

Read Novel Alpha Asher Novel [by Jane Doe] Chapter 236

Chapter 236

“Unless you want to carry the two of us the entire way, I’m going to need some blood.” I groaned.

The second Ember removed the cuffs, my body slumped forward like a sack of bricks.

My flesh had become a dead weight that refused to cooperate with my exhausted brain. Concrete bit into the palms of my hands as I struggled to stand to my feet. Ember huffed and released her hold on Brandon, letting him crash to the floor as she knelt at my side.

“Agh! Fuck, Ember. Could you have been any rougher?” Brandon groaned, cradling his bloody wrists against his chest.

She side-eyed him and said, “Yes, actually. I could’ve.”

“Well, thanks for being gentle.” Brandon shot back sarcastically.

Ember thrust out her arm, her wrist inches from my face. She stared down at me with a scowl on her face. It deepened when I stared at her through cloudy, disoriented eyes.

“I don’t care if you’re on your death bed, this is a one-time offer. Bite me and take some blood before I change my mind.”

My vision doubled as I reached out and wrapped my hand around her arm, feeling for a soft, fleshy spot to sink my teeth into.

“Don’t have to tell me twice.” I muttered, bringing her arm to my mouth.

A faint hiss slid past her lips as my teeth sliced through the layers of skin covering her muscle, carving a path to the blood-filled veins below. If I wasn’t losing strength with every passing second, I might’ve found it strange that I was biting Ember of all people, drinking her blood like it was the nectar of the gods.

Come to think of it, the flavor was a bit different. Much like her scent, Ember’s blood had a kick of spice to it, like it had been infused with cinnamon, clove, and hints of a crackling bonfire. The warmth of her blood spread throughout my body, increasing in heat until it was almost painful. Just as I felt the lick of actual flames against the inside of my veins, it vanished. In its stead came strength and a weightlessness that made my limbs tingle.

The wounds around my wrists, ankles, and neck began to fade, the skin stitching itself back together with the help of my magic.

“Don’t drink me dry, now. Thirsty bitch

“Ember grunted; her voice laced with pain.

I pulled away and wiped my mouth with the back of my hand. Ember sat back on her haunches before losing her balance. Her butt hit the cement floor with a light thud. She blinked a few times in rapid succession, shaking her head as though she were trying to clear away the cobwebs.

Brandon was slumped against the wall, watching the two of us with an expression I recognized all too well.

“That was kind of hot.”

“Shut up.” Ember and I snapped in unison.

I locked eyes with her. Mine narrowed on their own accord and hers quickly followed suit. Just like Tessa, there was no way I’d trust this girl, but I’d take whatever risks necessary to get out of this place.

Getting to my feet was all too easy now that I was healed and my strength slowly on the mend. I made my way to Brandon holding out a hand that he didn’t hesitate to accept. As I helped him to his feet, I reached out with my magic and imagined it washing over his skin, carrying away the wounds he endured.

They were much worse than what I endured since he couldn’t help but thrash against the cuffs. I could only heal them about three quarters of the way before I felt my energy wane. There were still bands of red skin where the metal had touched him, but they were no longer festering. That had to be good enough.

“Your magic feels tingly.” Brandon commented, shaking his hands out.

“That’s lovely. Can we get going before Freya comes back and murders us?”

Ember said pointedly.

Curiosity had me asking before I could think otherwise. “If Freya isn’t here, then where is she?”

“She’s out running an errand. Don’t ask me what it is because I don’t have a clue.

What I do know is that we need to be long gone before she comes back, or we're all screwed." Ember replied, scaling the three concrete steps that sat before the heavy wooden door blocking us in.

She raised her fist and knocked three times before a lock clicked and the door swung open. Beyond it was a set of stairs cloaked in heavy darkness. The only source of light came from a small sliver beneath a door up ahead.

"Follow my lead and say nothing." She commanded, hitting Brandon and I with a stern look.

We took the stairs one by one, drawing closer to that small sliver of light with every step we took. On the fourth step, a faint sound hit my ears. By the sixth, I recognized it as laughter. The laughter didn't belong to one person, but dozens. There was a robotic quality to it that came off as odd, and for the life of me, I couldn't figure out what it was until we reached the top and Ember opened the door.

It was a television, an old one with a built-in DVD player. The screen was oversaturated with color, though that could've been due to the kids show that was playing. As we stepped into the kitchen, a cheesy laugh track sounded.

What followed next was a giggle, one too real to have come from the television's crappy speakers.

We stepped into a kitchen that looked like it had been plucked from the early 2000's. The tile floors had a checker pattern that stood out against the pale-yellow cabinets. There was a white kitchen table at the center and sitting in one of the wooden chairs was a little girl.

Her hair was the same pale yellow as the cabinets, pulled into two pigtails that rested on either side of her head. The little white bows attached faced outward, their tails swinging every time she giggled at the TV.

Ember approached the little girl slowly. I couldn't help but notice how her movements were slow and almost cautious. It set me on edge, Brandon too from the looks of it. What kind of magic did this little girl have that would make a witch like Ember nervous?

"Angelica, I need your help." Ember's voice was unnaturally soft. The tone sounded strange with her slightly raspy voice.

I could only see the side of her face, but upon noticing Ember, the little girl smiled. That smile was wiped away when she turned her head further to the right and spotted Brandon and I hovering by the door.

Her pink lips popped into an 'o' and stayed that way.

Now that I could see the girl's entire face,

I realized she couldn't have been older than six or seven. Looking closer, I noticed a sparkly sheen over the girl's eyelids and her eyelashes appeared longer than normal. Wait, was she wearing make-up?

She was, I realized. The child had a full face of make-up on, foundation and all, but it was applied in a way that was meant to look natural. Even her clothes were odd, nothing like what you'd see a child in today's time wearing. She had on a baby-pink dress with white lace and frills that circled her neck, arms, and the skirt of the dress.

She looked like a baby doll.

Ember's eyes slid up to my face. There was something-some kind of emotion shining in them that made my stomach twist into knots. Could she see that I was noticing these strange things about the little girl? Did she notice them herself?

The subtle nod she gave me was answer enough. She noticed, alright.

"Ooooooh, Ember. You're going to be in trouble." Angelica, the little girl, gasped. She lifted her finger, which was painted pink with a strip of white at the top and wagged it at Ember like a disappointed mother.

