

Replacement Bride for the Alpha of the North

- Chapter 21 – 30

Chapter 21: SECURED A HORRIBLE PLAN FOR HERSELF

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What Blake deemed to be a hellish place was actually not that bad. After the horrendous first dinner and the introduction from the alpha to the pack members, which went out of Dawn's wildest imaginations, he granted her her wish to keep Kynes and Pyllo's lives with the warning that if they acted out again, there would be no mercy.

Zenith showed them that he only spared the two maids because Dawn asked him, or else, they would meet the same fate as Fern.

Dawn was actually surprised because he relented. She thought it would be a futile attempt. But, she was happy, not because she could save these two girls, but because she was being heard.

It was a small thing, but it meant so much to her.

This morning, because she had a hard time sleeping, as the gurgling sound that came from Fern kept echoing in her mind, she woke up late, yet Kynes and Pyllo didn't wake her up and Dawn immediately knew the reason for it.

"Awake?"

Dawn almost jumped out of her bed when she saw Zenith sitting on the edge of the bed, staring at her with those beautiful blue eyes, which looked cold and mysterious at the same time.

"What are you doing here?!" Dawn couldn't help her thumping heart. She thought she was going to have a heart attack.

"Get up and clean your face. I will take you somewhere," Zenith said. He had been waiting for her to wake up for two hours. Though his time was precious and he was not used to waiting for anyone, he still did it on the second day Dawn was here.

Ever since Dawn's arrival, there were a lot of things Zenith did that he didn't usually do and this made all of his men frown.

"Where?" Dawn pursed her lips, she snuggled into her blanket again. The north was too cold for her! "I don't want to go."

“Why?”

“Cold.”

“Everyday is cold here, do you want to stay inside your room for the rest of your life?”

Dawn was sleepy. “Can’t I do that?”

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“No. Get up.”

Dawn sighed deeply. She then sat down and looked at Zenith seriously, her hair was a mess and her face looked sleepy. In other words, she was not in the best situation to strike a serious deal with the alpha, yet she tried anyway.

“Look.” Dawn tucked her hair behind her ear, in hopes she would look a little bit presentable. “Let’s make a deal.”

Zenith didn’t say anything, he stared at the strand of hair that stuck on the corner of her lips, thus Dawn continued with her proposal.

“I don’t know what kind of deal that you have with my father, which left you to end up with me, but I am sure, this is not a deal that benefits you.” Dawn cleared her throat. “I don’t know you, you don’t know me. You must not be serious to make me your luna. I am sure you don’t want to be mated with me either, so why not go our separate ways?”

“You don’t have a pack to go back to,” Zenith reminded her, which was rather upsetting.

“No, I didn’t mean you to kick me out of this pack.” Dawn leaned over, she gave him the best smile she could muster. “I meant, I will do my part as the luna, but we will mind our own business.”

Zenith smirked. “You just want to laze around and do nothing.”

Dawn was exposed. “I am not.” She pursed her lips. “I will take my role as the luna of the pack seriously.”

“That includes bearing my mark, mating with me, sleeping with me and giving birth to our children. How are we supposed to do that without getting involved with each other.”

Dawn blushed with his bluntness. “We can have separate bedrooms...” she suggested weakly. “And we can arrange time for... ‘that’.”

“I don’t want to sleep separately from my mate.”

“But, I heard you don’t like it when you have someone in your bed.”

“Are they my mate?”

Well, he got a point.

Zenith pinched her chin. “Get up, I will take you to look around the pack.” He stood up and brushed off the strand of hair on her lips that bothered him.

“Wait! We have not yet finished with this discussion.” Dawn grabbed his hand, tried to pull him back to sit down, but instead, she was the one, who was being pulled up and forced to stand up.

Crazy! How much strength did he have!? He literally pulled her up until she was standing with only one hand!

“If you feel bad because you snore when you are sleeping, I can deal with it.”

After saying that, Zenith walked out of the room, telling her that she had ten minutes to be ready and he would wait outside.

“I don’t snore!” Dawn was fuming, but then she became a little bit insecure. I didn’t snore, right?

As it turned out, Zenith took her to the training ground and what made Dawn have a heart attack was what he was planning to make her do.

“No! I don’t want to!” Dawn immediately refused that. “Women in my pack don’t go through any training.”

“You are here, not in your pack. All women here should be trained, we get monster attacks every now and then, you need to be able to protect yourself when it’s necessary.”

Dawn felt like crying. “Every morning? I must train every morning? In this cold weather?”

“Yes.”

It felt like a nightmare.

“Fine, but I want you to be the one to train me.” Dawn put that condition because she was mad. If she had to be tortured in this cold weather, he had to suffer with her too.

However, to think back, even without her, that was what Zenith used to do.

Looking around and seeing the warriors' expressions, she knew she had secured a horrible plan for herself.

Come back and read more tomorrow, everyone! .

Chapter 22: HIS DEATH WILL BE ON YOU

"I am going to die," Dawn said. She laid down on the cold ground, ignoring how the coldness seeped through her dress. She was dead tired.

They had been training for three hours and true to his word, Zenith woke her up when the sky was still so dark, she thought it was still night, as it turned out the sun would come late in winter.

Right now, the sky had turned brighter, but even when she basked herself in the sunlight, she couldn't feel any warmth, it was not like this in the east. The weather was depressing here.

Zenith shifted back and walked toward Dawn, his shadow blocked her from the sunlight. "No. You can have a ten minute break, then we will continue."

"No..." Dawn wailed. "I am not going anywhere! I will not move an inch!" She threw a tantrum. Her body ached so bad. Her wrists felt like they were broken because of the harsh training.

Zenith clicked his tongue. "Your beast is very weak. How many times do you shift into your beast in a day?"

Dawn furrowed her brows. "Should I shift every day?" She massaged her wrists.

"You must." Zenith knelt down and took her hand, as he started to massage it. "As a shifter, you need to be in tune with your beast. In order to do that, you need to shift and let your beast take over sometimes, but not for too long, though. Or else, you will not be able to get a good grip on your feral side."

"I don't know about that."

"Nobody taught you about it?"

"They taught the men about everything in their training, but we, women, were not allowed to join in the 'fun'."

"No wonder you used the dagger better."

"What do you mean?" Dawn retracted her hand, it felt better now. "Why did you keep saying something weird, as if you knew me very well? You said we met before, but even

after wrecking my brains and losing so much sleep, I can't remember anything about you before you snatched me away from my pack."

"You have only been here for three days, how much sleep could you lose? And I did not snatch you away, I just took what is mine."

"You don't even like me," Dawn grumbled.

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"Who said that?"

Dawn lifted her head and looked at him with bewilderment. "I am not your destined mate and I am just a debt that my father has to pay you. I don't even know what the deal between you two is."

"I lent your father a thousand warriors six years ago, but he made a terrible plan and lost my warriors. He should have repaid it with his life, but I wanted his daughter as the repayment. That's how the deal was made."

Six years ago... It meant a year before her father decided to take Julia as his second chance mate, because she had Emily. Her father indeed wanted to give Emily to Alpha Zenith, that was why he had been treating them really nicely, probably because of his guilty conscience to Emily or maybe because he wanted to keep the mother and daughter close to him, so they wouldn't realize his plan before the time came.

Unfortunately, somehow Emily and Julia learned about that.

"Agreed. My father is a terrible decision maker," Dawn mumbled, she lowered her head. All the mistreatment that she had to endure was for what?

"You are not only a debt that your father has to pay to me. You are here because I want you."

"But, why? Why do you want me while I can't even recall if we have ever met before."

Just like every other time, he didn't answer her question. There was this silence that engulfed them and the cold wind that blew from the south and the sadness in his blue eyes.

Before Dawn could realize it, Zenith had moved really closer to her. His face was so close, she knew what he was going to do, but she was too stunned to move.

She knew he was handsome, there was something that would make you hold your breath for a while when you saw his coldness and the mystery that rolled off his being and now, Dawn was enchanted by his scent that intruded her senses.

He was getting too close!

Should I punch him? Kick him? Push him away? Scream at the top of my lungs?

However, when his cold lips pressed against hers, her mind went blank, as her face turned very red and the cold weather became a little bit warmer. He nipped on her lips and his warm hand was on the back of her head.

“Breath, Dawn,” Zenith said against her lips.

To her surprise, his voice was tender, like a spring breeze against her ears as his thumb circled her nape to help her relax.

This kiss was innocent, he was being very gentle with her, something that you wouldn't think the alpha was capable of doing when you saw him for the first time.

Yet, here he was, being careful with his advances.

And when Dawn finally became comfortable with his touch and was about to reciprocate his kiss, he pulled away from her.

“Ten minutes,” he reminded her and then backed away.

Dawn was breathless, her face turned very red and she felt humiliated, but more than that, she was pissed.

“Y- you kissed me!” Dawn blurted out.

“I did.” Zenith nodded calmly.

“How dare you!?”

“If I am not mistaken, you were about to reciprocate the kiss before I stopped.” He made it sound like he was very noble to have done that, as if he had done Dawn a favor.

