

Alpha Asher by Jane Doe Chapter 196

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A few hours after the sun had set and the chill of night kicked in, the rest of our guests showed up.

Tristan and Holly stepped inside toting a cooler full of blood bags, which I eagerly took to the icebox in the garage. My reserved half-sister looked elegant as ever, wearing a midnight cocktail dress that somehow seemed to blend in perfectly. Her hair was identical to my own, falling down her back in long dark waves, only it was pinned back with a single crimson bow.

She smiled shyly at everyone, but was quickly swept away by Cassidy, who had no qualms striking up conversation with anyone. Kendrick followed her around like a lost puppy, but judging by the cheeky grin on his face, he was just happy to be here. Tristan remained by her side, a detail I quickly noticed, but he too could only stay quiet for so long with Cass launching question after question at him.

During their stay in Asher's family home, Dad and grandma had become good friends with his parents and wandered into the living room to chat. Sean tagged along, followed by Zeke, the two of them shoving one another and cracking jokes like old friends.

Mason and Clara, who had been glued to one another's hip since wandering into the house, ventured onto the back porch with Breyona and Giovanni. From the kitchen I could hear Breyona grilling Mason over his relationship with Clara, but it was the witch that provided most of the answers.

It was chaos in the best way possible, a sea of chatter and laughter that seemed to have no end. No matter what room you went into, you'd find the same thing.

As the grill was being prepped, everyone picked at the sweets grandma had brought. Not a single one of us was exempt from her k****r baking skills. Not that I'd say anything, but I swore I saw Kendrick wrap a few cookies in a napkin before slipping them in his pocket.

An hour or two passed and I found myself wandering onto the back porch, a chilled blood bag in my hand. Drinking the stuff was almost normal to me now, even when I left it in the bag rather than pouring it into a cup.

My dad and Killian were manning the grill, though dad had slipped inside for another beer. Breyona and Giovanni were perched on the outdoor sectional with Mason and Clara at their sides, each one sipping on a different drink, though by the smell I'm pretty

sure Giovanni was drinking blood. After a short conversation with Killian, who was just as stoic and brooding as Asher, I was waved down by Breyona.

I plopped down in between Giovanni and Mason, inhaling the mouthwatering scent of grilled burgers and steaks that emanated from the smoke curling in the air.

“Alright, you lured me here. How exactly are you responsible for turning me into a shadow wolf?” Breyona asked, effectively silencing all other conversations going on. Even Mason and Clara turned to join in, both waiting curiously.

Asher’s voice popped into my mind, floating through the mind-link.

‘Want me to come out there?’ He asked, his gruff voice making my heart skip a beat.

‘It’s alright. I can explain things well enough. Besides, I don’t think Zeke’s commentary would help.’ I laughed, hearing his voice in the background.

There was a gentle, reassuring brush of warmth through the mate-bond before our mind-link ended and I was left to explain the situation.

“My magical type is called conjuration. I can basically conjure things into existence, whether it be physical, like opening a door, or something like turning a regular wolf into a shadow beast. I don’t know the actual limits on my power yet since the book we have is missing a bunch of pages, but I’m almost positive it’s why your wolf is different now.”

Breyona had been listening, giving me her undivided attention, when her face contorted in confusion.

“Did you want to make me into a shadow wolf? Don’t get me wrong, I’m not complaining, but was it intentional?” She asked.

I answered the best I could given I didn’t have all the answers and wasn’t sure I ever would. “So, I don’t think you were ever meant to get your wolf back. When it was taken from you, that should’ve been it, but something changed when you got hurt. I commanded them to save you, and instead of wanting to make a deal with me, they just listened. I think I used conjuration to make them obey me, and the solution was to give you your wolf back.”

“You think being in the shadows possession changed her wolf’s form.” Giovanni stated, speaking for the first time in what felt like an hour. His eyes were as dark as the night sky but were as piercing as the moon itself.

“That’s exactly what I think.” I agreed, taking a swig of blood. The minute it hit my tongue, my taste buds erupted, tingling from the sweetness and warmth. It filled my veins with the same feeling, sharpening the forest and back porch until everything

seemed brighter in color. "It's even more proof that I need to master this thing before it gets out of control. Its terrifying that any thought I have could become reality."

Breyona squared her shoulders and straightened her spine. There was a look of determination on her face that only appeared when she was in training or about to battle.

"You gave me my wolf's form back. It's only right that I do my duty as your best-friend and help you. How are you supposed to master this? Where should we start?"

"Cordelia said to practice randomly, on things that aren't life or d***h." I shrugged, "Your guess is as good as mine."

Breyona went silent for a few seconds, tapping her chin. I fell into a conversation with Mason and Clara, who both seemed to have something going on between them. Clara was curled up on the sectional, her body pivoted towards Mason's. I couldn't help but notice the way she'd smile, curling her plump lips at him as she batted her eyelashes. From what I could tell, it wasn't one sided either. When a breeze stirred and Clara shivered, Mason was quick to slip his jacket off and drape it over her shoulders.

While talking to them, I'd been poking and prodding at the topic of their 'friendship.' By no means was I against the two of them talking. I had no negative feelings towards Clara and after all Mason had gone through, he deserved his happily ever after, even if it was one without his fated mate. I was close to getting an answer when Breyona piped up.

"What was your brother saying about being bald?" She asked, that look of contemplation still on her face.

I quirked an eyebrow at her, wondering where she was going with this.

"He was having a moment. He's worried he's prematurely balding."

She snapped her fingers, a grin spreading wide across her face. With her slender jawline and high cheekbones, she looked like a mischievous pixie.

"Perfect! For your first practice session, fix your brother's hair."