Ember crouched low, her hands on her knees as she smirked at Angelica and whispered, "Aw, come on, Angelica. You were just saying how bored you are sitting here all day. I brought these two up so we could play a game. You do want to play with us, don't you?"

Angelica perked up immediately, her baby -blue eyes sparkling as she squealed and flashed ember a set of little white teeth.

She craned her head towards Brandon and I, her curled pigtails bouncing.

"You're here to play with us?" She chirped, her eyes flitting between Brandon and me.

I'd never been the best with children, but considering our lives were on the line, it was high time I learned. I mimicked Ember's stance, sinking down to Angelica's level.

"Of course we are. It's pretty boring down there. My friend and I love games." I said sweetly. "Don't we?"

I narrowed my eyes at Brandon, who had been standing there with his mouth open, gawking at the entire situation.

"Oh, yeah. We love games. Poker, blackjack, you name it." He sputtered.

“What’s blackjack?” Angelica inquired in her wispy soprano.

“I’ll teach you that one later.” Ember promised, shooting a glare at Brandon. ” Right now, I thought we’d play a game using our magic.”

Angelica jumped out of the chair so quickly that she almost knocked it over. She bounced up and down on her feet.

“Yes! Let’s play a game with magic!” She squealed, clapping her little hands together.

“Alright, then. Here’s what we need to do, Angelica. Think of it like hide-and- seek. Mistress Freya is going to come looking for us. We need to make sure she can’t find us, which is where you come in. You think you’re up for the job?” Ember asked the child.

“Does Mistress Freya know we’re playing this game?” Angelica inquired, a curious tilt to her head.

Ember nodded. “She sure does.”

“Okay, then. When do we start?” Angelica replied.

“We start now. Go on and grab your coat.”

Ember ushered Angelica out of the kitchen and beckoned us to follow.

The living room was fully furnished and cluttered in a way that made the place look lived in. Framed photos decorated the fireplace mantle, while embroidered curtains covered the windows.

Before I could truly search the place, Angelica appeared. She had on a little white peacoat that matched her dress and showed just a hint of ruffle down at the bottom.

“Ready to go, Emmy.” Angelina sang brightly.

Brandon hit Ember with a look. Before I could jab my elbow into his ribcage, he snorted and muttered, “Emmy, huh?”

“Quiet.” Ember hissed, marching over to the front door where she gripped the knob hard enough to dent the metal.

My heart skipped a beat as she yanked it open, growing faster as we stepped outside and into the open air. It wasn’t the full moon that hung front and center that ripped the breath from my lungs, but rather the fact that I recognized the neighborhood we stood in.

I'd been to this neighborhood more times than I could count to train with Rowena and Cordelia.

This entire time, we hadn't even left the pack.

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"You're wondering how we've managed to stay on your lands this entire time without anyone noticing." Ember spoke softly, Angelica's hand clutched in her own as she led the child in between houses to where the backyard was.

Tall picket fences divided the properties, each one the same uniform shape, height, and color. With the moon as our guide,

Ember led us to the back of the property, right where the forest met the neatly trimmed grass.

"She's not the only one wondering that." Brandon muttered sourly, casting a glare in Ember's direction. "This entire time I thought you brought me to some witchy village."

"Freya told me to bring you to her, and this just so happened to be where she was."

Ember fired back.

Angelica giggled, watching the two of them with curious eyes that shimmered brightly even in the dark. My only option was to intervene before they could descend into a full-blown argument. We'd be here all night if that was the case.

"How have you been able to stay here for so long without anyone noticing? Someone should've been able to pick up mine and Brandon's scents." I said, wondering why even now I failed to pick anything up.

Right as we reached the forest line, Ember tugged Angelica to a stop. The little girl whipped around, a knowing grin on her face.

"You don't have to cloak the house anymore, Angelica. If we're going to play, you'll need all your strength, yeah?" Ember said, lowering herself to the girl's height.

Angelica tapped her chin in thought for a moment before nodding, a look of agreement on her cherub face.

“Okay.” She giggled.

The air around Angelica began to shimmer, like it had been embedded with shards of diamond. It grazed the bare skin of my arms, sending little electrical pulses of magic through my flesh. Angelica waved her hands, a self-satisfied smile on her face when the space surrounding the house and fence began to ripple and change.

The entire length of the fence began to darken in color. Splotches of mold grew across the wood like wisps of moss. A quiet grinding sound filled the air as some began to crack and splinter. The baby blue paneling of the house changed as well, warping as spiderwebs of mildew began crawling across its surface. The shudders began to fall, their paint peeling as the scraps fluttered to the ground.

Even the grass began to change. It wasn't perfectly trimmed, identical to every other house in the neighborhood. Weeds sprouted in heavy clusters, growing higher and higher until they practically reached our knees.

Poor Angelica was swallowed by them, only her head of golden hair visible through the grass.

As the child giggled and clapped her hands, I understood.

“It was all an illusion. That's why Angelica was in the house. She was keeping us hidden.” I said, somewhat amazed. There was one thing bothering me, though. “What happened to this place? It's practically falling apart. None of the other houses in the neighborhood are like this.”

“Using dark magic leaves a stain on you. I'm sure you already know this, but it's like a poison. It doesn't matter where you are, that poison seeps into everything...even houses.”

Ember said, her voice low and ominous. She peeled her eyes away from the house, and as she did so, they glowed like two warm coals. She spoke in a whisper that Angelica failed to hear, “...let's get going before Freya comes back. She won't hesitate to kill us all once she finds out I let you and Brandon go.”

Now that my strength was slowly on the mend, I had just enough to reach out to Asher. The connection between us wasn't at its strongest, but it was enough to get the message across.

‘Asher, I'm sure you're pissed and wondering where the hell I am, but I'm here. I'm alive and safe...for the most part. All of that aside there's something I need you to do for me.’

Awareness blasted down the bond with a speed that made my skull rattle. I could practically feel his eyes turn my way, centering down the length of the bond where my presence called out to his.

'You are in so much trouble.' He growled. The sound was low and danced along the mate-bond, forcing a shudder down my spine that sent my thoughts veering in the wrong direction. Holding the connection was sapping the little strength I had. Asher, sensing the drop in my energy, quickly replied. 'Where are you and what do you need me to do?'

