

# Alpha Asher By Jane Doe

Chapter 217

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It was all a blur up until the moment my feet hit the polished tile floors of the town's Hospital.

Breyona steadying me as I screamed, the air melting from between my fingers, replaced with shadow and night, was vacant from my memory.

“Room 232...” A faceless woman in cheery, rainbow scrubs said to Breyona.

I blinked and we were down the hall. The second time and a set of elevator doors were closing, a third and we were in another

hall, approaching an open doorway where the scents of my friends and family poured from within.

Every step we took was another chance to get ahold of myself, to control the ragged breaths that slid past my lips.

It wouldn't have mattered. I wasn't sure even Asher himself could put together the broken shards of my heart, not when I stepped into the room and saw her.

The woman on the hospital bed, frail and much too thin, couldn't have been my grandma.

This couldn't be the same woman that put her entire heart and soul into every pastry she baked to the point where she had the entire town hooked on her desserts. 1

Grandma's face wasn't this lumpy, this misshapen or speckled with black and blue splotches like deadly flowers blooming beneath the skin. This wasn't the woman who would spend all morning baking, dancing to a tune only she could hear while the cottage filled with the mouthwatering scent of cinnamon and baked apples.

This had to be some kind of sick joke.

I told myself this over and over again, but her scent—the scent I'd memorized over the long year I'd lived with her, said otherwise.

The only solace, and the only thing keeping me together, was the steady beep from the heartrate monitor at her bedside.

I scanned the room to find Breyona, but instead spotted Mason, Clara, and Holly.

Clara was rubbing Mason's back in slow, soothing circles, her grief-stricken eyes on where grandma laid in bed. Even the witch, who had somehow become a part of this pack, cared for grandma. Mason's hazel eyes were bright with tears, the green specks

so much brighter when he cried without abandon. His lips were moving, saying something, but I couldn't make out the words.

Holly was rigid, carved from stone as her attention darted back and forth between grandma and I, unable to settle on one thing.

Chris appeared in the doorway, charging over to grandma's bedside, his mouth moving but nothing emerged.

I found Breyona standing off to the side, her hand against her lips to muffle the sobs that wracked her chest.

"Where is my dad?" I asked her.

"He's downstairs..." She whispered, her voice teetering on the edge of a sob. "... identifying the body."

Again, I blinked and was elsewhere, standing in a dimly lit hallway on the bottom floor of the Hospital. 2  
The Morgue.

As the placards above the doors increased in number, I slowed my pace. For the life of me, I couldn't remember which room

Breyona said to go to, but it didn't matter in the end.

There were windows along the walls that allowed you to see inside, and that was how I found my dad.

No one noticed when the door creaked open, and I stepped inside. Only Flora and the

Pathologist on duty registered my presence, but not my dad.

No, his head was bowed, and his shoulders quaked with the weight of his grief as he cried over the lifeless body of his son.

Sean. 20

My annoying big brother, reduced to nothing more than a fleshy cadaver.

The agony that encased me in it's shroud of darkness was unlike anything I'd ever felt.

Even mom's death hadn't hit this hard, hadn't tore a hole through my chest so large that already I could feel it festering.

I didn't want to look at him, at his pale skin. or at the massive gashes covering his body, but I couldn't look away.

A voice in my head screeched, 'This is your fault. This is your fucking fault. Yours, nobody else's.'

I'm screaming so loudly I think my ears might burst, but no one seems to register the sound. It's then I realize the screaming is in my head, but that doesn't make it stop. If anything, it makes it grow louder.

Only when I reached the table did my dad's head snap up. The sight of him, it made the hole in my chest wider-deeper, than ever before.

The man I'd always seen as a beacon of strength, a warrior even though his prime had long passed, was torn to absolute shreds. There was no strength in his glossy eyes, no ferocity on his tear-stained face. Only age lines, grief, and a longing for vengeance remained.

"Dad..." I tried to speak, tried so hard but it came out as a meek whisper.

The vicious voice in my head snarled, 'He knows it's your fault. He knows. You're not even his daughter. You killed his son, his only child. Killed him!'

"Lola...your brother. He-" Dad croaked, but the words faded as he let out a gut-wrenching sob, slamming his hand on the surface of the metal table hard enough to make Flora jump.

Flora, the slender woman who preferred flowery sundresses and dancing to whimsical music, wrapped her dainty arms around my father and held him-held the man who had slaughtered enemies, won wars, and lived to tell the tale. She held the man five times her size as he broke, doing all she could to piece him back together before watching him break again, and again.

My fingers trembled as I reached out, aching to touch my big brother's skin and see for myself. The truth was right in front of my face, but I couldn't accept it-not until I grazed his cheek and recoiled at the touch.

He was so cold, his skin stiff.

This was real. Sean was actually dead.

"I know, dad. I'm so so sorry." I whispered, clenching my fists so hard that my muscles cramped and spasmed, but it kept the tears at bay.

Just like Dad, if I started crying, I'd never stop.

Suddenly, his head snapped up and his eyes found mine.

"You have to find the witch that did this. Promise me-promise me you will, Lola." He said hoarsely. "Promise me you'll make them pay.

Hearing my dad beg for justice shattered the last tendrils of restraint keeping me together. The darkness-the grim determination mixed with heady magic flooding my body was a response to his plea. It was as though all this time I'd only been waiting for his permission.

"I will." I promised him, unable to say anything else.

As I left, the same thought played in my head on repeat, slashing and carving away at the bleeding hole in my chest.

Dad doesn't know.

He doesn't know that it was Asher.

Asher killed Sean.

I went back to visit my grandma one last time before hunting down the witch that attacked them. There was no plan forming in

my head, but one way or another I would find her and make her pay. The entire walk, Breyona's words back at the clearing

replayed in my head.

