with a smile, and I frowned at her, wondering what the occasion was.

Ania put down the cards and walked towards me. She sat on the bed beside me and held my chin with her hand, turning my head from side to side to check my face.

Lisa was laughing, and I didn't get the joke.

Not wanting to speak with my morning breath, I pushed away her hand and got off the bed.

I gathered the sheets, wrapped them around my naked body and walked to the bathroom to brush my teeth; Ania followed me. It was clear she was disregarding the boundary rules this morning. I wondered what had gotten into her.

"I was checking to be sure you are intact. Knowing the mood you were in when we left you yesterday. You slept on the couch. You did not know when we brought food. I was wondering what must have made you tired. Then Alpha returned, and I got worried for you. But seeing you naked in the sheets and looking like a hot mess, I figure it went well," She said, rushing through her words.

I brushed my teeth in a hurry and rinsed my mouth, then unwrapped my body with the sheet and threw the sheets at Ania since she had decided to be a spectator. I stepped into the shower and heard the door close. I guess she decided to respect the boundaries.

I took only a short time in the shower. My stomach was growling, and I was ravenous.

I finished quickly and left the bathroom.

I went to the closet to get ready for the day.

Nikolas's scent filled my senses, and I lingered in the closet with his shirt held to my nose.

I felt a strong need and longing for him and wondered what was happening to me.

The scent was also unique.

It smelled like morning. Like a garden would smell early in the morning with rain dew on the plants. It smelled like wet, cool ground. He smelled of home. Somewhere I wanted to linger. He smelled whole and complete.

"Mine," Raven said, and I moaned at her words.

There was a strong need and longing for him inside me. None like I had felt before. It was overwhelming and strange, but I welcomed it. With him, I was safe. It was safe to let myself fall this deep. I knew he would catch me, no matter what. I was that sure.

I breathed in the shirt one last time, and when I knew I couldn't let go of his scent, I chose to wear the shirt to surround myself with it.

Suddenly I felt an emptiness that I knew only he could fill.

I remembered what happened last night and how he had made an effort to bend for my sake. There was no doubt that he loved me. I just hoped I would not cause him to bend that way again.

The thought of his love made me giddy, and I tried to link him but met silence. It was apparent he wasn't around. I wondered where he must have gone. I planned to be wild with him tonight. He deserved it for being sweet.

I stepped out and found Ania and Lisa waiting patiently on the couch. They both looked in my direction and assessed what I was wearing.

"That bad?" Lisa asked, and I nodded.

I knew I was blushing, and my cheeks felt red. They laughed when I placed my palms against them to calm the blush effect.

"Honestly, I was scared he would kick you out and do terrible things to you. Instead, I heard Alpha sent Dr Newton to check on your father. I was shocked," she said, and I was shocked too because I wasn't expecting he would keep his promise.

"By the way, Alpha has travelled to Snow this morning and might not return until tomorrow," Ania added, and I felt like my world had collapsed.

Here I was, missing him and thinking of how to show my appreciation tonight. Knowing he won't be coming home tonight, I felt lonely. Something sudden must have come up, or he would have told me beforehand. I just hoped he would be safe.

"They left with Luna Isabelle," Lisa said, and I felt a knot in my stomach.

I remembered my conversation with the woman and wondered if what they were off to do had anything to do with our discussion.

Nikolas had told me that Isabelle would defend him for the crown. I secretly hoped that was all there was to it because I would hate putting Nikolas in a problematic situation.

"Do not worry, Darling, we are here to keep you company," Lisa said, realising how the message had affected me. Just then, my tummy grumbled, and I looked at the dishes on the table.

"What's in them?" I asked, wanting to eat.

"Toasts and other things," Ania said, and I went to the table to dish out food. I opened all the dishes, and the food smelled great. I was glad it wasn't irritating me like it did yesterday. I plated my meal and ate quickly. It tasted delicious, and my hunger was satisfied. After I finished eating, Lisa cleared the dishes and carried them away.

Ania and I waited for her to return.

"So, how did it go with Alpha?" She asked, and I did not think it would be wise to give her details of our intimate discussions, so I opted to tell half-truths instead.

“He did not find it funny but decided to allow it because my father was slowing down the work with his illness,” I lied, and she widened her eyes.

“You are lucky he was already thinking along that line,” She said with a smile and gently smacked my shoulder with a broad grin.

“Yes, I was lucky,” I said with a fake smile.

I felt like s*hit for lying to Ania, but I knew if I told her exactly what happened, she would ask more questions I would be uncomfortable answering. This was for the best.

“So, what is our itinerary for today?” She asked, smiling.

“I mean, now that Isabelle isn’t around, we can roam about the place, you know,” She said, and I smiled.

“Maybe we can cook that steak you have always wanted to make for lunch,” She said, and I shook my head.

“I am more in the mood for mixed veggies stir fry,” I said, and she laughed.

“Since when did you like vegetables?” She asked, and she had a valid question. I did not hate them, but I had never requested them specifically, and I usually went for the protein mostly.

“I guess now,” I said, and she laughed. Just then, Lisa returned and joined us.

“I am feeling a bit under the weather. I told Alpha I would run a test at the werewolf clinic,” I said.

Ania checked my body temperature with the back of her hand pressed against my forehead, then did the same to my neck.

It won’t give her an accurate reading. It might not give her anything, but I appreciated the gesture.

“I must admit your body was off yesterday, but you seem pretty okay now. The stress of discussing your father with Alpha might have caused it.” She said, and I figured as much, but I knew Nikolas would only drop the matter once I ran a test.

“Alpha insists I go for a medical checkup,” I said, and she nodded.

“We can go there after lunch. Right now, the volunteers would be at their place of work. They won’t resume work at the clinic until three in the afternoon,” She said, and I had utterly forgotten that aspect.

I wanted to know if the clinic could be registered as the workers' place of work so they do not need to work elsewhere. Even though it would be a bright idea to bring it up, I knew I should take it slow. Nikolas had just made a significant bend for my sake. I needed to give it space and time. We weren't there yet.

I agreed, and we remained indoors.

Once it was one in the afternoon, we headed to the kitchen to prepare mixed vegetables.

Unfortunately for us, we bumped into Gezel and Erica in the kitchen. I walked past them, trying to ignore them, but Erica called on me.

"I hope you know your days in Alpha's bed are numbered. His mother plans to get him a suitable Lycan bride. You know he can't resist it because he would need her beside him to be king," Erica said, and to my surprise, Gezel cautioned.

"Stop it, Erica. It is none of your business. I do not want trouble anymore. This s*hit is getting old," she said, and I saw shock registered on Erica's face.

Gezel collected the cup Erica was holding and served herself some juice. She walked out of the Kitchen while Erica was still stunned by Gezel's response. I guess Gezel had turned a new leaf. Hopefully, Erica will see the light too.

Ania and Lisa glared at Erica, and she left, looking confused.

She was still yet to understand what had just happened with Gezel, and I doubted her small mind could understand it.

We made the mixed vegetable, and it tasted delicious. I added broccoli, cauliflower, butternut, aubergine, carrots, garlic and boiled potatoes for a filling effect.

I seasoned it with lots of pepper to taste. It was a weird combination for me, and even though Lisa and Ania did not like the taste, it tasted delicious, and I ate a lot of it. Once we were done. We cleaned up and left.

Although I was with Nikolas, people still saw me as a slave and his mistress, so they would often throw snide remarks or try to be disrespectful; nothing blatant, and I knew it was to avoid Nikolas's wrath, but there was an attitude they put up to try to show I was beneath them, and that was why we had to do the dishes and clean up after ourselves.