'Gather everyone and meet me back at the house. Don't tell them I'm coming, make something up. I'm bringing-'

I barely managed to get those words out before losing my grip on the link between us. Asher's voice faded into nothingness, its absence a reminder that I hadn't been able to mention Ember and Angelica. I'd have to make it known quickly they were not to be harmed.

Keeping Holly's betrayal to myself, as stupid as it was, had been completely intentional. It could easily cost me my life, but despite what she had done, I didn't want any harm to come to her. I'd make a decision, but I needed to look her in her eyes as I did it.

"We're meeting everyone at the house." I told Brandon, who replied with a curt nod.

"If I find out you betrayed me, I'll use the last seconds of my life burning someone you love to a crisp. Got it?" Ember hissed under her breath, her eyes flashing viciously.

"Got it." I replied, sighing heavily.

Ember and Brandon were either going to flourish together or destroy the world. There would be no in between.

On that positive note, the four of us slipped into the forest, the muddy earth squelching beneath our feet. The whisper of cold air against my skin was a pleasant reminder that I was no longer locked in a basement, counting down the seconds until my body was no longer my own.

Well, I was still counting seconds, but this way I felt like I was doing something to prevent it.

"Angelica, time to start the game. I need you to hide the four of us, and our scents. Think you can do that?" Ember called out.

Just a few feet up ahead, Angelica and Brandon carved a path through the forest. The child had a hold of Brandon's shirt, using him to keep her balance over the rocky terrain. Whenever she hit a patch of mud and slid, she'd grab onto Brandon, nearly taking him down with her. The shrill notes of her giggles cut through the thick silence of the forest, accompanied by Brandon's disgruntled mumbles and curses.

“Sure can!” She sang happily. If Angelica understood what was going on, she didn’t let it show. With her free hand, she made a series of gestures, waving it through the darkness like she was trying to catch a butterfly. Just like back at the house, the air around us began to shimmer, charged with the metallic tang of magic.

I glanced up at her, my stomach turning as a dark thought popped into my head.

“She wouldn’t hurt Angelica, would she? I mean, she’s just a child. She can’t possibly understand everything that’s going on.”

Ember didn’t answer my question right away. She held out her hand and blew softly into her palm. A small ball of flame sputtered to life, illuminating where we stood in the darkness. The light flickered and waned, dancing as its casted shadows along Ember’s high cheekbones and plump lips.

“Angelica’s situation is...unique. She and her sister are both exceptionally skilled with illusions, and since they’re so young, it makes them easy to manipulate. Freya cherishes three things: power, beauty, and youth. She uses her power to grant herself beauty and youth, but it’s just a cheap imitation of the real thing. Now when she finds the real thing, like Angelica and her sister, she likes to hold onto it.” She explained with a scowl.

“Is that why Angelica looks like a living baby -doll?” I said, watching the child in question.

She bounced in every puddle we came across, splashing dirt flecked water in every direction. Her lace-trimmed socks quickly turned brown, as did the hem of her dress, but she barely seemed to notice. If anything, she looked to be having the time of her life.

“It’s exactly why she looks like a living baby -doll, and no matter how much time Freya puts into dressing her up, she still wouldn’t hesitate to take her out if it meant achieving our-her goals. She would’ve called it “a necessary sacrifice.” It...It never sat right with me, but who was I to say anything?” Ember’s voice quickly dropped in volume until I had to strain to make out her words.

The longer I looked at her and the fire dancing in her eyes, the more I thought I saw the girl beneath that blazing exterior. It could’ve been wishful thinking, but I wanted to believe that for the first time, Ember was questioning her attachment to the Blood Witch and whether or not it was what she wanted.

By some stroke of luck, we made it to the house in one piece. The forest had been unnaturally quiet the entire time, as though all manner of creatures were avoiding us. Even the shadows made themselves scarce.

Sometime along the way I noticed this strange sensation take form. It seemed to pop up out of nowhere, looming over my shoulder and pressing at my back. Once I noticed it

there, I couldn't force myself to stop thinking about it. The closer we got to the house and to my mate, the heavier it became, breathing down my neck.

It got to the point where I swore I could smell its sour breath curling over my shoulder. That was where I drew the line.

I must've made a sound or shuddered because Ember quickly cocked her head in my direction, a look that bordered on concern crossing her face.

"You okay?"

She was nervous. I could tell by the way she twisted her fingers. She'd done it back in the basement when she'd been debating on whether or not to join our side.

We were close, having just stepped out of the thickest part of the forest into what was technically my back yard. The field that stretched out before us was large, but not so much so that I couldn't see the patio and the lights shining from the house. My gut told me Asher was outside, peering into the darkness as he waited for me.

Words couldn't express how much I missed him, or how nervous I was to see the look of disappointment on his face knowing what I had tried to do. As much as I wanted to regret trying to bring my brother back, I couldn't. Even though it had failed, I got to see Sean one last time.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Let's get going."

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Chapter 238

As the back patio came into view, along with Asher's broad shoulders and unruly hair, I realized my gut had been right after all. Flecks of dazzling gold swirled in his eyes and were bright even in the dark, much brighter the porch lights with their artificial glow.

His shoulders visibly relaxed as his eyes settled on my face. Only I could see and feel the fury that painted his iris's gold. While my vision might've tunneled on Asher, I didn't fail to notice he wasn't alone.

Reclined on the swinging bench was Breyona and Giovanni. Mason and Clara occupied the two chairs off to the side.

There wasn't a single smiling face, only scowls carved deep with worry.

I'd almost forgotten about Ember and Angelica, both of which were partially concealed behind my back, until Asher let out a snarl that nearly shook the entire house.

Ember went deathly still. The temperature rose several degrees, quick enough that a sweat began to break out along the back of my neck.

I took a step towards my mate. "Don't, Asher. They're with us."

Breyona shoved herself off the bench, evading Giovanni's arms before they could pin her in place. "Since fucking when?"

"It's a recent development." I admitted, waiting for Brandon to chime in. When he didn't, I was forced to continue. "You don't have to trust her. Trust me, okay?"

"Where's Tessa?" Ember didn't hesitate to ask.

Surprisingly, Clara was the one who answered. "Your sister's inside with her mate. You ain't welcome in yet, though."

"Where the fuck have you been?" Asher bellowed.

I bristled at fury in his voice, thinking he was talking to me. His eyes, however, were trained on Brandon.

"Oh, you know. Here and there." Brandon replied dryly, grunting when Ember slammed her elbow into his ribcage.