"Lola, your grandma, and Sean...they were attacked.

I'm-I'm so sorry, Lola. Sean didn't make it."

"What do you mean Sean didn't make it? Who-Who attacked them?"

"You have to understand, Lola. I—I was the one that found them. I was looking for you, and when I stopped by your house and

you weren't there, I figured I'd check Asher's parents.

Claire and Killian weren't home, and neither was your dad, but your

grandma's car was still in the driveway.

When-When I got there, the front door was wide open.

Sean was already...and your grandma, she was on the floor. Before she

lost consciousness she told me who killed Sean.”

“Who was it, Breyona?”

“Asher...it was Asher.”

Even now, after seeing his lifeless body for myself, I wished she'd been lying.

When I entered the hospital room, nothing had changed. Well, except for one thing.

Grandma was awake, her eyes open and scanning the room before finding me hovering in the doorway, pale as a ghost.

Clara extracted herself from Mason and spoke softly. It took a great deal of my attention to understand the words she was saying.

“I don't think you heard me before...which is understandable, but I told you I was going to try a little magic to wake her up. I-I have some distant relatives that are decent with Natural magic, so I figured I'd give it a try. I think I healed her a little bit...”

“Thank you, Clara.” My throat was dry and with every word I fought tears, but I hoped she could pick up my sincerity.

Now awake, I could see that the woman in the hospital bed was my grandma. She had the same long, flowing hair tinged with

silver streaks and a face full of a lifetime of joy. That joy had been dimmed immensely, but this was still the woman I knew and loved.

“We’re going to step outside and let you talk.” Mason murmured; his eyes downcast. “If you need anything, just let us know, Lola.”

I didn’t fight him when he pulled me into his arms. His scent had always been calming, like a gentle wave cresting, crashing along the sandy shore of a beach. I breathed him in, all the while steadying myself and fighting back the tears that begged to be set free.

‘Not now,’ I told them. There would be time to cry, but only after I found the witch responsible.

Not trusting my voice, I replied with a nod.

Holly stopped as she passed and leaned in to whisper in my ear.

“Tristan, Giovanni, and Zeke are out looking for Asher. They won’t let anything happen to him.” She gave me a small, tentative smile at the end before following Mason and Clara out the door.

“Did you want me to-” Breyona began to ask, but I cut her off.

“Stay.” I croaked, my eyes still on grandma.  
My best friend nodded and approached the bed at my side.

The strength solidifying like slabs of granite in grandma’s eyes crumpled the moment I took her hand in my own. Never had she felt so thin and frail before, so close to death that my heart spasmed in my chest and thrashed as it tried to break free.

“I tried to save him, Lola.” Her voice broke, and so did another piece of my heart.

I closed my eyes, fighting the agony that fell like a torrential downpour.

“I know you did, grandma.”

Her lip quivered, and Breyona stepped in to take her other hand.

“I watched him die.” She whispered.

“I should have been there. I should have been the one to save him.” I hissed through my clenched teeth, my jaw aching painfully

but it was the only way I’d leave this room without dissolving into tears.

Her grip on my hand tightened, and I looked up to see her shaking her head. Sweat clung to the sides of her soft face, her hair

plastered to the hollows of her cheeks. Breyona, tracking where my eyes lingered, reached out to brush the hair away.

“No, sweetheart. Do not blame yourself for this.” Even heavy with grief, her voice held strength. It quickly became tainted with

uncertainty as she continued. “Lola, there’s something I need to tell you.”

“I know, grandma. Please don’t say it.”

“I have to make sure you understand. I’m so sorry, Lola.” Her voice cracked. “Asher killed your brother.”

It was another blow altogether hearing it from her, from the woman capable of so much love that she’d captured the hearts of all

my friends, of everyone who had the pleasure of knowing her. I clutched my stomach, drowning in not only my own agony, but

the agony I felt pulsating down the mate-bond.

My mate-my beautiful, horrible mate knew what he had done, knew what he had taken from me.

“Listen to me and listen to me well.”

Grandma said, trying to sound stern but it was hard to do considering her face was a mass of black and blue splotches. “You

know your mate better than anyone else. It might’ve been his body that did this, but it wasn’t him. It wasn’t Asher. I looked into

his eyes, Lola. You know what I saw? I saw nothing. No wolf, no man. Just emptiness, like he wasn't even there."

I inhaled sharply. "You're positive that's what you saw?"

"Yes." She lifted her chin, wincing as she attempted to nod. "That's not all, either.

There was someone else there, a witch. I couldn't make out her features. The power was out, and she had a cloak over her

head, but while...while Asher attacked your brother she-she came for me."

Grandma's eyes fluttered shut, a tear escaping her swollen lid to trail down a bruised cheek.

"I tried so hard, but I'm old and my body just isn't as strong as it was." Her eyes opened, and she looked down at her hands like

they were a puzzle in need of solving." I've only been able to use my magic in my baking, but when the witch attacked me it- it

exploded from my hands. I wounded her, Lola. Hit her square in the face, hard enough to make her scream. I'm betting you she

has a mark or scar of some sort from it." 3

Hearing my grandma's version of what happened, it tore open the wound in my chest until I could no longer tell where it began or

where it ended. In order to breathe -to survive, I needed to focus on something else. Anything else.

I latched onto the vengeance in my dad's voice, onto the strength in my grandma's eyes, and onto the iciness of Sean's skin and

the serene look that painted his face, as though he hadn't died a violent, painful death.

"I'm going to find her, grandma, and I'm going to make her pay." I promised, letting her fingers slip through my own as I turned

around and walked out the door.

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