Even though there were workers in the kitchen to do that, they clearly said they would not clean up after us, especially me. I did not take offence, really. I just ignored them, but I registered their faces in my mind. I wanted to see how they would behave when Nikolas abolishes the Unity law in Forest. It would be a wonderful experience.

We left the building, and I decided to check on my father at his house before going to the clinic

I found him awake when I arrived, and Israel was there.

Israel was happy to see me, and his smile let me know that my father would be okay.

My father did not look sick, but I did not allow his looks to fool me. He motioned me to sit close to him on the bed, and I did so. Using his free hand, which had no needles stuck in, he hugged me and kissed my cheek.

"Thank you, Aliana. Gamma Grant just told me that I have been placed on allowance and no longer required to work anymore," He said, and I was surprised Nikolas had put the gesture into effect.

"Honestly, I did not think you could do it, Aliana, but I am glad you did. Everyone your father's age, including myself, has been relieved of our duties and placed on allowance. They said something about us slowing down the work. I know deep down it was you because it wasn't a coincidence," Israel said, and I smiled.

I was grateful to Nikolas.

"Speaking of the Alpha, you reek of him. Is that his shirt?" Israel asked, and I nodded.

"Are you sure you aren't more than a mistress to him?" Israel asked, and I shook my head.

"I am sure I am just a mistress," I lied, and my father squeezed my hand gently for support. He knew I wasn't just a mistress. Qusack had revealed that much to him.

"Anyway, he seems to have a soft spot for you. I wonder why that is, knowing how he loves obedience and how stubborn you are," He said, and we all laughed.

I could not tell my father I was going for a medical test, so I kept my sickness to myself and stayed with them for forty-five minutes before deciding to leave.

Forged In The Flames Chapter 56

Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman

Chapter 56 To The Clinic (Aliana's POV)

I was more relaxed after I saw my father. Ania, Lisa and I headed to the hospital after the visit. The rickshaw that took us to the place was slow, but I had all the time, knowing Nikolas would not be home tonight.

“When I got to the warehouse that was turned into a clinic, I noticed some construction was ongoing.

Nikolas had told me the place would be renovated and equipped. I saw he was doing as he had said. I was grateful for him, and I hoped he would succeed. I could not wait to scream at the top of my lungs that I love him. I could not wait to make what we have official. He was more than a secret. He was everything to me right now.

A nurse approached us while we waited in the open space, looking at the patients on the rows of beds.

“How are you feeling today, Aliana?” The woman asked.

She looked friendly. Everyone knew my name and who I was by now, so I wasn’t surprised.

I could see her grey hair and fine lines, but even with the signs of ageing, she looked graceful and beautiful. I knew she wasn’t from Riverhead because I did not know who she was, but she was a Werewolf.

“I am fine. Nurse...” I said, searching her uniform with my eyes for her name tag.

“Alison,” She said with a broad smile, and I nodded.

“Nurse Alison,” I said, and she smiled.

It was very unusual behaviour for people that weren’t from Riverhead to smile at me. Most of them loathed me and saw me as a traitor for sleeping with the enemy.

While the people in Riverhead knew I had no choice, others believed I decided to whore myself to make my life easy. The people from other packs were more in Riverhead than my pack members because of Nikolas’ s projects.

Ignoring the oddity of her behaviour, I spoke. “I came here to have myself tested for sickness,” I said, and she raised an eyebrow and looked at me. Ania and Lisa decided to excuse us by giving us some privacy while they looked around.

Nurse Alison led me to a makeshift office that was created with curtains. There was a desk and two chairs on each side. I guess one belonged to the Medical practitioners, while the other belonged to the patient.

Nurse Alison motioned me to sit, and she had a broad grin. It was now looking creepy.

I could not tell if it was plastered or real. Seeing the s*hitty situation we were all in and the fact that most people believed I was a traitor for being with Nikolas, Something I had

no control over, by the way, I suspected her smile was fake and plastered. I might be wrong, and I hoped I was.

"May I know why you think you are sick?" She asked, still giving that fake smile again, and it was getting to me.

"Do you mind not faking a smile? It is creepy," I said, and she laughed.

"I am not faking it, Aliana. I am actually happy. Today my husband was told he would not need to work as a mason. I learned Alpha Gabriel and everyone his age were laid off and placed on pension, and I heard it was because Alpha

Gabriel was sick. We all know the Lycan Alpha did it for your sake. I am just happy," She said, and I felt a bit uncomfortable.

If they were pedalling such stories, how would our pretence work then?

"I doubt it has anything to do with me. Alpha obeys the unity law," I said quickly, and her smile dropped.

"Well, I guess we were lucky then," she said, looking at me.

Though she wasn't smiling anymore, her eyes looked soft and thoughtful. Clearly, she did not believe me, but I wouldn't volunteer any information that would harm Nikolas.

"Back to the matter at hand," She said, and I nodded.

"I have been feeling nauseous lately. Smells get to me, especially food. Yesterday was worse because I couldn't keep anything down. I could not eat, and my body was burning up. I had to take a few cold showers to cool my body temperature. This morning I woke up feeling great. I was able to eat. In fact, I have eaten twice and eaten large portions, so I doubt what is wrong with me is serious." I said, and she nodded.

I could see the concern in her eyes, and I wondered what the matter was.

"Have you ever gone on heat?" She asked me, and I shook my head.

"When. Last, did you get your heat periods?" She asked, and I did not know what she was talking about. I believed heat periods were for mated wolves. My mother never told me much about it.

"I thought it was only for mated wolves," I said, and she smiled and shook her head.

"Well, it might have happened to you without

She said, and I was confused. I would know if I was on heat.

I have never gone into heat, to begin with. That was what birth control was for. To suppress my heat and prevent me from getting pregnant.

"I can't have a heat period because I am on birth control," I said, and she sighed.

"When did you start taking it?" She asked me, taking out a sheet of paper and writing things down. I began to feel nervous. I explained to her when and she sighed.

"You weren't supposed to take it until you get your first heat.

The heat is a sign that your body is ready to mate and reproduce.

It is also a sign that your wolf is ready to bond with your mate's wolf. Taking birth control like that would disrupt the natural order of things

It won't suppress your heat neither would you know when it comes because the timing has been offset by the medication hence why it is prescribed to be taken on the first day of the heat.

Otherwise, it is useless and sometimes harmful. Is that doctor a quack? Does he not know about a woman's reproductive system?" she asked, and beads of sweat began forming on my forehead. I was scared because this wasn't the time for this.

"Are you saying I am on heat?" I asked her straight up. There was no point in finding ways to sugarcoat it. It was either she was saying that, or I was overthinking it.

"I am not saying that Aliana, but your symptoms indicate it. I hope you have been using protection during intercourse," She said, and I shook my head; worry registered on her face.

"Very well, let me have a sample of your urine. Once the pregnancy is eliminated, we can look at allergies, flu and bacteria. Once all these things are eliminated, it might just be your disrupted heat," She said.

At that moment, I would give anything to make it one of the other things, not the pregnancy.

Nikolas would hate me because that was one of his rules.

He did not want me to get pregnant even after we got together. This wasn't good.

There was no way we would be able to keep the pregnancy secret.

How can we prove he is obeying the unity law? I could imagine the arguments.

“You are not fit to be king. You do not have the interest of the Lycans at heart. You disregard our laws. Even now, your werewolf mistress is pregnant with your child and living with you. We can’t support you,”

The arguments played in my head, and I began to fight my tears.

I did not want to think of terminating the pregnancy because I loved Nikolas, and it would be beautiful to have his child but at what cost? I was completely blank.

Even though the nurse was calling me, I could not hear her.

