

Alpha Asher by Jane Doe Chapter 184

Read Alpha Asher by Jane Doe Chapter 184

The air around us exploded in a bright flash of light and heat that seemed to come from nowhere. Dina was ripped from Tristan's arms and flung against the base of a tree, crumpling the second her body made impact. Her clothes were smoldering, letting off thin tendrils of smoke that dissipated in the air. Splotches of light danced in my vision, but I noticed Tristan was smoking as well. The blast had clipped his shoulder, burning a hole in his blood-soaked shirt.

Before either of us could act, a second blast followed. This time I was able to track it before leaping to the side, and saw that it wasn't an explosion, but a plume of red-hot flame.

Tristan was at my side in an instant, crouched into a defensive position that would do little to nothing against the magic of a highly trained elemental. There were a reason Rowena's books warned against angering one. Controlling nature had no limits. All that could determine an elementals range of power was their own personal strength.

As if to prove my point, a dozen or so vines shot out from the ground, sending mud and soil splattering in all directions. They curved over our heads, crossing over one another like the fibers of an old quilt. I grabbed Tristan and stumbled back, running into a wall of writhing vines.

"She's caging us in-" I began but stopped when the sound of clapping filled the air.

"So observant." A scathingly familiar voice cooed.

Ember and the witch she called Tessa appeared from around the base of a great oak tree. The fire elementals eyes were still glowing like hot coals, shimmering with tangible excitement. She looked far too eager to spit flame. There was a nagging sensation in my gut that told me she wanted nothing more than to burn this forest and everything surrounding it to the ground.

'Like a rogue wolf gone feral...' Maya couldn't help but point out.

Tessa made a small gesture with her hand and the vines parted, forming a doorway for the two of them to pass through. There was about fifteen feet between us, enough to count the freckles on Ember's face and to see the earthy tones in Tessa's eyes.

Ember looked me up and down slowly, making a show of it. About halfway through, she let out a snort of amusement and flashed us a tight-lipped smirk. She didn't give a reason for her reaction, and instead spread her hands out at her sides and said, "You're

already exhausted, Lola. You don't have the energy to fight us both, even with your shadow friends."

She was right, but I'd sooner die before admitting that. There was this horrible exhaustion still weighing me down, slowing my reflexes until it felt like I was trudging through feet of mud.

I'd never been this tired from using magic before.

"Surrender to us and I'll kill him quickly." Ember said, her voice soft but still laced with cruelty. "Fight us and I'll burn him alive."

There was something off about the two of them, and I quickly realized what it was when Tessa glanced nervously at Ember. Even drained and exhausted, they were worried I'd fight back. It was my magic they feared.

Not the shadows, but the magic I'd inherited from the Renaldi witches. Magic I had no clue how to fully access. Fear-true unbridled fear unfurled in my chest.

We were backed into a corner and had no way of getting ourselves out.

Tristan craned his head my way, just enough to meet my gaze without leaving himself defenseless to the witches. For the first time since meeting the abrasive Vampire, I was able to read the light shimmering in his eyes clearly.

'Get out of here while you can.' They seemed to say.

When they flickered to the cage that surrounded us, lingering on the gaps in the vines for but a fraction of a second, I knew I'd been right.

I was going to refuse to muster up that tone of voice again to obliterate the insane idea from his head, but I knew it would never work. The look on his face was one of peace and utter selflessness. Tristan's voice overshadowed the word I was murmuring under my breath, chanting it like it were the solution I desperately needed. It even overshadowed Maya's voice, which grew louder and louder in my head, screaming at me to shift and get out of here while I still could.

"No, no, no, no."

His lips curled up in the smallest of smiles.

"It's been an honor, my Queen."

Then, without looking back, he lunged for Ember's throat.

Somewhere in the back of my head, I conjured up the conversation between Holly and me. I could hear her delicate voice like she was right next to me, telling me to not be afraid of asking for help. I didn't know how to ask for help, or why she had given me that advice above all else, but the time to sit and contemplate had long passed.

Ember shot a column of flame at Tristan, who rolled to the side and narrowly missed being charred a second time. He sprung to his feet without a moment of pause, snarling into the night as he lunged a second time.

As I forced every ounce of energy into my desperate scream for help, all I could think about was Tristan and how this couldn't be it-this couldn't be how I lost his infuriating mark.

I couldn't tell if I were screaming out loud or solely in my head, but the words were as clear as the moon still illuminating the sky.

"Someone-anyone, help me!"

The shadows around us began to writhe, melting into one another to form a solid mass of darkness. I could hear their voices and knew that something was wrong. They were whispering, their voices so frantic and crazed that I couldn't even begin to pick them apart. All at once they stilled, going completely silent.

