

Read Novel Alpha Asher Novel [by Jane Doe] Chapter 246

Chapter 246

Breyona & Giovanni

Five Years Later – Breyona’s P.O.V.

I appeared in a plume of inky shadow, emerging from the darkness like I’d been there all along. If there were any humans nearby-which my hearing told me there wasn’t- they’d see nothing more than a lingering shadow dancing along the brick walls of the abandoned store front I lurked outside of.

This wasn’t my ideal hangout spot, but for whatever reason, this was where Freya had chosen to hide a bunch of magical texts and artifacts. I absolutely adored my job of traveling the country via shadows, collecting information that was thought to be lost among the witches.

It was similar to what my parents had done, a realization that never failed to bring tears to my eyes. Even after all these years, I missed them so much.

I slinked along the back wall, past the rusted dumpsters that hadn’t been used in Goddess knows how long, to the backdoor Ember’s source promised would be unlocked. Sure enough, when I tugged the handle, it swung open with a metallic groan.

The inside of the abandoned store was far worse than the outside led me to believe. Judging from the discarded mildew stained stands and faded posters, this place used to be some kind of cellphone store. That was long before the Blood Witch-may she not rest in peace-turned this place into her own personal hiding spot. 1

Lola and Clara had been furious when they found out how much information Freya had been h*arding, keeping it for herself to hold over the heads of young witches everywhere. This was exactly why I signed. up for the job.

If there was one thing my parents believed in whole heartedly, it was that knowledge should not be kept hidden. Knowledge was meant to be shared with the world.

I tiptoed inside, keeping my ears peeled. There was little in the way of light, but I expected as much after eying the blown fuse box outside. A quiet scuttle just inside alerted my attention, but as I crept closer, past clusters of soggy boxes and overturned displays, I realized it was a very chunky rat.

“If I were an evil Blood Witch with a superiority complex, hell-bent on destroying the world, where would I hide a bunch of dusty magical texts?” I asked myself, lowering my

voice halfway through. Silence had a way of making the smallest of sounds seem louder, and the last thing I needed was to draw attention to myself if any rogue witches were nearby.

Starting my search, I thought back to last month and how drastically things had changed.

This was my first job since returning from my honeymoon with Giovanni. His parents had this incredible villa in Italy, set in the Tucson country side. It was surrounded by rolling hills and a vineyard as far as the eye could see. There was even an olive grove, whose owner was more than happy to give Giovanni and I a tour.

It was Lola, and her crazy a*s magic, that made all of this possible. She'd given Giovanni and I a wedding present, something we could've never expected.

For those two weeks in Italy, she'd made Giovanni impervious to the sun.

We were able to visit all of the monuments and do all of the wonderful touristy things I had on my list. A dream vacation after a dream wedding.

I kicked open one of the soggy boxes, wrinkling my nose at the stench that wafted out. Wet, mildew covered paper had a stench that was eerily similar to rotting trees. Moving on, I followed the dull tingle of magic in the air, and began searching one of the overturned displays. Grabbing a shard of broken wood off the floor, I nudged one of the display's doors open, humming the first song to pop into my head.

The sweet and soft melody that had been frequenting my head the past month was none other than the song played at my wedding. I shared the day with Mason and Clara, a decision I didn't regret in the slightest. 2

The dual aisles split in two by rows upon rows of our closest family and friends was incredible, lined with fresh roses and orbs of starlight that Lola herself had conjured. Even Ember and Tessa had a hand to play in the wedding. There were floating sconces with cobalt flame that flickered the breeze. A breeze which carried the scent of wildflowers from the vines they sprouted on.

Marrying Giovanni and having my breath ripped from my lungs as I spotted him in his tux, while also watching my best-friend marry the love of his life, was by far the best part. Well...almost. It was a tie, actually. The ceremony had been beautiful, but the reception was another thing entirely.