Giovanni lifted his shoulder in a half-shrug, indifferent over his mate's idea. Clara had on a grin of her own, her curls bouncing as she nodded eagerly. Only Mason, whose wide eyes darted between the two of us, seemed unsure about the entire thing.

"Um, I don't think that's a good idea." He chuckled nervously.

Clara scoffed, jutting out her lower lip in a pout. "I think it's a great idea. It's practice, which is exactly what Lola needs."

“Besides, it’s just hair. What’s the worst that could happen?” Breyona chimed in, but Mason still seemed unconvinced.

“Just focus and make sure what you’re wanting is very, very specific.” Clara suggested. Her eyes twinkled with humor, “Wouldn’t want your brother to end up with a Mohawk or something.”

Soft footfalls sounded inside the house, nearing closer to the patio doors. A second passed when Claire popped her head out, her eyes trailing over the five of us before darting over to where Killian stood manning the grill.

Her eyes crinkled as she smiled, and within the fine lines on her face I could see traces of Asher. She gave him her long lashes and plush lips, while Killian gave him the harsher aspects of his appearance. Claire eyed the five of us and asked, “What’s just hair?”

She padded over to Killian, wrapping her arms around his waist and watching as he flipped a couple burgers and checked the temperature of the steaks.

“They’re talking about her brother, Sean. Apparently, he has a balding issue he’d like Lola to fix, and like the caring little sister she is, she’s thinking about helping him.” Killian remarked, the corners of his lips twitching into a knowing smirk.

Claire, innocently oblivious to the underlying tone of Killian’s voice, cooed sweetly. “Oh, how kind of you, Lola! I promise I’ll keep my mouth shut. I’m sure he’ll love the surprise.” She pecked her husband on the cheek and wandered back inside.

Her and Breyona both began cackling, their faces bright with laughter, uncaring of the two men that watched them with rapt attention. Even Killian was smiling, which was as odd as seeing Asher smile. The two men were so tightly under wraps the slightest bit of emotion was shocking.

“I have a younger sister myself, so I’m well versed in the antics of siblings. Even when the entire pack was afraid of me, Claire included, she never was.” He chuckled, then turned his attention back to the food he was grilling.

I had to bite back my own giggle when an idea weaseled its way into my head, one spawned from Clara’s comment.

“Alright, I’m going to do it.” I decided, straightening my spine.

My eyes fluttered shut and I told the four of them, “I’ll need a minute to concentrate. If it works, it should be instantaneous.”

Darkness enveloped my vision, but I still had my other senses. I could feel the chilling brush of night against my skin, its breeze curling around my arms and speckling them in

goosebumps. The smoky scent of charred meat clung to my nose, mouthwatering as it called on my empty stomach to awaken. One by one, I let them slip into the background, where I could no longer notice them. Just as I'd begun constructing the thought, I heard a familiar voice.

"Woah, what's she doing?"

It was Zeke, and from the sound of it, he was close by. I didn't plan on answering, not that I needed to. Breyona was quick to reply, effectively hushing the eager Alpha.

"Shh! She's using her magic to give Sean hair." Breyona whispered, her voice fading into nothing.

Zeke cursed then whispered, "I don't want to miss this."

I could hear the sound of his footfalls and knew he had run back into the house. Returning to the task at hand, I thought of my brother and the role he filled in my life. He'd been my first best-friend, and my first enemy. This time around, I didn't have to put much effort into it. Cordelia had been right when she said knowing my magical type would make it easier to call it forth. All I had to do was create a mental image of what I wanted, and I felt the electrifying stir of magic in my gut.

Reaching out, I tapped into it and let it solidify the picture I'd created.

A scream rang out, and my eyes snapped open. It was rough enough that it sounded masculine, but it was higher than any man's voice I'd ever heard. It was followed by a deep bellow of rich laughter.

The five of us locked eyes, a second passing before we scrambled off the sectional and raced inside.

More laughter rang out, varying in pitch and tone. I recognized my dad's and grandmas in the mix, along with Claire's.

We sprinted through the kitchen, pushing past one another like children, to the source of the commotion.

Everyone was in the living room, so it took a moment before I was able to spot who screamed. Giovanni made it first, followed by Breyona and then me. Clara and Mason came directly after, both craning their heads until they found what we were all looking for.

Zeke was on the floor, clutching his stomach as he cackled. Dad was red-faced from trying to hold it in, and grandma had her hand firmly planted against her forehead. Both Cass and Kendrick had ear-splitting grins on their faces while Claire and Flora giggled

behind their hands. Asher's was the last laugh I heard, his tone as deep and rich as Zeke's. I was so stunned by my mate's reaction that I almost didn't notice Sean.

"Lola, this isn't what I meant at all." My big brother groaned, combing his fingers through the long mane of hair I'd given him.

It was a wispy shade of blonde, a last-minute detail I didn't think would stick, and ended a few inches past his a*s. Seeing him like that left me stunned for a minute, not only because it actually worked but because of how different he looked. Breyona was the first to break the silence, and as always, she didn't disappoint.

"So majestic." She murmured in amazement.

Per her comment, the room was once again engulfed in laughter, this time mine included.

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For the rest of the night we laughed, ate, and talked. I couldn't remember the last time I'd had this much fun, where there wasn't some threat looming over my shoulder. Since taking on the responsibility of Luna and Queen of the Vampires, there wasn't much time to kick back and relax.

Even Tristan and Giovanni seemed to be enjoying themselves. The latter was absorbed in a conversation with Asher and his dad. Breyona kept her distance, but every time Giovanni's eyes lit up with interest, she'd practically squeal. Tristan was elbows deep in whatever argument Zeke had incited, but judging from the occasional smirks they gave one another, it wasn't serious enough to intervene.

