

Chapter 43 – The Punch

“Beware of those who don't fight back. Sooner or later, they will.” —
Joyce Rachelle

Third Person POV

Wanting to get the ceremony over with, Neron rose from his seat and speedily marched towards the podium on the stage. Kiya's brown eyes followed his every movement, smirking at his obvious dishevelment. It elated a deep part of her, looking at the Alpha's disordered appearance, aware of his eyes burning into her flesh.

Everyone noticed their Alpha standing at the podium, all conversation fading to silence.

“I'm sure you all are wondering why I've gathered you together for this occasion.” Neron's voice carried throughout the hall, bouncing off the pristine walls. Unmated she-wolves swooned in their seats for the Alpha, while the Garnet Moon group remained stoic or rolled their eyes.

“The recent rogue attacks have plagued our tight-knit community with despair and destruction. We've lost family and friends. Children lost their parents, and mates lost their other halves. This cannot go on, for our survival is at stake. I had the pleasure of meeting with my fellow Alpha, Anthony Guerrero of the renowned Garnet Moon Pack. After lengthy discussions, we've come to an agreement where he not only sends aid to the affected families but loans us his best trainers to train our warriors until a select few prove themselves worthy for the open Delta titles. Without further ado, I would like to introduce Alpha Anthony and his chosen warriors.”

“That’s our cue.” Alpha Anthony mind-linked his group, who all stood up in unison. Claps and a few stray whistles erupted from the crowd as they watched the group of seven walked onto the stage. Both Alphas shook hands, exchanging words of confidence in whispers as the six fighters stood strong and tall by each other.

Kiya’s eyes scanned the crowd with an indifferent expression, void of affection and joy. She spotted many familiar faces, especially her denounced family. She could see Raina and Valerian sitting next to each other with their bundle of joy swinging his legs in his seat. Next to them were her former parents. She resisted the urge to spit over her left shoulder at the mere sight of them.

The crowd disgusted her. Here they are, sitting with an overflowing hope that she and her friends would help them regain the strength they’ve lost. She’d walk away from all if she had the opportunity. But her eyes spotted the children of all shapes, sizes, colors, and genders.

She’s doing this for *them*. Them and their innocent parents.

The height differences between the six warriors stood out the most. The shortest is Kiya, and the tallest were Jacqueline and Darien. Each of them stood strong and proud next to one another, unstoppable forces that could not be budged. Alpha Anthony took to the podium, smiling as Neron took a step back.

“Thank you, Neron. It is a pleasure to be in the presence of a great pack. The threats of rogues are horrendous, for there is no shortage of packs who have suffered because of these mongrels. Unfortunately, some have fallen to absolute ruin.” Many mumbles of concern swam through the atmosphere. “However, our goal is not to let this pack fall victim to soulless wolves. You all have a powerful leader who will lead you to victory, and I’m here to lend my support and help to further enforce the power you all hold.”

His eyes darted to his group. “I’m proud to have selected this fine group of warriors to be your temporary trainers. They all worked hard to get to where they are right now. Each has strengths within their rights, specialties that can help the warriors, young and old, to become better fighters. They aren’t intended to replace your Deltas, but to seek those strong enough to take up the mantles that have been lost too soon. I expect you all to treat them with the same level of respect that they would give you.”

“***Like that will ever happen.***” Kiya and Artemis muttered in unison.

The introductions led on, the Alpha expressing each warrior’s skills and specialties, his eyes sparkling with pride. Applause followed as the group took to their seats once again for the arriving dinner, ignoring the looks they received from the crowd. Neron stalked Kiya’s every move, from the flicking of her fingers, to the sways of her hips, to the powerful strides she made when it was time for everyone to mingle.

Conversation boomed in the air as the Garnet Moon warriors got to know many of the members and met a few warriors eager to be taught by members of the warrior pack. Alpha Anthony gained a fan club of his own, unmated she-wolves competed for his attention, ignoring the fact that he was fully mated with a child. Despite being in a relationship with Odessa, Neron is on the hunt. His Alpha instincts claimed his rationale, yearning for Kiya. Mindful of his appearance, he scoured the crowd for the woman in black.