Seeing the look on Mason's face when Clara stood to give an impromptu speech, only to reveal the secret she, Lola, Holly, and I had kept for almost two months, was a moment I'd never forget. In fact, I had a picture of said moment tucked away in my wallet.

Mason had scooped Clara into his arms, tears cascading down his cheeks, when his bride revealed she was pregnant with his child.

There weren't enough words in my vocabulary to express how happy I was for my best-friend, and for the joy he had found in his life after enduring so much. The light in his eyes sent me reeling back five long years ago, to a conversation I overheard between Sean and Mason.

Just one month before Sean's murder, I'd nearly walked in on the two of them talking. It was their hushed tones that prompted me to stop, while a tingle in my gut told me to stay and listen.

"You like her, she clearly likes you. What's the problem, man?" Sean had asked.

It took Mason several seconds to respond. "You don't think it's wrong of me to want her?"

"How could it be wrong?" Sean replied.

"I had a mate, and I lost her. I-I can't replace her with Clara." Mason's voice cracked, a shard of it ricocheting off the wall and into my chest.

There was a sharp clap, and I assumed Sean had patted Mason on the back. "This is going to sound harsh, but I think you need to hear it. Your mate died, yes. But she also chose to reject you. Spending the rest of your life alone and hurting for a person who couldn't see your worth is a terrible waste. You deserve happiness, even if it's not with the one the Moon Goddess paired you with."

Mason let out a long, shaky sigh, followed by a halfhearted chuckle. "You sound just like Lola, you know? How come you haven't moved on from your mate?"

"I haven't met anyone quiet like Kanyon. You're lucky, Mason. It's different when you've completed the bond. Part of you dies with them, and that part of me knows Kanyon is out there waiting-waiting until we're together again."

It was funny to think that Lola's brother was responsible for Clara and Mason getting together. Sean had been more right than he could've ever known.

"Ah-ha!" I gasped, kicking open yet another door on an overturned display.

This time, instead of old phone cases and corroded wires, I found a box completely untouched by the water damage infesting this place. After a quick victory dance that resulted in me kicking the door and sending it flying off its hinges, I bent down to slide the box out of its hiding place.

Sure enough, inside was four different books, each one named after one form of magic or another. I scooped them into my arms and made quick work of slinking back into the shadows, willing the slippery little b*stards to transport me somewhere else-to the very person who sent me on this mission.

“You’re late.” Ember’s snarky voice permeated the room I teleported into. The stone crafted fire place to my left was the only source of light, casting a number of shadows along the heavily decorated walls.

I slapped the box of spell books onto the nearest table before propping my hand on my hip. Narrowing my eyes at the red-head, I spat back. “Easy for you to say. How long has your a*s been in that cushy chair? Three hours? Four?”

A smirk twitched onto her face. “Five, but who’s counting?”

Laughter rumbled in my chest, leaving my mouth the same time it left Ember’s. I approached the massive executive desk with my arms outstretched. She met me halfway, pulling me into a hug that all but enveloped me in her c*nnamon-apple scent.

“It’s good to see you, Ember.” I stepped out of her grasp, eying the emerald-green pants suit she had on. It was adorned with golden buttons that matched the dainty chain around her neck-a gift. from Brandon that she begrudgingly accepted only after he threatened her into it.

I made absolutely no attempts to understand their relationship.

“It’s good to see you too. I’ve been swamped with work, and I’ll admit, it’s nice to see a friendly face.” She winked.

With the box of spell books forgotten, we spend the next hour chatting, catching up with one another’s lives. I told her all about my honeymoon and the adventures Giovanni and I shared, while she both complained and bragged about her hectic schedule bouncing between not one, but two jobs. Another Magisterium had been built last year, this one in Zeke’s pack. Ember leaped at the chance to take over as Headmaster, even though she was already acting as A*bassador to the Witches. The only thing keeping her from prematurely greying under the work load was the fact that both jobs often went hand in hand.

“Encounter any rogue witches?” Ember asked offhandedly, as she always did when I returned on one of my missions.