Fear of the unknown had engulfed me. I was raking my head for what to do.

Snapping out of my deep thoughts, I looked at the nurse immediately.

“If I am pregnant what am I to do?” I asked her: she sighed.

“You might have to terminate it because I doubt the Lycan Alpha would want a half-breed child. Also, the life of the child might be difficult. You could also keep the baby, most preferable in my regard. I am sure you won’t regret it. That is if you are pregnant. Then again, it could just be the flu, a bug or your heat. We won’t know until we have eliminated the pregnancy possibility,” Nurse Alison explained, and I nodded.

She left the makeshift office and returned with a small cup five minutes later.

“Pee into this cup and bring it back. The test won’t take more than ten minutes, and we can eliminate the possibility of a pregnancy,” She said, and I took the cup from her.

Though I was afraid, I managed to steady my hand to keep it from shaking. All I kept praying for was that the result would be negative, and I would have panicked for nothing.

Deep down, I wished my relationship with Nikolas was normal.

It would have been great having his child.

It would have been a beautiful thing.

He would make a great father, but if he isn’t king and is yet to abolish the Unity Law in Forest, having this baby and living in peace with him would be a lofty dream.

As long as he is under the unity law, this could mean trouble for both of us, and I knew the Snow King would not hesitate to use it.

I thought about it for a while.

I got to the restroom and managed to pee in the cup. I wasn't pressed, so I did not get much, but it was enough for the test.

While I rinsed my hand in the sink, I took a few deep breaths. I knew I needed to brace myself and make a decision. Should the test turn positive, termination won't be an option.

I looked at my eyes, which looked dull in the mirror over the sink. Fear radiated in them. Fear and uncertainty plagued them, and I tried to gather myself.

Walking towards the makeshift nurse's office felt like forever.

The sound of the voices of the people in the clinic was distant.

Even Raven was silent.

This was a hurdle I doubted I would jump unscathed.

Soon I arrived at the office, and Nurse Alison was there. She had worn her latex gloves and was waiting for me to return.

I held the cup to her, and she tried to collect it from me.

I held on to the cup tightly, contemplating letting go.

I could just leave and be in denial, but that would be stupid because not knowing was worse than knowing.

I also wondered if I could trust her to have Nikolas's interest at heart. Would she spread the news if it turned out positive?

I was afraid and worried.

"Promise me you will keep this between us. If it turns out positive, will you keep it a secret so I can figure out what to do about it? He mustn't know. He will kill me," I lied with tears.

I wanted her to believe keeping quiet would be a favour to me, not Nikolas, just in case she hated him. Nurse Alison's eyes were misty, already feeling sorry for me.

I felt terrible that I had lied against him.

"This is supposed to be joyful under normal circumstances, Aliana, but I understand your fear. It is sad that although we come from the same source, the Lycans have made us seem insignificant. I know you will be a great mother and have beautiful pups. It is too bad if the

Lycan Alpha cannot see the light. Besides, it is really not up to him to go easy on you. I doubt King Frederick and King Aleksander would be peaceful if he finds out that the Lycan Alpha of Forest is expecting a baby with his slave mistress,” she said, and her tears fell freely.

“We all know why he took you as his. We know what his reasons were. Do not worry, Aliana. Your secret is safe with me. I will not judge your decision,” She said, and I thanked her.

I wished she knew how much Nikolas would sacrifice for my sake, but on the surface, she was right. Fortunately for me, what Nikolas and I had was deep, but it wasn’t deep enough to accommodate a baby. This shouldn’t have happened now.

I watched her put the strip in the cup and pull it out.

We both waited for lines to show.

The wait was like forever.

My heart was beating fast, and my breathing was irregular. I felt the sickness coming back.

I knew I might soon have a panic attack, but I tried to keep it together.

I tried to hold it. I watched her face as she stared at the stick, and when she exhaled with a sad expression, I knew the answer.

She handed the strip to me, and I saw two thick lines.

“I am sorry, Aliana, you are pregnant,” She said, and there was a ringing in my ear.

A ringing of fear and despair. I clamped my palms against my ears, hoping to muffle the words she had spoken, but who was I fooling? Denial would not change the facts. The facts were written on the stick, and it was positive.

Forged In The Flames Chapter 57

Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa’ad Usman

Chapter 57 The Trip To Snow (Nikolas’ POV)

The drive to Snow was very bumpy. Qusack had to drive fast because we needed to get there on time. The summon letter arriving late was suspicious.

I wondered what happened to the mailing service, or did the sender deliberately send it late?

King Aleksander's letter was late too. I wondered if someone was intercepting my letters. If that was the case, I would need to find the person. It could also be a coincidence, a mistake at the post office. I just hoped we would get there on time.

"Why would Fredrick set the meeting so suddenly?" my mother asked, and I figured she knew the man more than I did, so there was no way she was expecting me to answer that question.

"There might have been a delay in the post office. Sometimes if a receiver receives a lot of letters frequently, the post office tends to pile them up and send them to save the delivery cost," Abraham said, and Qusack disagreed.

"Not an obvious summon letter with the Joint Committee seal on it," Qusack said, and Abraham was quiet.

I knew he was trying to calm the tension in the car, but the worry about what we would face in Snow intensified the pressure.

Qusack stepped on the accelerator like a madman.

We needed to be there before three in the afternoon to make it for the meeting. Failure to show up may cause undesirable effects. I was already dealing with a lot. I didn't want to add disrespecting the joint committee to my list of issues.

"I can't believe Fredrick took Mathias' bastard from that bitch. I thought she died with her child. Leon told me she died with her child. I felt so sorry for Mathias when I heard the story. Little did I know that we would be married and I would be living in her shadow. It was bad enough that I was in competition with her ghost; why would Fredrick try to use her son against my son? I know he is lying," My mother grumbled angrily.

I knew that was the reason she followed. My mother hated my father's first love more than she hated Aliana, and the last thing she wanted was for the woman's child to be placed above hers. I knew the right buttons to press.

All I wanted to do was abolish the Unity law in Forest, and I planned to do whatever it took to get it done. That was all that drove me now. Not revenge but reform.

We arrived in the Snow region by one thirty in the afternoon. There were people at the border, and they looked serious. I figured Fredrik put up the security because of my hunters. It was good to see he knew what it felt like to guard against intruders.

"State your reason for the visit?" A man said at the border's gate.

He was rude and unreceptive. I guess his attitude came with the job description.

“Prince Nikolas Kowalski is here to attend the Joint Committee meeting,” Qusack said, and the man’s facial expression changed. It seemed he had heard my name before or might have been given instructions about my arrival.

“Wait a minute,” He said and went to speak to someone who seemed to be his supervisor.

The man walked to where we were and bent by the driver’s window to speak to Qusack.

“Do you have an invitation?” He asked, and I was offended because we had just introduced ourselves.

“The meeting is by three, and we still have an hour to get to Ice Hill,” Qusack said, handing him the letter from the committee leader.

It wasn’t supposed to be necessary, but since Forest had not partaken in these meetings for almost thirty years, they were expected to behave like this.

The man read the letter, which I felt was supposed to be private because of the things mentioned in it. Nothing was worse than growing up like a wild animal, so I could live with this. I just had to keep my eyes on the goal.

The man stepped back.

“I will need you all to alight so we can search the vehicle,” The man said, and I realised what he was doing was deliberate. Why would he want to waste our time like this?

“I beg your pardon?” Qusack asked, and he growled.

“We have had issues with Forest hunters lately, so this is our protocol now,” The man said.

“What are you searching for, if I may ask?” Abraham asked him.

“Weapons,” he said, and it was ridiculous.