Before long, a few of us began packing things up. There were enough leftovers to feed a small army of humans, which meant there was just enough for Asher and I to last the week with. Grandma's desserts, on the other hand. Those were gone before anything else.

Dad and grandma, along with Asher's parents, were the first to leave. Sometime during the evening, Holly decided she wanted to stay for the sleepover Cassidy was hosting. She seemed a bit nervous, toying with the hem of her dress, but surprisingly, Clara took her aside and helped smooth things out.

Since Asher didn't feel comfortable leaving all of us here alone, we made a compromise. The guys would keep to themselves and find something to do, while the girls had full rein of the in-home theatre, living room, and minibar.

None of them objected to the idea, not once Asher showed them the lounge and his aged whiskey collection. If anything, I think Giovanni might've been ready to swoon.

"I'm totally down to hang out and drink, but can we maybe find a late-night barber or something first?" Sean asked, narrowing his eyes at me in particular when everyone burst into laughter. Even Tristan and Giovanni cracked a smile, and they were two of the most stoic men in the room.

Zeke clapped him on his back and said, "Not to worry, man. I can cut your hair for you."

"You can?" Sean asked dryly.

"Sure can." Zeke nodded, "I've done it before."

Placated with Zeke's answer, Sean lumbered into the lounge, jumping into the conversation Mason and Kendrick were having over Asher's whiskey collection.

Kendrick's entire face had lit up when Asher invited him as well, right down to his hazel and green-flecked eyes. It was wholesome and almost adorable the way Kendrick grinned and stammered, "I-I'd be honored, Alpha!"

When Sean was out of hearing distance, Breyona tapped Zeke on the shoulder and said, "You've cut hair before?"

"Yeah, when I was seven. Didn't do too bad if I do say so myself." Zeke shrugged, his grin downright cheeky. "Hey, Lola. If I mess up, you think you could regrow his hair a second time?"

I yawned into the palm of my hand, only somewhat tired from using my magic the first time. The amulet Rowena had given me must've been doing its job, making it easier to focus my magic. Still, I hoped the wave of exhaustion I felt when conjuring would soon go away. It would royally s**k if I spent the rest of my life dependent on mid-day naps.

"Don't see why not." I replied.

Cassidy quickly ushered the guys from the room and demanded we all change into something comfortable. I loaned Holly and Clara a pair of pajamas, and half an hour later, found myself sitting front row in the home-theatre while some Werewolf-Vampire romance movie played on the screen.

I bit back a cackle when the tanned, obscenely muscular guy on the screen exploded in a mass of fur, his clothes shredded and billowing through the air like confetti. Out of all the inaccurate information I'd seen so far, they at least got that part right.

"I thought I was supposed to be escaping my troubles, but you've got us watching werewolves and vampire's fight." I said teasingly.

Cassidy's face broke out into a grin, her sea glass eyes twinkling with laughter in the low light. She tossed a handful of popcorn into her mouth, groaning happily as she chewed.

"Ugh, I just love popcorn. And hey, at least there's no witches in the movie!" She giggled. Then she waggled her eyebrows and said, "Plus who doesn't like watching two attractive men fight over a girl?"

"She needs to pick the werewolf. He's so hot." Clara murmured; her eyes fixated on the screen. Or, more specifically, fixated on the tanned shirtless man that walked across the screen.

Breyona wrinkled her nose and turned to give Clara an incredulous look. "Bleh, that wolf has a superiority complex or something. He's done nothing but boss her around. Plus it's weird as h**l that they can end up mated to a literal child.

She needs to pick the Vampire. At least he cares about what she wants."

"I don't know about you, but I like me a bossy man and that Vampire of hers is a good hundred years older than she is." Clara shot back, poking her tongue out.

Breyona was visibly holding back laughter, her shoulder shaking as she bit out, "I like them bossy in the bedroom."

"Oh, I'm sure wolf-boy's bossy in the bedroom. These wolf men all have their dominant side." Clara replied, a knowing tone to her voice that none of us missed.

Cassidy cocked an eyebrow at the witch. Lowering her voice, she murmured in my ear. "Somethings telling me she's speaking from experience."

Clara craned her head at us and snapped, "I heard that!"

"I like the Vampire." Holly's soft voice rang out, "He seems sweet."

"H**l yeah, Holly. Us Vampire lovers have to stick together." Breyona said smugly, earning a smile from my reserved half-sister.

I sat back and enjoyed the rest of the movie, but not nearly as much as I enjoyed listening to everyone bicker. The fact that the other girls included Holly filled me with a lightness that made my head swim, though it could've been from the blood I was sipping. Before the end of the movie, Holly had come out of her shell and was actually cracking her own jokes, most of them about the main characters inability to stay on her own two feet.

She was right though, that Bella girl was clumsy, especially for a human.

After the movie, we migrated back into the living room where Cassidy had a few bottles of alcohol waiting. There was a mix of wine and liquor, though the liquor was most likely for us wolves. As far as I knew, Vampire's got intoxicated at the same rate as a human, and I don't think Holly had ever had alcohol before.

She seemed to have no problem drinking wine though, cradling the goblet in her hands after emptying half a blood-bag into the mix. Catching me eyeing her, she smiled shyly and held the glass out.

"It's delicious, really. Would you like to try some?"

I accepted her offer and took a small sip of the blood-laced wine. My eyebrows crept up my forehead at the flavor and the odd sensation it brought on. The blood made my heart race and heat flood my veins, while the alcohol provided a soothing buzz that amplified everything else. I could definitely get used to drinking it this way. She nodded knowingly, emptying another blood bag into a clean wine glass, and topping it off with alcohol.