The mass of curly hair escapes him with every attempt he made, either blocked by a wolf or disappearing into the crowd. He wanted to know who she is and why he couldn’t pick out her scent. Onyx grew more and more restless, his beastly nature aching to make their claim on the woman. He isn’t just sensing the beautiful lady; he could sense the wolf deep within her.

And he wanted her **now**.

Kiya

This party is boring.

And hated every single moment of the mingling.

Many of the pack members I recognized didn't recognize me. How could they? I was full-figured with muscle and dolled up. Part of me is disappointed, but another part of me is excited, expecting their reactions once they see their former slave had made her reappearance.

And this time, she knows how to fight back.

I called it a night after escaping the clutches of some unmated males needy for attention. Mind-linking my brother and friends a good night, I made my way back to my room. The hallways were just as I remembered it, desolate and polished. My heels scuffed at the tiled floors, a distant memory of polishing the crevices creeping back up in my memory. I remember it all, how hard I worked to make these floors sparkle.

Now, they don't sparkle anymore.

Heading up the stairs to the third floor is when the scent hit my nose. The scent that erupted a volcano of rage deep within the pits of my belly. The damned scent of sandalwood, sage, and ginger. There's one thing I knew for sure.

Neron was following me.

I have an inkling as to **why**.

Before I could take another step, I was pushed against the wall by a hard body. Powerful heat encompassed me, worsened by my black dress.

Large hands gripped my wrists, pinning them against the wall behind me. My brown eyes met blue, flickering to black. Heavy huffs of air kissed my face and neck, the culprit's face mere inches from mine.

I'm not scared. I was for a mere second, but then it died like mayflies at the day's end. Neron pants heavily above me, his six feet five stature swallowing mine at my five feet five.

"Who are you?" He growled, his voice straining for control.

I scoffed. "It seems like barbarism is a common trait amongst men of this pack. Who do you think you are restraining me like this?"

His eyes promptly shut, his nose sniffing the air. I smiled as he failed to pick up my scent. "You're a wolf, and yet you carry no scent. Why is that?"

"That's for me to know and for you to never find out." I rolled my eyes. "I'm not in the mood for this. Are you going to let me go or what?"

His color-shifting eyes flickered in sadness, one hand releasing my right fist. His fingers grazed my cheek with the gentleness of cotton, full of affection. "I'm so sorry. You look...like someone I once knew...and miss dearly."

My rage exploded. Emotions combusted in me like a raging wildfire, threatening to do as much damage as possible.

Will I regret what I am about to do? No.

Will it have repercussions? Maybe.

Do I care? Nope.

I punched Neron in the face. That satisfying crack of his nose sent tingles down my spine, awakening a wicked grin on my face. Crimson

spilled, and it was his for a change. The Alpha growled as he clutched his broken nose, some droplets of blood ending up on his suit. I shook my hand to ease the pain.

Sweet payback for all the times he punched me in the face.

“Let’s get one thing straight, Alpha,” I growled, Artemis inside me was at full stance, also glaring at Neron. Although, I have a feeling she was staring down the wolf in him. “Don’t ever touch me. I don’t give a shit how much you miss this mystery person, but you will not do this to me again. I’m here under the discretion of my Alpha, and I’ll be damned if you think you can treat me as an object.

“But do tell me one thing, Alpha,” I smirked, my eyes glittering. My fingertips reached to his face, mimicking the same action he did to me. My eyes stared deep into his, burning every pointed emotion I have to twist his heart. “Does it hurt to desire what you could never have?”

His eyes widened as big as saucers, electric blue swimming in shock and dismay. His skin lost its color and words were lost to him. His blood-stained lips were paralyzed in his fear. Feeling satisfied, I turned to walk back to my room, my heels clicked with every step I took.

“That little number is nothing compared to what is in store for you, Neron.” And with that, I slammed my door shut, disappearing for the rest of the evening.

Chapter 44 – The Nephew

“The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled.” —
Plutarch

Kiya

“You behave while I’m gone, okay? I expect no trouble from you.”

“I’ll be fine, big bro. When have you known me to cause trouble?” I giggled, squeezing him tight in our hug. Anthony was leaving to Garnet Moon and my heart wept. I knew this was coming, but it didn’t make it any easier. I’ll miss him terribly.

The others bid their Alpha farewell before returning inside the packhouse, leaving the two of us alone. They knew we needed a moment together before he left. This was different. This was unlike when I return to San José for the school year. I knew when I was coming back, and I was in a place where I was welcomed and loved for who I am. Here, I don’t know when I’ll return, and I was in a place I abhorred.