No one in their right mind would drive all the way to Snow to enter the territory through the border with the intention to attack unless it was a war situation.

“Is this how you search everyone? I have told you that the prince of Forest is here. Did your King put you up to this?” Abraham asked him, and I told them there was no need to argue.

“Let them search the vehicle. I will deal with Fredrik alone,” I said, and the man growled.

“It is King Fredrick to you,” He said out of annoyance, and I laughed.

"If he doesn't give me the respect I am due, I am bound to reciprocate the treatment. It is

Fredrick to me. If you have a problem, report it to him or start a war here," I warned the guy.

I was bluffing about the war part. Of course, I dared not attempt it now, not when I do not have an army, but he did not need to know.

"I took Forest; Snow would be just as easy. I also know your King has been unable to take Forest. I doubt you will want me as an enemy," I said, and his eyes showed sudden fear.

"The rogue Prince?" the man said wide-eyed with fear. I guess my reputation precedes me. "Open the gates!" He called out to his men.

He did not want trouble with me and did not want to create problems for his King.

Very few people know I was Mathia's son. I might not have met resistance if I had come as the rogue prince. Qusack started the car and drove through the gates into the territory.

It was a frozen land, with many desolate lands and abandoned homes on the way.

"Fredrick did a number on the werewolves that used to live here," My mother said, looking at the place that looked like a ghost land.

I was sure there were better places, but this was just horrible. It looked like the people living in the buildings fled from war a long time ago. An ambush of some sort.

Thinking people once lived in run-down isolated buildings and farms on the way was heart-wrenching. I just wondered what happened to them.

"This is awful. I can see why he wants the slave trade badly," I said, feeling sorry for the occupants, knowing deep down that there was a possibility they were werewolves.

"Actually, Alpha, Snow originally belonged to werewolves. This was their home until the

Lycans took over their territory and installed a monarch. They lived in packs, and each pack had an alpha with a head alpha leading them; similar to the system we met in Forest, the Lycans took over and enslaved the people.

The land was rich in Iron ore. The Lycans then used the werewolves to mine the mineral. Due to cruelty, werewolves began to flee to Forest and Hill.

Two hundred years later, there was no one to do the job. The majority of the werewolves had fled the territory leaving Lycans.

The leadership now had a labour problem because Lycans could not easily be controlled as werewolves.

The Lycans would go to other territories, capture werewolves, and force them into slavery. They will Kill off the Alphas and betas, so they can quickly subdue the rest.

It continued like that, and when the Hill and Forest Kings saw how profitable it was because of the rapid development of Snow and the strength of Snow's army due to slave labour, they decided to adopt the practice.

Slowly, the demarcation between both races began.

Every time a King tried to make slavery a universal law to make the slave trade legal, another would do the opposite due to how profitable the slave black market was or for moral justification purposes.

Werewolves became the primary target for the slave trade because they were better servants than Lycans; they would never strive to be better than their masters. Their loyalty to their Alpha was absolute. That was how it all began. It wouldn't have happened if it weren't for the Lycans of Snow," Abraham said, and my mother sneered at him.

"Lies, Delta. Stop telling lies," She said, and I knew it would get to her because those were awful things to say about her people. It made them seem like thieves and usurpers.

"I am only stating what is in the archives, Luna," Abraham said peacefully, and she hissed.

"My ancestors never meant harm. They came here for greener pastures, and the werewolves were cruel to them. They would not allow them to join their packs because they were different. They wanted to return to where they came from, but their land was far away.

They would have to cross the great sea to get there, so they had to survive in Snow.

The only way to survive was to take over from the unfriendly head Alpha and create a home for themselves," She explained, and she had pretty much said the same thing as Abraham, just a nicer version.

I kept quiet because I wasn't here to argue about who owned Snow first. I was here to fight for my crown, to restore my family's name and be with the woman I loved. Every other thing was a none issue.

"I think it is best both of you drop it. The past doesn't matter," I said, and I did not realise what I had said until the words escaped my mouth.

If the past didn't matter, why did I seek revenge on Gabriel? Why did I hurt him and Aliana and enslave the werewolves? Why does my blood boil whenever I hear the werewolf Alpha's name? The truth was the past mattered, and I was stuck in it. Stuck with the emotions of a past I did not live in, a past passed down to me by an unstable hurt woman, a past that plagued my life, my present, and maybe my future. The past mattered a lot.

We were silent in the car, and Qusack drove with speed. It was almost two in the afternoon. The bastards at the gate had cost us thirty minutes. I hoped we would make it to Ice Hill on time.

Soon we arrived in a small town. It was beautiful, with tiny modern houses that had chimneys. Maybe not as stylish as it should be. Smoke escaped through the chimneys, indicating a fire in the fireplace.

Their snow-covered lawn and roofs gave the town a frosty black-and-white look.

The black came from visible parts of the stone walls of their buildings, and the white represented the Snow that covered everything else. The trees were covered in Snow with no leaves. I wondered how they managed. I wondered if the Lycans were the ones living in that town or werewolves. I had to appreciate the weather in the Forest. It was pleasant. It wasn't as hot as Hill, and it wasn't as Cold as Snow. It was a place to be, and I could see why Fredrick would envy and want the place for himself.

We finally arrived at a gate that read, "Welcome to Ice Hill".

I looked at my wristwatch, and it was two in the afternoon.

The gate was opened with no questions asked, and we drove in.

The houses in Ice Hill were built on the mountains. They, too, were covered in Snow, but the buildings looked stronger and wealthier than we had witnessed on our way there. The place was highly developed.

The building was modernized with glass windows and polished wooden doors. The houses were painted. Not all of the houses had visible granite finishing.

The city was exquisite, but it was quiet and cold.

The people's eyes were dull, and they tried hard not to look at us. Most were werewolves, while others were Lycans, but the demarcation between both races was broad.

It was an invisible line neither dared cross. I wondered how King Fredrick could live like this. "We are almost at the palace. Alpha," Qusack said, and I adjusted myself in the car. I looked at my mother, hoping she was ready for what would happen. I prayed it would go in my favour, and soon, I would be free to do whatever I liked.

Forged In The Flames Chapter 58

Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman

Chapter 58 The Committee (Nikolas' POV)

We soon arrived at the palace. It was an old stone wall building like mine. It wasn't in disrepair, and they had upgraded the place, but they had maintained the old features, which gave it an elegant and antique look. We alighted the car, and Qusack handed the car keys to the valet to park. My mother stood at the entrance and looked at the building. I saw tears stream down her cheeks; she was reliving her memory of the past. She was frozen to the spot.

"Fred didn't let me enter, you know," She said and looked at me.

Tears in her eyes. This was a real pain, not the pretence she put up just so she could have her way.

My mother was wearing her pain on her sleeves.

"He did not let me in. They took my nannies from me. I was heavily pregnant, and Fredrick could not look upon me with pity," she said.

"I was kneeling here pleading that he let me in. I told him my husband was dead and those werewolves had taken over Forest. I told him I needed shelter. This was also my home. I grew up here," She said, wiping away her tears.

"He said I was useless. He called me a disgrace. Said I should have died with my husband. Said it was shameless of me to accept a werewolf's kind gesture. He said he had no kingdom to share with me since I could not rule what was already mine by marriage," She said and sniffled.

"I told him I just needed shelter and would return when my child was of age, and he laughed. He took my nannies and chased me away. Looking back now, I wonder how I made it alone. Out there with no one to help me and nowhere to go. I thought of crossing the sea, but the three kingdoms were all I had ever known. I was trapped," she said, and I went to hold her. She had never shared this pain with me before. It was profound, and it hurt her deeply. I wondered why Fredrick would be cruel to his own sister. It was a shame.

