

## Alpha Asher Novel [by Jane Doe] Chapter 219

### Chapter 219

Instantly, I could tell that I had no control over this form. Thoughts drifted through its head, flowing like a winding stream, but I couldn't tap into them. The terrain was too rocky, too tumultuous to allow me to get any closer. Instead, I was left with whatever stray thoughts washed ashore and the emotions that followed them.

I stood on the shoulder of a narrow, winding road. Clusters of trees surrounded me like a cage, spanning up and up and up to kiss a sky full of stars and to bask in rays of silver moonlight. By all accounts, it was beautiful, but there was a sourness to the fresh air that felt an awful lot like foreboding.

Sensations battered me left and right. Sounds and colors were duller, not as vibrant as what I was used to. The sheer cold of the air against my skin was numbing, carving through the flowing skirt and buttoned blouse I wore.

A single emotion was all I could snag, and it filled every crevice of this body until its joints began to ache.

Cordelia was worried.

I looked back at my car, a Nissan that had seen better days. Somehow I knew that she'd taken a beating on the long drive to the pack all those months ago, but that she was in good enough shape to run.

Which is why, as I stood there on the shoulder of the road, I knew that there was no reason the engine should've stalled. The minute I pulled over and lifted the hood to inspect it, another wave of emotion trickled through this body, along with a harrowing realization.

Somehow, I knew that magic had been involved.

It was dull, but there was a fragrant sort of darkness that tainted the air and mixed with the pungent smell of the exhaust.

A branch snapped just beyond the guard rail, too far within the darkness of the forest for the human eyes I stared through to make out. There were no other sounds, but the feeling of being watched, it was strong enough that anyone would take notice.

Much like the familiar rush of my own magic, a pulse of electrifying energy swirled in my stomach, but it carried with it something dour.

Just then, a pair of eyes gleamed from within the forest, right where the crack of tree branches had sounded. They were round and golden, peering through the darkness to where I stood.

“You do not frighten me.” My mouth moved, but it wasn’t my voice that came out. It was Cordelia’s. “I have lived a long life, but you are mistaken if you think I’ll part this world willingly.”

The branches shifted again, only this time the cracking worsened. Trees bowed as the wind kicked up, cold enough to make me shudder. Another wave of magic and I somehow knew that I needed to leave this place right now or something bad would happen.

I waited for my heart to leap through my chest, but the feeling never came. In fact, Cordelia felt oddly calm all things considered.

This was the first time I’d felt Cordelia’s magic for myself, and the intimacy between her and her gift was incredible. It was like an instrument she’d crafted with her own two hands and spent the last decade mastering all on her own. There was a fondness between the two, a mutual sort of respect that was astonishing.

Moving as quickly as a human could, I grabbed the charms around my neck and plucked the right one from the mess of tangled chains. The amber bottle was no larger than a quarter, but the oil inside was strong and fragrant.

It was the scent of autumn, of crisp leaves and spices, carrying notes of elderberry and holly.

It was warm against my pointer finger, its heat never once fading, as though the wind couldn’t touch it.

Hastily, I began to draw a sigil on the hood of the car. Lines crossed left and right, surrounded by a ring of two circles that overlapped one another.

It was a sigil to banish dark magic, one that was tricky and precarious in the best of situations. Magic sparkled in the oil like specks of silver, but it wasn’t as strong as it should’ve been. I could tell it wasn’t going to last very long, which meant I needed to make the best of it.

I rushed around to the driver’s side of the car and hopped inside, forcing it into drive before slamming on the gas and peeling down the road.

There was a sharp, electrifying tug to my stomach, and I knew I’d just narrowly missed a terrible fate.

Just as I began to wonder where I was going, another thought floated to the surface of Cordelia's mind.

The prison cells, that's where I needed to go. Zeke would be there along with a handful of guards. They'd believe me when I said I was being chased, they'd protect me until the threat was gone.

When the car began sputtering just ten minutes later, Cordelia let slip a curse.

Where there hadn't been any visible signs of damage earlier, smoke now spewed from the car in thick waves, clouding the sky and temporarily blotting out the moon.

I flattened the gas pedal to the floor, but the accelerator refused to budge. A flicker of panic broke through the stream of Cordelia's thoughts, but like someone truly in control of their emotions, she embraced it and set it free.

The car limped to a stop, collapsing against the curb as it let out a final gut-wrenching gasp before dying completely.

I scanned the small field outside the driver's side window, then turned to look out the passengers. There was a small park, completely desolate this late at night. There were no writhing tendrils of shadows in the forest, only unending darkness, the kind a human-witch or not-couldn't peer through. 3

Hastily, I wrenched open the glove box and rummaged through its contents, clueless to what I was looking for until I pulled out a cellphone. I jammed my finger into the power button and a "low battery" sign flashed on the blackened screen.

"Unreliable technology." I huffed, hearing Cordelia's voice rather than my own.

Once more, I peered out at the forest and the park, looking down the long stretch of road I was on, hoping I could make the walk, but somehow knowing that I wouldn't.

Cordelia's magic had this sixth sense that wrapped around your bones and forced you to pay attention. It was almost like it had one foot in the future, and the other in the present. At least, that's what it felt like when it slithered around her head, pulling a single thought to the surface.

If I get out of this car, something bad is going to happen.

It was pure bravery that led the hand that opened the door, along with a gust of acceptance that swelled in my chest.

I stepped out of the car, not bothering to shut the door. Closing it would only cause unnecessary sound. Every crunch of cold earth beneath my feet sent a trickle of alarm down my spine until slowly the sensation of being watched returned full force.

There were eyes everywhere, it felt like. Hiding in the trees along the road, buried in the mulch of the playground, in the hedges that lined the paved pathways in perfectly sculpted cubes.