Zenith smirked and shifted into his beast, even in his beast form, Dawn could see how he taunted her. She shifted into her own beast and started chasing after him.

However, no matter how hard she tried, she would always be three steps behind him. Zenith could have outrun her easily, but he would always make sure she was within his sight.

Two hours later, Dawn gave up, she shifted back into her human form, breathing raggedly.

“No. You can’t force me to train anymore. I can’t move.” Dawn waved her hands at Zenith. “Leave me alone.”

“Get up, you can’t sleep here. We are close to the forest, there might be a monster roaming this area.”

“Can’t move...” Dawn whimpered. “You need to drag me.”

Zenith was sure he had toned down the intensity of the training, but it was still too much for her.

The alpha then knelt down in front of her with his back facing her. “Get on.”

“Do you want me to climb onto your back?”

“Should I drag you instead?”

Dawn pursed her lips, she immediately climbed on top of his back. He was warm and his smell was really good. She couldn’t help, but sniff him. His broad back was also very comfortable.

“Zenith.”

“Hm?”

“If my destined mate could sleep with my step sister even with the mate bond between us, how can you promise you will not betray me the same way? If you have any plans to do that, you better tell me, so I can stop myself from trying to like you, since we will spend forever together.” He didn’t answer her, but at this point, she got used to this side of him. “Do you even like me?”

“I don’t like you, but if I saw you with another man, his death would be on you.”

“Can I do the same when I see you with other women?”

“Please do.”

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Julia couldn’t hold it back any longer. She was very upset to always find Tony in Dawn’s bedroom, sitting on her bed and covering his face.

This room was empty. There was not a single trace of Dawn here. Somehow, that alpha from the north managed to clear everything up and take away all of her belongings, which Julia was grateful for, but Tony had been very depressed when he learned about this.

Not even a single thing that could remind Tony of his daughter was left. It almost felt like Dawn had never lived in this house before.

The fact that Tony had often catered to Emily's needs and slowly removed everything that belonged to Dawn around their house and replaced them with Emily's, only hit him now.

His daughter had been isolated in her own house.

Tony regretted everything. He wanted his daughter back. He wanted to explain to her that he didn't abandon her.

However, no letter he sent to the north had ever been replied.

"She is not dead. Why have you been acting like she is dead? She lives her life in the north." Julia stood at the door, staring at Tony with anger in her eyes. "You have your other daughter that you need to think of too. Emily needs you now, you need to talk to Blake to treat Emily better."

Tony lowered his hands from his face and looked at his second mate. He remembered how she convinced him to take Emily to the capital city two years ago instead of Dawn, because there were only three invitations to visit the palace. Both Emily and Dawn had never been to the palace before, but Julia managed to make him leave his own daughter behind for two weeks straight.

How cruel he was.

"I will talk to Blake," Tony said. He stood up, walked past Julia and then returned to their bedroom. He had been very cold lately and during the morning training, he was often harsh with Blake. He almost killed him once during the sparring.

Come back and read more tomorrow, everyone! .

Chapter 23: PREPARATION FOR THE CEREMONY

"Alpha, she is sleeping," Kynes said politely, she was still trembling at the sight of the alpha. The two of them still remembered how close they had been to losing their lives and seeing Fern everyday reminded them of what kind of fate they would have if they angered the alpha.

Zenith let Fern live, but she served as a walking reminder to the others why they should not take his silence for granted.

"She said her body ached all over and asked me to massage her," Pyllo reported in a small voice.

Zenith listened to the report, but he didn't say anything when he entered the room and saw Dawn was sleeping, curling herself under the blanket.

At first, he didn't understand why she was sleeping like this, but later on, he learned that she was used to hugging herself to sleep because no one comforted her whenever she felt unwell.

Zenith sat on the edge of her bed and caressed her forehead. He brushed his thumb against the wrinkle between her brows. It seemed, her nightmares intruded her sleep again.

Dawn must be very tired, because she didn't wake up even when her dream was not pleasant, but when she opened her eyes, she found she had overslept.

"Did the Alpha come this morning?" Dawn asked Kynes, she was startled because it was already so late, but Zenith didn't come to wake her up for their training. It had been three days since she started that hellish training of his, her body slowly adapted, though she felt her muscles ache so badly.

Pyllo and Kynes looked at each other and both of them shook their heads. "No."

The alpha didn't come this morning, but he indeed left this morning after spending the night by her side, about which Dawn didn't have any idea at all.

"So, there is no training for today?" Dawn beamed. She smiled so brightly, as she laid back on the bed, ready to fall back asleep. "You can go now, I want to continue sleeping." She waved her hand lazily to make them leave the room.

Somehow, she remembered what Emily said to her, that being away from Blake would help her get rid of him from her mind quickly, and her nefarious step sister was right. She didn't think much of that man, as if he was just part of her nightmare and the memory of them together slowly faded away.

It also helped that Zenith treated her so well, it was way more than she expected, which was very surprising to her, probably because she thought so low of the alpha from the north. If Zenith knew about her thoughts, she wondered what his reaction would be.

"You can't sleep again, my lady. There is someone that you need to meet."

"Who?" Dawn opened her eyes, she was not happy.

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"A seamstress." Kynes looked excited.

“The alpha said you need to see the seamstress so she can make a dress that you like for the ceremony!” Pylo chimed in. She was thrilled too when she explained that it had been a long time since there was a ceremony in this pack.

“I have never seen a ceremony before,” Kynes said happily.

“Yes, me too!”

“During the ceremony, usually we will have a lot of food and drinks and entertainment, there will be music and...”

Dawn stopped listening, spaced out with the thoughts of her ceremony. She had told Zenith she wanted to know the people in this pack better first before they addressed her as the luna, but that cold alpha only said;

‘They should know you, not the other way around.’ Zenith’s second reason was; ‘So, nobody will get their tongues cut.’

And with that ‘grand introduction’ during her first dinner here, who wouldn’t know her?

After Kynes and Pylo helped her change into a dress, they went to the seamstress’ place in a carriage that had been waiting for them.

The seamstress’ house was a simple house that looked so boring with various dresses on display. Snow piled up on its roof.

And when they were about to enter, someone came out. As it turned out, this was the gamma.

“Oh, the woman who doesn’t like lamb meat!” Darius remarked when he saw Dawn at the seamstress’ place. He came here to get a new cloak stitched because the one he had was destroyed after the monster attack last night.

Dawn thought, probably that was the reason Zenith didn’t come this morning for training, because he was dealing with the monster attack.

Little did she know, Zenith didn’t get involved at all in it. He chose to stay with her during the attack.

“That’s the only thing that you remembered from that night?” Dawn narrowed her eyes incredulously.

“Oh, I remember you are the cause of someone losing their tongue, but I was being polite and not bringing that depressing topic up,” Darius said lightly, shrugging his shoulders nonchalantly.

Kynes and Pyllo lowered their heads. They were still afraid at the mention of that night.

But, hearing what Darius said, the corner of Dawn's lips twitched. "Thank you," she said sarcastically, but the gamma actually smiled with joy at her.

"You are welcome!" Darius crept closer to her and then whispered. "How can you change the alpha so much? Have you both known each other before this?"

"No."

Zenith said they had met before, but for Dawn, she had never seen him.

"That's weird..." Darius contemplated, but he didn't dwell on the matter too much. "I heard you have been training with the Alpha, how was it?"

"It's hell..." Dawn couldn't help but sigh.

"I know, right?!" Darius was so loud, he clapped his hands excitedly, as if he just met with someone that had the same thoughts as him. "He was too harsh, right?!"

Seeing him like this, Dawn was pumped. "He forced me to run even when I was out of breath. He tackled me to the ground too, and also..."

"Right? Right?! Right?!"

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"Can you stop doing this?!" Emily was very angry with Blake. She was on the verge of crying, because the man had been ignoring her for days. No, actually he had never treated her well ever since Dawn left the pack. "You will fall into insanity if you can't let go of her! What can she do that I can't!? I am pregnant with your child for God's sake!"

Blake glared at her. His father was in his hair about how he should treat Emily better and how he should be a better mate for her, because he failed to be one when he was with Dawn.

However, his heart couldn't accept it. He longed for Dawn. Her voice, her touch, her laugh. Everything...

Every corner of this pack reminded him of her and it was unbearable.

He had tried to like Emily, but he couldn't. She was the reminder of why Dawn was miles away from here and why he couldn't see her again. The thought of her suffering in the north under the cruel alpha left him nauseated. He wanted to save her from that place.

“Don’t. Touch. Me.” Blake emphasized his every word, he glared down at Emily. He didn’t raise his voice, because if his father heard him, he would reprimand him again about not treating her well, since she was pregnant with his firstborn.

“How can you abandon me after you got what you wanted!?” Emily screamed at the top of her lungs, tears streamed down her face. She was really upset to the point she was trembling.

“You are not what I wanted!” Blake shoved her body away from him. Her scent disgusted him.

“You didn’t say that when you made love to me!”