I held her hand, and we entered the palace. My mother looked at the place like a stranger. It was clear the building had been modified a great deal.

We were ushered to the hall where the meeting was to be held.

People were already present.

I somehow knew King Aleksander was around.

With just thirty minutes to go, I knew everyone would be around other than Fredrick. We entered the hall, and people began to murmur when they saw us.

We were led to a place that had seats reserved for Forest. There were six seats altogether, but only four of us had come.

I noticed people looking and whispering. Some even pointed at my mother and me.

I did not know what to make of their actions, but I ignored them. I looked at the throne, and there were two seats there. King Aleksander was already sitting on one.

He looked at me and winked, and then his eyes fell upon my mother. It didn't linger when he looked away. I knew they might have history, but I wondered how deep it ran.

There was a long table with chairs on one side. It was on a lower level after the throne. Some men were seated there, and they were all looking at us. I knew those were the committee leaders.

There were three empty seats on the table, which were apparently reserved for my nominees and me. The rest of the hall had people. They were just representatives and members of the committee, preferably floor members.

Soon the tall doors on the other side of the hall opened, and a tall, brawny man walked through. Everyone except King Aleksander stood up to pay their respects.

I saw the man emerge, and he looked like my mother.

The resemblance was striking, and I could see myself too.

He was indeed family.

I knew it was Fredrick, and the thought of that alone made me want to sit down and blatantly disrespect this man.

He looked dangerous, with battle scars on his right cheek. He wasn't peaceful, so he was expected to sustain injuries on his wicked missions. That was what I called what he did. Taking people by force against their will was wicked. I was taking back what was

mine by attacking the Forest, but he was stealing what did not belong to him by attacking and bullying others. I had no respect for the bastard.

He went to his throne and sat down. Aleksander extended a handshake, and Fredrik took it. They both bowed to each other, showing they were equal before he sat.

The meeting started.

The head of the committee greeted everyone and told us what was on the itinerary, with my matter being most of it.

“Joining us today is one who claims to be the son of King Mathias Kowalski and the rightful heir to the throne of Forest. He is here to demand his rights. Although he has conquered the territory and taken it back from the werewolves. He would rather be recognised as a Kowalski than a new king should we choose to crown him,” The man I had come to understand was Alpha Olsen Sadowski, who sent me the invite, spoke and nodded at me to stand up.

I stood and bowed to greet the kings and the people in attendance.

“I do not claim to be King Mathias’ son. I am his son, and I have come with my mother to testify to that,” I said, and it was clear that they already did the math.

“Young lad, you do not know why I pushed back,” Frederick said.

“My colleague and I have many reasons why we have decided not to give you the crown yet,” He said and smiled.

“How have you been, Isabelle?” He asked my mother, and she stood up.

“Alive,” she said with venom in her voice.

“I heard you went feral. You are one lucky wolf,” He said and laughed, and some people laughed with him. I was mad but controlled myself. My mother had asked me to do whatever it took to take the crown peacefully, which I would do.

“The Forest did you well, Izzy. I didn’t know a woman like you would have that much fight in her. Pray, tell me what you ate while in the bush,” He said, and it was out of line, but no one dared tell him to be quiet. My mother did not respond to him.

“Now that you have acknowledged she is your sister, and as you can see, she is well, and she isn’t denying that she is my mother, I think my point has been proven,” I said.

Frederick laughed heartily and shook his head in disagreement.

"You look like your mother, but I am sure she did not tell you about her escapades in the palace before you were conceived." He said, and I frowned at him.

"Come on, Fredrick, the lad has Mathia's eyes," Aleksander said, trying to stop him from what he was about to say, but I doubted the man would pass off the opportunity to humiliate his sister.

"Your mother was a whore. A power-hungry one at that. Then she became a cheap one," He said, smiling.

"Deny it, Izzy?" He challenged my mother, and she couldn't speak.

"She slept with Leon, Mathias's half-brother. In fact, she was sleeping with him thinking he would be given the kingship of Forest. She had no interest in Mathias. Leon was the love of her life. The key to making her a queen. Her key to the Forest kingdom. Leon did not tell my sister his mother was a concubine and that he was illegitimate.

She found out when Mathias was named the next inline. They didn't stop there, really. They continued their love even after she had married Mathias. Some of the Rendezvous was held here. Am I lying, Izzy?" He asked her, and my mother quivered in shame. He wasn't lying at all.

"Mathias suspected it, but she denied it every time. Then Leon got killed by werewolves, and she was alone. That was when she became cheap. She slept around a lot after that. Some of her lovers were werewolf officers," she said, looking at her disgusted.

"Gabriel turned her down, you know? My spies told me of her many advances to the King's Beta," he said, and I was shocked, but I had heard enough.

"We are not here to discuss my mother, your majesty," I said as respectfully as possible.

"But we are, young lad. I am telling you this so you will know why I doubt you belong to

Mathias even though you might have his eyes. Looks can be deceiving, you know. There is no guarantee that she was pregnant by Mathias at the time of his death, and there is no way to find out. So, stop trying to claim you are a Kowalski," He said; everyone was silent. I linked Abraham immediately.

"Does his argument hold?" I asked Abraham. "I am afraid so. If your mother's fidelity is in question, then there is no guarantee you are Mathias's blood. She should have told you this. We would have come up with a better argument." Abraham said, sounding a bit annoyed.

"Tell him you took the Forest from the current leader, so it is yours regardless of what he thinks about your mother," Abraham linked me back, and I looked at King Fredrick.

"Well, my mother did not tell me everything but thank you for the history lesson. Regardless I know I am King Mathias' son. Nonetheless, I still have the right to be crowned because I conquered Forest and took it from the people ruling it. It is my right to ascend as King." I said, and Fredrick laughed.

"Well, for that to happen, young lad, there are many boxes you have to tick. You must achieve a long list of things for my colleague and me to deem you worthy of being equal." He said, and Aleksander chipped in.

"This is wrong, Fredrick. He looks like Mathias, and you know Isabelle. Why do you want to put him through stress over his birthright?"

Aleksander asked, showing that their opinion was divided.

I was grateful to the Hill King because I was beginning to feel alone. My mother had disappointed me ultimately.

"Let's not talk about heirs. In that case, then, they are two. A possible bastard by my dear sister Izzy and Mathias' illegitimate heir by his fated werewolf mate whom I have raised as my nephew for years," Fredrick said, and people gasped. I didn't. I knew he was heading there.

"You bastard!! How could you, Fred!!" my mother called, and Olsen banged the gavel.

"You will address his majesty with respect Luna," he warned her and I could see how unfair the Lycan world was. Fredrick had insulted my mother and his sister, and no one cautioned him, but my mother's outburst was reprimanded immediately. It was a sad situation.

"Olive's baby died. Leon buried her and the child." My mother said, and he laughed.

"She had twins, Izzy. One survived, but Leon did not want a half-breed to be heir to the Forest kingdom, so he sold the child to me as a slave. I raised him as my distant relative," Fredrick

said, and she was in shock. It didn't seem like the King was lying either. I began to suspect

Gabriel might have told his daughter the truth about Leon. He seemed like a conniving bastard. If he wasn't, why bring his lover to my father to marry? I had a lot of digging to do. My mother had lied to me too much for me to be relaxed right now.

"So, what is the way forward, your Majesty?" Olsen asked King Fredrick

"Those in favour that we give him the crown assuming his Mathias' son say, Aye," Fredrick said, and Aleksander and the people in Hill community said, Aye.

Fredrik did not like it.