Propping my feet up on the c*shioned footstool perched in front of the chair I sat on, I shook my head. ” Nope, sure didn’t. From what I could pick up scent-wise, there hadn’t been anyone around in weeks.”

“Good, good. I really hate sending them to the Tower, but I know it’s a necessary evil.”

My stomach twisted at the mention of the Witch prison Lola, Ember, and a few of the others had created. It was the only place on this earth strong enough to contain Witches that dabbled in dark magic.

Using Conjunction, Lola created a tower in the middle of the ocean that could only be accessed through special doorways planted in both Asher and Zeke's packs. As the only person able to transport themselves through the shadows, I was often stuck escorting prisoners to and from various places.

Lola had put so much effort and energy into the Tower that she was out of commission for over two weeks. Asher still hadn't let her live it down, but through her crazed efforts, the Tower of Delirium was born.

I still found the place horribly chilling. A tower comprised of snow-white brick, so pale that one could see their reflection in its surface, perched out in the middle of the ocean. Once inside its walls, there wasn't a magic on the face of this earth that could be used.

Not even my shadow abilities-which was scary as all hell.

"Hmm, I think that 'Elemental Magic for Beginners' and 'Potions, Elixirs, and More' would be better suited in Lola's pack, don't you think?" Ember mused, her eyes scanning some of the pages scattered around her desk. Her voice carved through my thoughts, chasing away the chill that the Tower never failed to evoke.

They held the respective student populations for both schools, along with the various magical types. Seeing as the Magisterium back home had more Elementals than in Zeke's pack, it only made sense to send the spell book home. Either way, its pages would be scanned and entered into the Academy's database so that all Witches would have access to the knowledge.

"Works for me." I nodded, sipping on the tea Ember had given me. The herbal mixture was a bit tart from the orange peels inside, but even they failed to hide the undertone of bitterness.

Noticing the grimace on my face, Ember smirked. "Tastes like a*s, doesn't it? I promise it'll help ease your nerves. It's the least I can do." Her eyes flickered downwards, to the apex of my stomach. "Have you told him yet?"

I swallowed a gulp of the lukewarm liquid, an inkling of unease squirming in my chest. It hadn't taken much for Giovanni to get me pregnant. In fact, it was all happening so quickly that I often wondered if some other force was at play.

"No, not yet. I...I'm working up to it." I sighed, brushing the strands of hair that had fallen out of my high pony from my face.

Ember nodded understandingly, but her lips were knitted tightly together. "Was Lola able to figure out why the baby is interfering with your shadow abilities?"

My hand drifted to my stomach on its own accord. Even though the life cooking away inside my body was a vast sea of unknowns, it was one I wanted to tread regardless. It wasn't just a piece of myself, but of the mate I loved with every fiber of my being.

"The most she can deduce is that the baby is inheriting its own shadow abilities. We won't know more until it's born, but I'm hoping it doesn't mess with them any further."

I was only a month along, barely noticeable apart from the fact that this little nugget somehow had the strength to screw with my shadow abilities. I'd be relaxing in bed, or taking a calming bath when the shadows would begin to slither over my body, seconds away from plopping me someplace new.

Each time I managed to stop it before I actually vanished, but my fear was that with the passing months, my child's power would grow.

Ember's eyebrows went up, just as mine had when Lola hit me with her theory.

"She thinks your child is inheriting shadow abilities?"

"That's what she said. You know, I kind of liked being the first wolf to have this kind of power, but now that my baby is involved I'm honestly terrified. I don't know what my body is creating. What if it's a monster?" I felt terrible to think these thoughts about the life I had helped to create, but the possibilities for this to go horribly wrong were endless.

Ember leaned back in her chair, practically swallowed whole by the silk cushion. She crossed her arms over her chest, and from the twinkle in her eye, I could tell she was about to speak with her usual dose of brutal honesty.

"Lola was playing with the fabric of reality by turning you into what you are. Like it or not, these sorts of things have consequences. This-this is one of them."