Without warning, without a single sound, a wolf exploded from the shadows.

Coasting through the air, it tore through the cage of vines, all but demolishing them. When its four massive paws hit the ground, making it tremble in the process, I realized I'd been wrong. The thing hadn't exploded from the shadows.

It was the shadows.

Its monstrous body was made from the same unearthly force that hid within the forest, which whispered and plotted and thirsted for blood. The tendrils of its fur writhed like wisps of smoke, vanishing and reappearing at will. There was a translucent quality to it that made me wonder if it could do any actual damage.

The beast answered my question when it latched onto Ember's shoulder, sinking its milky white teeth into her flesh.

Ember let out a scream that was vicious and enraged rather than one of pain. As though the wolf noticed it too, it whipped its head to the side and flung the witch into the air. She went soaring, flying past trees and into the darkness where it swallowed her whole. There were two heavy thuds when she finally landed, and judging from sound alone, it was at least fifty feet away from where we stood.

Terra froze where she stood, her eyes wide and her face unnaturally pale.

The wolf turned its head slowly, stopping when its snout was parallel to her. It huffed once, and the witch flinched.

Nodding, she lifted her hand slowly and made a subtle gesture. What vines hadn't been destroyed collapsed to the ground, slinking back into earth, and leaving smooth dirt behind as though they'd never existed. I held my breath and waited for her to go running after her companion, but she didn't.

Tessa's eyes slid to my face. Burning deep within them was knowledge.

"This creature you created; it is unnatural." She said firmly, then quickly began to back away until she too vanished within the forest.

Neither Tristan nor I spoke, not that there were words that could explain what the hell just happened. If anything, we looked to the creature that had saved us-the one Tessa insisted I had created. I wanted to snort and deny her claim, telling her she's just as crazy as her arsonist friend, but as I stared at the profile of the wolf, I felt this odd sort of connection between the two of us.

It must've felt it too, because it turned its massive head my way, cocking it to the side when my jaw plummeted to the ground.

I knew those eyes. I'd looked into them hundreds-thousands of times. "Breyona?!" I gasped.

Alpha Asher by Jane Doe Chapter 185

Read Alpha Asher by Jane Doe Chapter 185

An hour later, I found myself sitting in the passenger seat of an old work van, listening to Breyona recount the moments before she vanished from Giovanni's bedroom and reappeared in the forest.

Calling her name back in the forest seemed to trigger her human side. She'd quickly shifted and accepted Tristan's shirt before scaling the hill and finding us a ride. By the time she pulled up with the van, whose paint was peeling so badly I almost missed the picture of the plunger on the side, Tristan and I had hauled Dina most of the way.

The Vampire who had helped save my life was still unconscious. Her heartbeat was muffled, not nearly as strong as it should've been, but all that mattered was that it was there.

Not only had Breyona gone the extra mile by helping Tristan and I carry Dina the rest of the way, but she'd also offered up some of her blood to help speed their healing.

"I was laying in bed when I heard screaming, but it was in my head. It wasn't like the mind-link, though. It was like you were there with me, sharing my thoughts." Breyona explained, "Once I made the connection that it was you, I could feel that you were in danger. I started seeing flashes of trees and fire, along with those two witches that were attacking you. When you called out for help, it was like you opened a door for me, and I just walked through."

She shrugged where she sat in the driver's seat, as though everything she'd said made perfect sense. As confusing as it was, I couldn't deny feeling a connection to her, one that definitely wasn't there before.

"Giovanni is probably losing his mind right now." I said, unable to formulate anything else.

Breyona shook her head, seemingly unworried about her mate.

"There was a phone in the van. I called him before I destroyed it. He's catching a flight back to the pack as we speak."

I frowned, "how was he able to get a flight so soon?"

There was one major airport inside of our pack, but the flights coming in were scarce at best. It would make more sense for Giovanni to catch a flight to one of the airports outside of our territory, but then he'd have at least an hour to drive before hitting the boundary lines.

Tristan answered my question before Breyona could, his voice only a tad bit dry.

"Giovanni's parents might not have power in the Vampire world, but they have plenty in the humans."

Breyona nodded, agreeing with Tristan's explanation. The brooding Vampire that was so ready to give his life for my own it left me seeing stars, outright refused even a drop of Breyona's blood. I wasn't sure if he were trying to make sure Dina had her fill, or if he were worried about Giovanni might react to him feeding from his mate.

"They were able to delay all other flights and get one straight out of their local airport. I had him contact Asher's parents, so the airport will be expecting them to land soon." She explained.

Curious, I asked. "How does his family have that kind of power?"

