

Chapter 56 - The Puppeteer

"Every story needs its hero. And its villain. And its monster." — Amie Kaufman

Third Person POV

Eyes, red as carmine, perused over the reanimated corpse of his puppet. The cadaver is motionless as a statue, put upon a steel table scintillating faintly under fluorescent lights. The owner of the ominous eyes cracked an amusing smirk, lips hiding the terror behind them.

The plan was working smoothly. His spider-like fingers traced the stitches of flesh, held together by a delicate string. Sharp nails nicked the slowly rotting dermis, the ooze of shamrock green dribbling out like droplets of rain. His marionette isn't ready for its grand appearance for there was much to do. The thought of having what he always wanted aroused him, the vivacious heart of the one so close he could almost taste it.

Restless as he was, he knew the value of patience. He mustn't act too hastily for his plan to work. He must take time. The waiting was mind-numbing, but it would all be worth it.

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"My lord." His head gently turned to see one of his many living, breathing puppets standing at the door to his morgue. "Many of the undead hellhounds returned to their cages. Our numbers suffered in the attack against Zircon Moon. What are your orders?"

The man grunted in amusement. "My little lambs will continue to construct more hellhounds. I'm not finished with those wretched dogs. They have something I want, and I won't stop until I get it. The ashes of the deceased rogues are plentiful. No worry about the depleting numbers."

"How many?"

"Quadruple the number of hellhounds we have. Sextuple, if you must. The more we have, the more we overwhelm our enemy."

"Very well, but have you discussed this with Nadia? You know how she feels about being left in the dark."

His lord's face hardened; lips pursed. "She is to work on the hellhounds with my other lambs as instructed. Do not bring her name up again, Lucien."

Lucien wanted to say something. So desperate and needed that it punched at the base of his throat, demanding an escape. However, he was agonizingly

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aware of his lord's wrath at the mere mention of that name. All he could think about was the poor woman slaving over enchanted ashes and rotting stiffs of failed pack dogs. He wished he could say how Nadia was of value to him, not only for his blackened heart but for his soul. The touch of a beautiful maiden could do him wonders to steer him off this chaotic path.

In the end, he forced the words back down. He couldn't risk his safety. With a last nod, the bleach-blond man left his lord to cogitate in his darkness. The stench of his toy was enough to trigger intense nausea.

As for the mysterious lord, he ran his hair through the puppet's darkened hair, matted from his illicit resurrection. He was the centerpiece of his ambition, the key to his victory.

To get what no one else would claim.

The Moon will be his.

Neron

The rogue attack two days ago left more questions

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than answers. As my Beta and Gamma sat in my office to discuss the aftermath, the end of the battle preoccupied my mind. It had persisted, pestering my thoughts day in and day out.

That howl. The howl that caused the ceasefire. I've heard it before. But it couldn't be who I think it is.

"Those rogues weren't ordinary. They reeked on death and decomposition." Kwame spoke, pulling out his tablet. "After a thorough examination of the corpses by the pack embalmers, reports state each part of the rogues were in various stages of decay, some more advanced than others."

"That brings forth another question," Valerian spoke. "How are they able to have such immense strength during battle? Their fortitude was up to par with fully trained, full-bodied wolves. If they are rotting away, they should not have the tenacity to withstand our blowbacks."

"The zombie rogues are under the control of someone," I spoke up. "Armies always have a commander calling the shots from behind the chaos. The mysterious howl called back the rogues that escaped unscathed. This poses a problem if we're facing an enemy we cannot see." ²

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"Magic must be involved." I pull my attention to my Beta. "Maybe a witch is behind the attack." He shot a childish smirk at me. "Pissed off any witches lately?"

"Not since my last visit to The Witching Hour a few months back." I laugh to myself. The Witching Hour was a club in Las Vegas, frequented by the supernatural, a party hub for us to let loose. In all seriousness, I highly doubt a few butt-hurt elemental witches have enough power to pull off an attack of this caliber.

This attack was calculated. Whoever's behind this madness was cowardly enough to hide their face. Anger sizzled in my heart at the thought of my mysterious contender in hiding. The bastard attacked my home, putting everyone I care about in danger.

My pack.

My friends.

My family.

My mate.

The lively thoughts landed on Kiya for the umpteenth time today. As usual, she continues to avoid me like the bubonic plague. One-word answers

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were the norm for her. My presence offended her so much that she distances herself than be in the same room as me.

I don't blame her. She still carries a lot of pain from the past, especially from me. Yet, I knew for a fact she feels the sparks of our bond whenever we touch, I cannot be the only one. Onyx was still restless for her. He wanted her resting in our arms where she belongs. However, claiming her heart as mine proved to be a bigger challenge.

Well, lucky for me, I love challenges.

Clearing my throat, I force my thoughts back on the situation at hand. "Magic is a strong contender in why the undead rogues are the way they are. The pack embalmers will continue to examine the corpses to discover more about what we're dealing with. We need to find this puppeteer because I have a strong feeling that we'll see more attacks like this."

