236 XADEN'S LAST MEMORY OF HIS MOTHER

Xaden dropped down to his knees instantly, and his entire being shook for a while. 1

And then he became frozen.

Like he was unable to look, his eyes were just locked on her head on the spikes/

It was like all further joy that he had had earlier on vanished.

Like they had never existed. Like this morning, he had not whistled like there had been no smiles on his face.

He did not see her body anywhere; only her head, and then her king-black raven hair hung from her head.

"What is going on?" Erik asked from behind.

He had just caught on to them.

He stopped short. "Fuck." 1

There was serene silence.

The horses that had approached with the other wolves went quiet.

As if they, too, were acknowledging the gravity of the loss.

"How did this happen? How did you find out?" Erik asked.

Xaden was barely even listening to them.

It was like he was lost in his little world.

"We received word from the men securing the wall," Damian said. "I came to investigate, and I found her."

"What about her body?" Erik asked.

"We found her on the eastern part of the wall," Damian said. "The men had seen the body earlier and had no idea who she was. She is being taken away now."

Damian looked back up, her head on the spikes. "I could not bring her down. Xaden deserves that honor."

And then Xaden became limp.

He turned to a wolf, and he howled.

He cried and howled, and you could hear him whimper like a child.

All the men just stood still, unable to console him.

Xaden was heartbroken. 3

And the last time he had seen her, he had said awful things to her.

It flashed through his mind quickly and tormented

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(FIRST FLASHBACK)

"I warned you about her." Eleanor had said. "What am I here for you if you won't seek me out to help you?"

"Marie, do not turn me down the way you do. And moreover, she is stronger than you." He said. "You couldn't even accurately find out who had tried to kill me."

Eleanor involuntarily jerked back in disbelief at what he said, and then she cleared her throat and said, "She is stronger because she uses dark magic. You have no idea what it is. Dark magic is evil, and once taken, it asks for something in return. I love you, that's why I will never use dark magic."

"If you loved me, you would have gotten all of this over with, " he said rudely. You don't care about me or anyone else."
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She blinked in shock. "How can you say something like that, Xaden? This isn't how I raised you."

"I'm not a child anymore." He told her. 1

She looked at him, hurt at his words.

"That boy you raised is gone." He said angrily.

He was upset with her.

It was partly her fault.

She had served him false information, and he had gone ahead to disgrace himself in front of everyone.

"You don't mean what you're saying." She shook her head. "Stay away from Marie."

"I am an Alpha, not some half-dead child anymore. Leave me alone." Xaden said.

She was hurt by his words he could see it in his eyes. 2

She licked her bottom lips, and her fingers shook.

"You don't mean that." She said.

"I mean every word of it!" He spat. "Now leave!" 2

She gasped softly.

Then she nodded her head, turned away, and left the throne room.

Once Xaden saw her leaving, he realized that she was truly going.

She was the mother he never had. She was, in fact, his only mother after his family's massacre

He felt a squeeze in his chest.

He wanted to tell her to stop, run, and tell her that he meant those words, but pride and ego filled him.

After all, it had been her fault.

It was Elena's fault that he was hurting over Jasmine. He would have gotten rid of her from the first day he had met her had she used dark magic to read her the night they had come to the cabin. 3

Instead of going after, Xaden let his pride win. 1

He remained on his throne until she had left.

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(SECOND FLASHBACK)

"Xaden!"

He turned and saw Eleanor.

The last time
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They had seen they had had a very bitter argument, and he had sent her out.

Even told her that he never 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 news sorry for all the awful things he had said. 1

Rather, 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.

Was she really going to talk to him about Marie when he was going away to probably his own death?

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

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

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

He tried to climb his horse and then 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. 1

He suspected that it was Jasmine's wound beginning to affect it. 1

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

"Fine." He said gruffly.

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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