I sank my teeth into my lower lip to stifle a pitiful whine. "What am I going to do? After being taken, my wolf spent too much time with the shadows. Lola isn't comfortable changing me back to normal."

"When the time comes and your baby is born, no matter what it is or what it's capable of, we'll all be there to help you."

Even with so much left to the unknown, the promise of one of my newest and dearest friends was enough to soothe the jagged shards of my fear.

If only it could erase it completely.

Read Novel Alpha Asher Novel [by Jane Doe] Chapter 247

Alpha Asher Novel [by Jane Doe] Chapter 247—Tessa & Zeke

Six Years Later Tessa's P.O.V.

"What do you say we wrap up early and head out to the cabin—just the two of us?"

A voice I spent the last six years memorizing called out from across the room. I lifted my head. From the mountain of paperwork I was sorting through, a smile already tugging at my lips as I spotted the playful light shimmering in Zeke's eyes.

My mate and fiancé—a term I couldn't seem to stop using—was peering at me from across our shared office, a shameless grin tugging at his velvet soft lips. I drummed my fingers across the top of the desk, tapping out a pattern that filled the silence between us.

A jolt of electricity crackled along my skin, delving past my flesh to settle in my stomach. Once upon a time, I couldn't bare more than a few seconds staring into those eyes of his. Now I couldn't seem to get enough.

We'd come so far from where we'd once been. Not as far as Ember and Brandon, who had a sea of troubles even six years later, but those two were another story entirely.

I pursed my lips, tapping the end of the pen I held against my lip. Zeke tracked the movement with a slight tilt to his head. His nostrils flared with desire and I knew if I didn't answer soon he'd close the distance between us, fall to his knees at the foot of my desk, and burrow his up my pencil skirt as he had nearly a hundred times now.

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"Hmm, that does sound fun. Too bad you won't be going anywhere until those peace treaties are signed. Better get on that, Alpha." I giggled, my cheeks warming when a husky growl slid past his lips. He always did love when I used his title.

Admittedly, I enjoyed when he used mine as well. Only, instead of a pang of lust, I was greeted with a swell of pride.

Tessa, the first Witch to ever be named a Luna.

Our cabin was anything but modest, which I should've expected when Zeke presented it to me four years ago. It had a rustic quality I adored with its stone fireplaces and hand carved interior, but it's three stories and plethora of floor-to-ceiling windows gave it the same feel as a woodsy mansion. It could've been a cardboard box for all I cared, though. The cabin held a place in my heart that could never be replaced.

It was where Zeke and I shared our many firsts.

The very forest where he wrapped me in his arms and promised me in a whispered voice that I'd never again be alone—that he and all of our friends would forever be my family. The front porch where he kissed me for the first time, followed by the fire pit out back, where we watched the stars wink into existence in the sky before he sank onto one knee and promised me the world.

The bed where I gave him my heart and my body, and received something so very precious in return.

Speaking of something precious, the mark on my neck tingled at the thought of our cabin and the memories associated with it. No amount of strength or magic could force me to tear my

attention away from Zeke. More and more these days I found myself lost in the past, marveling at how far we'd come and at how much things had changed.

This was my future—he was my future.

Zeke's scratched his signature across countless peace treaties, all of which Asher had sent our way after personally reviewing himself. Even doing something as mundane as paperwork, his hair falling over his forehead as he scowled in concentration, Zeke was utterly breathtaking.

To think just six years ago I was a breath away from rejecting him, from passing up on all of this. I couldn't fathom the reality that beneath his playful exterior, there was a man with a heart of gold. One fiercely protective of those he loved, willing to do anything—absolutely anything to help them.

When my mom and Dad were murdered, I thought Ember was all I had left in this world. She was who I confided in, who I took solace in. Despite how the years had hardened us, there was this gaping wound in my chest that longed for a family—for a network of people who loved. me and enjoyed having me around.