"I'd have a glass every night at dinner...you know, back then."

Abruptly, Cassidy clapped her hands and gasped.

"Oh, I know what we should do. Let's play Truth or Dare!"

Breyona shrugged like she didn't mind. When she caught my eye from across the room, she nodded in Clara's direction. It took me a moment to understand what she was getting at, but when I finally caught on, I was in full agreement. The five of us sat in a circle, each of us curled up on the sectional with a drink in our hands. Clara quickly explained the rules to Holly, who Cassidy decided would go first.

"Holly, truth or dare?" The blonde bombshell to my left cooed.

Holly pursed her lips, contemplating before responding.

"I think I'll go with dare."

"Our first dare of the night! Let's make this a good one." Cassidy clapped. "Hmm, I dare you to scare one of the guys. Doesn't matter which one but make it good."

Clara leaned forward in her seat; her full head of curls pulled back.

"Mind if I use my magic to help her?"

Cassidy tapped her chin, "That's fine, but Holly has to be the one to scare them."

While Holly snuck into the kitchen, the four of us hid in the hallway. The lounge was a straight shot to the kitchen, which meant none of the guys would see us hunched over, our hands clasped over our mouths to stifle our laughter. Clara had one of her hands flat against the wall, feeling around for a few seconds before going still once more. I didn't ask, but I did pay close attention to what happened next.

It took only a few minutes for the sound of footsteps to appear, growing louder until Kendrick's scent permeated the kitchen. He was singing under his breath to a song I didn't know the name of. I was sure that if I peeked around the corner, I'd see him bobbing his head as he rummaged through the kitchen.

There was a slight crackle in the air, like an electrical current had been unleashed. Breyona snorted and sputtered behind her hand when Clara's hair began to lift, and her curls frayed. Without warning, there was a loud 'pop,' and the kitchen light went out. The entire room was bathed in darkness, but it was Kendrick we focused on.

"What the fu—"

He had started to say, but I assume Holly took that moment to jump out because the next thing the four of us heard was a deep, masculine shout, followed by the deafening clank of pots and pans hitting the ground.

Several seconds of silence passed when Kendrick huffed, "Aw man, you made me drop my cookies."

"Oh, I'm sorry." Holly replied sweetly. "Would you say you were thoroughly frightened?"

"Urn, yes. Yo, did Cass put you up to this? She knows I hate jump scares."

"I was fulfilling a dare, actually. Sorry about your cookies, again. Just curious, but why were they in your pocket? Do you always hoard food? Lola's grandmother is very kind, and I'm sure she would make you your own batch if you asked."

Holly's innocent reply didn't disappoint and had all of us breaking our silence, starting with Breyona, as we exploded in laughter.

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After personally apologizing and promising Kendrick a plate of grandma's lavender cookies, we headed back into the living room and continued with the game.

Whether it was the blood, wine, or scaring the s**t out of Kendrick, Holly had finally loosened up and no longer fiddled with her fingers or picked at the hem of her pj's. She chose Breyona next, who quickly picked 'truth,' and proceeded to ask her about her relationship with Giovanni. There was a light blush staining my half-sister's cheeks as she asked about the ins and outs of their relationship.

Breyona, who answered Holly's question gracefully, set her sights on Clara.

"Clara, truth or dare?"

The curly-haired witch set her glass of wine down and quickly l****d the residue off her lips before smirking.

"I'll go with truth. I know you been chomping at the bit to ask me about my thing with Mason, so I'm giving you the chance for one question."

My eager best-friend gasped, clasping her hands together while contorting her face into a look of careful contemplation. From the years of studying Breyona's dramatic facial expressions, I could tell she was trying to figure out a way to get the most information possible.

"How would you describe your relationship with Mason?" She asked, a self-satisfied tilt to her lips.

Clara sat back on her haunches and took another sip of wine, putting as much consideration into her answer as Breyona had put into her question.

"Well, we're not dating but I think we're on our way to it. He's been through a lot, but I'm sure you both already know all about that. I've been through my fair share of s**t that makes it hard to get close to people, but I like Mason. I've never been with a guy that's sweet like him." She confessed, pursing her lips. Through her tanned skin, I could see the clear heat of a blush staining her cheeks but decided not to comment on it.

There were plenty more questions I had, but I kept those at bay. She and Mason would talk about things when they were ready. Before moving on with the game, Breyona let her know that she had our full support, which seemed to relieve some of the tension in Clara's shoulders.

As the game progressed, each of us taking turns and bouncing back and forth between silly dares and heavy truths, I found myself being asked 'truth or dare' by Cassidy.

She had eyeliner smeared down half her face and ruby-red lipstick on her jawline from where Clara had dared her to do a full face of make-up in a minute, making it impossible to take her seriously.

“Dare. Do your worst.” I smirked, tapping my nails on the side of my glass.

A devious grin overtook the soft curves of her face, and I knew Cassidy wouldn't disappoint.

“I've been saving this one up since that little power display of yours. What you said about your magic not having any limits, it got me thinking.” She murmured, leaning in close to the four of us. “Can you influence other people?”

“Like, make them your slave?” Clara said, her face twisting into a grimace. “That don't feel right to me.”

Cassidy shook her head, her eyes widening. “Goddess, no. I should've worded that better. I meant, I wondered if you could put a thought into someone's head, or an idea of sorts. Like, if I had to choose between a piece of chocolate cake or a salad, could you nudge me towards the salad?”

The girls bobbed their heads up and down, making sounds of understanding. I wasn't quite as convinced, though. The idea that I might be able to influence a person's mind didn't sit too well in my stomach, but I had to admit I was curious about the limits of my magic too.