“You seduced me!” Blake finally lost it. If it was not for her advances, he wouldn’t have done it with her. She was the one who threw herself at him. “You are so cheap, you wanted to hurt Dawn so bad, you came after her mate!”

From the distance, the two of them could hear footsteps approaching and they knew it was Beta Jason.

Out of her rage, Emily immediately knelt down and held her stomach, she wailed painfully. “It hurts... It hurts...”

“What happened here?!” Beta Jason was shocked when he saw Emily’s current state. Not long after, Blake’s mother came because she heard the commotion. She chided her son for stressing out Emily while she was pregnant with his child.

Blake despised Emily so much.

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“Where is Zenith?” Dawn asked Darius when they were having their dinner in the dining hall. She rarely saw Zenith join them at the dining table.

“I told you, right? He doesn’t like to eat with others.” Darius gobbled up his meat happily, though it was only two hours ago that he ate.

Dawn frowned, she knew Zenith didn’t like to eat with others, but he used to attend dinner at the beginning. It had been four days straight and he didn’t make any appearance, but the people didn’t seem to be surprised with this.

“Where are you going?” Darius asked when he saw Dawn pick her plate up and stride toward the door.

“I am going to eat with him.” Dawn was sure the cold alpha was in his study room.

Darius was about to say she didn't need to bother and Zenith might throw her out, but he remembered Zenith's peculiarity whenever it involved his future luna, so he simply shrugged his shoulders. "Good luck!"

It was not hard to find Zenith's study room and the warriors, who guarded there, let her in without any ruckus.

"How easy... what if I have bad intentions??" Dawn mumbled to herself.

Come back and read more tomorrow, everyone! .

Chapter 24: ATTEMPTED MURDER

Inside the room, Dawn found Zenith sleeping soundly. He looked tired with a few parchments scattered on the table before him. She took a look and noticed those were from different continents, written in different languages.

"How many languages could he speak?" Dawn mumbled to herself and saw Zenith had not yet touched his meal.

Zenith was leaning his back against the backrest of his lavish chair, closed his eyes and breathed deeply.

She contemplated waking him up for a moment, but then she decided against her idea. Maybe he needed this rest more, so she dropped her plate on the table and went to get a blanket for him.

"I hope you get sick, so I don't need to go through that stupid training, but it will be cruel to wish you bad luck," Dawn talked to herself, as she draped the blanket on his body. "He really had his guard down..."

Zenith didn't wake up even after Dawn left the room. The girl even brushed away his curls from his face, yet, he was still deep in sleep.

With that, Dawn left with her plate.

"Are you sure, it's okay to let her enter the room without notifying the Alpha first?" One of the warriors talked to his fellow friend, as they watched Dawn walk away.

"The Alpha said not to restrict her movements, she is allowed to go anywhere without permission, including his study room, strategy room and his bedroom." The second warrior recalled what the alpha said.

"That's insane. No one has such privilege. Even the beta and the gamma were not allowed to enter the Alpha's bedroom without permission."

“That’s right, but had the Alpha gotten mad because that woman entered without permission, we would have been summoned, right?”

The first warrior thought for a moment and agreed. “You are right.”

Half an hour after Dawn left, Darius came and the moment he entered the room, the alpha opened his eyes, because he sensed someone was approaching him.

However, he frowned at the blanket that was draped on his body.

“Are you the one, who put this?” Zenith stared at the blanket.

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“No. I just came.” Darius tilted his head. “You don’t know who did it? Maybe it was Dawn, she said she was going to come here and dine with you.”

Zenith stared at the blanket for a while and folded it.

“Wait, you didn’t know? You didn’t even wake up when she approached you?” Darius was surprised to learn about this. “How could that be possible?”

Zenith had never put his guard down so low, to the point he was not aware of his surroundings, even in his sleep.

“How comfortable are you with her that you don’t realize it?”

“What do you want to talk about?” Zenith immediately cut off the topic. He didn’t want to discuss this topic. This was his problem. Probably, Dawn was the only person who could actually kill him in his sleep.

“Your word about preparing the ceremony has traveled fast. I am sure the King has learned about it already.” Darius eyed Zenith’s untouched dinner. “We caught the King’s spy close to the untouched land.”

“Be ready, prepare all the warriors.” Zenith stood up and walked toward the door.

“Zenith, I don’t understand, why is the King against you taking her as your mate? You can just choose someone else, so you will not anger him.” Darius couldn’t understand this.

In his eyes, it was a trivial matter. Dawn was not even his destined mate. There was no need for a heartbreaking rejection and the pain of a severing mate bond. More so, even when Dawn was a debt that Zenith had to collect from Alpha Tony, he didn’t need to make her his luna.

“I want her.”

And that was the only answer that Zenith gave to Darius. He wanted her. There was nothing else.

“Sometimes, I don’t understand why these two brothers are very stubborn. They are at each other’s throats, but have not yet really killed each other.”

Most people knew that Zenith and Zander didn’t see eye to eye often.

Late at night, when everyone had fallen asleep, a few beasts emerged from the dark. The look in their eyes would let you know that they held malicious intentions.

There were around fifty beasts, which was an enough number to create a ruckus inside the pack, especially when they managed to get closer toward the pack house.

Thankfully, with their reckless movements, a warrior noticed them first before they could enter the pack house and alarmed the other warriors about these intruders.

“It’s happening...” Axel clicked his tongue, shaking his head. Darius and he had been waiting for this, since the alpha had expected their visit.

“What now?” Darius asked one of the warriors.

“Rogues!” The warrior replied.

Of course, the king would use rogues so it wouldn’t be traced back to him. But, who was the king trying to deceive when his brother knew very well that he was behind it?

However, the rogues were only a distraction, because the real goal was not to invade the pack...

Inside the most comfortable and beautiful room in the north pack house, where you could see various daggers hanging on one wall, a girl was sleeping without knowing that her life was in great danger, as a beast entered the room, a flash of killing intent evident in his eyes.

This would be a quick death. Everything would be over in less than a minute. He could hear the soft sound of her breathing, not realizing the commotion out there.

The beast crept closer, he was only three steps away from the bed when he felt this chill run down his spine, a strong presence came from behind him. Within a second, he became prey to a stronger predator.

He didn’t even have time to fully grasp his situation and think of a way to escape his predicament when the beast suddenly jumped on his back and tore off his neck.

It was a swift and quick death, where he could only let out a small croak before his body fell to the ground. His dead body shifted into his human form.

Hearing the sound and the thick smell of blood in the air, Dawn woke up with a jolt, as she immediately sat down and looked around her, but all of a sudden, someone closed her eyes.

“Argh!” Dawn managed to claw her attacker’s arm, but he immediately caught both of her wrists and pushed her down on the bed. He was so strong, while one hand covered her eyes, his other hand held both of her hands down. “Let go of me!” Dawn was about to shift into her beast when she heard his voice.

“It’s me! It’s me!”

Zenith’s voice echoed in this quiet room, which made Dawn stop struggling. Only then, she noticed his woody scent so close to her, amidst this thick smell of blood.

“W- what happened?” Dawn was confused, she was still unable to see.

“Close your eyes, you don’t want to see this. I will take you away from this room.”

The smell of blood and the urgency in his voice let Dawn know it was really not a good idea to see whatever had happened around her.

Zenith saw that she nodded and lowered his hand slowly to see Dawn followed his instruction. He then let go of her hands and carried her away from this bloody room. He pressed her face against his chest, to make sure she wouldn’t sneak a peek.

“What happened?” Dawn asked, as Zenith walked in the corridor.

“Just a nuisance.”

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This man sat on the throne, looked aloof, but playful. His face was covered by a golden mask and his shoulder length hair had these little curls. You couldn’t see what kind of expression he had behind his mask, but you could sense that he was not in a good mood.

Meanwhile, in front of them, there was this bloody box with a head on top of it. It was still bleeding, some magic must have been used to preserve the head even after a week of travel.

The king had a maid serve him a cup of alcohol tea, his favorite drink. The maid looked pale, she was mortified and tried her hardest not to glance at it and left this throne room

as soon as possible, while the royal gamma was sitting next to the king, looking bored to his senses.

This throne room was spacious enough and lavished by luxurious things, but there were only the two of them there after the maid left.

“How could he send me that? Don’t you think that he had crossed the line?”

“You are the one, who had crossed the line first, Zander,” his gamma chided the king lightly. “You should have expected this to happen after you targeted his chosen mate.”

“I told him not to go through with his ridiculous idea to have a ceremony.”

“Does he ever listen to you?” The gamma rolled his eyes, looking tired with this unnecessary dispute between the siblings.

“No. But, I am his king, he is my subject. He should listen to me.”

“Yeah, apparently that didn’t work.” The gamma scratched his head and then handed him a letter. “This is the report from the northern border. A horde of monsters managed to go through the northern warrior’s protection and caused great damage to your favorite hot spring in the north.”

“Ridiculous!” Zander cursed, he threw the mask that covered his face and revealed the same exact face as the alpha from the north.