“You’ve grown and matured a lot, Little Bit,” Anthony whispered, bright hazel swimming in distant memories. “I still can’t believe how strong you’ve gotten. You amaze me and I know you’ll get through this.”

I nod, my smile was sincere. My eyes glazed with unshed tears. “Sometimes I wonder what my life would be if Mom and Dad didn’t find me. Would I have still been a rogue? Would I have died?”

“That’s why what-ifs should remain what-ifs. Fate brought my parents to you and blessed you with the joy you never got.” He scoffs inaudibly, his eyes scanning not only the packhouse behind me but the surrounding territory. “This pack does not understand what they lost that day. But…” He looks back at me. “I’ll never stop being proud of you. You’re a trooper, Little Bit. And I love you so much.”

“I love you too.” I hugged my big brother one last time, my tears dripping onto his shoulder. I promised I wouldn’t cry, but I couldn’t keep them in any longer. I couldn’t thank him and his family enough for keeping my hope and love alive.

I will make them proud, no matter what.

I waved goodbye to Anthony as I watched his van roll out of the territory, leaving me alone. It is a bittersweet separation, but I found myself at peace. Garnet Moon had given me the tools and the assurance to move forward with my life, and that is what I will do.

Once the black van faded from my sight, I headed back inside the packhouse on my way to the common room. The others and I were planning out the new training schedules and routines based on the files that Kwame had given us. We plan to assess the strength and aptitudes of all the fighter wolves later this afternoon.

“Bossman is finally gone, huh?” Galen asked as I slumped on the couch next to him, crossing my feet on the table.

“Yep. It’s just us now.”

Sapphire passed me a couple of manilla files. “Time to get down to business. We already started on the first stack, so you can start on the other.” Each file held the profile of each fighter wolf, labeling their basic stats such as how much weight they could lift and their running times. I also spotted basic information like their height, weight, and age. Every wolf we came across has its strengths and weaknesses we can work with.

But this is not enough. We need these wolves to become stronger because we do not have a timeline of when and where the next rogue attack could happen.

We spend the next hour and a half organizing and recording down the warrior wolves in our tablets to keep track of training status. We threw out ideas and suggestions for new items we could use in their new regimens. Since Zircon Moon decided to implement training regimens to the newly shifted pups, we needed to come up with a schedule and routine fit for the young wolves. I don’t want to burden the young ones with so much when they already have school and friends to worry about.

Speaking of wolves, I haven't seen Neron around. I spotted him when we were having breakfast earlier this morning, but he didn't stay for long. He looked spooked and ate his food in his office, leaving no room for questions. I couldn't help but feel a sense of snarkiness when I saw his nose had completely healed. That's werewolf healing for you.

He didn't even look me in the eye in the kitchen. I took extra care to disguise my scent to keep him guessing.

After we all were done, I took the completed plans and files up to Neron's office. No one wanted to be in the same room as him without ripping his head off, so I was the best option. I didn't mind it. As I am walking up the stairs, a little bundle of joy bumped into my legs, not strong enough to push me off balance.

"Oops! Sorry!"

My eyes dashed down to look at a little boy no more than five years old with a toy airplane in his tiny hands. His youthful, medium-tanned skin had faint smidgens of dirt, his curly mess of black hair rested on top of his small head, his eyes were bright emerald green with his cute button nose and full lips. When his eyes met mine, an enormous smile appeared on his face.

"It's okay." I smiled. "You should be careful of where you're going. You never know who you might run into."

"I saw you before! You were at the party last night!" He exclaimed, hopping in place. His buzzing excitement is contagious. "You will make the wolves very strong, right?"

I nodded. "Yep! That's the plan!"

"That's so cool! Could I be a strong wolf too?" He asked me, his eyes shining. "Daddy always told me I will grow up to be a big, strong wolf so I could protect my Mommy."

Chuckling, I kneeled to his height, hugging the files close to my chest. “You are and you will be once your wolf is born. I promise.” I stretched out my hand. “My name is Kiya. What’s yours?”

“Adonis, but everyone calls me Donny!” Adonis shakes my hand vigorously. “You’re very pretty, Miss Kiya. A lot of us say so!”