The number of those in support was counted, and it totalled twenty-three.

“Those not in favour say, Nay,” Fredrick said through gritted teeth. He was mad at

Aleksander. The Hill king had stuck his neck out for me. I hoped he would not regret it.

People from the Snow kingdom, along with two alphas from the Hill kingdom, said Nay, giving a total number of Twenty-seven people.

Even if I placed Qusack and Abraham in the council and they voted in favour, it would not show the result in my favour.

“So it is clear that we look at the other matter,” Olsen said, and my mother gritted her teeth.

She had cost me this, not Aliana or the werewolves. It was her fault for being loose and lying to me.

“Well, there are things expected of you to fulfil, and once you have done it all, we can consider having another hearing on the matter,”

Fredrick said, feeling like a victor.

I wondered how the bastard slept at night. He was doing this to his own blood for what?

“You must be a part of the committee and nominate people that would represent the interests of Forest on it.

You must contribute to the collective with money and Warriors.

We collectively guard our borders against intruders that might come from the sea. We would like you to contribute handsomely to that cause,” Fredrick listed, and I was silent.

“You must obey the unity law and all that it entails.

I know you are fond of werewolf women. My spies have given me reports. The daughter of the man that killed Mathias is your mistress, right?” He added, and some people gasped.

111 do not care whatever sick game you are playing in Forest but do not break the unity law. The day you take a werewolf bride, that would be the end of your opportunity to rule the Forest as King, and we will come for you to enforce the unity law in Forest.

Our forefathers have built our society fiercely, and we will not let you crush it. No werewolf would achieve noble status. It is called a Unity law for a purpose. Because the three kings signed and agreed to it. If indeed you are Mathais' son, you will respect your father's wishes and abide by the laws he helped install," He said, and I sighed.

"And who will determine all this has been fulfilled?" I asked, wanting to know the yardstick of measurement and who to look out for.

"Me and Aleksander, of course," he said, and I knew I had nothing to worry about with Aleksander.

"If I donate money to the collective purse now, can we proceed?" I asked, and he frowned.

"I might be sleeping with a werewolf, but we aren't mated. The unity law is obeyed in the Forest. The werewolves are slaves working on the projects to develop Forest," I said, and he laughed.

"You are quite impatient, Nikolas. You can't say you uphold the unity law when you pay wages and give them food. You do not allow them to be sold to other parts as slaves," he said, and I nodded.

"I have to pay allowances so they do not die. As you know, I have attacked them for nine years straight, so their numbers aren't good; I do not have enough werewolves to do the work in

Forest, so why should I starve and kill or sell them when I am looking for more slaves to help my projects move faster? Your informants should have told you this," I said confidently, and he was silent.

"If you require slaves in Snow, I say you should be kinder towards the ones that come here so you can have people do the work. If we treat the werewolves the way you treat them, they will be extinct.

It is not my fault or King Aleksander's fault that there aren't enough slaves in Snow.

Still, King or not, I will not allow your men to come into my territory and hunt without my permission," I said, letting him know the crown to me was just a mere formality. I owned Forest. My mother t*ouched my hand, and I yanked it away, i "I have been called a bastard today, and all sorts of things have been said, but one thing is sure; I accomplished the one thing you couldn't, King Fredrick, which was to take over Forest, and you might hate me for it. If you genuinely felt my half-brother was an heir, you could have fought for him to regain his father's kingdom. Instead, you tried to take it for yourself. I have heard the stories, your majesty.

This is all because you want Forest for yourself, but I am not a coward. Many people might not speak to you like this out of fear, but I'm a savage. I know no crown or laws.

As far as I am concerned, the decision method is already flawed if you will be presiding over the matter," I said, and Fredrick was silent. I could see he was observing me.

I was tired of the bulls*hit. As things were, I might take Aliana and leave, but I could not walk away from what is mine.

Aliana and I would never be happy, and she would never be free if the werewolves were not free. So, I planned to put up with the bulls*hit, get the crown and abolish the laws in Forest. I will pretend if I have to just long enough to get what I want.

"I request that King Aleksander preside over this?" I requested, and Olsen banged the gavel and shook his head.

"On the contrary, Alpha. You have said many things here today, and we will let them pass as emotional rants. This council will preside over the matter.

You are to build relationships and form alliances in your given period. Show us you have what it takes to be King, and we will reconvene to decide. If it pleases the Kings," The man said, and Fredrick and Aleksander agreed to Olsen's term.

I knew our part of the meeting was over by then. I was given a seat on the committee along with Qusack and Abraham. We represented the kingdom without a king.

The meeting lasted three hours, and we were ushered to our rooms once it was over. I wished I could leave immediately, but we had to be polite.

Forged In The Flames Chapter 59

Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman

Chapter 59 Still In Snow (Nikolas POV)

We were ushered to the royal wing of the palace. King Fredrick said they should take my mother to her old room. I felt it was cruel what he did. Treating his sister the way he did was uncalled for. I also wondered if the joke was on me and if everyone knew her story.

Was that why King Aleksander couldn't look at her and tried to stop Fredrick from talking about her past?

I wasn't mad at Fredrick because he used his only weapon to completely disqualify me from inheriting a crown. I blamed my mother solely for what happened at the committee.

I was glad I came with her, or I would have thought Fredrick was telling lies.

She had ample time to tell me all that her brother said. Instead, she was busy trying to get rid of Aliana and complaining about betrayal.

I doubt my relationship with her would be the same again.

Had I not fought and conquered Forest, Gabriel wouldn't have been able to hand over to me because Fredrick would have discredited me regardless.

The only thing that still gave me power was that I had conquered Forest. An heir or not, I owned the region. The only issue now was as long as I had no crown, Fredrick and Aleksander would be above me, and I must obey the unity law my father helped install. It was messed up.

My mother's silence and secrets had complicated things for me now. It seemed eyes would be on me henceforth.

How would I manage with Aliana?

I kicked the bed out of frustration. I felt like growling because I had been backed into a corner. Fulfilling the requirements of the unity law will be challenging because it would mean that I would have to be mean to the werewolves.

Honestly, I couldn't hate the weres at this point.

This was my mother's fault. Had she been honest, I would have strategised better.

I growled and tried to release my rage. I wished Aliana was with me to help me calm down. She had that effect on me.

Aliana was supportive, but I could not bear to be away from her. I did not know how long this thing would take. One thing was sure, I did not plan to marry a lycan to get ahead.

Settling down with Aliana would put me in violation of the unity law, and seeing what happened here, the council would support Fredrick to come after me.

I could only do as I liked and not answer anyone if I became King. Once I get back to Forest, I would have to re-strategise.

Fredrick had spies in my territory, so I needed to be careful. It was also time for me to have spies in Snow and Hill too.

I heard a knock on the door of my room, and knowing no one dared to harm me, I asked the person to enter.

My mother opened the door and walked in with bloodshot eyes. She had been crying, but I didn't care. Her Lies and secrets had cost me dearly.

"What do you want?" I asked her, and she walked towards me.

"I am sorry I didn't tell you I had an affair with Leon..." she said, and I cut in.

"You did not have an affair with Leon, Mother. You two were dating, and then he introduced you to his brother. Why? Why did you do it? How could you two do that to King Mathias. What were you thinking?" I asked, and she wiped away her tears.

I doubted she would be honest with me, but I was bound to listen to what she had to say. One thing was sure, I planned to talk to Gabriel about his version of the past. So far, what he had told Aliana seemed to be accurate.

"I loved Leon. I wasn't meant to be with Mathias, but when I met Mathias, I fell in love with him. Unlike Mathias, Leon was shady and selfish. I felt I would have a better future with Mathias," She said, and I fought the urge to laugh. Of course, she would have a better future with Mathias; he was the King.