If you didn’t look closely, you wouldn’t be able to tell the difference.

Come back and read more tomorrow, everyone! .

Chapter 25: NOT BAD

“They are at it again,” Axel said, feeling irritated when he saw a letter from the palace bearing the king’s insignia. This was not the first letter that King Zander sent to them. His order was still the same; take care of the monsters that managed to ‘escape’ the untouched land and keep destroying the border in the north.

It caused turmoil in the whole continent, because the north pack served as the first line of defense against monster problems.

But, the reply that came from Zenith was the same; he would try his best to deal with it.

Not only did this matter cause rippling anxiety in the people of the kingdom, but it also gave the king a headache. Zenith was still pissed because his brother sent someone to blatantly kill his mate.

"I think this will last for another two months," Darius said. "Zenith purposefully weakened the protection around that spot."

"I know." Axel frowned. "Why do you think the King wants to kill that woman? I know they disagree on a lot of things, but the King doesn't have any reason to interfere with the mate Zenith chooses."

"I am not sure either." Darius took the letter and opened it. "Why didn't you open this?"

"It will be the same nagging letter about how we need to strengthen our protection." Axel didn't want to read the same thing over and over again.

However, reading its content, Darius frowned. "No. This is not about that." He handed the letter to Axel. "We need to inform the Alpha about this letter."

Meanwhile, after that attack, Dawn was sleeping in Zenith's bedroom. The alpha also appointed someone to follow her anywhere she went, aside from Kynes and Pyllo. Zenith also made the seamstress come to her room, instead of her going to the village.

This level of protection started to feel overwhelming for Dawn.

"You are better now, but still far away from my expectation," Zenith said after one of his training sessions with Dawn.

"Your expectation is too high, Alpha. You overestimated me." Dawn laid down on her back, staring at the bleak sky that made her feel even more depressed. She missed her pack and wondered if she should write to her father.

"You lack ambition."

"I just want to live peacefully." Dawn blinked her eyes, as she remembered something. "Oh, right, can I return to my room? I think the smell of blood has disappeared by now."

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"No. It's not," Zenith replied too fast to make it sound more convincing, which made Dawn give him a look.

"I think I can handle it."

"Why? You don't like to sleep with me?" Zenith sat next to her, his piercing blue eyes forced Dawn to avert her gaze. Most of the time, this man was very overbearing and intimidating, even looking him in the eyes was already an effort for her.

"It's... uncomfortable." Dawn tried to find an excuse, but could only come up with the lamest one.

Hearing that, his blue eyes turned a few shades darker. He pinched her chin so she could look at him. "How?"

Dawn tried to think of something, but she couldn't, so she chose to be honest with him. "I am not used to sleeping with a man."

"You slept with your ex mate." The way Zenith said that was filled with aversion.

Dawn swatted his hand from her chin and glared at him, but her face turned very red. "I didn't." She gritted her teeth.

"You didn't?" Zenith narrowed his eyes. "Do you want to say that you are a virgin?"

Zenith knew that Dawn had been with Blake for five years, ever since they knew they were destined mates and it was unusual for them not to be mated, not even once. Most of the shifters around their age would have an experience or two, or even more, especially if they found their destined mate.

Zenith was even surprised to see that she didn't bear Blake's mark, which made the severed mate bond not as painful.

The alpha could understand if she had not been marked yet, because it was not a trivial process, but not to be mated...

"I don't want to talk about this," Dawn was embarrassed. She didn't want to talk about this topic anymore, but before she could escape, Zenith had wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her into his lap.

Dawn could feel her back against his chest. He felt so warm. His scent engulfed her.

"Let me make it clear." Zenith almost growled when Dawn tried to escape from him again, which made her stop and turn rather docile. "He had not yet marked you, which is obvious, and the two of you had not mated either, am I correct?"

Zenith could understand if they had done it, which was fair, since Dawn was with him. He wouldn't be surprised or make a big deal out of it, but what surprised him was the fact they didn't.

"We kissed, okay." Dawn felt so stupid to even entertain this topic. "What? Are you having second thoughts about me because I am inexperienced?" She wanted to sound angry, but she only sounded embarrassed. "My father is very strict. We weren't even allowed to be together in the same room for the first three years we found out that we were mates."

The corner of Zenith's lips quirked up. Alpha Tony might be a terrible decision maker, but he was good at keeping his eye on his daughter, unfortunately, his other daughter slipped through his fingers.

"So, he never kissed you like this?" Zenith asked, his voice was a little bit husky when he nibbled on her neck and traced her collarbones with his callous fingers. It sent shivers down Dawn's spine to feel his touch. He was exceptionally gentle with her right now. "Answer me, little one."

"N- no..." Dawn cursed herself when her voice sounded like she enjoyed it. "Someone will see us."

"Do you really think that I will let someone see you so vulnerable like this?" He traced down his hand and brushed his fingers against her breast, which made Dawn gasp. Her heart was pounding loudly against her ears.

What was she doing? Shouldn't she push him away? Why didn't she do anything?

Dawn was curious, this was a new territory for her, there was this ticklish sensation in her stomach that she couldn't ignore. Her adrenaline rushed in her veins and she wondered what Zenith was going to do, but at the same time, she didn't know what she should do at a moment like this.

Should she touch him back? Where should she touch him?

"Has he ever touched you like this?" Zenith lifted her dress and caressed her inner thigh, which made Dawn curl her toes as she shook her head. "Answer me..." He coaxed, as his hand trailed higher to her intimate part.

"N- no..." her voice was shaky, but at this point, Dawn didn't care much about how she sounded. It felt... good.

She felt a little bit guilty to even feel that way.

"Hm," Zenith hummed in agreement. She was so sweet and innocent, just like how he remembered her before he flipped her world upside down and she was filled with rage and malice. "Your scent is intoxicating..." he whispered in her ear and nibbled on her earlobe.

Dawn blushed so hard when she heard that, she felt her body was so hot, she thought the snow around her would melt at some point if she touched it.

She was breathing raggedly when she tilted her head and took the initiative to kiss him first. She moaned into his mouth when he squeezed her breast gently. This felt so right. She could hear the ripping sound of her undergarment when Zenith tore it and slid his finger in her opening.

She gasped and moaned loudly when he started to touch her intimately.

Dawn had never thought this was how you would feel when someone touched you in this way. Her body was trembling when he picked up his pace and moved faster. She felt tension building up in the pit of her stomach.

"I- I feel weird..." Dawn said breathlessly when the tension built up and she was not sure whether she wanted to cry or scream.

"It's okay... don't hold back," Zenith said against her lips. He could feel her tensed body and how she almost reached her climax. "Don't hold it back, little one, it's okay..."

Dawn was not sure what she had to do, but she really couldn't hold it any longer and it almost felt like something inside her snapped and she felt this rush of pleasure that washed over her body.

This was the first time for her to feel this intense feeling and she didn't know what to do, but to clutch onto Zenith and bite his lip, until it ceased.

Once it was over, she felt so tired and everything became clear again, but when it happened, a wave of embarrassment hit her so hard, especially when Zenith's finger was still in her private part.

Dawn pushed his hand away from her and she felt this warm feeling that made her slightly uncomfortable.

"I... That's..." Dawn couldn't find a word to explain herself, nor did she know what to say.

"I assume that's your first time to be pleased?" Zenith tilted his head, he liked that Dawn struggled with her words. "How's it?"

Dawn bit her lip and mumbled. "Not bad."

A flicker of amusement flitted past Zenith's eyes. "Not bad, huh?"

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Chapter 26: IF YOU DIED, IT MEANS, I WAS DEAD

"Not bad, huh?" Zenith pinched her nipple, which made Dawn gasp. "I want to know who you compared me with."

Dawn blushed even more. He knew that she had no one to compare him with, but then he made her situation even worse when he whispered in her ear.

"I will do better next time," he said darkly. It sounded like a warning, but also a promise, which made Dawn look forward to it.

Dawn shook her head internally, it shouldn't feel right to look forward to it, right? But, then she remembered that she would sleep next to him.

"About the bedroom..." Dawn barely opened her mouth when Zenith kissed her again, effectively silencing her, as he spoke against her lips instead.

"You will sleep with me. In my room. In my bed." Zenith brushed his tongue on her lips. "There is no room for negotiation or discussion."

Dawn felt timid. After the pleasure she got from him, she felt like she wanted to run away and hide from him for a few weeks or months.

However, his kiss was very tempting, she was at the point where she didn't want to let go.

Therefore, she was startled when suddenly Zenith pulled away from her before pulling down her dress into place, covering her exposed legs.

Swiftly, Zenith also pulled away his hand from her chest and tidied up her dress, so it didn't look very obvious about what they had done earlier, but the sweet smell in the air around them gave it away.

"Should I give you five more minutes?" Axel asked.

Dawn screeched and pressed her face into Zenith's chest. She was too engrossed with his touch, until she did not realize that someone was approaching them.

This was humiliating!

"No. Tell me what it is?" There was something in Axel's voice, which indicated this was something urgent that Zenith had to know immediately.