I wondered if Ember could set things on fire with her glare, because she looked angry enough to kill.

Brandon sighed dramatically. As usual, he wasn't taking a damned thing seriously.

"I was captured by Ember...my mate."

He was more than reluctant to admit the second part.

Silence and shock rippled along each of their faces, the same that had passed through me. back when I found out. As deafening as it was, the silence didn't last long. It was replaced with a low growl I barely recognized as my own when she walked out.

"I must be going crazy. Did I just hear Brandon—" Cassidy's laughter was cut short when she popped her head out of the back door and spotted us standing at the base of the porch.

Blood began to boil in my veins, as though Ember had touched my insides with her magic induced flame. All rational thought evaporated from my head as I stared into her eyes, trying to force two words through her skull and deep into her brain. I know.

It didn't matter that I had limited strength. Every ounce of it was forced into the command I sent out to the shadows, drawing them from the depths of the forest by the dozen. They leapt off the ground and stretched, wrapping around Cassidy's body before she even had the chance to shriek.

I swore I heard Angelica coo in amazement, but the sound was swallowed before I could truly register it.

"Lola, what the hell!" She screeched, golden -blonde hair falling into her face as she thrashed.

Brandon whirled on me, his eyes wide with confusion and outrage. I stumbled back, swallowing my surprise when he went to take a step towards me. Ember, of all people, cut him off. Her palms were flat against his chest as she held him back. His eyes flickered between her face and my face, searching for answers but finding none.

Asher held up his hand, and Cassidy's shrill scream was cut short. Her chest continued to heave, and as her lips trembled, I could practically see her dying to continue.

Helpless until the bitter end. "Baby, what are you doing?" The soft tone.

Asher's voice had taken on sent a wave of agonizing pain through my chest.

He'd believe me. He had to.

My voice cracked from the weight of what I was about to say, a truth that would change everything and could never be taken back.

"It's her. It's always been her. Cassidy's the second witch." 6

Upon the words leaving my lips, Cassidy threw back her head and snarled. She wriggled against the hold the Shadows had over her, belting out her frustration.

"She's lost her damn mind, Asher. You know me! You've known me our entire lives!"

Asher didn't move a muscle. Even his chest had gone completely still, the oxygen still swirling in his lungs. My mate looked between Cassidy and I, and for the first time in our tumultuous relationship, he truly seemed torn. When Asher failed to come to her rescue, Cassidy hurled her words at Brandon, who appeared much less inclined to believe what I was saying.

“Brandon are you going to let her do this to me?! You’re my best-friend. I-I thought I was yours.”

Her big, baby-blues watered so convincingly that if it hadn’t been my own brother that whispered her name in my ear, even I would’ve believed her. I wasn’t at all surprised when Brandon’s eyes slid to my own and his face hardened beyond recognition.

“Let her go, Lola. I won’t tell you again.”

A snarl tore through Asher’s chest, directed at his younger brother. “Touch her and you die.”

“Everyone needs to just calm down.” Mason chimed in, ever the peacekeeper.

Breyona narrowed her eyes on Cassidy, pursing her lips until they formed a thin line. “I’m on Lola’s side. Look at her arms.

That weird darkness stuff she had going on is gone, which mean’s she’s not going crazy.

Ember, who had been blocking Brandon from me this entire time, cursed under her breath.

“For fuck’s sake, Brandon. Get your head out of your ass and listen!”

Brandon glowered at his mate, but the witch was able to dish it back tenfold.

He spoke through gritted teeth. “I am listening. Cassidy is innocent-”

“No...” Ember whispered. “...she’s not.”

Those three words were Cassidy’s undoing, melting whatever spell or magic she had placed over her. It wasn’t her face that changed, that part remained the same. Color seeped into her hair from her roots, staining the golden strands a deep auburn. Her eyes followed, the blue tones swallowed by darker notes of crimson and brown.

Cassidy went so still that the shadows encasing her twitched with unease. Much like a vicious snake coiling in the grass, she attempted to lunge at Ember, all hints of innocence obliterated from her face.

“You fucking bitch! You pathetic, worthless traitor! I’ll kill you for this! Freya will kill you! You ruined years of work for nothing. Nothing! We’re going to kill you-all of you!” Cassidy screamed and snarled, switching between manic laughter and fury so potent a chill skittered down my spine.

Ember, still holding onto Brandon even though there was no need, craned her head over his shoulder to where Asher gaped at his childhood best-friend.

“Don’t blame Tessa for this, please. She didn’t know.” Ember begged.

From the look on Asher’s face, I could tell he wasn’t listening. The sting of betrayal hurt that much more coming from him, radiating down the bond as it added his emotions to my own. If I could, I would’ve taken that pain tenfold if it meant keeping it out of his grasp.

Cassidy looked at Asher with a mixture of bitter regret and disappointment. If it weren’t for my brother’s warning against dark magic, I might’ve ended her here and now. She ceased her thrashing long enough to speak. “I was going to let you live, Asher.

You and Brandon. An Alpha’s blood has power. I convinced my mother to let me keep you both, but you’ve ruined it.”

Brandon snapped out of his stupor to gape at Cassidy. “Your mother?”

Pride lit her eyes brighter than any magic could. Her heart-shaped lips peeled upwards in a triumphant grin. “Yes, Brandon. My mother. The Blood Witch.”

In the midst of all the chaos, not one of us noticed the patio door sliding open. Only when Tristan’s face came into view, was my attention snared. It wasn’t on my first-in-command, though. Rather, the girl clinging to his side.

Holly’s eyes widened with a slew of emotions, so many that it would take me hours to dissect them all. Her jaw dropped, plummeting to the ground where it rolled down the stairs and into the grass. Holly’s betrayal didn’t anger me nearly as much as Cassidy’s, but it was still a truth I planned on bringing to light. 3

If I’d been paying closer attention, I might’ve noticed the slight ripple in the air- a sign that Angelica was no longer hiding us with her magic.

“You-”

I never got the chance to say anything more. That presence I’d felt hovering over my shoulder, the one I’d forgotten about during the chaos, chose this moment to descend. It happened so quickly that nothing could’ve prepared me.

My lips refused to listen. No matter how much I screamed, they remained frozen in place. The only voice I heard was the one in my head, but even that was short lived.

I wasn’t sure when the chanting began. Perhaps, it started back in the forest, too quiet for me to hear. All I know, is that once it began, a presence filled the empty spaces of my body-the ones my brain no longer had access to.

