

## 191 GOODBYE

Xaden pulled Fiona up to him and hugged her close. 1

From the very first day he found her, when her mother told him to look after her, he had seen her as his little sister.

When he let her go, there were tears in her eyes.

"God, look at you crying. When I return, we are going to discuss your working as a servant; the risks are too much." He laughed at her.

She managed a soft laugh as she wiped off her tears.

"Come back so that I do not have to resume working as a slave." She held his arm. Shall we make a deal? If you promise to return home, then I will abandon my troublesome ways and stop pretending to be a mere servant."

He laughed softly. "Is that a promise?"

"I promise. Just you promise me that you will return." She said, her voice breaking. "Promise me you will come back safe and sound, and you will heal her. It will suck to lose the both of you."

He kissed her forehead. "I promise, little monkey."



When he found her, he called her a little monkey because she was fond of climbing trees and anything in sight.

She had hated the pet name.

But today and at this moment, she did not mind.

Then Erik opened the door. "We need to be on our way. The men are ready."

He gently let go of Fiona, cupped her cheek, and then pecked her warmly.

"Just take care of her while I am gone. I will leave Damian and some other high-ranking wolves to take care of you," he said.

She nodded numbly.

He turned to Marie and Loren. "Stay with her and protect her even if it is the last thing you do. I will be back."

"Go well," Marie said. "You have the ability to be guided and be careful on your journey. Erik will know all about it."

Then he let go and took one last look at Jasmine.

He did not want to see her in such a state, but he could not bring himself to leave her without saying goodbye.

He stood in the middle of the room, looking at her, and then turned and headed out the door.



Fiona remembered what Jasmine had wanted to tell him when he was about thirty seconds gone.

Something within her told her that she needed to tell him. 1

"Xaden, wait, I need to tell you something." She ran off to the door.

But he was already gone.

She leaned at the door and sighed reluctantly.

"We will have to pray for his return," Marie said to Fiona as she stood by the window.

"You sent him to his death." A year-stricken Fiona confronted.

"The moment that she had been stabbed, death had already been chosen for him," Marie said wisely.

Fiona joined her at the window as they both watched Xaden and his men ride out on the new mission, which would either be good or bad fortune.

Then she turned to Loren. "Someone stabbed Jasmine right?"

"Yes, Aurora but she was killed by Xaden. It was his mistress who went on the killing spree. Brought down over seven wolves on the quest. Baffles us all." Loren said in all earnest.



"I need to see the body," Marie said.

"She is in my quarters." He said. Then he turned to Fiona. "Stay here with Jasmine and the guards. Do not go anywhere. We will be back."

Fiona nodded diligently and sat beside Jasmine while they left the room.

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After Xaden left the chambers and closed the door hard behind him, Erik handed him his helmet.

"Damian and the rest shall remain behind." Xaden said. "We still do not understand the tragedy that befell us, but we can not take any chances."

"Yes, my lord." Damian said.

As they headed down the stairs, he saw Lisa.

"My lord-

He glared at her, and she knew to shut up immediately.

He ignored her and kept on walking ahead.

Then Damian asked. "Those whom you had ordered executed what is to be their fate."

He had forgotten entirely that he had ordered some people dead.

"We can carry out the orders when I return".

Xaden said.

They headed outside and then to where the horses were.

"I leave this pack to your care," Xaden said. "Do not fail me."

Damian bowed. "Yes, my lord."

Then, just before Xaden was about to climb his horse, a familiar female voice stopped him.

"Xaden!"

He turned and saw Eleanor.

The last time

They had seen since they had their very bitter argument and he had sent her out.

Even though he had said he had not wanted to see her again, she was his mother. The woman who had raised him when he had no one.

His entire being was filled with shame when he saw her progressing towards him.

"Eleanor." He said.

His pride, grief, and guilt would not let him show to her that he missed her.

That he was sorry for all the awful things he had said.

Instead, he maintained a persona of someone who had everything under control.

"Xaden, I need to speak to you about something. It is quite urgent," she said to him.

He felt himself stiffen.

She was really going to talk to him about Marie when he was going away to probably his death.

He became angry at her lack of concern for him and arrogantly went to his horse.

"I have a journey to make." He said.

"Xaden, it is of the utmost importance." She replied. Your journey will have to wait. I need to tell you something."

He tried to climb his horse, but he felt a pain in his chest.

He stopped and groaned.

She gasped and reached out to him while his men looked down, worried.

"Are you okay?" She asked him.

He suspected that it was Jasmine's wound beginning to affect him.

It waved off, and then he shook her hand off.

"Fine." He said gruffly.

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Then he climbed his horse and said to her.  
"Whatever you have to say will wait. Moreover, I  
said that I do not want to see you."

He saw the hurt in her eyes, and then he turned  
on his horse and rode off, leaving her standing  
there before the guilt in him consumed him.

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