"King Zander sent a letter," Axel said, as he approached Zenith and Dawn, who were still sitting on the frozen grass, with the alpha hugging her from behind.

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If it was Darius, he would make a big fuss about this, since they had never seen their alpha being lovey dovey with anyone, but Axel was all business. This matter needed Zenith's attention quickly.

Zenith got the letter and read it, because of her current position, Dawn could read the letter too, since he didn't intentionally hide it from her.

“Five days?” Dawn frowned. “Does it mean the King will be here today?”

Zenith growled dangerously. He didn't see this coming. Even though he knew, there would be some point, Zander would get back at him for the chaos and panic he created throughout the continent with the monsters.

In his opinion, his brother deserved that after the stunt he tried to pull to kill Dawn. Zenith was not yet done with him.

But, it was a bold move from him to come here directly.

“Close the gates,” Zenith said.

“What?” Axel was startled. “Zenith, I know you are pissed, but no matter what, he is still the King.”

“Close the gates and don't open until I said so,” Zenith repeated his order, this time, he didn't leave any room for discussion.

Axel shook his head and then left to relay the alpha's order.

“Zenith, what are you doing?” Dawn could feel Axel's frustration, she was also afraid of what Zenith wanted to do. “What if the King gets angry? You can be punished for your actions, even though he is your brother.”

Zenith stared at her for a while, as if he tried to contemplate something before finally he decided to tell her.

“The rogues and the beasts were sent by my dear brother. He wanted to kill you. So, while he is here, you need to pay close attention to your surroundings. Make sure that you are never alone.”

“What? What did I do? Why did the king want to kill me?” This situation was getting weird. Dawn had never met any of them, but why did these two brothers have some advanced feelings about her?

“You don't need to worry,” Zenith said, he released her body and then stood up, he stretched his hand to help her to stand up too.

“How can I not worry? The King wanted to kill me, should I be honored instead?” Dawn frowned. She didn't like this situation. She was confused and wanted to know the truth. “Why did he want to kill me?”

“Because I chose you to be my mate.”

Dawn didn't expect him to answer her honestly. "Can you not choose me then? I want to live." But then, something clicked in her mind. "Is that why you made me train hard so that I can take care of myself if someone tries to kill me?"

"More or less."

Dawn stood up, she swatted his hand. "You put my life in danger! I don't know why your brother wanted to kill your chosen mate, but I don't want to die, okay."

"You will not die. If it ever comes to that, it means I was already dead."

Dawn frowned, she didn't like the sound of it. "What are you talking about?"

"No one will be able to harm you as long as I am alive." Zenith took her hand and walked back to the pack house, but Dawn stumbled after a few steps. She looked embarrassed, thinking he would taunt her, but the alpha actually put his arm around her waist to steady her and didn't say anything.

Two hours later, just before the sun set, the guard at the gate reported to them that they spotted a carriage that carried the royal insignia. It was not a big entourage, but you would know it was someone from the royal family.

They reported this to the alpha, but Zenith didn't allow them to open the gates.

"How should we answer them, Alpha? We can't ignore the king," the guard looked worried. They needed to follow their alpha's order, but the king was an entirely different story, they couldn't ignore such an important figure.

"Did you spot the royal beta?"

"Yes, Alpha."

"Ignore them."

The guard sneaked a look toward the beta, asking for his help, but Axel simply waved his hand and dismissed him. "What are you trying to do now? If this is the dispute between you and your brother, you shouldn't make your pack members lose their lives. It's not fair."

"Nobody will lose their lives."

=====

"So, he doesn't want to open the gates?" Zander asked his beta from inside the carriage. He still had that creepy golden mask covering his face. "Is he trying to straight up ignore me?" The king tilted his head.

“I think your brother literally said; fuck off.” The beta didn’t even filter his choice of words.

However, the king didn’t even bother with that. He didn’t need to be told about what his brother was trying to say. He knew about it already.

Not long after, the king came out of the carriage. He stood next to his beta and stared at the high fortress.

“If he didn’t want to meet me, I should be the one to go to him, right?”

“Zander, you are pushing him too far.”

“I just miss my brother.”

Even under the mask, Pyro could tell that Zander was pouting his lips right now. “You don’t miss him, you just want to mess with him.”

“Same thing.” Zander shrugged his shoulders. “Create the portal.”

Pyro was Zander’s beta, but he was not a shifter. He was a magic user, which was against the rules, but he was the king, he was the rule maker himself. He could bend the rules as he pleased and not even the highest fortress in this continent could stop him from seeing his brother... or to be precise, that woman.

It was not hard to find Dawn, since Zander had one more spy that Zenith failed to notice. This warrior told the king where Dawn was right now, currently, she was with Kynes and Pyllo, walking in the greenhouse.

“Good, take me there,” Zander said to his beta.

The greenhouse was the only place in this northern pack, where you could see various flowers thriving through the harsh cold weather. Magic was necessary to keep those flowers alive and it was a refreshing sight for Dawn to see aside from the boring bleak sky or the frozen river.

More so, there were not only flowers, there were many other plants in this huge greenhouse, where she could learn about herbs or... poisonous plants.

Yes, Dawn had this weird interest in herbs and poisonous plants, but mostly the latter.

In the Moonlight pack, the women didn’t have training like they had here, so in her free time, Dawn used to explore a few things on her own.

However, all of a sudden Dawn sensed someone else’s scent, so did her two maids. The three of them immediately turned their bodies toward the source of it and caught

the sight of this man, in his golden mask, adorned in a luxurious cloak and carrying a regal aura around him.

Kynes and Pyllo were shocked, as they immediately knelt down to greet the king.

Dawn remembered what people said about the king. Not many people had seen his face, because he had been wearing this weird golden mask since ten years ago.

He started to wear this mask ever since he lost his destined mate when he was only nineteen, right after he was crowned as the king in this continent.

No one knew the reason why he wore this mask. There were a lot of rumors about it, though...

"I see... it seems, my brother has not marked you yet." His voice was deep and dangerous.

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Chapter 27: YOU ARE GOING TO KILL HER

Dawn immediately knelt down in the presence of the king, but when she remembered Zenith's warning, she felt a chill run down her spine. This was the king, who wanted to take her life for unknown reasons.

But then, how could he be here when Zenith made it clear not to open the gates? Did he change his mind and let him in again?

It would take two hours to travel from the main gates to the pack house, thus how could he get here so fast?

Meanwhile, the king walked closer to Dawn. "The two of you can leave." His voice was deep and dangerous, which made Kynes and Pyllo rush away from the greenhouse. "I see... it seems, my brother has not marked you yet."

Dawn was still kneeling and from Zander's position, he could see her neck. There was no mark on her.

"Hm... should I kill you now, or later?" Zander talked to himself, he tilted his head, as if Dawn couldn't hear his vicious thoughts.

"My King, I don't understand what you mean," Dawn said calmly. This king was insane!

It was why you shouldn't trust the rumors! People always said the king was an embodiment of sunshine, someone who was warm and kind, while Zenith was a dark shadow.

However, right now Dawn felt like the alpha of the north seemed more sane than the masked man before her eyes.

“This will be a quick death,” Zander said. He fished out something from his pocket and put it in Dawn’s palm.

“What is this, Your Highness?”

“Poison.” The answer came very clear and simple. “You will not suffer. It will feel like you just fell asleep.”

Dawn couldn’t believe her ears. This king was very blunt with his intention, he didn’t even try to hide it.

However, instead of making her afraid of him, it made her furious. This reminded her of how Emily and Julia wanted to kill her at some point and they were not shy about their intention.

What the king did to her right now was nothing but triggering the rage that she had been holding back.

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Dawn took the poison, it was a small tube, almost as big as her thumb. She lifted her head and looked at him defiantly.

“How do you know, My King? Have you tried it?” Dawn stared at his blue eyes that reminded her of Zenith’s. They were of the same color, but while Zenith exuded aloofness and distance, the king’s eyes were filled with calculation and cunningness.

A flicker of amusement flitted across Zander’s eyes to see her retaliation, but before he could answer that, he saw a flower vase coming shooting toward him, but instead of dodging it, he simply smirked.

Before the flower vase could hit him, it stopped mid air and then fell to the ground, the sound of it startled Dawn, but before she could see what was happening, a black cloak covered her sight briefly and someone yanked her arm, pulling her up.

It was Zenith! The alpha growled dangerously at his brother.

Meanwhile, a man that had been very quiet all this time finally spoke, he greeted Zenith first. “Good day to you, Alpha Zenith.” Pyro nodded politely. The beta was the one, who had stopped the vase from hurting the king and Zander knew Pyro would protect him, thus he didn’t move to dodge it.

Unfortunately, Zenith didn't have any interest to pay attention to him, because his main focus was on his brother.

"What are you doing here?" Zenith pulled Dawn behind his back, anger rolled off his body. He thought Zander would come looking for him, he knew he would get into the pack house in one way or another, but he didn't expect he would go straight to Dawn.