“...it’s time...’ I swore I heard something whisper.

Time skipped a beat and the next thing I knew Asher stood in front of me. I cried out in relief, but the sound was reserved only for my thoughts. Asher would fix this; he’d find a way. I could feel his hands on my shoulders, his thumbs rubbing soothing circles on my bare skin, but no matter how hard I pushed, my body would not listen.

Even though my head refused to turn in Ember’s direction, I didn’t miss the way she gasped. Her hand trembled as she placed it over her mouth and whispered, “Oh, no. It’s begun.”

The familiar tingle of magic skated along my skin, and while I recognized it as my own, it wasn’t my command that it followed. I shouted a warning that never made it past my lips and watched in horror as a wave of magic exploded from my chest.

It came out in single blast that made the air around me ripple and hit Asher at a devastatingly close range. The bittersweet look of shock on his face was the last thing I saw before my mate was thrown backwards. He hurled through the air so violently that even the side of the house couldn’t slow him down. The wall exploded as he hit it, crumbling beneath him as a plume of drywall dust billowed into the air.

Without my command to hold them in place, the shadows imprisoning Cassidy slithered away into the darkness.

She wasted no time, throwing back her head to howl her laughter into the night sky, before turning and attacking the people I loved most.

Desperately, more than anything in this world, I wanted to help. Unfathomable power sat right at my fingertips, but it no longer listened to my voice. No matter how much I cried out and begged for its help, it remained just out of reach.

The chanting in my head grew louder, and as it did, I was able to make out a number of overlapping voices.

“...come to me...’

Only Angelica, with her golden pigtails and round eyes, noticed me slip away.

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Chapter 239

One moment I was there, and the next I was gone.

The Shadows melted around my body with ease, filling the gaps of moonlight that shone through with impenetrable darkness. I couldn't see a thing, couldn't navigate my surroundings even though I'd been through this forest a hundred times before.

My body was no longer my own, stolen by an invisible force that tied its web-like threads around my wrists and ankles, stringing me along the way a marionette manipulates its puppet.

The only thing that remained my own was my thoughts. As panicked as they were, the only thing I could think about was Asher and my friends. Were they alive? Were they fighting Cassidy? Had they killed her already and rushed off to my rescue?

Each one went unanswered.

When the tendrils of darkness slithered away, no longer clouding my vision, I stood somewhere new. At the very back of the field was a rectangular brick building, dimly lit by the streetlamps that seemed so far away.

I recognized the building as the town's high school. While I never walked the halls myself, I often found myself in town when the parade of yellow busses emerged onto the street, carrying groups of rowdy kids ready for an afternoon away from dusty textbooks and drawn-out lectures.

The school quickly faded from view when my legs began to move, propelling me forward, towards a mass of darkness at the center of the field.

With each step the tendrils slithered further away, dragging their leech-like bodies across the ground with a quickness that made me wonder if they knew something was horribly wrong.

There, at the center of the field, was the one person I wanted dead the most.

If there was one thing I'd learned these last two years, it was that evil always appeared beautiful on the outside. Despite the rot that was my father's soul, his outward appearance had been handsome-stunning, almost. It was the same with Freya, the most powerful Blood Witch the world has ever know, mother to not only Holly, but also Cassidy.

I hadn't seen that coming one bit.

A sultry and downright joyous smile was pasted on Freya's face. She could've batted her eyelashes and giggled like a schoolgirl.

Nothing would've erased the underlying sense of danger that oozed from her every pore.

It didn't matter how strong her magic was, nothing could smooth out the sharp angles that created her face. From her slender chin to the regal slope of her nose and the deep grooves of her cupid's bow, every single feature of hers was crafted to hide the evil within.

Freya wasn't alone. Standing around her in a large circle were other's-more witches.

The snarl of absolute frustration I let out vibrated my skull. Even my eyes refused to respond to my will. No matter how hard I pushed or pulled, they would not stray from Freya.

"And here she is, ladies. Our guest of honor." Freya said loudly, her voice warm and full of joy that felt woefully misplaced.

She swept her arm out to the witches that surrounded her, the long sleeves of her gown billowing in the air like blood-red streamers. Her hair, which was the exact same shade as Cassidy's hung down her slender back in waves of rust and crimson.

I also couldn't help but notice she wasn't wearing any shoes. Her bare feet rested in the grass. The sight was such a [search for cry](#) from the therapist I'd met months ago that all words escaped me. Not that it mattered since I couldn't [search control](#) my own mouth.

Freya made a come-hither motion with her fingers and my legs didn't hesitate to obey. I snarled and spat an array of colorful words in my head, thrashing against a hold that didn't so much as budge. Once I was inside the circle of witches, feet away from Freya, I stopped.

Her smile turned feline, as though she could feel every ounce of the fight I was putting up.

"Don't be a sore loser, Lola. There wasn't anything you could do to stop this. Even now, your friends and mate are fighting for their lives. A fight they will lose, but not to worry. You won't be here to feel your mate's death. By the time my daughters and the others I sent to their aid end your friends, your soul will be long gone from this world. Your body on the other hand...that will remain."

The others? There hadn't been any other witches there before I slipped away, but that could've easily changed within the last half hour. As hard as I tried to grab onto the bond between Asher and I, it slipped through my fingers like it was coated in oil—no, not oil.

Blood.

Freya ended her speech with a light chuckle, one a mother might make after watching her child do something amusing. There were hundreds of questions I wanted to ask her.

The answers wouldn't just satiate my curiosity, but they'd also waste time, giving the others a chance to stop this mess from happening.

The slight glimmer of hope fizzled out before it ever had a fighting chance when Freya plucked a dagger from behind her back. Even without her explanation, I could feel the shift in the air as she unsheathed it and knew that there was an unnatural sort of magic at play.

It was beautiful in a haunting, blood-chilling sort of way. The blade itself sparkled with hints of both silver and gold, the moonlight revealing the delicate carvings all along the metal. The grip was cushioned in crimson fabric, but the showstopper was the pommel and the blood ruby that sat atop it.

The ruby didn't reflect the moonlight like the metal of the blade did. No, it seemed to create its own light, glowing from within.

"Say hello to your father, dear. His soul is trapped inside this little stone. Incredible, isn't it? It took me a very long time to find this beauty. You wouldn't believe the things I had to do to get my hands on it, but it was worth it in the end. You see, I had to make sure everything was in place for this moment. Thankfully, I had quite a bit of time." She purred, turning the dagger in her hands.