"After I settled down with Mathias, Leon tried to get back with me, but I refused. I would have been faithful, but Mathias left me no choice. He was hung up on Olive that he could not move on," She said, and I shook my head.

"If that were true, then he wouldn't bother marrying you," I told her, knowing that if anything happened to Aliana, I would not move on.

"He married me so he could have peace. He and Fredrick were always fighting until after our union," She said, and I frowned at her.

"Your brother doesn't care about you enough to respect your mate and stop pursuing his agenda," I corrected her, and she paused.

"He does, Nikolas. Fredrick sent me away because he felt I was stupid not to take over Forest. All this anger is because he felt Forest was for the taking. I should have secured the throne instead of making a deal with a werewolf and coming home. He felt if he sent me away, I would return to Forest and do the needful. Before the uprising, we were all on good terms," She said.

"If that is the case, why oppose me taking the crown?" I asked.

"Fredrick fought so hard for the unity of Law, Niko. You have shown that you won't respect it when you become King. It will be easy for you to disregard it. You have been lenient on them. You even kept one as a mistress. Your actions would scare anyone," She said, and I laughed, i

\”This is on you, Mother. Not Aliana or Gabriel; It is on you. I can f*uc*k whoever I please. I can pardon whoever I like. I do not need you or your brother to tell me what to do. You are responsible for the outcome of this meeting.

You lied and did not tell me the truth. Instead, you were focused on getting rid of Aliana.

The crown was in our grasp. I had done my part, and you ruined my chances before I was conceived.

This is on you.

My leniency to the werewolves and my choice of mistress have nothing to do with it.

In fact, I forbid you from ever bringing Aliana or the werewolves up again. If you do not like my lifestyle, I am happy to leave you with your dear brother and go home.

Let this be the last time you will angle our conversation towards the werewolves.

I will not sell slaves or start sleeping with money and power-hungry Lycan women to please your brother. So far, I haven’t met any good ones. They are all like you, mother. Power hungry.

I can’t deal. I would instead remain single with a mistress than settle down with a lycan,” I told her, and she nodded.

\”So you refuse to have an heir?” She asked, and I laughed.

\”Your brother just stated Olive’s child as the true heir. I have all the motivation I need in the absence of a legitimate child. Any living relative closest to me can take over,” I said, and she shook her head.

\”Your father was a king, but you aren’t. The law does not apply to commoners. Fredrick owns that council and will oppose you if he sees you favour werewolves,” She said point blank, but I already knew that.

I needed time to strategise and decide what to do on the matter. I needed to talk to my trusted officers, especially Qusack, to know the way forward. I did not need to tell my mother this, of course. She had disappointed me greatly. I could never take her seriously.

\”If you let me. I can get you a suitable girl,” She said, and she was lucky she was my mother, or I might have gotten physical with her.

She noticed my rage and went silent.

"I will try and talk to Fredrik about it. So I will know what you require to get the crown," She said quickly.

"Are you stupid?" I asked her.

It was harsh, but it was an honest question. I wasn't trying to hurt her or sound condescending. I was genuinely concerned for her intellect.

"Your brother wants Forest and all it owns for himself. He will never support my kingship. No matter what you do, he will never support us.

He doesn't care about you or your family bond.

All he cares about is being powerful.

He wants slaves, and I do not know why.

You cannot help me, mother.

I will just do what they say and see where it leads me. As for the settling down part, it won't happen," I said, and she was silent.

You should leave my room, mother.

We leave this forsaken place at five in the morning. I want to get home on time to monitor my ongoing projects and increase Forest's security.

I like what your brother has done with his place. I will copy him a bit," I said, and she reluctantly left. It took a lot for me to be able to speak to her, but I had to control my temper.

Forged In The Flames Chapter 60

Forged In The Flames By Karima Sa'ad Usman

Chapter 60 Talk With The Kin (Nikolas POV)

My mother's visit greatly irritated me, but I calmed down. I spent time pacing about the room and thinking of what to do.

I knew it wouldn't be easy. As things were, I wished I could settle for being Alpha of Forest, but that would subject me to the Unity law. I might be attacked, tried and persecuted for breaking the unity law. I needed the crown. I just had to be wise about it.

A few hours later, someone knocked on my door. I went to open it because whoever it was, was afraid of knocking. I could tell the difference between a confident knock and an unsure knock.

I opened the door and saw a blonde werewolf slave holding a tray.

She looked in her early forties, but she was beautiful. I saw a mark on her neck that indicated she was claimed. It was the mark of a Lycan and not a werewolf. She also had a distinct Lycan scent. Something like what I did to Aliana. A Lycan had marked her.

I wondered who would be able to claim a werewolf in the Snow.

The collar on her neck indicated she wasn't free, so I figured the mark might have gotten her in trouble.

It disgusted me to see that they collared people in Snow.

I could understand why those that had the opportunity to escape would escape.

The woman held a tray of food and averted her gaze from mine.

"I am here to serve your meal, your highness," she said, and I wondered why she would refer to me as a prince.

"I am just an alpha. No need to treat me as royalty," I cautioned her in case it was Fred*ic*ks's trap.

She entered the room and placed the food tray on my table.

"To me, you are royalty, your highness. I come from Forest," She said, and I could understand why she would refer to me as that. News must have travelled about me.

It seemed the woman had something to tell me but decided against it last minute.

"His Majesty asked us to bring you female company. Would you be interested in werewolves or Lycans?" She asked, and I shook my head.

"Neither, thank you," I said, and she paid her respect and left.

I observed her closely and realised she wasn't just any slave; she had a brand on her neck that indicated she belonged to the King.

The bastard.

He said I had a werewolf mistress. I doubted she was just cooking and cleaning for him. I bet the scent was his. The woman was too pretty and well-kept to be an ordinary slave.

Since he did not reek of werewolves, I couldn't accuse Fred*ic*k, but then again, he had organised the meeting, so he had time to get rid of her scent. I knew he was sleeping with the woman. He was incapable of passing off the beauty.

I ate the meal and decided to sleep early so we could wake up before five and leave. I had linked Abraham, Qusack and my mother to inform them of my plans.

I was about to lie down when a confident knock sounded on my door.

"It is opened!" I called out, and the person turned the knob.

I knew it was King Fredrick because of the confidence of the knock. His scent was faint while he was at the door. It was also familiar.

It was like that of the slave werewolf that had served me.

Why would he allow his mistress to serve me? Was he trying to tell me something? I wondered what his deal was.

I got off the bed while he walked in. He had a broad grin, and I wanted to wipe it away by telling him I knew he was screwing a werewolf, but somehow I knew he wanted me to know, so I held back.

"Dear nephew," he said, and I fought the urge to growl at him.

"I was hoping you would spend a day with me," he said, and I chuckled.

"You insulted me and embarrassed my mother. You denied me my rights and expected me to be happy about it. I think it is best I leave in the morning," I said, and he nodded gradually.

"I can understand your anger, young lad," he said, and I wondered when he would stop calling me that.

"But you have to understand that there are rules. Mathias, Aleksander and I came together and agreed on the rules. Before the werewolves struck, Mathias had decided to join the slave trade. Since he had lots of them, he was bound to make money off it. But unfortunately, Gabriel struck, and your mother was too weak to hold on to what was rightfully hers.

Had she positioned herself properly, you wouldn't have had this problem. No one would question your right or paternity," he explained. "How do you expect her to hold the

throne without an army. You should have provided her with that,\" I told him, and he nodded.