“It's not taking away their will, per say. More like planting a thought and watching it take root.” Cassidy explained.

I stared at the two of them. “I'm not sure. Is that your dare?”

Her lips twitched. “Well, it's a bit more specific than that, but in essence, yeah.”

“As long as I'm not taking away anyone's willpower, I'm game. I think I'd be more comfortable if we let the guys know first, though. Just to make sure everyone's on board. We don't have to tell them who the target is or what idea I'm putting in their head, but I feel like we should get permission before going forward with it.”

Everyone else seemed to agree, so I sent Asher a quick message over mind-link and got a reply back seconds later. The guys were still in the lounge drinking, and from the mental image Asher sent me, half of them were bordering on tipsy. Asher himself would never relinquish control enough to get intoxicated, which was exactly why he wasn't tonight's target.

“Sean asks you don't mess with his hair again unless you're going to give him a beard to match.” Asher grunted. “And yes, he made me say that.”

It took only a few minutes to choose the target and what thought I wanted to plant in their head. The act itself was all too easy, like with my magic alone a tether had been created between me and that person. Down that tether, I sent the thought and phrased

it more as a suggestion than anything else. I still wasn't comfortable taking away someone's willpower, so there was a big chance this wouldn't work.

To fight off the exhaustion that settled over my shoulders and tugged at my eyelids, working with the alcohol to make them heavy, Cassidy turned on some music. She began swaying her hips to the beat, letting her long blonde locks out of the clip they were twisted up in. Breyona was quick to follow, leaping off the couch and grabbing my hands before I could curl up on one of the plush cushions.

"Oh, no you don't. When was the last time we danced?" She snorted her question at me, her raised eyebrow giving me my answer.

I groaned but let her pull me to my feet. Grinning like a cat, she bowed and held out her hand for me to take.

Lifting her chin, she asked. "May I have this dance, almighty Queen Luna Lola?"

Laughter bubbled in my chest and exploded from my mouth, widening her cheesy grin. When I was finally able to speak, I sputtered a reply.

"If you never call me that again, yes."

As we took turns twirling one another, our hands clasped and limbs weightless, I noticed Clara teaching Holly how to dance. Her cheeks were bright red, turning deeper by the second when Clara started shimmying her wide hips and shaking her bottom.

"Oh, I don't think I can do that." She squeaked, a hand over her mouth.

I twirled Breyona under my arm and shouted to Holly, "Did I ever tell you the first time I met Tristan was in a nightclub?"

Holly blinked at me, surprise erasing some of her shyness. "No, you didn't."

"He wouldn't dance either, but I think you could get him to try." I winked, paying close attention to how her blush began to spread, crawling down her neck in a sea of fire.

For awhile I had my suspicions about Tristan and Holly, though neither one would admit anything. There was this protective side of Tristan that I admired, but it seemed to change in regard to my half-sister. When it came to keeping me safe, he was acting out of respect and an undying duty to his Queen. With Holly, it was different. I wasn't going to pry, but it didn't hurt to let her know I supported whatever they had, or didn't have, either way.

As time went on and the songs ticked by, I'd forgotten about the dare Cassidy had given me. It all came rushing back when Zeke popped into the living room, a brownie in his hand and his foot already tapping along to the beat. I was the first to notice when he

started shaking and rolling his hips, his eyes closed as he began singing along to the Taylor Swift song that played.

Before long, all five of us were giggling behind our hands, watching the oblivious Alpha dance his heart out while munching on a leftover brownie he must've smuggled away.

In the entryway leading out into the hall, the face of my mate appeared, flanked by the other guys.

Asher's surprised expression alone had me crumpling, his eyebrows vanishing into his hair as he watched his closest friend dance to Taylor Swift. Mason was bopping his head as he watched, while Tristan and Giovanni looked more confused than anything else.

"Hey, you've got moves." Kendrick shouted, pushing past the guys to join Zeke.

Zeke's eyes popped open, a lopsided grin on his face that quickly morphed into a look of realization. His arm shot out to point at me, but he didn't stop dancing. I looked sheepishly at him, shrugging my shoulders as I feigned innocence.

"You know what I'm not even mad." He shrugged. "I happen to love this song."

The chime of the doorbell ringing began to flood the house, muffled beneath the strum of the guitar playing on the speakers. I shouted to the rest of them that I'd be right back, but they were all enamored with Zeke's skills. Surprisingly enough, he did know how to move. If he wasn't an Alpha, I'd say a career of male stripping was in his future.

As I turned the corner and headed into the foyer, the last thing I saw was Zeke plucking Breyona off the couch to twirl and spin in the middle of the living room. Her carefree laughter mixed with the raspy sound of her mate's growl, bringing a smile to my face.

Even while mourning her parents, my best-friend still had joy in her heart.

Through the hazy glass covering the dual front doors, I could see the blurry figure of someone standing on the patio. I opened the door an inch and standing on the patio was a woman just a few years older than myself. She lived down the street from us and was technically our neighbor even though the forest was nestled between our houses.

From my constant trips into town to go to training sessions or to visit my dad and grandma, I knew the woman had a young daughter and a mate that loved to dote on the two of them.

Her eyes were large, but soft and reflected a kind light that made me like her instantly. She half-waved, drawing my attention downward, to the package in her hand.

“Hey, Luna. Sorry to interrupt your night, but this was delivered to me by mistake. I swung by earlier, but you weren’t home and I didn’t want to just leave it on your porch. It has over-night expedited stickers on the front, so I figured it was important.”

I took the package from her hand, which was nothing more than a slender bubble envelope large enough to fit a sheet of paper.

“Thank you so much. I appreciate it.”

She waved again, smiling as she bid me a goodnight.