I blink. “Really? Well, that is sweet of you, Donny.”

“Are you going to the Alpha’s office? I can take you there!”

Adonis looks more than excited to talk to me, judging by how he wouldn’t stop wiggling. Smiling, I rose to full height and nodded, allowing the young boy to lead me to Neron’s office. He babbles on about his day in school and how he couldn’t wait to get his wolf when he is older.

He was cute, reminding me of the over-energized children back at home. Pure and innocent. Adonis was just like them, and in my heart, I knew that he was one of the children I want to protect from danger. When he told me that he wanted to be a strong wolf, that couldn’t be any farther from the truth.

The air around this child is different from the typical pup. Despite his age, anyone can tell that the blood flowing through Adonis is that of a ranked wolf. Powerful. My eyes widened and my breath hitched in my throat when I put the pieces together.

Oh, my Goddess! The power in his blood is like mine, Jackie’s, and Dwayne’s.

Adonis has Beta blood. He’s Raina and Valerian’s son. I couldn’t believe that I was talking to my nephew.

My mind flashed back to that fateful day on the cliff, remembering how my sister’s stomach was slightly poking out from her dress. I wished for

whoever her child would be to not be evil like her and I'm here, watching that same child make airplane noises as he soars his toy in the air. A very, very deep part of me was saddened at this. Adonis has no idea that he is talking to his aunt. Was he even aware that he had an aunt?

Did Raina talk about me to him at all?

I rolled my eyes and scoffed. Who am I kidding? Raina didn't talk about me at all. All Adonis needed were his parents and grandparents. That saddened part of me quickly turned into anger over the fact that my nephew would never learn the truth about what his Mom did to me. Raina will always be the sweet, innocent mother and not the sinister demon who took pleasure in torturing me.

I shook those thoughts out of my head. Children do not hold the sin of their parents. Adonis is an innocent child who hasn't experienced the full pleasures of life, yet. He deserves to live out his life and happiness without me ruining it for him. I don't want to ruin the image he had of his parents. They were his superheroes. I'll only be here for the summer.

After that, Adonis would never see me again.

"Here we are!" He announced, presenting the mahogany double doors of the Alpha's office with an outstretched hand. Neron's scent permeated through the creases of the doors, announcing his presence inside. "Want me to knock for you?"

"Oh no, you've done enough." I ruffled his curly hair, laughing. He squealed, batting my fingers away. "Thank you very much, Donny. You've been a good helper."

"You're welcome! See you later, Kiya!" And with that, the little trailblazer booked it down the corridor, disappearing into the fading light. Such a precious little boy. Turning to the door, I knocked hard three times. A gruff "Come in" was heard and I entered with my files at

hand. Neron looked up from the paperwork he was doing, his eyes widening as I approached his desk.

“We’re done.” I slam the stack down in front of him. “We’ve come up with rough drafts of training schedules that we will discuss with you and your Gamma once we have completed them. I am also developing a training regime for your newly shifted pups, which I will implement in the next day or two, depending on how many are interested in training. The files helped, giving us a sense of where your army is in terms of combat and skill, but we have some ideas of fresh ways to not only better strengthen your army but make them more equipped to battle enemies beyond the typical rogues.”

Neron stared at me, his eyes flicking from blue to black once again. It was almost unnoticeable if I blinked, but I kept my eyes on him. Unwavering. “Yes. Thank you for your help. How long will it be until I see a draft?”

“In an hour, give or take.” I simpered. “We work fast.”

“I see...”

“How’s the nose?”

That broke Neron’s indifferent gaze on me, his brief shock shifting into a scowl. “Punching an Alpha is a punishable offense, Kiya. You don’t want to be causing trouble here on your first day.”

“Don’t pin me against the wall then.” I shrugged. “You got in my personal space, and I defended myself. Don’t dish out what you cannot take, Alpha.”

“Cockiness isn’t attractive, woman.”

“Neither is that look on your face, so we both lose.”

He's getting irritated. Good. I could see a vein pulsating on the side of his head. "Look. I'm sorry for the way I behaved last night. That was improper of me, and I didn't mean to offend you. I don't know what came over me."

"Control your wolf next time." I rolled my eyes. "Alphas need to have full control over their wolves and their actions. That I learned from my Alpha. Take responsibility. Don't find excuses."