

Chapter 8 - Fighting Alone

"If you want to be strong, learn how to fight alone." -
Unknown

Kiya

"Little Bit, I have found nothing worth finding."
Jackie's voice rang from my closet as her hands
thoroughly rummaged through my hanging
clothes.

"Nothing suspicious in the bathroom!" Sapphire
called from the lavatory. "You need more toilet
paper, though!"

My eyes narrowed to the muffled coughs of Galen,
who crawled from underneath my bed with his
hair partially covering his left eye.

"Nothing down here but dust bunnies." He
chortled, grasping the helping hand of Mikhail as
he pulled him from the ground. Isaiah checked
through every nook and cranny in my room for
any evidence of an intruder but found nothing.
Not even he, who has a degree in Forensic Science,
could find anything.

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From my peripherals, Darien lingers at my door. The disgusted and annoyed look on his face told a story that he wouldn't be caught dead going through the threshold into my room. Hatred burned into my back, searing off the small hairs on my arms under the intensity of his glower. Involuntary, unpleasant shivers swam down my spine as my ex-best friend silently wishes for my disappearance.

After revealing my sleep troubles to my friends and, shockingly, under Neron's request, all of them are scoping out clues for an intruder. Or at least an entranceway for it to trespass. A deep part of me desperately hoped for a slip up from the hybrid; if Osiris had left clues of his presence for my friends to detect. With every hand that came up empty, my heart sunk in a sea of disappointment.

The bastard is intelligent. He left behind no evidence of his arrival. I saw him. Felt him. His presence engulfed the peace in my room and left behind the chaos. It thrived off the aura of disorder, using it as a weapon to subdue me. Osiris is crafty and I'm a fool to think anything different.

"Kiya, are you sure something was here?" Isaiah asked me, rising to his feet from his knees. The sunlight made his deep melanin glow. "Because if

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there was, none of us can find anything."

"So, we're wasting our time," Darien growled from the door; arms crossed. "We have better things to do and we're here chasing dust bunnies and imaginary friends."

"Dude, chill out." Galen barked with a scowl on his face. "We're here helping a friend. Who knows what could be out there? And I trust Kiya's words that something was in here."

"She *does* have a creative imagination." The insinuation lining Darien's tone stung deep. He believes that I'm making this up, but I'm not! I-I just... "We're chasing a ghost."

"Don't write it off, yet." Abigail gently added. Her smile is dazzling. "After all she's been through, she has every right to be concerned. A presence in a room isn't to be taken lightly. It's an affliction that can happen to anyone."

"Kiya..." Artemis spoke. **"You should tell them the truth. What Osiris has done must be known. Let them help and protect you."**

I didn't answer back. My fingers fidgeted nervously. Darien is right. I'm leading everyone on

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a wild goose chase because I don't dare to tell them about Osiris. And the dark promises and warnings he spoke of. The war against him is a battle I must fight alone. He's the one who kidnapped me, and I'm the one he's after. Involving the people I love in this madness will only lead to pain for them. And I cannot let that happen.

My friends would stop at nothing to make sure I'm safe. I'm the youngest of our crew, thus making me the baby. The one everyone needs to protect. No matter how much training I go through or the battles I've fought and won, they still believe I need protection. As much as I appreciate it, it annoys me sometimes. I'm a Delta. I'm Selene's avatar. I can fight and win alone.

But then, I remember it. The onslaught of Cerberus. Their broken, bloodied bodies on top of the burning grass. All in their silent vow to keep me safe. It brought a wave of agony I've never felt before. It cut deeper than a knife and burned hotter than Greek fire. Those images resurface in my nightmares—sometimes with the bonus of their bodies shifting to stiff corpses.

For once, I want to protect them. Osiris' attention is on me and I want to keep it that way. His eyes should remain on their target, not on potential

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liabilities or extras in whatever his plan is. My friends deserve to be happy and safe with their mates, not risking their lives for me.

Is that a bad thing?

I know it's stupid to keep this to myself. That I'm being haunted by a man thought to have died in the fiery hellscape over three weeks ago. But the love and protection for my friends outweigh my safety. As long as they're okay, I'll continue to fight this secret war.

"We're not getting any closer to finding whatever the fuck we're supposed to find." Pushing himself off the door, Darien cranes his neck from side to side, ridding any kinks. "Continue to play detective. I'm leaving."

"What the fuck is his problem?" Galen asked, his eyes alit with annoyance.

"Maybe he's tired or has a lot on his mind." I quickly add, trying to defuse the situation. Galen, although flamboyant and silly, takes his friendships seriously. He grew up with Darien and can already tell that there's something wrong with him.