The way her otherwise sharp eyes softened as she looked at the stone mounted on the dagger's pommel was nothing short of awed. She blinked, and when her eyes opened, they were once more on my face.

"Fifteen years ago, a powerful seer witnessed the birth of a little girl. This little girl would be the first of her kind, a mixture of the three supernatural species. As if fate didn't bless this child enough, it decided to give her more. This little girl would be born to the most powerful line of Vampires' and Witches in existence. She'd grow in strength until the day came where she murdered her father, assumed his throne, and brought the three species together. Care to take a guess who that little girl is, Lola?" Freya hummed, tapping the sharpened point of the dagger with her finger.

When I didn't answer, she smirked.

"Your father and I always worked well together. With your magic at his disposal, we will be unstoppable. On that note, I think it's time we begin."

A low hum took place in my head, growing stronger and louder until my teeth rattled from its force. Just beneath the deafening sound was the changing of multiple voices. If I couldn't see their lips moving, I would've never known the chanting was coming from the witches surrounding us.

My limbs began to tingle as magic filled the air around us. Fear unlike anything I'd ever known turned my blood ice cold. A daunting realization was setting in, slowly creeping beneath my skin, burrowing into my muscles and bones.

No one was coming to save me.

The ten witches surrounding us tilted their heads back in unison, their faces bathed in silvery moonlight. I almost missed the glint of steel in one of the witches' hands. As I noticed it, I realized it wasn't just one of the witches-it was all of them.

Every single one had something small and metallic clutched in their hands. I didn't understand what it was until each one lifted it, the tiny blade inches away from their faces. Horror squeezed the oxygen from my lungs.

I couldn't even save myself.

All at once, the witches swiped their individual blades against their throats, splitting skin and opening up a sea of crimson that washed over the earth tenfold.

The chanting stopped, replaced with the gurgle of ten people choking on their own blood. It lasted for several horrifying seconds before each one of the women fell to the ground, nothing more than corpse drained of life.

Grief began to build in my throat, stinging the backs of my eyelids. The tears would never fall, not while Freya had [search control](#) over my body. Unable to look away, I had no choice but to take in the sheer loss of life, the waste that had just occurred in front of my very eyes.

Freya, the mastermind that orchestrated the deaths of so many, had her head held back. Her chest and the cleavage that showed from the deep 'v' of her dress, moved up and down rapidly. When she opened her eyes, her pupils were dilated, dripping with power and what I knew was excitement.

She approached me slowly, carrying all of the confidence of someone who knows they won. Twirling the dagger in her hand, she came to a stop mere inches away.

I couldn't help the slew of thoughts that passed through my head. If only I could move. I'd sink my teeth into her throat, unleash Maya on her and relish as my wolf and I tore her limb from limb.

"A transfer of souls can only occur between two people of blood relation, any other way and the results would be...let's say, unstable. It takes a big sacrifice to generate the kind of magic required to keep your father's soul in your body. Now that that's done with, all I have to do is put this itty-bitty blade here in your chest cavity. As your lifeblood

carries your soul out, the blood ruby will force your father's soul in." Freya explained, an eager tilt to her lips.

The way she dismissed those ten witches made my stomach clench with disgust. They truly meant nothing to her.

As she raised the dagger, my heart skipped a beat.

It should've been fear that flooded my mind, but it wasn't. All I could see was Asher, the golden flecks in his eyes when we made love, proof that it wasn't just him that had fallen for me, but his wolf too. All I could hear was his voice, the emotion that filled it's gravely notes as he sank down onto one knee and professed his love for me. All I could smell was his scent, deep and masculine,

intoxicating in a way that made my soul soar.

"With this final step, I bind my life force to that of the Vampire King. With the power of Conjunction, he will never age, and neither will I."

Many things happened at once.

Freya's hand moved, bringing the dagger down towards my chest. Time slowed and a presence I could only describe as pure undeniably feminine washed over me, brighter and more potent than the moonlight pouring from the sky. The and memory of my brother's voice echoed in my ears.

...someone powerful is watching out for you The pieces clicked together with a resounding snap that could've easily been my teeth chattering.

The Moon Goddess.

That was the powerful being that was looking out for me, helping me when I couldn't even help myself. Now that the thought took form in my head, nothing could convince me it wasn't the truth.

Her presence did something to the dark magic rooting me in place. It weakened it, coated it's clawed hand in liquid moonlight, making it that much harder to hold onto my physical form. It wouldn't last, I could feel it in my soul.

It was a chance, a whisper of power that could only be used once before it faded entirely, and the darkness once again took hold.

I blinked.

I did it again, and again. My fingers twitched, then my toes. Relief came fast and hard, but not nearly as fast as Freya's blade. It didn't matter how quickly I regained [search control](#), or how much time slowed.

I just wasn't fast enough.

A flash of inky darkness exploded in my peripheral. For a moment, I thought I saw wolf made of pure shadow. Time sped back up with an abruptness that left me grappling for [search control](#). At the last second, before the cold tip of the blade could pierce my skin, something barreled into me with enough force to send me flying.

With my body throbbing, drowning in the agony of being hit by what felt like a freight train, I realized it wasn't something that hit me, but someone.

Tristan.

Freya's spell snapped back into place, holding my body captive once more. It lasted a total of three seconds before shattering. Deep down I knew why, but it wasn't until Tristan stumbled backwards that I was forced to face the truth.

The scream that left my mouth was entirely my own, even if it was blended with two others: one of genuine heartbreak, and the other of murderous fury.

It was Freya that screeched, spitting venom at the Vampire that shoved me out of the way. Her daughter, my half-sister, was the one sobbing, wailing in a way that only someone deep in love could manage.

Holly fell to her knees at Tristan's side.

Breyona's massive wolf stood off to the side, her body swirling with wisps of shadow. She'd brought them here. Not Asher, Zeke, or any of the others, but Holly and Tristan. As she stood there, ears twitching and muzzle pulled back, I realized that even she didn't know what to do.

None of us did because it was too late.

Even with a dagger embedded in his chest and blood pouring from his mouth, Tristan's eyes remained on my face. 6

With his last breath, he forced two words through his lips.

"My Queen."

Read Novel Alpha Asher Novel [by Jane Doe] Chapter 240

Chapter 240

“My Queen.”