\"True; I have also noticed that Izzy has kept much from you. I did not send her away because I wanted to be wicked. Had she come to ask me for an army to take Forest, I would have gladly lent it to her. Mathias and the little warriors he had, had done a number of them. Gabriel wouldn't have seen me coming.

But she came to request shelter, saying Gabriel promised to hand Forest to you when you are of age. Her weakness cost all of us dearly. Gabriel was now in charge of Forest and all the resources needed to run our lands. Due to the clause in the Unity Law, I could not lead an attack on my own.

A section states that no king will attack a kingdom with a potential ruler and an heir.

My sister was a potential ruler.

I sent hunters after her to chase her deep into the woods, hoping she would return to Forest and take what belonged to her. She didn't.

She didn't return to ask for help or go to Forest. Pushing her away was useless. She was weak and not a leader material, so I let her rot there. Our father would have killed her for disgracing our bloodline, but I allowed her to live.

I knew the cave you two lived in most of your lives in the woods. I kept her there so people would believe she was dead, and I could have the opportunity to attack Forest and take it back from Gabriel.

Unfortunately, he made the place impenetrable. I wish I had adopted your strategy. I would have succeeded,\" He said and sighed.

The man had the effrontery to tell me he deliberately ensured my mother ran deep into the woods. He was sick. Their entire family was dysfunctional. I was indeed unfortunate to be related to the Semenovs. He sighed and looked at me.

I could see him dropping the confidence and playful facade. He was about to say something profound.

\"My reason for opposing you is that your actions have proven you would not have the best interest of our people in mind.

I doubt you will support the lycan community and uphold our laws. I am not sure you will put your kind first or maintain the Unity Law in Forest.

When the law is abolished and werewolves have rights, they will relocate to Forest, leaving Snow and Hill underpopulated.

If we are underpopulated, we can't develop, and our defence will weaken. Werewolves are the best workers and very efficient in the army because their loyalty is absolute.

A little freedom will offset that balance, Nikolas.

We have been able to keep our region safe because of this balance. Mathias saw the light. There are other kingdoms across the sea. They will overrun us if we do not have a strong defence and development. Everything has a reason.

So you have to understand my fear.

If you can prove to me that you have our best interest at heart and are willing to help

Aleksander and me develop our regions, then you have my support. Kingship is a lot of power to possess. I have to trust you to grant it," He said, and I shook my head.

"I have told you that there aren't many werewolves in Forest. Gabriel did not develop that place for the twenty-nine years he was in charge. Forest is behind. Hill and Snow are more developed than Forest. I am practically overworking the werewolves to modernise the place," I explained.

"I would have believed you if it weren't for the reports my spies have given me.

They tell me about how you dote on your werewolf mistress.

She sleeps in your room.

She has no collar.

So how can she be a slave?

You pamper her and even punish your kind for her sake.

Had I said this to the committee, the twenty- three people who voted in your favour wouldn't have?

You demoted your gamma for her sake and even put lycan halfbreeds to serve her.

I learned that you quarreled with your mother and punished her too.

How do you expect me to support you when you might abolish the law so you can be with your mistress?

I know love when I see it. You remind me a lot of Mathias when he was with Olive. He refused to sign the unity law because of her.

You are likely to abolish it for this woman's sake," He said, and I did not know how obvious my intentions were until now.

I thought I had done an excellent job masking it.

Still, Igham and my mother's actions had made it incredibly difficult.

They had attacked Aliana and tested my patience and limits. I could not ignore their transgressions at the expense of Aliana, but it had come to bite me in the arse.

"Then you read wrong, your majesty," I said, thinking of a comeback.

"I do not like people messing with my toys. The slave knows her place and remains there, just like the one that served my food," I said, so he would know that I knew she was his mistress, and he smiled.

"Ah, she is a beauty, that one," he grinned. Unfazed by my observation.

"The difference is I do not wear them collars, and I won't. It isn't my style. I have rules in Forest, which are simple; no one messes with my things without my consent. After all, the

Lycans are in charge of the werewolf slaves. I never get involved with their treatment, but I would feel insulted if anyone tried to mess with my slave. She is my property to do as I please. She isn't for general use, nor is she to be

damaged. I also have a reason for keeping her. I am sure you know she is Gabriel's daughter," I said confidently, and his eyes faltered because he thought about what I had said. I hoped it remained that way. I felt like a traitor for speaking of Aliana in such a condescending manner. I hoped she would forgive me.

"If you put it that way, I can't argue with you, Nikolas, but I will need some convincing. I want to get to know you as family and as my business partner. Once I am sure you have our best interest at heart, then I will support you. I would rather a Lycan be the King of Forest than a halfbreed," He said, and I sighed.

"What about my mother? You did not need to humiliate her like that?" I asked him, and he chuckled.

"Izzy is a conniving bitch. She would have tried to take over if I had let her in. There are many things about Leon and your mother that I cannot discuss with anyone. Still, Izzy did not leave room to alleviate my doubt about her loyalty. She loved Mathias; that was obvious, but she wasn't loyal.

I cannot accommodate someone as disloyal as Izzy in my kingdom. I always said she would have been better off with Aleksander, but she wanted a wealthy suitor. I must

confess, Mathias was the most wealthy and powerful of us three. It was amazing to see how Gabriel knocked him down.

You have to be careful. Those things are treacherous,\" he said, and I did not want to say anything. I just nodded.

\"Maybe I will visit Forest in person instead of relying on my informants. I would like to meet this slave that you are possessive of,\" he said, chuckling, and I nodded. Of course, he wasn't welcomed, but there was no need to spell it out. \"Miles would have loved to meet you, but he went to do something in Hill. He has been visiting there often lately, and I wonder why.

Maybe he will come to see you in Forest,\" He said, and I nodded.

I wasn't interested in the conversation anymore. I just wanted to sleep and leave in the morning. There was too much to do now.

\"Think about the trade deal and all the other things we demanded. I would like to see you sitting with Aleksander and me,\" he said, and I did not need to guess what he meant by I should think about the demands.

He wanted me to bow to his will. He wanted to control me. It also implied I would be King by name only. Just like Aleksander, he wanted me to dance to his tune, to do things his way. He wanted to be the King of kings. I needed to discuss this with Qusack and Abraham extensively. I had to be careful because everything was riding on this.

Fredrick left me in knots, but I managed to sleep.

I woke up at four in the morning and got ready.

Qusack was already up and waiting for my orders. There was no point waiting until five. I linked Abraham and my mother to meet us outside and headed out.

Fredrik was still sleeping, so I left a message to inform him we had returned to Forest.

We left in a hurry, and the drive back was silent.

Qusack and Abraham were angry, and so was I.

My mother would have spared us the humiliation by telling me the truth. I began to wonder if everything she told me was a lie.

Although Fredrick had confirmed some things she said, I would need to gather information from all the parties involved to get the bigger picture. I also knew I needed to take things a step at a time.

\”Do you think we can do this the peaceful way?\” My wolf, Bane, asked, sounding a bit worried because we could not fight a war.

\”I will try, Bane,\” I told my wolf.

\”What about Aliana?\” He asked, and I sighed. “We will figure it out. I do not plan to give her up for any reason. Maybe we will be more discreet while we try to fish out the spies,\” I replied, and Bane was silent.

One thing I was confident about was my scope of search.

Fredrik’s spies were most likely to be Lycans.

So they had to be people in my ranks, preferably Kappas.

I planned to comb through everyone until I found the people responsible for giving off so much information, leaving me vulnerable to my enemies.

Whether I liked it or not, Fredrick and that damn committee were filled with haters who wished they owned Forest. I will dance to their tune on the surface while I find a permanent solution underneath the pretence.