How could he find her so fast?

The audacity of this man was baffling!

"As a brother, I want to see the woman you chose as your mate," Zander said playfully, but when he spoke again, his tone changed, it was way darker and full of authority. "And as a king, I need to know what kind of woman you are bringing into the family. Shouldn't you have the ceremony in the palace instead of here?"

Dawn was well aware that Zenith was the king's younger brother, but because of how people used to think of the two of them very differently, as if they were from two different worlds, it just clicked in her mind that Zenith, as his status demanded, since he still belonged to the royal family, had to have his ceremony celebrated in the palace.

"Stay away from her, Zan," Zenith said, he matched his brother's dangerous tone. His voice was not even shaking when he chased away the king blatantly. "I will not be polite if you lay a hand on her."

Zander didn't back down either. "What if I did?" It was clearly a provocation.

"I don't mind destroying the whole kingdom."

"Is that a threat? Be careful with what you are saying, I can charge you with treason."

Dawn clutched Zenith's cloak. She was clueless as to why they acted this way, even more when it came to her. She wanted to tell Zenith to stop, but she didn't think it was her place to speak.

Thankfully, Pyro jumped in before things could escalate too far.

"Your Highness, you came here to discuss 'that' matter. Shouldn't we talk about it now?" Pyro reminded him about this.

The king came to see Dawn, but at the same time, there was another urgent matter that Zander had to discuss with Zenith.

Actually, the latter was the actual and main purpose they were here.

“Alpha Zenith, I think your banter scared your mate.” Pyro approached them, he stood next to Zander.

Zenith glanced at Dawn, who was still clutching his cloak and whatever expression she had right now, softened the alpha’s stance.

He took her hand and walked away with her, but not before he gave Zander a final warning. “I meant what I said.”

Dawn glanced at the king and his beta over her shoulder and saw the king wave his hand at her playfully. She could only imagine he was smiling at her behind that golden mask, but Zenith pinched her chin and made her look ahead.

“Do you think he wants to keep her because she is cute?” Zander asked Pyro.

“Zan, you pushed him too far.”

“He said it himself. That he would be the one to kill his chosen mate, but what the hell with the ceremony preparations? He even brought her here.” Zander walked out of the greenhouse and Pyro followed him, just in case his king would cause more trouble again. You couldn’t trust these two brothers not to claw each other’s throats if they were left alone. “This is not what he said he would do.”

Pyro could only sigh deeply. Being the middleman of this brothers’ duo was even harder than taking care of the entire kingdom.

Meanwhile, Zenith took Dawn into his bedroom. He checked on her, there was this worry in his eyes.

“Are you okay?” Zenith cupped her face and caressed her cheeks. “Did he do something to hurt you before I came?”

Dawn shook her head.

“Don’t go out. If you were not with me, don’t go out. Stay inside the bedroom. Understand?” Zenith leaned over and kissed her, which caught her off guard, but she didn’t dislike it. “Don’t go out.”

“Wait.” Dawn stopped him, when he was about to leave. She clutched onto his cloak. “Will you explain to me one day what all of this is about?”

Zenith was visibly tensed up. “You will not see me the same if you know about it.”

Dawn frowned. “How can you be so sure?” She walked closer to him. “How can you be sure that I don’t see you in a bad light now?”

Zenith chuckled, he kissed her again, which felt like a normal thing to do for him. "Stay."

After that, Zenith left the room, Kynes and Pylo came shortly, the two of them stayed with Dawn the whole time.

However, Dawn was deep in thought, she was still holding onto the poison tube that the king gave to her. She forgot to mention this.

"What poison is this?" Dawn mumbled to herself. She was curious. She knew some poisons, but her knowledge about this subject was still very little.

"What is that, my lady?" Kynes asked, she came closer to Dawn. "It looks like something sweet."

Dawn smiled at her, ever since what happened, the two of them were very sweet and polite with her, so was the rest of the pack members, which was nice, since she didn't want to get into trouble.

At the same time, after Zenith asked Dawn to stay inside their bedroom, he walked straight to his study room and found Zander and Pyro were already there.

His brother was sitting on the windowsill, staring at the white snow falling over the vast land out there.

"You can leave us now, Pyro," Zander said.

"But, the matter about the poison..."

Zander cut him off firmly. "I want to have a talk with my brother alone first."

Pyro looked back and forth between Zander and Zenith. "Are you sure the two of you will not start killing each other?"

"Nah, I am a better fighter than him," Zander said, waving his hand nonchalantly, while Zenith scoffed at that statement.

With that, the royal beta left the brothers alone.

"You said it yourself. That you will kill her." Zander took off his mask, his expression hardened. "What changed?"

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Chapter 28: OBVIOUS INTENTION TO KILL YOU

When Zander took off his mask, it was the same face that stared back at Zenith. The

two of them were brothers, but most importantly, the two of them were twins. Even their builds were the same.

The only difference was, the king had his hair touching his shoulders, you could see the curls more on him than Zenith, who had short hair.

“You know that you have to kill her,” Zander said, his playfulness disappearing. He was all serious right now. He walked toward the table and put his mask on it, as he sat there. “You know what will happen if you don’t. What’s your plan?” Zander narrowed his eyes. He tried to understand what was in his brother’s mind, but he still couldn’t figure out anything.

“I am not going to kill her,” Zenith stated the obvious. If he was not going to kill her on their way here, he was not going to kill her ever. The alpha even went ahead with the ceremony.

“Then, it will be her, who is going to kill you,” Zander growled. He was frustrated.

“That’s not what the prophecy said.”

“I will eliminate all possibilities.”

“Try and I will be your calamity.”

Zander clenched his jaw. Both of them knew that Zenith didn’t play around with his words. He meant everything he said. He was going to take down the whole kingdom with him if Zander harmed Dawn.

“She is not even your destined mate.”

Zenith didn’t say anything. He had made it very clear for Zander where he stood. Therefore, there was no need for another discussion.

“Does she know about it?” Zander looked at his twin brother, who refused to answer him. “She doesn’t, does she?”

“What brings you here?” Zenith changed the topic. Earlier, Pyro talked about poison. There must be something going on in the capital city.

Zander crossed his arms in front of his chest. He considered his options, whether to change the topic, or pursue the problem of his brother’s chosen mate.

“Open the gates. I brought something that you need to see.”

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In the end, Zander took a step back, not to aggravate his brother further than this. Zenith would only become obstinate if he pestered him. He would try a different approach in this matter.

Zenith called for his beta and Axel entered the room not long after, the beta was surprised to see the king was there, but he expected that much from him.

“Hi, Axel!” Zander raised his hand when he saw the beta. “You look great, I guess my brother treats you well?”

“The Alpha always treats me well.”

“If you were going to lie, at least try harder.”

=====

Dawn learned that Zenith had opened the gates for the king’s entourage from Pyllo, she had been updating her on everything that happened around the pack and helped her to adjust here well.

Probably because she and Kynes felt guilty about the way they met in the beginning, they became overly thoughtful with Dawn. Or maybe, they were just being scared by the alpha’s wrath.

Either way, it was fine with Dawn.

Later that night when Dawn thought she would have her dinner alone and would be confined for days inside this bedroom, Zenith actually came and asked her to join him and the king for dinner.

“Are you sure?” Dawn asked. She looked at Zenith’s expression closely. It was not very clear, but she could feel that he was in a bad mood. “Do you think it’s safe for me?”

“Yes.” Zenith caressed her cheek. He stared at her deeply and sometimes, whenever he was like this, Dawn could see this sadness in his eyes.

Dawn fished out something from her pocket and handed that to Zenith, it was the small poison tube that the king gave to her earlier.

“The King gave it to me when we were in the greenhouse, but I forgot to tell you. He said that it was poison, but I checked it after. That’s only sweet nectar.” Dawn didn’t know why the king lied.

Zenith stared at it and threw it away. “Don’t accept things from strangers. Weren’t you taught about that?”

“He is not a stranger, he is the King of this kingdom.”

“You still don’t know him. He is a stranger.” Zenith had enough argumentation with Zander, he didn’t want to have some more with Dawn too, thus he took her hand and got out of the room.

They would have their dinner together near the training ground.

=====

Blake stared at Emily’s sleeping face, but there was no affection at all in the way he looked at her, if anything, there was only resentment.

This woman had made a lot of drama. Not so long ago, she fainted after another round of fighting.

The more Blake stayed with her, the more he scorned her and the more he scorned her, the more he wanted Dawn. It drove him crazy to think what that cruel alpha was doing to his mate.

He really wanted to rush to the north and get her back. He was sure if he met with her right now, she would forgive him and return with him.

But of course, this was not the scenario his father and Alpha Tony thought to be the best, more so, he had Emily and his firstborn to think about.

“I know you are awake, quit your crap, there is no one here.” Blake couldn’t hold back his anger. There was a time when he thought he wanted to kill her. He must be in the early stages of insanity.

“Blake.” Emily opened her eyes. She looked at him, her eyes were very clear, there was no trace of fatigue. “When will you get over her? It has been more than two months since she left.”