Tristan, my first in command. The man I considered both a friend and a worthy enemy. A Vampire I had once hated with every fiber of my being, only to now trust him with every beat of my heart.

He was dead.

Cold. Unmoving. Not a spark of light in his eyes.

He pushed me out of the way. He took the blow that was meant for me. He gave his life for me and it broke Freya's spell.

Tristan loved me.

Holly's head was bowed, her hair a dark veil that covered her face as she wept. Her hands were stained red with Tristan's blood, but she didn't seem to notice. She continued clutching at his shirt, whimpering, and whispering under her breath.

Without warning the blood ruby unleashed a blast of light that left me seeing spots. Holly ripped the blade from Tristan's unmoving chest, dropping it as though it were poisonous.

Freya's face had lost its triumphant luster, taking on a more sinister expression. It looked like her skin had been pulled too tightly over her bones, stretching across her face in a way that emphasized every dip and curve. Her cheeks were just a touch too hollow, her eyes bulged from their sockets ever so slightly. Her teeth pressed at her lips, pushing them outward.

Her eyes flickered from the dagger to where I sat in the grass, the start of some sickening plan or idea taking form in her head. Before she could react-before any of us could react, Holly stumbled to her feet.

I should've noticed something off when she went silent, no longer crying or whispering under her breath.

Long strands of inky hair hung over her face, partially shielding it from view. From where I sat, I managed to catch a single glimpse of her eyes. My stomach plummeted as I took in the haunted light that filled her entire being.

Holly, the sister that betrayed me, the one I craved since I was a little girl, unleashed a wail that made my hair stand on end.

For a split second, I thought she was going to attack me. After all, it was my life Tristan died for. Never could I have anticipated Holly charging at her own mother, grabbing onto her dress with blood-stained hands as she screamed and snarled like a wild animal.

“You killed him, you killed him, you killed him!” Holly wailed, her voice cracking several times over.

Freya’s lips pulled back from her face in a distasteful sneer. “Get off of me, girl. Have some class. We do not cry over men.”

She shoved Holly away, who stumbled backwards but didn’t fall. Her shoulders were hunched as she took in breath after breath. Bloody handprints littered Freya’s skin from where Holly had made a grab for her.

Digging my fingers into the dirt, I pushed myself off the ground and onto my feet. I inched closer to Breyona, hesitating when I caught the unearthly glow of magic in Holly’s eyes.

Suddenly, the bloody handprints on Freya’s body began to smoke.

Freya noticed the same time as I did. Her bulging eyes went wide, so wide that I could see the network of veins running across them like spider webs. Unlike normal veins, these ones were black-tainted with darkness.

“You... You dare use blood magic on me?”

She scoffed at Holly. “I am your mother.”

Holly didn’t so much as blink at her mother.

Her lips barely moved, forming words that came out as a cold whisper.

“You’re nothing but an empty vessel.”

If I hadn’t witnessed it myself, I wouldn’t have known what to make of the sound. It was the crash of a vase against a hard floor. The crack of a bone snapped in two, it’s splintered echo ringing in your ears.

Only, it wasn’t a vase or a bone that created that sound.

It was Freya.

What started as a hairline crack running down her arm, splitting her pale skin in two, began to widen. Like the brittle edges of a chasm, her flesh began to crumble. More and more cracks formed, each one stemming from the bloody handprints Holly had left on her mother’s skin.

One crawled down Freya's neck, another across her chest and cleavage. A third inched up her neck, cleaving her jawline in two.

Freya looked down at her hands and the widening cracks flooding her body, a look of bewilderment on her face. Something in my gut told me this emotion was new to her.

"What is this magic!? No! No, it's not possible. You're nothing! You're not powerful enough to kill me!" She half-shouted at Holly, who stood there impassively, a look of detachment marring her face.

"I don't have to be as powerful as you, mother. You killed him, and it's his lifeblood that's killing you."

Holly's words rang in my ears. As I stared down at Tristan's body, noting how even in death his eyes were trained on my younger sister, I realized she was right. As disturbing as it was, there was a sick sort of beauty behind watching the Blood Witch crack and crumble like old porcelain.

It felt like Tristan was here with us, dealing one final blow before his soul slipped away.

Freya's entire face transformed as she opened her mouth and let loose a furious scream. Her jaw opened wider than it should have, more cracks crawling up her face from how taut her skin was pulled.

The sound alone was deafening, sending a sharp wave of pain straight into my head. I barely noticed the difference as I slammed my hands over my ears. Breyona's wolf was several feet away, writhing in pain as tendrils of shadow danced off her fur-covered body.

"NO!" She screeched, making a go at Holly with her arms raised and hands extended.

As her foot came down, cracks spread up her legs until her flesh crumbled in a sea of cream-colored shards, raining down into the grass. Freya screamed a second time, but this sound was one of agony. Everything from her kneecap down was gone, even the gown she wore had crumbled. Her arms went next, showering the earth and sinking deep into the soil.

She fell to her knee's, her arms gone and shoulders quickly eroding. The screaming stopped when her face caved in, her jaw becoming just as brittle as the rest of her. Her eyes sunk into the hole in her face, followed by her nose and lips, melting into the shards of her auburn hair.

Within seconds, there was nothing left.

The Blood Witch was gone.

Holly had killed her.

She barely seemed to notice, turning so quickly her hair was ripped from her face. There was only one problem. The spot

Tristan died in was empty. His blood staining the grass was the only thing that remained.

We locked eyes, and despite everything we'd been through, the only thing that passed between us was panic. That panic quickly turned to grim realization when Breyona let out snarl that froze the blood pumping in my veins.

Slowly, we turned to face the source of Breyona's aggression.

It looked like Tristan, blonde hair blowing in

the breeze, standing on two feet as he scanned his surroundings, but it wasn't him. The way he moved was off. Many times he'd look down at his hands, spreading his fingers before clenching them into fists.

Holly sucked in a sharp gust of air that fractured into a sob, one that caught the attention of Tristan and had him turning in our direction.

I recognized the eyes I stared into.

They were my father's.

A deep blue just a few shades darker than Tristan's stared out at us. With the slickness of oil, they slid to Holly's face, registering the grief that painted her delicate features in deep shadows and sharp angles.

"What did you do, Holly?" The voice that emerged didn't belong to either Tristan or our father. It was an amalgamation of both.

