

~SCARLETT~

"Gabriella told me that this healer could help us," Autumn informs me as Alaric and Ares help carry Carter up the stairs.

"But would she be willing to help us?" I ask in fear. I didn't want to come all this way and then she turned us down.

Carter was losing more blood with each passing second, and it was making me panic. I was trying hard to stay strong, but the truth was that I was terrified inside. It was taking a lot of my self-control not to break down in front of everyone and scream his name repeatedly.

The thought of never having Carter say my name again terrified me. The thought of our baby never meeting his father made me devastated.

I knew that I would give my life today for Carter to live. I would do anything, anything at all. If I had to get down on my knees and beg this healer to save him, I will.

"Her name is Hermione Devi," Autumn informs us. "She's supposedly a very powerful healer. Gabriella said she would help us since she owes Arthur a favor."

"Arthur Blackner?" I ask her, seconds away from falling onto the ground and losing the battle.

"I will be able to reverse it before it can kill him." She announces suddenly.

I took a deep breath and gasped.

I felt like her words had given me a reason to breathe again. I felt like the life inside of me had just been restored.

"I need everyone to exit the room." She tells us. "I need to be fully focused to save him, and it may be difficult for me to do that if anyone starts crying."

I knew she was directing it at me. I didn't want to leave him, but I also wanted her to do her job without interruption. I needed Carter to come out of this alive. If that meant that I had to stay outside while she healed him, then it was something that I could do.

I lean over and give him one last kiss on his forehead. Please, Carter, I need you. Please fight this for us. There's still plenty that I want to experience with you.

Clara gently takes my hand and guides me outside with everyone else.

I couldn't sit still when she locked us all out of the room. I was pacing from left to right. How long does something like this usually take? I was restless.

"It's going to be okay," Clara promised me. "Carter has always been a fighter. He's not going to give up."

"Clara is right," Ares said to me, even though I could see the worry in his eyes. "My brother is a fighter. His love for you is stronger than death. He will fight the poison to get back to you. I know that much."

I was grateful for their comforting words. It was helping.

Damon walks over to Clarissa and kisses her on her cheek; he'd just arrived. She quickly wraps her arms around his neck and practically melts into him.

I swallow, I wish that Carter was with me so that I could do the same. I needed him to lean on.

"How is he doing?" He asks us.

"We don't know." Alaric answers him. He was taking it just as badly as I was. Dark circles were under his eyes, and he looked like he wanted to cry. He wasn't pacing like I was but he did look like he would also break down if this didn't work.

I knew how much Alaric and Carter loved each other. Their brotherly bond was a beautiful one, and I knew Alaric must be blaming himself for this. Carter mentioned more than once that Alaric always blamed himself if anything bad happened to any of his siblings.

Clara places a hand on his shoulder to give him support.

"He's going to make it Alaric. No poison is strong enough to kill him. I've known Carter for years. This cannot harm him, he's much stronger than that."

Alaric wipes away a tear from her cheek. Despite everything, Clara still cared deeply for Carter. She was the one who fell for him first, of course, she would also be hurting. But she was still trying to be strong for the rest of US.

"I should have protected him." He whispers, "I should have stopped Fox in time. I thought I had him. I let him slip away from my grasp and in that second, he hurt my brother. He poisoned him."

"Don't blame yourself," Atticus says as he enters the hallway. "No one is to blame for any of this. This was beyond our control. Let's all just pray that he makes it through this.
 I look behind him to find Grif and someone else that I never expected to see here today amongst the rest of us.

"Elsa?" I ask in surprise.

Why would she be here? She was a Cage, they would never allow her to show her support. She smiles at me, "Scarlett!"

"What are you doing here?" I ask her. She should be back home with her family. What happened there while we were gone?

"Did they fight not end?" I ask Atticus. "Are they still fighting back there even though I rejected Wilder?"

He shook his head.

"Then what's going on?" I demand.