“I will never get over her. I will get her back.”

Emily’s eyes hardened when she heard that. She felt her heart fill with rage, but she suppressed it. “Be real. You are just being delusional if you think you can covet something that belongs to the Alpha from the north.”

People knew Alpha Zenith’s reputation, no one would even dare to pick a fallen leaf in his garden, let alone a woman that he chose.

“She might be dead by now.” Emily’s words were laced with disdain and what Blake did next shocked her, as he wrapped his hand around her neck and covered her mouth.

“Say that again and I am going to kill you for real.” There was a killing intent in his voice and his cold eyes that glared at Emily scared her so much. She didn’t think someone as sweet as Blake was capable of doing that. “Understood?”

Because Blake covered her mouth, Emily couldn’t scream or ask for help, she could only nod her head. She feared him.

“One more thing, if you pull this trick again, I will make sure you will not wake up for a few days, understand?”

Emily nodded again vigorously and only then Blake let her go and walked out of the room, he didn’t even look back to check on her, as she cried silently, afraid to make a noise, just in case he was still nearby and heard her cry.

His warning still echoed in her ears and the hatred in his eyes would forever haunt her.

Meanwhile, the woman that Blake thought was in a difficult situation was actually indeed in the middle of the most awkward dinner that she ever had.

“I have not introduced myself properly yet,” Zander said cheerfully. He acted the way people perceived him.

Right now, they were in the strategy room, where it had changed into a small gathering that consisted of six people.

Aside from the king and his beta, also the alpha and his chosen mate, there were Axel and Darius too.

“On this casual occasion, you can call me Zander, my apologies for my rudeness earlier,” Zander said politely to Dawn.

Dawn stared at the king, he had this golden mask that covered half of his face, which allowed him to eat. She was curious to know what the mask was for. Did he have a scar that he wanted to hide?

“This ring is a token of my apology.” Zander gave Dawn a small box, inside lying a beautiful ring with blue stone, it was in the same shade of the king and Zenith’s eyes.

However, before Dawn could take it, Zenith had grabbed it and thrown it to the fireplace, which shocked Dawn, but the other three people there didn’t seem to be surprised, they didn’t even flinch at all.

“Zenith!” Dawn shrieked when she watched the ring disappear inside the flames.

“It is cursed.”

Hearing that, Dawn was even more shocked, she glared at Zander, who was actually smiling harmlessly at her. He didn't even try to be secretive with his intentions.

"It's okay, it's just a weak curse, you will only get sick for a few days." Zander shrugged his shoulders.

Dawn started to think it was not a good idea to sit and have a meal together with a person, who was determined to kill her.

"Are you sure this food is safe for me?" Dawn looked annoyed. She was still afraid of the king, but she lost her respect for him in person.

Dawn said that out of vexation, but Zenith actually took it seriously, as he tasted all the food that Dawn was going to eat.

This dinner was very tense and awkward to say the least, even Darius didn't say anything.

"Right, Zenith said you knew a thing or two about poison."

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Chapter 29: HIS VOICE WAS HEAVY WITH REMORSE

Dawn had learned about poison, and also read a few relatable books ever since she could read. She had a vivid interest in this subject, because after her mother died, it was the healer of the pack, who had been looking after her, whenever her father was busy with the matters of the pack.

From her, she learned a lot of things.

However, Dawn wouldn't say that she was an expert in this domain. She was only mesmerized to learn that plants around her could be used for something else if you mixed them right.

It was weird for a shifter, a daughter of an alpha like her to take interest in it.

"Something weird happened in the palace. All of a sudden a warrior couldn't shift into his beast." Zander put down his cutlery and focused all of his attention on Dawn. "The healers or the magic users couldn't figure out what happened, but after four weeks, he died."

Dawn was listening, but she was still confused as to what she had gotten herself into. She glanced at Zenith, but he didn't say anything.

"We thought it was a poison, but there is no expert in poison on this continent," Zander explained. His voice was calm, just like the king he was.

“I am not an expert either.”

“But, fortunately, your mate said that you know about poison.”

Dawn narrowed her eyes at Zenith, not because he brought her into this mess, but because she was dying to know how he knew about it. His knowledge about her was baffling.

“What makes you think that it’s poison? The warrior could have eaten Rottingbane or come in contact with it without him knowing it.”

Rottingbane was the leaf that they often used to prevent a shifter from shifting into their beast, usually, they would use it on the shifters, who committed an unforgivable crime.

“No, the healer said there are no traces of Rottingbane, more so the effect of Rottingbane will only last for a few days.” The victim couldn’t shift into his beast for a month before he died. There was no way it was Rottingbane. “It has been confirmed that it’s not black magic either.”

Dawn thought about that for a while, she tried to remember what she had learned. “It’s hard to tell if I didn’t see it myself.”

The corner of Zander’s lips quirked up. “Come. I have brought the dead body with me for you to examine.” He stood up and walked toward the door, followed by his beta.

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Dawn was surprised to hear that, she looked at Zenith and the alpha stood up. But, Dawn was not the only one who was surprised, because Darius, Axel and Pyro didn’t expect this either.

“Zan, are you sure?” Pyro asked the king. “I have never heard her name before aside from being Alpha Tony’s daughter.” The beta followed the king out of the strategy room.

“Zenith said she can,” Zander said nonchalantly. “There is no harm in letting her play with the dead body once.”

Meanwhile, Darius and Axel looked at Dawn incredulously.

“Do you really know anything about poison?” Darius finally spoke something, after being very quiet for the entire dinner.

Dawn didn’t say anything, she kept staring at Zenith, who didn’t give her any explanation. “You want me to help him after he tried to kill me?”

“No.”

“What do you mean?”

“If you want to check on the dead body, you can do it, but if you don’t want to, we can leave and go on a walk to help with digestion, but if you want to check and don’t want to help, that’s fine too.”

Axel was speechless and Darius had his jaw dropped.

“Zenith, you are not serious, right?” Darius didn’t think the king would take it nicely if they showed him this kind of disrespectfulness. People might see the king as a kind and wise person, but the gamma happened to see him get really mad one time and it was enough to scare him for the rest of his life.

And what Zenith suggested Dawn do was blatant disrespectful toward the king, even Dawn was scared.

Meanwhile, Axel didn’t say anything. He grew up with the two of them, thus he knew better how the relationship between these brothers was.

In the end, Dawn took the safest choice, as she checked on the dead body of the warrior. Darius, Axel and Pyro didn’t notice this, but Zenith and Zander could see how Dawn didn’t even flinch when she saw the condition of the dead body.

As someone that they assumed had never seen anything bad in her life and lived her days as the only daughter of the alpha, to be able to see this dead body and check on it, was already a great feat.

Even Pyro and Axel furrowed their brows and Darius looked like someone just shoved sand down his throat, yet here Dawn was, her expression looking all serious as she examined the dead body that had shown some changes.

“Do you need something?” Zenith asked, he approached Dawn and pulled up her hair, as he tied it into a bun, so it wouldn’t bother her while working.

Dawn was too focused on her task, she didn’t even realize this gesture, but the rest of them had this mixed expression to see such affection from Zenith.

“When did he learn how to tie a woman’s hair?” Zander whisper- asked Axel, who was standing next to him. “Where did he get the hair tie?”

“I am not sure.” Axel shook his head. He was always with Zenith, but even for him, his actions were a little bit off lately, especially when he was with Dawn.

“I need Caius roots,” Dawn replied to Zenith’s question. She opened the warrior’s mouth and put her finger down his throat. “I saw you have it in the greenhouse.”

Zenith turned to Darius. "Get her Caius roots."

The poor gamma blinked his eyes. "What is that? I have never heard about that."

"I will go and get it," Dawn said, she then shifted into her beast and dashed toward the greenhouse. Not many people knew about Caius roots, thus it was understandable if Zenith asked someone else, they wouldn't recognize this plant.

Shifters didn't really care about plants and herbs, since they could heal themselves. Unfortunately, they were not really immune to poison.

Dawn shifted back into her human form, she shivered because the night was rather cold and rushed into the greenhouse, because inside the air was warmer.

It was not difficult for Dawn to find Caius roots, but she didn't immediately leave, instead she faced Zenith. There were just the two of them here and she couldn't wait any longer to ask him this question.

"How do you know?" Dawn asked calmly, but her expression let Zenith know that she was serious. She wouldn't settle with his usual quietness as the answer. "How do you know I learned about poison? How do you know so many things about me?"

Both of them knew these questions were inevitable, Zenith followed her here with the knowledge that she would ask him this, but he followed her anyway.

"I can try my luck with the poison, but I want to know the truth from you." Dawn approached Zenith. He was very tall, her head barely reached his shoulders, but she carried herself really well. "When did we meet before this?"

"If I told you, you would not believe me." Zenith saw the determination in her eyes. He always liked her strong will.

"Try."

Zenith didn't immediately speak, there was this silence that stretched out in this greenhouse, as the alpha only stared at the woman before him.