I bowed my head, my hand snaking up to grasp an amulet I didn't know the purpose of, when Cordelia's hushed voice filled the open air.

"If I am to die tonight, I will accept my fate, but please do not let it be for nothing."

I began to walk alongside the road, following it back into town where I knew the prison was located. It didn't take long for the feeling of being spied on to grow to the point of panic. There wasn't a joint in my body that didn't ache, and I knew that I wouldn't last long like this, especially on the main road.

That no longer mattered when up ahead a figure appeared, shrouded in a cloak the color of midnight. They straddled the median, rod straight and unmoving, but I could feel the cold, calculating gaze pressing into my skin.

I lifted my chin, unafraid of what was to come, when a second appeared.

It was a split decision floating to the surface of Cordelia's thoughts that hit me at the last minute. There was no way out of this, not in this aging body with the limited magic at its disposal, but I wasn't going to willingly walk into death's arms.

My legs moved and I dashed into the forest. The stinging pain of branches lashing my face was numbed by the cold. The creeping sensation of being watched-being followed, continued to grow, slowly closing in on me like a vice I couldn't escape.

I didn't make it far, but some distant part of me knew I wouldn't.

My body began to tire at an unnatural rate, even for a human.

Muscles began to seize, and joints ached, the pain turning my bones to lead until my body refused to respond. The ground rose up to meet me, invisible claws yanking me down as I fell. The impact knocked the air from my lungs, but as I lay on my back in this tiny clearing, I realized how beautiful it was.

It took all of my concentration to breathe, forcing air into my lungs and then out, pushing past the pain for a taste of oxygen. All the while, I stared up at the sky. The stars were bright, sparkling as if they were rivaling the moon itself for the spotlight.

"What a beautiful place to die." A voice said, one that felt familiar in the same way a dream felt familiar.

A hint of milky skin appeared from the shadows, but not nearly enough to tell who was speaking. Their face was shrouded by a heavy cloak, the shadows masking their features.

The frustration that surfaced was purely my own. I thrashed in this new, unfamiliar body, angry when it refused to respond to me. The witch was so close-so unbelievably close that if I reached out, I could tear the cloak from her head without a second thought.

Cordelia did no such thing. Instead, we tilted our head up, soaking in the moonlight one last time.

"It is a beautiful place to die, isn't it?" Cordelia said, somehow mustering the strength to push us to our feet. "I'd tell you to join me, but we both know it isn't your time yet."

The world shifted and swayed, but by pure will alone, we remained upright.

"No, it certainly isn't." The voice chuckled, silky and smooth like waves of velvet.

This wasn't the sound of someone evil, it couldn't be. Someone whose heart was black with darkness wouldn't sound so kind-so understanding.

A second figure appeared, but they too remained hidden within the darkness, the hood of their cloak pulled tightly over their face.

"Get on with it already." The second voice. hissed, once again familiar but in a dream-like sort of way.

"Your time is coming soon." We said, Cordelia's voice full of a resolution I could only dream of having. Our eyes drifted to the second figure. "As is yours."

"You're insane. You can't tell the future, old woman." The second witch hissed, their form going rigid beneath their cloak.

I-Cordelia, let out a chilling laugh.

"No, I cannot. Yet I am closer to death than I have ever been before. I can hear it calling to me, whispering on the wind." We paused, and as I stilled my own thoughts, a wave of melancholy filled my soul.

It was so faint that one might mistake it for the whistle of wind passing through the small gaps in between leaves, but there was a certain flow to it that felt...unnatural. I had no proof apart from what my soul was telling me, and it was saying that this distant sound was in fact death, and that

Cordelia was infinitely blessed to hear its call.

“You will hear it’s song yourself, and in your final moments you will think of me.” We said in a voice filled with peace.

The first witch, still hidden within the shroud of darkness, laughed softly.

Twinkling bells, that’s what it sounded like, or the soft sigh of a piano note fading into nothingness.

“You are so very wrong. I’ve evaded your grasp despite how valiantly you’ve searched for me. I’ll evade his grasp too. Do let him know that.” The witch purred, a glint of silver appearing in the form of a long blade.

“Believe me...” Cordelia whispered, our aching muscles coiling, poised to attack or run, I just wasn’t sure which. “...I will.”

I had no warning for what happened next.

My body-the one I was thrust into, surged forward. My withered hands met the coarse velvet of the first witch’s cloak and the second I made contact, I held on for dear life. It took no effort to fall back on my weight.

It forced the witch’s blade into my chest, and for a second, I was drowning in sharp, stinging waves of agony. I prayed for the pain to end, silently begging for my body to go into shock and for adrenaline to blot it out. I was no longer able to tell where Cordelia’s emotions began and mine ended, only that with every breath, I could feel the knife lodged in my heart and could feel the way it spasmed, trying so desperately to beat and pump blood around the obstruction.

Throwing herself onto the blade was merely a consequence of what Cordelia had done, but it wasn’t the true purpose.

With every ragged beat of her heart, her thoughts became clearer to me, and our emotions bled into one.

Cordelia knew that this fate was inevitable, that every road fate had laid out before her ultimately led to this moment. It wasn’t death Cordelia feared, not in her age and not with the things she’s seen in this life.

Her fear was that she’d die for nothing,

which is exactly why she threw herself at the witch and skewered herself on its blade.

In doing so, in shifting her weight backwards and letting gravity take hold, she pulled the witch into the clearing-into the light.

Recognition hit us both at the same time, as cold and cruel as the eyes we stared into.

With cloudy vision, our lips moved to form her name, but before could utter it out loud a wave of darkness took hold, stealing away our senses until only that beautiful, ominous song remained.

Then, as our heart took it's last shuddering beat, Death came and whisked us away.