Breyona's hackles lifted as her body coiled, seconds away from pouncing.

Holly's hands trembled as she brought them to her mouth. Several times she mouthed the words, but it wasn't until the last time that they finally managed to stick.

"The right thing." She whispered.

Realizing what his youngest daughter had done, our father let out a furious roar that sent the shadows scattering in all directions. Bats fled from the tree's, melting into the night to escape the fury of the resurrected Vampire King.

Our father hadn't so much as taken a step before faltering. The light in his eyes flickered, deep blue fading in and out like an old radio that couldn't quite settle on one station. The answer drifted through my head, carried on the echo of a breeze.

Freya had bound their life forces together.

"Breyona, don't." I warned her, a hand raised in her direction.

Attacking him would do no good, not when he was already dying.

My father turned his head in my direction. A rueful smile crossed his face, so unlike Tristan that I couldn't help but marvel at the expression.

"Lola, my heir. All of the power in the world, and you're too much of a coward to use it."

He rasped, attempting to take a step but stumbling as he did so. The light in his eyes flickered once again, his voice growing weaker with every breath that rattled in his lungs.

He fell to his knees in the same spot Freya had been in.

"Such a disappointment."

The light in his eyes flickered once, then twice, before sputtering out completely. Tristan, his body once more an empty vessel, fell to the ground.

Holly quickly followed, kneeling at his side. Still pale faced and trembling, a broken sob tore itself from her chest as she gingerly turned his body over and laid him flat against the earth.

"Oh, Goddess..." Breyona whispered sadly.

I didn't fully understand why until I felt a touch at my back. The sensation of someone standing close by was like an electrical pulse to my already shot nerves. Tree's blurred into one as I spun around, only to find myself steadied by a familiar face. Asher.

My mind was so jumbled, my nerves so raw, that I hadn't even felt the sparks licking over my skin as he approached.

He had a wound on his head that looked freshly healed. There was a lot of blood, but most of it had dried. It ran down his sculpted cheek, past his rigid jawline and down his neck. A wound like that would've killed a human, but not Asher.

Even wounded, the sight of him warmed me from the inside out.

That was, until a certain blonde came to mind.

“Cassidy-“I stammered, struggling to find the words.

Asher didn't mind, though. Even with the dried blood smeared across his cheek, there was a look of peace on his face that I hadn't seen in months. He held my face in his hands, running his thumbs over my cheeks. In slow circles, a glimmer of joy in his eyes at the fact that I-that we, were alive.

“She's dead.” He replied, not an ounce of emotion in his voice.

I wanted to ask more. I wanted every single detail up to her last miserable breath, and I was going to ask for it before I heard another familiar voice hit the air.

“Brother.”

Giovanni stood off to the side, rooted in place and just a few feet away from Tristan and Holly. Before Breyona could approach, he walked over to Tristan's body and sank to his knees. He didn't register Holly's presence, even when she let out a gut-wrenching cry.

The thick curls that fell from his head hung in his face, swaying gently in the breeze.

“Go on.” Asher whispered, nudging me towards the two of them.

A flicker of grief hid deep within the golden notes of his eyes, so buried that you'd have to know just where to look to find it, but once you did, you'd see how endless it truly was. Through a mutual hatred between two men vying for my heart, an odd sort of respect was born, one that teetered on the cusp of something more, but never had the time to make the plunge.

Only when I lowered myself to the ground, the soil and grass cold against my kneecaps, did Holly look up from Tristan's face.

“I-I am so sorry, Lola.” 1

I'd never heard her voice like this before. It was unrestrained, a wound that bled and bled and bled. The words poured from that wound, mixing with the remnants of Tristan's blood on the ground.

“She said she-she said she'd kill him if I didn't help her.” Holly whimpered, her eyes traveling over Tristan's smooth face,

marveling in both awe and horror at the expression calcified by death's cold touch.

“The Blood Witch said that?” Giovanni asked in a gravelly voice, one thick with grief.

“No, Cassidy did. She-She was my sister, and she knew-she knew I loved him.” 1

Her shoulders shook as her face contorted in pain. More tears than I'd ever seen from a single person trailed down her cheeks. When she lifted her eyes to meet my own, I knew deep in my gut that Holly would never be the same after this. She would never be okay.

“I'm so sorry, Lola.” She whispered, truly and completely broken.

There was a hole in my chest where Sean's life had once been, and I couldn't help but think how differently things would've been if it had been Asher that joined him. The wound that would've been left behind as half of my soul was carved from my body would be irreparable.

I wouldn't have been able to live through that kind of agony-the same kind Holly was currently experiencing.

She's suffered enough, I decided.

“I forgive you.” I murmured, meaning every word.

There was a glimmer of surprise that crossed her face, but nothing short of a miracle could erase the pain that would follow her every singled day for the rest of her life. Her lips, glossy from tears, moved to form a response.

Perhaps she might've responded, but a flicker of light just a few feet away caught her attention. It was nothing more than a flash of red, like the whisper of a budding flame.

Holly frowned, reaching several feet behind her to pluck her mother's dagger off the ground. She stared at it for several seconds, a perplexed expression quickly forming on her face. With a single trembling finger, she reached out and touched the blood ruby attached to the pommel.

With a raw gasp, she yanked her hand away.

“What is it?” I quickly asked.

Giovanni's head snapped up. “What happened? What is that thing?”

“It's the Blood Witches weapon. It had...it had Lola's father's soul in it.” Breyona replied, narrowing her eyes at the object in question.

I didn't blame her one bit. The thing gave me the creeps, but the way Holly was looking at it, like it was her last hope, made me falter.

"I didn't mean to, but I think I did something when I-I pulled this out of his chest." Holly admitted with clear reluctance. "Our father's soul went out and..."

The longer I stared at the blood ruby, the more I noticed something different about it.

Whereas before it glowed with a light that reminded me of fresh blood, this time around, it had changed. There was a warmth radiating from its core, flickering, and waning exactly the way a flame would.

It was there, in the hollow of my chest, that I found the answer.

"...and Tristan's went in." Holly finished, now cradling the dagger to her chest.

I reached out for it, a slow smile spreading across my face. As Holly looked from my hand to my eyes, her hold lessened.

"I have an idea. Do you trust me, Holly?"

Slowly, like she was holding the secret to life and not a silver dagger, she placed the weapon in my hand.

"Now, lets see if we can bring Tristan back to life."