"Seriously, I can be like this for a whole night." Dawn crossed her arms in front of her chest, showing her stubborn side.

"I had this long dream," Zenith finally said.

"A dream?" Dawn tried her best not to judge. "What? Did you dream about me?"

"Yes." Zenith nodded. "I dreamt about you."

Dawn opened her mouth, but then she closed it again. She tried to find the right word, but the only word she wanted to say was; ridiculous. How could someone like Zenith believe in a dream? But, if she said that, this alpha would clamp his mouth shut again and she wouldn't get the answers that she wanted.

Was this even an answer?

"It's a long dream. It's a long and sad dream, almost like a nightmare. It was a nightmare."

"What happened in your dream?" Dawn didn't have any other choice, but to play along with Zenith, because he looked very serious with what he said.

Dawn couldn't imagine someone like Zenith would make a joke like this, yet she couldn't help but think this to be one.

"You killed me," Zenith replied curtly. "But, that's not your fault. It was my fault. I was being cruel to you and you only tried to protect yourself."

Dawn saw that sadness again in Zenith's eyes, but this time, the sadness stayed. She didn't imagine it.

Zenith stretched out his hand and caressed her cheek, his touch was gentle as usual, but there was something different.

"It's really not your fault. I deserved that."

The way he said it sounded as if he had made a grave mistake toward Dawn, as if he had done something unforgivable, even after Dawn killed him, he didn't think it was enough to redeem himself.

"How cruel you were to me until I killed you?"

"Very, very cruel..." Zenith's voice was heavy with remorse.

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Chapter 30: I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY I KILLED YOU

When Zenith and Dawn finally returned, there was something off about the two of them, but the others didn't pay close attention, since the alpha didn't talk much and Dawn engrossed herself in what she was doing.

"It's really poison," Dawn said as she pulled out the Caius roots that she put inside the dead warrior's throat.

These Caius roots were the size of your forefinger and black, but it was very sensitive to toxins, not many people knew about this because Caius root itself could be poisonous if you didn't know how to handle it safely, thus people who learned about medicine often didn't use it, because it was not a safe option.

Dawn explained that to them and showed the roots that had turned dark yellow.

"The color indicates that it's a slow acting poison. He must have been exposed to the source constantly."

"I don't know that you are very knowledgeable about poison," Darius commented. "Can you make one too?"

Dawn glanced at Darius, but her words were directed to Zander. "I can and I will give you one, if you annoy me."

Darius scrunched his nose. "If I annoyed you, just tell me, I will correct my behavior, okay." He moved closer to Axel to whisper to the beta. "She is scary."

"So, what is the source of it?" Zander was surprised that Dawn really knew what she was doing.

"It can be anything, it is hard to tell if you didn't see where he lived and what the thing that constantly had come in contact with him."

"Great!" Zander clapped his hands. "All the more reason for you to go to Capital City!"

"No," Dawn immediately refused. This king was very shameless, she felt like she wanted to interrogate those people, who said he was wise and kind. More so, his mask was weird. "I am not going with you."

"Why not?"

"After your attempt to finish me off, I don't feel like helping someone like you, who tried to kill me."

"You are being too sensitive. If I really wanted to kill you, you would have been dead by now."

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Hearing that, Zenith took Dawn's hand to walk away from there. "She helped you enough already. You can deal with it." He snatched the roots from her hand and threw them to Pyro, who caught them and frowned. "I expect not to see you again in the morning."

After that, the alpha left with his woman.

“Ck,” Zander clicked his tongue. “Why so cruel?”

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Dawn cleaned herself once they returned to their bedroom, since she was so dirty after touching a dead body literally.

It was already so late at night when she finished taking a bath and because Zenith didn't like it when there were other people in the bedroom, Kynes and Pyllo couldn't come to help Dawn to dry her hair, which meant she had to do it herself.

However, Dawn was too tired and her hair was rather thick and long, it would take some time before it really dried.

Therefore, she chose to sleep with her hair still wet, but Zenith took the towel and told her to sit down.

“Let it be, it will dry when I wake up.” Dawn snuggled against the pillow.

“No, sit down.” Zenith pulled her up to sit down and started to dry her hair. She was sitting on the bed, while he stood in front of her.

The room was very quiet and the only thing that Dawn could hear was the rustling sound of her hair against the towel and the wind outside.

“Zenith.”

“Hm.”

“In your dream, why did I kill you?” Dawn asked this question before in the greenhouse, but Zenith went quiet. He reminded her to finish her examination on the dead body first and they would have time to talk about it later.

And this was the right time.

“You came to me and told me that our son went to the untouched land. I didn't believe you. Our son is only five, there was no way he could get to the untouched land, based on that, I ignored you.” He was being very gentle with Dawn.

“Why didn't you believe me?” Dawn was unhappy when she heard that. Lowering her head, she stared at the floor and his feet.

“Because you lied too much to get my attention.”

“But, why didn’t you check?”

“Because I didn’t believe you.”

“What happened then?” Dawn didn’t like how it turned out.

There was a heavy silence and when Zenith spoke again, his voice was laced with rage and remorse. “He was mauled by monsters.”

Dawn was shocked, she raised her head and looked at Zenith. She wanted to curse at him, but then she remembered it was only a dream. “Well, I can understand why I killed you...” She mumbled.

Zenith gently made Dawn lower her head again, as he focused on his task. This time, she didn’t ask questions anymore, probably because she saw the pain in his eyes.

Dawn didn’t believe the dream that Zenith told her about, but somehow, she felt it was personal. A sensitive topic for Zenith and he was being very serious with this so- called dream.

“It’s done,” Zenith finally said after a while. “Sleep.”

Dawn immediately snuggled into the blanket, while Zenith laid down next to her. At the beginning, it felt very awkward to have him sleeping next to her, but gradually, Dawn got used to the comfort of his presence.

More so, despite how unpredictable he was and how he often took advantage of her, Zenith actually didn’t do anything more than a few kisses here and there. He even hugged her in her sleep and caressed her head when she had a hard time falling asleep on her first night in his bed.

But this time, Zenith felt distant. Probably because of their conversation about his dream? He was being very serious about it, that Dawn had to physically stop herself from teasing him by saying; ‘it was only a dream...’

Slowly, Dawn crept closer to him and hugged his body. She didn’t like to see him upset like this. “I know you will never do that.”

Zenith wrapped his arms around her and pulled her closer, he buried his face against her neck and felt heavenly to have her in his arms again.

“Let’s sleep,” Dawn said in a small voice. “I hope you’ll have a nice dream now.”

Zenith squeezed her body gently and with that, the two of them fell asleep. But, unfortunately the next day when Dawn went to the dining hall to have her breakfast, she

saw the king was still there. He was sitting on Zenith's chair, while the alpha was nowhere to be seen.

It was not uncommon for the alpha not to join them, but it became awkward for Dawn, thus she turned her body quickly before Zander could see her, but unfortunately, the king already spotted her figure.

"Dawn! Come here!" Zander called Dawn, he waved his hand in a way that made him look charismatic.

This time, because the king was calling her, all of their eyes were on her and she just realized how tense the atmosphere here was because of the presence of the king.

What a nuisance...

"Dawn! Come! Sit with me!"

I don't want to!

Dawn wanted to scream back at him, but with all the people around them, she couldn't disregard Zander. No matter what, he was still the king of the werewolves.

Left with no other choice, Dawn dragged her feet to the platform, where there were only the king and his royal beta, while Dawn walked between the long tables, she spotted Darius and Axel, both of them chose to sit with all the warriors instead of filling their usual seats.

The gamma even waved his hand at her, as if saying; good luck.

"Good morning, My King," Dawn greeted Zander with no enthusiasm and this made Zander grin.

"Good morning to you too, how was your sleep?"

"It's great." Dawn sat on her seat next to Zander, but she didn't eat anything. She didn't feel safe to eat anything that this king had touched.

"So, tell me where did you learn about poison?"

"A healer in my pack taught me a few things about medicine, but I read more books about poison."

"Why did you read more books about poison? Is there someone that you want to poison?"

Come to think of it, there were indeed people that she wanted to poison. The rogues. Because they were the ones who killed her mother, but later on, it was Emily and Julia.

Dawn had never said that she was a good person, but she didn't know how long she kept this desire for them to be dead because they were giving her hell, ever since they entered her life.

She scoffed at herself; see how full of hatred she was, but only now she realized it.

"It's good to be able to protect myself," Dawn replied.

"Protect yourself from what?"

Dawn turned her head, she was frowning at the king. This time, he was wearing a similar half faced golden mask again, but with different intricacy. Just how many masks did he have?

"Am I being interrogated?" Dawn was a little bit bold, as she stared him right in the eyes. This king was very wicked. She knew someone like him when she saw one.

"Of course not. We are having a nice conversation, are we not?" He smiled harmlessly at her.

"Can I ask a question too?"

"Sure." Zander turned his body toward her, interested in her question.

"Why did you want to kill me?"

"Because you are going to kill my brother."

Come back and read more tomorrow, everyone! .