"I suggest we consult the Alphas of the other packs that have been attacked," Kwame spoke. "If we could find a link between the onslaughts, we could assume we're facing the same enemy."

"Agreed. I'll contact the Alphas; you both will go to The Witching Hour club to speak with witches. The

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last time I checked, using magic on the dead is a forbidden practice. The more insight we get from them, the closer we will be to getting answers.”

Witches were extremely strict with the ethics of magic. They can honor and bring peace to the dead, but never to use for maliciousness such as this. If I were a witch, I’d demand answers if a sacred rule was broken.

Valerian shot me a look. “You’re asking me to go to a club known for being a hub for the supernatural to ask witches for answers about zombie wolves?”

“Is that a problem?”

“It is, considering many of those witches are known to seduce wolves. Raina would go on a rampage if I come back smelling like a witch.”

Kwame shrugged. “Lorelai does not have that level of extreme jealousy, but she’d be concerned too.”

“Talk to your mates first. You both will leave tonight. Have two guards with you in case.” Despite their initial protests, both agreed to the assignment before leaving my office. The work to expose the identity of this challenger will be extensive, but it was all for the betterment and safety of the pack. I couldn’t be

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a weak Alpha.

These wolves needed a strong leader, and a strong leader I will be.

Going back to my original concern of the mysterious howl, I mind-linked my father to see if he could help clear up this fog of confusion.

"Hey, Dad. Could you come to my office?"

"It's about that howl, isn't it?"

"Spot on as always. I don't want to jump to conclusions, but I needed your opinion. That howl, though different, sounded familiar. Almost like..."

"I feel the same way, son. I'm on my way. We'll discuss more when I arrive."

"Alright, thank you, Dad."

I cut off the link, shuffling to the window. With the extraordinary view I was blessed with, I was able to watch the training of the wolves and pup trainees. My eyes, once again, fell on Kiya, commanding the children with grace. Posing with various fighting stances and having some pups test their might on her brought forth a sense of pride swelling in my

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chest.

The children love her. They follow her every command down to the letter. Not only was she authoritative, but she was also gentle and patient. She had all the markers of being the perfect Luna. Her incredible beauty was a bonus.

Goddess, I wanted her so bad. She'd thrive as my Luna, the position that's destined for her since birth.

Kiya

I wanted bottled water from the kitchen. Was that too much to ask for?

All I had to do is to go into the kitchen, grab a crisp bottle, and walk back to training. Simple, right?

Nope!

Instead, I got a glimpse of soft porn when I found Sapphire and her mate making out on the kitchen island, seconds away from doing the devil's tango. Were they naked? Not fully.

Did I have to see a grown man pinch and pull

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Sapphire's bare nipple? Hell no.

They must have been too deep into their lust because when I cleared my throat, the two leaped away from each other. Sapphire's blue eyes widened like saucers as she struggled to put her shirt back on as her mate stared at me like a deer in the headlights.

I wanted to laugh. Their expressions were gold! I covered my mouth to hide my smile because if I didn't, I'd die of laughter.

"K-K-Kiya!" Sapphire faltered, smoothing her blond hair to conceal the sin she was about to commit. "U-Uh, how long have you been standing there?"

"Too long." I snorted. "Listen, I know you both love each other, and..." I peeped the marks on their necks. "...you're already mated. Wow, it hasn't been three days! But regardless, you and Isaiah should be at training, not making babies in the kitchen."

I walked around Isaiah, who bent down and grabbed the shirt he'd tossed carelessly on the kitchen floor. Giving me a full view of his, luckily, clothed rear.

Two firm and perfectly round globes.

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"I apologize, Delta Kiya." The male werewolf bowed to me, his chestnut brown cheeks reddening in embarrassment. "I...we didn't mean..."

"Dude, it's fine." I laughed, waving it off. "No harm done. Just keep it in the bedroom next time, okay?"

Isaiah nodded, standing straight. "Thank you, Delta. You are kind."

"Eh, I wouldn't say that. I'm reasonable." I smile, grabbing the bottle I was pining for. "Your fly is down. You should take care of that."

In a heap of embarrassment and giggles, the mated couple dashed out of the kitchen. My heart was pleased to see how much Sapphire glowed in her joy. Her mate was a good one. Isaiah was a warrior who recently returned from a visit to his family in Chicago right before the attack. I didn't expect Sapphire to mate so soon, but that's the thing about the mate bond. It was made that you cannot resist your other half, sacrificing your rationale to complete the soul bond.

I shuddered at the thought.

Once I arrived back at the training grounds, the pup trainees paired off to spar. Excitement oozed from their cheers and fist pumps, finding their friends to

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practice. After a couple of minutes of monitoring progress, I spot a lone pup sitting on a rock some distance away from the session.

I cocked my head to the side, curious. Why was she over there?

As I got closer, she caught onto my presence and instantly flinched in fear. I don't know why, but that action saddened me. "Why are you here, little pup? Shouldn't you be sparring with your peers?"