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Another secret I'm keeping from everyone. Aside from the Osiris fiasco, I've yet to tell everyone about Darien and I's fallout. What am I supposed to say? He went from amazing friend to bitter enemy within a day, and I don't know why. And it's not like I can walk up to him and have a conversation; not after how he blew me off the other day. His words stung deep, hitting the fleshy and vulnerable parts of my heart. The areas I guard the most.

And the last thing I want is to be the reason for Darien and Galen's fallout. I don't want to be fought over.

In the end, no one found anything. Osiris left nothing. My friends departed from my room shortly after I declared that they can leave. Each had expressions of sadness or disappointment but didn't dwell on them. I didn't want them too. They shouldn't carry this burden with me. Sitting my rear on my bed, the dead silence in my room was heavy without their mild chatter.

It's cold.

"You should have told them," Artemis sighed. **"This would make things a lot easier, Kiki. You had the chance, but you let it pass you by. Why?"**

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"I can handle Osiris myself." I defended. "Why should I let them fight my battles? They have better things to do than to fuss over me."

"I know you care about them and their safety. You're selfless to a fault. But, sometimes, we need help with things we can't handle ourselves. If you don't tell them about Osiris, it'll only be a matter of time before they do find out and that can end badly. You think he'll keep this a secret like you are?"

"He only wants me. That guarantees that he won't hurt anyone else. Keep the enemy's eyes on their target and not let them stray."

"But how will it help them if you get hurt?"

"This isn't about that! I don't care if I get hurt! I care whether they get hurt*! I'm tired of people hurting for me. You saw what Cerberus did to them. Abi's arm hasn't fully healed yet from it. Osiris has the potential to do worse. When I get rid of him on my own, this all will be over. They don't have to know."*

"...You and I know evil doesn't keep itself hidden for very long. Please, don't wait too long to tell them. They have to know. Them a

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nd Neron, since this is his pack."

A defeated sigh escaped my lips as I trudged my legs into the bathroom. Opening the faucet, I splashed cold water on my face a few times in hopes the coolness dissipates the stress bubbling underneath my skin. I know I have to talk, eventually. But is it worth the risk? Osiris can get into the territory undetected and haunt me. Who knows what else he's capable of?

Pulling a towel off the rack, I wiped my face clean, relishing in the softness of cotton. Everything felt peaceful for a moment until I felt a puff of hot air on my earlobe.

"Miss me?"

On high alert, I jerked behind me to see the billow of smoke writhing in the air like a snake. Once again, the scarlet red eyes sunk deep into my eyes, grappling at the threads of my soul. "I admire your friends' diligence in finding me. Too bad I'm always one step ahead."

Growling, I threw my towel to the side. "You're a fucking asshole, Osiris. You've been watching me?"

"Of course." He said it was a known fact. "I'm a

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predator. I have to monitor my prey. You know this by the empty results you've received not too long ago. They cannot find me! This form of mine leaves no physical evidence behind, so, in actuality, you've been leading them in a wild goose chase."

The billow hovers closer, a hand reaching out to cup my face. The dark touch sends nothing short of sensual sensations through my body, involuntarily invoking a shiver. I hate it. "Get away from me."

"No. I like to admire what's mine."

"I belong to no one."

"I beg to differ." Suddenly, a fistful of my hair was grabbed, violently jerking my head back. The area where he bit me, on my neck, throbbed asynchronously from my heartbeat, causing my legs to buckle. What is this power? "I don't want to hurt you, Little Moon. I've given you the option to surrender and yet, you continue to fight the losing battle. Must disaster explode in your face for you to realize the truth? That all will abandon you? Your friend Darien has."

My heart lurched at the thought of Darien and his

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heated looks of abhorrence. He wants nothing to do with me and for the life of me, I cannot figure out why. "How long until the others follow? How long will you realize that the love of your friendships and family is nothing more but a farce? How long until you realize they have played you like a fiddle? I thought you were much smarter than that, Little Moon."

My powers sprung to the surface like springs free from compression, steaming in a fiery passion for my protection. In the blink of an eye, the darkness that veiled my bathroom in near black vanished to normal white. Light from the small window illuminated my surroundings with hope and serenity. My right hand vibrated and shook with moon energy, realizing it was responsible for the dissipation of the darkness. Breathing deeply in relief, my free hand went to the area the hybrid forcibly grabbed, fingers massaging my scalp to release the throbbing pain.

If there's one thing someone shouldn't do, is touch my hair. Let alone yank it. I worked too hard on it for grimy fingers to mess it up!

Nevermind that. As much as Osiris' words hit a deep part of me, I won't let him win. Not over me. I've come too far to let some fanged bastard ruin things for me. A damsel in distress is a role I

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refuse to play and reject wholeheartedly.

This is my fight.

I'll take Osiris down. With my own two hands.

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