Clicking the lock on the front door, I turned and tore into the package. The label on the front said it was shipped from almost halfway across the country but had no name or company to tell me who it had come from. As I tore it open, a letter fluttered out, drifting to the floor.

On the front of the letter was one word. A name, actually.

Breyona.

As if that wasn’t harrowing enough, it gets worse. Inside the bubble envelope was a small stack of papers. It wasn’t very many, no more than five but the thick material made it bulkier. The moment my fingertips grazed the papers rough surface, I was struck upside the head with recognition.

The book Giovanni had given me on my family, it had the same type of paper.

Following my gut, I pulled the papers out of the envelope and ran my finger down the edge, feeling the frayed pieces from where they’d been torn from the book.

On the front was a sticky note covered in scribbles of ink, the bottom signed by Breyona’s parents. The writing was clearly rushed, but as I made out the words and meaning behind them, my stomach began to plummet.

Lola, we pray to the Goddess these find you in time and not some other soul. Protect this information with your life, there are people who will k**l for it. They know we stole it, and they’re hunting us now. If we don’t make it, give Breyona the letter we included and tell her we love her. You’ve been a wonderful friend to her since you’ve come back into her life, and all that we ask is that you use what you’ve learned to keep her safe, to keep them all safe.

Alpha Asher by Jane Doe Chapter 199

Read Alpha Asher by Jane Doe Chapter 199

When I came back inside the living room, nothing had changed. Zeke was still dancing with Breyona while Giovanni watched with a mixture of irritation and adoration on his face. Tristan continued to glance at Holly, who was curled up on the couch watching the two dance with blush-stained cheeks. Clara and Mason looked like they wanted to join in, while Cassidy laughed at Kendrick's terrible moves.

Only Asher noticed me come back in, his dark stare soft as it turned to my face. There must've been something—some fragment of truth in my expression because his eyebrows slid into a grimace and his jaw tightened.

"What is it?" He asked, coming to my side.

I held the papers in my grasp, still trying to process what the h**l I'd just read. The envelope with Breyona's name on the front sat at the very top, another hole in my heart because I knew this letter would dampen her mood. It was from her parents, a last farewell to their only daughter before they were m*****d.

The single envelope felt like it weighed a thousand pounds.

Every head in the room turned to Asher and I, hearing the question he'd asked me and seeing the truth on my face. Tristan was at my side in an instant, followed by Breyona. Giovanni hovered at her back protectively, as though he could shield her from whatever had gone wrong.

"The neighbor just brought this over. Apparently, it was delivered to the wrong house." I said, my voice low and eyes darting up to meet Breyona's. "It's from your parents."

My best-friend s****d in a sharp breath, her large brown eyes instantly watering. They scanned the papers in my hands, latching onto the envelope that stood out against the tanned pages that had been torn from the book on my family's history.

"Is that...is that for me?" Her voice trembled as she asked.

I swallowed the knot in my throat. "They left it for you...incase they didn't make it."

Her lower lip began to tremble, and she brought her hand up to hide it just as Giovanni pulled her into his arms. I looked up at the Vampire that towered over her, that protected her with the same fervor he protected me with.

"Take her to my bedroom or one of the spares. I'm sure she doesn't want an audience." I murmured, handing him the envelope with pain clutching my heart.

Zeke, who had been hovering on the outskirts, cocked his head. "Those papers are from the book, aren't they? What do they say?"

I gave a small shake of my head, one that said, 'not here.' It's not that I didn't trust everyone else in the room, but my insides were so shaken that I wasn't sure I'd be able to utter the words around this many people.

Mason's voice rang out, snaring all of our attention. He had his arm around Clara's shoulder, but his words weren't just directed to her.

"Mind if we grab some of those leftovers you got stashed away? I'm starved." He said, rubbing his toned stomach. There was a knowing look on his face, but it was laced with sympathy that told me he understood completely.

Clara hummed, holding back laughter. She batted her eyelashes at Mason, making him smile. "You're always hungry, but I could use a snack too. Alcohol gives me the munchies."

Kendrick nodded, oblivious to the tension in the room. "I second that. Plus there's never a bad time for a burger."

"Go ahead and dig in." I said, forcing a smile onto my face.

Mason and Clara headed into the kitchen with Cassidy and Kendrick following closely behind. The blonde in charge of hosting tonight's sleepover had a concerned look on her face, and clear reluctance in her eyes as she left us alone.

Holly appeared around Tristan's shoulder, tapping it gently to get his attention.

"I think I'm going to go with them. I could use another blood bag." She whispered, her eyes flickering over the rest of us.

Tristan nodded, something in the depths of his icy gaze thawing as he looked down at my half-sister. "Giovanni put them in the ice box in the garage."

Once Holly had padded out of the living room, leaving only Asher, Zeke, Tristan, and myself, I knelt down in front of the coffee table and spread the papers out for them to see. Asher flicked on the television, cranking the volume up to drown out our voices.

They were made of the same thick material as in the book. Even the writing and ink were the same, elegant, and lilted as someone with an expert hand painted them across the page. The frayed edges only proved further that they were the missing pages, but it did nothing to explain how they'd gotten that way to begin with, or who had taken them.

Each one of the guys passed around the sticky note that was attached to the front, their eyes skimming over the last words of Breyona's parents before they were k****d.

"The witches are the ones that k***d them, so it stands they most likely had the pages to begin with. We need to prepare for the possibility that they already know." Tristan pointed out, his mind on the same track as my own.

I chewed anxiously on my lower lip, picking at the skin that come up from the last time I bit into it.

"We need to pray to the Goddess that they don't." I whispered, staring down at the pages.