I was worried that it wasn't over. I didn't want anyone else to lose their lives or become seriously injured because of me. I'd seen enough damage in one day. I didn't want to see any more.

All eyes are on Elsa. She's supposed to be the enemy, but she was the only one that helped me escape. She wasn't an enemy to me.

"She ran away from home." Atticus sighs.

"W-what?" Ares demands.
 There are shocked and horrified looks among us. Elsa wasn't happy with her family, but I never thought she would try to escape.

But what was she doing with the Fawns? Why was she here?

"I kind of sneaked into their jeep." She says as if reading my mind.

"This is not good." Alaric growls. "The second they find out she's missing, they will start searching for her. If they find her with us, that will lead to another battle. We can't let that happen. Too many lives have already been lost! My brother is still fighting for his life in that bloody room, and it's because of her family!"

Elsa winces at his tone, and Grif moves before her, "Let's all just calm down. She can stay with us if that's what she wants. There is no need to make her feel unwelcome. She did nothing wrong. Her brothers are the ones responsible for everything, not her. She's innocent."

"Grif n," Autumn whispers gently. "She should return home.

That's the best thing for all of us."

Atticus clears his throat and motions for Autumn to come closer to him. He whispers something to her, and her eyes immediately widen.

What did he say to her?

"I don't want to go back," Elsa tells us. "I do not want to marry a man of my brothers' choosing. I will not be forced into that marriage. I'm never going back."

Ares runs a hand through his hair, "Well, it looks like this fight isn't even close to finishing anytime soon."

"None of you have to worry about this," Grif n assures us. "I will keep her with me. If you're asked anything, say you do not know where she is. That's all."

Why was he this protective over her?

"Grif n," Damon says as he looks at his brother like he'd lost his mind. "Have you lost your damn mind? We already have other things on our plate right now. Do you think we can handle this?"

"I don't f*cking care!" Grif n growls. "She stays with me. I'm not f*cking letting her go back to that place. If she wants to stay, she isn't going anywhere."

Damon quirks a brow before a knowing look crosses his face. Did they all know something that we didn't?

"She's your mate, isn't she?" Clarissa asks him in horror.

"Elsa is your mate."

Grif n looks away from her gaze without answering her. I guess that was our answer.

I couldn't believe this. It felt like our problems would never end. However, I agreed with Grif n. Elsa saved my life when she decided to help me to escape. She was innocent in all of this and I was willing to help her. If she wanted to stay, I would show her my support. It was the least I could do for her.

"I will also stand by Elsa's decision; if she wants to stay, I will help keep her hidden as much as possible," I informed the others. "She helped me escape. She's a good person. She's nothing like her brothers."

Elsa gives me a grateful smile.

"It's safe to say we've all lost our minds." Ares chuckles, but he can't hide the harshness in his voice.

We were all worried.

Clara held my hand and squeezed it tightly. How much longer must we wait? I couldn't hear anything from inside the room. I couldn't tell if things were okay.

I place a hand over my racing heart.

Everyone goes silent when the door opens, and Hermione walks out of the room. I held my breath as I waited for her to say something.

"The poison is out of his body." She finally breaks the silence. "He's now out of danger."

It takes my body a while to react to the news. I was preparing myself for the worst news possible but this...

I fell to the ground as I broke down crying. I'd held it in for too long. I couldn't stop myself anymore.

Clara drops to the ground beside me and pulls me into her arms, "I told you that he's a fighter. I told you so!"

I don't think we were the only ones crying. Ares and Alaric were trying to be strong, but I could see the tears in their eyes, also. They were relieved that their brother had survived.

"You can see him now," Hermione tells me. "He isn't going to wake up until tomorrow, so don't get alarmed when he doesn't open his eyes for the rest of the day."

I don't need to be told twice as I rush into the room. I ran straight towards the bed and covered his face with kisses. I knew he wasn't awake but I wasn't leaving his side until he opened his eyes again.

"Thank you!" I whisper. "Thank you for not leaving us!

Thank you so much!"