"Gio's dad is an uber rich businessman. He owns some fancy Italian super car company." She shrugged, and I swore I heard Tristan scoff. "His dad's thinking about running for Senator."

"The last thing that state needs is Giovanni's father at the helm." Tristan muttered, turning his head to stare out the window, offering no further explanation. A moment passed before he turned and said, "...back to the whole shadow thing. This isn't the first time you've shifted since Lola got you your wolf back. So, how come this time you're made of shadows and whatnot?"

Breyona sighed and brushed the stray hairs that had fallen from her pony tail out of her face, a surefire sign that she didn't know the answer to Tristan's question.

"Maybe it had something to do with Lola being afraid?" She suggested.

I hated to shoot down her theory, but it just didn't sit right with me.

"I was afraid a few days ago and you didn't feel anything, much less show up as a giant shadow wolf." I pointed out.

Breyona cocked her head at me. "Did you call out for help, though?"

"Well, no...but-

A voice sounded from the back, still weak but not hovering on the cusp of death.

"Sorry for interrupting, but about how many times have you shifted since Lola here...uh, got you your wolf back?" Dina asked, drawing our attention to where she lay in the back seat.

Hearing her voice, Tristan turned his attention to her legs, which rested on his lap. Gently, he peeled back what remained of her charred clothing, exposing the leg she had broken in the crash. There was no longer any bone protruding from the skin since we'd set it an hour ago, but there had been a nasty gash left over. That gash was now nothing more than a faint pink line that stood out against her dark skin. Breyona's blood was doing its job and speeding the healing process.

"Quit fussin' over me." Dina snapped, swatting at Tristan though she didn't have the strength to truly make him stop. "Her blood did the trick, even if it did taste funny."

Breyona's eyebrows dropped into a confused scowl, "Funny? What's so funny tasting about my blood? Gio's never had a problem with it."

"Yeah, well has 'Gio' tasted you after you turned into this shadow beast?" Dina shot back.

"Well...no, I guess he hasn't." Breyona replied, now sounding uncertain. "You think the shadow's make my blood taste different? Oh, and I've shifted about six or so times since Lola got me my wolf back. I got a bit excited in the beginning. It's uh-it's been a while."

"I don't see what else it could be." Dina shrugged, "About what time would you say you shifted during each of those times?"

Breyona replied, "Oh, it's always early in the morning, after the sun rises since Gio's knocked out by then-oh, I understand now."

Dina nodded slowly, "Shadows can't form during the day. At least, not enough to turn you into a whole shadow beast."

Upon seeing the understanding on all of our faces, the snarky Vampire in the backseat shook her head and mumbled, "It's a damn miracle you all survived this long."

Giovanni pulled into the driveway just a few minutes after we all slipped inside. I could hear the tires of the car he rented crunching on the gravel and was thankful we had dropped Dina off at the house Tristan and Holly were staying at beforehand.

Dina would be safe with Holly; I was sure of it. Besides, I didn't want an audience for the bomb I was about to drop on Breyona.

I'd spent the entire drive home stewing over how I'd tell her what the witches had said. It didn't matter if I had another three days to think it over, nothing would erase the inevitable heartbreak she'd go through once she found out her parents were dead.

I hated it. I hated it so much. Not because I'd have to tell her myself, but because I couldn't stand to see the happiness drain from her entire being. Losing a parent, especially one you had a good relationship with, takes a chunk out of you.

The moment Giovanni crossed the threshold into the house, Breyona launched herself into his arms. Like a lithe ninja, she pounced at him. His eyes had been lit with worry but melted the moment he accepted that his mate was safe and sound. Physically, she was. Mentally? Well, that was about to change.

I didn't dive into things right away. Instead, I herded everyone into the kitchen, listening to Breyona gush about transforming into a wolf made of shadows. As she squealed about how ferocious she was, Tristan turned to me and spoke with a lowered voice.

"Have you gotten ahold of Asher?"

I shook my head, adding yet another thing to my growing list of worries. Contacting Asher, both over mind-link and our bond, was akin to talking to drywall. Not only did I receive no response, but there also wasn't even the barest hint of acknowledgement on his end. Either Asher was asleep, or something terrible had happened.

He was alive, that much I knew for certain.

“Let me know when he’s back, alright? I’m going to check in with Holly and Dina. I know you and Breyona have some things to talk about.” Tristan grimaced, looking both reluctant and impatient to leave.

I swallowed down the knot rising in my throat and nodded, “Yeah, I’ll let you know when he’s back.”

“You can do this, Lola. I might not be overly fond of her, but she’s strong. There’s a reason she’s survived this long as your friend.” Tristan murmured, the corner of his lips lifting into a dry smile, the first one he’d managed in a while.