"What the f**k?" Zeke mumbled, his eyes sliding back and forth as they traversed each page with rapt interest. He slid a hand down his face, which had paled considerably. "F**k, this is bad."

Asher, who had been silent this entire time, pinched the bridge of his nose and suppressed a snarl.

"Can someone explain?"

On any other occasion, Tristan would've taken that moment to poke fun at Asher. He would've gotten into him for being too impatient and high-strung to read. The stoic Vampire said nothing, looking expectantly at Zeke and I as he too waited for an explanation.

Zeke looked up at me, a light I'd never seen before in his eyes. They'd always been full of warmth and friendliness, and while they weren't exactly distrusting, there was a wariness there that I found myself hating.

"Do you want to, or should I?"

"Go ahead." I croaked, not trusting my voice.

"The first page is saying there are no limits to Conjunction, but that there are certain...side effects. The side effects the witch experiences are dependent on where the power comes from. It goes on to describe these two different planes of existence. They're kind of like Heaven and H**I, only think of them as dark and light. There's no way to travel to these planes, but they're the sources of magic that all witches pull from. Even the evil ones pull from light without knowing it since the dark plane is so hard to access. There are some in history that have accessed the dark plane, but only in small amounts. Conjunction acts like a key to both planes, and lets the witch pull from them freely...drawing as much power as she wants." He explained, pausing to give Asher and Tristan a moment to catch up.

Tristan's grimace held a hint of confusion. "How is this knowledge dangerous?"

"He hasn't even gotten to the good part yet." I said, my lips pressed in a thin line.

Zeke tapped the second page in the stack. "It gives an example. It talks about one of Lola's ancestors who pulled from the dark plane, drawing more power than any other witch has in existence. The spell k****d an entire town of people, but it worked."

The dim lighting paired with the pressure filling the room, s*****g the air from the four walls, left me lightheaded and shivering. I slid my hands beneath my t****s to hide the tremble in them.

Asher leaned forward in his seat. "What did the spell do?"

Instead of looking at Asher, Zeke met my eyes as he spoke.

"The spell created something. Something dark and never before seen by our world. It created the Shadows."

Tristan's already pale skin grew paler, like wet tissue paper draped over cobalt veins.

"The Shadows? You're sure?" He asked.

Zeke nodded, his face grim. He tapped the page a second time. "Positive. It says it right here. Not sure why the Shadows are willing to make deals with the Vampire monarchs, but if I had to guess it may be the fact that both Vampire's and the Shadows drink blood."

"Why would she create the Shadows? For what purpose?" Tristan scowled.

"Humans...witch hunters, had taken her baby. They thought witchcraft was taught, not passed down through the generations. They didn't know her baby had magic of its own. Either way, she couldn't allow them to take her child, so she acted." I replied, my eyes glued to the pages.

There had been this force inside of me that demanded to know the truth. Why would anyone create something like the Shadows? The thought that this dark entity had been birthed from one of my ancestors' thoughts made my skin erupt in goosebumps. I couldn't stop myself from reading the pages, desperate to know more. The answer brought not a speck of comfort.

Asher ran his fingers through his hair, tugging at the roots before letting go. "We can work with that. It just means that Lola is more powerful than any of us thought."

My mate's eyes met my own, and in their golden depths I saw understanding so pure and strong that it made me want to weep. I wanted to find reassurance in Asher, but I couldn't let myself. He had no clue how much worse it got, but soon, he would.

"There's more." Zeke said. "The witch that created the shadows went too far. Tapping into that kind of magic is addicting, and even doing it once can get you hooked. It says

here that she lost her mind, and that the dark magic had changed her over time. Before she was m*****d by other witches, her sisters, she'd created what the humans called 'the Black D***h'."

Tristan locked eyes with Asher, his icy blue against my mate's warm gold. Something passed between them, an agreement of sorts. It was the first time I'd seen them wholeheartedly on the same team.

The four of us went silent, but the truth hovered in the air around us demanding to be given life. It was Tristan that spoke the words on all our minds, solidifying the fact that we were losing this battle and that our worst nightmares—they were so close to becoming reality.

"If they're able to control Lola, they could quite literally erase both our species from existence."

Alpha Asher by Jane Doe Chapter 200

Read Alpha Asher by Jane Doe Chapter 200

There wasn't much of a sleepover after that, though it wasn't for a lack of trying.

Cassidy and Clara could feel the tension in the room and knew from the looks on our faces that what we talked about hadn't been good. Soon after wrapping up, Breyona came downstairs, her eyes raw and red with the opened envelope clutched in her hand.

I knew Breyona needed space, but I also knew that leaving her alone wasn't the right thing to do. It didn't take much convincing to get her to say, but I think deep down she wanted someone to confide in, someone who understood.

After promising Cassidy I'd show up to training tomorrow, she and Kendrick left, following Mason and Clara. The four planned on going out for drinks, and I was glad they were able to continue their night. Staying here would've just meant d*****g in all of our foul moods.

Holly decided to stay, and I found I was genuinely glad she did, even if she had to leave early the next day for a therapy appointment.

Late in the night, Breyona, Holly, and myself curled up on the massive bed Asher had made for us, swapping stories in the dim lights draped around the beds canopy.

Breyona talked about the letter her parents had left her, breaking down halfway through as sobs wracked her body. I'd been stunned when Holly wrapped her arms around

Breyona and I, hugging us both. I'd never gotten close enough to her to notice before, but her scent was light and held hints of elderberry and rose.

The letter written by her parents was a goodbye of sorts, a piece of themselves too sad to dare read out loud. Just hearing about it made my eyes water and fill with tears. I pictured my own mom, and all of the good and bad memories between us.

They had told her how much they loved her, how proud they were, and how she'd never be alone, not for one second. Every step of the way, every milestone in her life, they would be there.