The blond trainee shook her head, green eyes gleaming with unshed tears. "I don't think I have what it takes, Delta Kiya. I fall all the time and I can't throw a punch. I'm not a strong wolf!"

"Who told you that?"

"Huh?"

I kneeled to her eye level, knees on the soft grass. "Who said you're not a strong wolf?"

The girl looked unsure to tell me, but after a second, she relents. She glued her eyes to her lap. "The boys. They've been teasing me for having a small wolf."

Shaking my head, I swallowed down my anger for

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the girl. There were many things in the world I don't like. After Neron, it was bullies. "What's your name, hun?"

"Isabella, but everyone calls me Bella."

"Bella." I smiled. "You share the same name as my mother's wolf. Beautiful." I shuffled a bit, now sitting cross-legged. Bella sat higher than me because of the boulder. "Bella, it's important to not listen to the words of mean boys. Does a small wolf mean you're weak?"

Bella sniffled, wiping her nose with her hand. "I mean, I'm tiny. And you're a huge and strong wolf."

"Because I am a woman. You still have a lot of growing to do, Bella. And even if you're a small wolf, so what? There are many advantages to being small!"

"Really?" Her emerald eyes glittered like diamonds. "Like what?"

I bit my lip, trying my best to figure out how to explain this properly. That's when an idea popped into my head. Looking around, I checked to make sure no eyes were on us. Once the coast was clear, I stretched out my palms. "Watch carefully. I'm about

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to show you something.”

Bella gasped when she saw the sparkles of silver light dancing from one palm to another like fireflies. Instantly she fell on her knees, crawling closer to the captivating show. “Is that magic?”

“I guess you could say that. It’s not like witchcraft magic. This is different.” I smirked. Closing my eyes, I imagined the images of two wolves, big and small. The light of the moon within me streamed from my fingertips like a river, tranquil. The imagined image came to life in my palms, wolves outlined in sharp white. “Look carefully, dear.”

“The bigger wolf looks intimidating. Its height, weight, and brawn are its advantages in battle and duels. However, muscled bodies aren’t the only form of strength, Bella.” The images of the big wolf tossing the small wolf away played before the little one’s eyes.

“The smaller wolf has strength too! It has the strength to stand up and face its problems, regardless of its disadvantages. That wolf has speed, courage, agility, and power within itself to be a powerful opponent.” The smaller wolf opened its jaw, bolting. With a leap, it sunk its jaws in its neck, pulling the big wolf towards my palm. “It may be small, but its strength is in its fighting spirit.”

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After the demonstration, the images turn into balls of light. "Bella, you have a lot more strength than you realize. Don't let those mean boys tell you otherwise. Even the smallest of fighters can beat down the bigger ones."

I toss a ball to Bella, who quickly caught it in her hands. Her eyes glimmered with wonder as it floated between her palms before shimmering away into nothing. "That was so cool, Delta Kiya!"

"Thank you." A smile rested on my face, proud. "However, let's keep this between you and me, okay?" I shot her a wink, in which she returned before standing on her feet. "After training, show me the boys who teased you. No one gets bullied under my watch."

Her face fell. "Will they get in trouble?"

I patted her shoulder. "It depends. Now, get back to training, okay? Don't cry over them. Be proud of who you are! You have the makings to be a fine warrior."

With a big smile, Bella ran back to the pup training grounds, quickly finding her sparring partner. Knowing that I made a child's day shine a little brighter was reward enough. Children deserve to be happy, no matter who they are.

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That should have been the end.

But it wasn't.

Without warning, an astronomical force of fire exploded within me. The sheer strength made me stagger and sway. Multiple flames within me ignited into thousands of burning infernos, blazing like hellfire. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't think straight. My vision blurred slightly as my lungs and heart worked overtime, unable to keep up with the homeostatic imbalance.

My body became overly sensitive, begging me to peel the clothes and armor away from my body. It couldn't handle the many minuscule fibers brushing against my skin. I crumbled to my knees, clutching at my heart through the devastating agony of fire.

"W-what's happening to me?" I whimpered. Talking became a challenge I couldn't conquer.

"*Oh no. Oh no, no!*" I hear a frantic voice from behind, followed by rapid footsteps. The scents of multiple wolves became extraordinarily strong, particularly the male ones. Sweat dripped from my chin as a certain area on my body, embarrassingly, began moistening. A hand was pressed on my back, which did nothing but worsen the flames.

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Not just because it was from Raina.

"Kiya, we need to get you inside the house now!" She exclaimed, trying to lift me bridal style, but I shoved her from me.

"Don't touch me!" I screamed, wiggling away. Her poisoned touch added more agonizing flames, striking every bodily organ. "What the hell is going on...?" 

"You're in heat."

I *HATE* BEING A WEREWOLF!

Chapter Comments

POST COMMENT

HauntedMachines728

I knew it! Zombie rogues is a concept I haven't read about b...



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Avakin SincereLemur652

what the hell is happening



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