Hearing Breyona talk about the letter prompted Holly to mention her own parents. I'd never pressed the topic with her out of fear that she'd shut down and close me off even more than I already was, but as she talked I listened with unbridled interest.

It had been a padded, golden-plated prison she'd lived in during her time with our father, and while she'd grown to hate every second of it, there was a time where she wanted nothing more than to make him proud. Only when she realized how impossible that was, did she finally crave true freedom.

She had a longing for the mother she'd never met, the one currently trying to enslave me, but it was tainted with disappointment. Nothing would change the Blood Witch's path, not even the daughter she'd never met.

After hearing Holly talk about her hopes, dreams, and pain, I felt I trusted her enough to talk about what I'd just learned. I hadn't realized how much I needed this, venting in the dark to two people who I trusted, who understood in their own ways.

It's a good thing I had because this week had barely just begun.

Days passed by in a blur, each one melting into the next. The entire pack was tense, all of us going back to our normal routines as if everything wasn't falling apart. Between the lingering stares and whispers whenever I went out in public, it felt like everyone was holding their breath, waiting for the next shoe to drop—or the next m****r to happen.

Each day I bounced between warrior training, witch training, spending what little time I could manage with friends and family, and stuck in meetings with Zeke, Asher, and a few others as we tried to figure out where the witches were reconvening.

Asher had left a few men to scout the town the witches had once occupied, but none had showed up since. Just yesterday, he'd sent his Beta, who had been on leave taking care of his mate and newborn son, to Alpha Bran's pack to act as Alpha in his stead.

Other groups were sent out to visit neighboring human towns. Clara and Mason went with most of them, mainly because of Clara's ability to tell if there was any magic cast on the area.

All week, I kept up with practicing Conjunction, and as easy as it was becoming, I was still utterly exhausted after every attempt. I'm sure it didn't help that there was a new stressor involved, one that had me questioning every move I made in case I somehow pulled magic from the wrong source.

Cordelia assured me that I'd know if I were drawing on dark magic, but the fear still remained.

Halfway through the week, Chris showed up. Per our old tradition, I stayed hidden as he entered the training room, greeting an entire class full of students. When he turned to introduce himself, I launched my attack.

The old man still had k****r senses, because not a second after I sounded my battle cry, he'd pivoted on his heel and struck. We fought for what felt like fifteen minutes, neither one of us yielding until Emilia came in and began clapping. A truce was called, but I know I would've won had we kept going for just a few more minutes. Funny enough, Chris said the same thing about himself.

It was Thursday night when something changed—when the other shoe finally dropped.

The shadows had been restless for hours, thrashing and writhing in the forest the moment the sun had gone down. I could hear them whispering from where I stood on the balcony just outside our bedroom.

Asher had his arms wrapped around my waist, his damp hair tickling my cheek as he spoke, but I wasn't listening.

I could hear them. They were trying to work up the courage to come closer, to speak to me directly. Their slippery little voices had grown in angst after I'd learned it was my family line that created them, and that it hadn't been conjunction that allowed me to control them without making deals, but the fact that they came from my magic.

Our bedroom darkened as the shadows had finally come to a consensus. The lamp on our bedside table, which was currently on, began to flicker. When it sputtered out, cloaking the room in absolute darkness, I noticed the shadowy mass that had appeared.

It hovered over the carpet, writhing and twitching as it condensed into the form of a man.

Asher stood nearby, his arm around my waist as he stared at the shadows. He was suppressing his surprise, but I felt it seep through the bond. It was still jarring, even after all this time, seeing them up close and hearing their dark, melodic voices.

Newcomers, they have arrived...

The shadows whispered, dozens of voices overlapping one another as they spoke almost in tandem.

“Who has?” Asher demanded, narrowing his golden eyes into a glare.

We do not ssspeak to you, Curssssed Alpha.

Every muscle in my body tensed, right down to my fingers and toes. I locked eyes with my mate, both of us wondering if we’d heard the same thing and if we had, what it could possibly mean.

“Who has arrived?” I asked them. “Tell me, now.”

Vampirossss.

Their hiss lingered in the air.

“They’ve arrived here? At the pack?”

Not here. Ssssafely-haven.

I s****d in a sharp breath and looked at Asher, but he was already mid mind-link with Zeke and the others. Weeks ago I’d asked the shadows to watch over the safe haven, the town we were still in the process of creating for the Vampire’s. I wasn’t sure they’d actually listen, but they did. This was the first piece of news I’d gotten from them, and already I knew we needed to act.

There was only one other I’d given the location to, someone whose survival would be a testament to my newfound magic.

Deacon.

“Everyone’s up and getting ready. We’ll leave within the hour and get there before sunrise.” Asher grunted.

His posture was tense, and his jaw locked tight. It wasn’t the newcomers that had him like this, but what the shadows had called him. I placed my hand on his bicep, the sparks dancing between us, tickling our nerve endings.

“You called Asher, Cursed Alpha. Why?” I snapped, hardening my voice as I turned on the humanoid shadow. “I demand you tell me.”

He is cursssed.

I kept pressing, fearful they’d vanish and leave us with more questions than answers.
“Who cursed him?”

One you trussst hasss betrayed you. Betrayed you all.

“How can we break it?” I asked, desperation laced in my voice. Asher’s arm around my waist was all that held me back from charging at the shadows, as if that would do any good.

What’ssss done, isss done.

Magic stirred in my gut, but before I could use it the lamp on our bedside table flicked on, and the shadows vanished. A whisper lingered in the air; one I somehow knew only I could hear.

You cannot ssstop him, massster. Through carnage and d***h, the curssse will be fulfilled.