While I still love Ember with my entire heart, no matter how troublesome she can be, I'd finally found the family I'd been searching my entire life for. And while she still won't admit it, I know she had too.

Lost in the dreams of the past, a heavy knock to our office door pulled me back to the present. It opens just a hair before Brandon's head appears in the gap, his hair just as unruly and overgrown as Zeke's.

“Got a couple someone's here wanting a word with the Alpha and Luna.” He drawled; lips tilted in a lopsided grin.

“Send them in.” Zeke called out, not looking up from his paperwork.

Meeting Brandon’s eyes and seeing the light that shone within them, a light my sister of all people cultivated, I smiled. “Thank you, Beta.”

“My pleasure.” He said with a tip of his head.

Clearly, I wasn’t the only one enjoying my title. It only made sense with Ember taking over this division’s Magisterium that Zeke name Brandon his Beta. The shift that occurred when letting Witches and Vampire’s into the world of Wolves was one some found hard to swallow. Zeke’s previous Beta was one of the many that couldn’t fathom a world of peace.

“Tessa!” A voice squealed, one full of enthusiasm.

Breyona burst into the room; her cheeks pulled back in a grin. She waved to Zeke, leaving Giovanni in the dust as she pranced to my desk. I stood, seconds away from pulling her into my arms when I noticed the little bundle of blue silk she held.

A sleepy wail emerged from that bundle, giving Breyona pause.

“Oops.” She mouthed sheepishly.

“Here, I’ll take him. You go say hello.” Giovanni chuckled, not an ounce of ire towards his mate or newborn son. The massive Vampire swept the infant into his arms, bringing him to his chest where he murmured sweet words just out of range.

I came out from around my desk, nudging the chair in place with the tip of my heel. “I can’t believe you’re here!”

She pulled me into her arms, smothering me in the buttery scent of her perfume. I held her tightly, my heart full and warm at the sight of them. Zeke and I tried hard to make it in time for the birth of Breyona’s baby, but we’d been just a few hours too late. Still, holding little Vincenzo in my arms had been a joy that left it’s imprint for years to come.

On cue, Vince let out a monstrous wail, balling his little fists which appeared from the hem of the blanket. The lights flickered and grew dim, prompting Zeke to look up from his paperwork. Not a second later, the diaper bag at Giovanni’s feet vanished in a plume of shadow and smoke. Breyona cursed, locking eyes with her mate. “He’s going to give us grey hairs once he reaches his terrible two’s. There’s a spare bag in the car. Somehow I knew this would happen.”

“Good looking out.” Giovanni said with a tilt to his lips. He kissed Breyona on the cheek and plucked the car keys from her hand, carrying Vince out the door and down the hall.

I didn’t miss the flicker of pride in his eyes at his son’s show of power.

Exchanging a loaded look with Breyona, I brought her over to the loveseat against the far wall and offered her something from the bar cart.

“Just a seltzer water. I’ve still got acid reflux from being pregnant with him. Who knew having to drink blood to nourish a half-breed Vampire baby would cause such issues?” She chuckled.

“I can’t say I’m jealous of that part.” I wrinkled my nose. “My stomach is way too sensitive to drink blood.”

“Luckily you won’t have to worry about that when your time comes around.” She winked.

I waved her off. “I’m not thinking about those things yet. Not until we get married, anyway.”

Leaning forward on the couch, she let out a squeal. “Oh, tell me how the wedding planning is going! Have you and Ember decided on a venue? What about a color scheme? You know, I never would’ve thought I’d enjoy sharing my wedding day with someone else, but having Clara and Mason take half of the planning load was just a Goddess send.”

I didn’t need any coaxing to get me to launch into the finer details of the wedding Ember and I were planning. It didn’t matter that she and I had shared everything our entire lives, even a crib at one point. There wasn’t a single piece of my life that I didn’t want to include my twin in. That being said, it didn’t help that she and I were like night and day.

It made things interesting, though. That was for sure.

Ember wanted seafood and steak, while I preferred more vegetarian options. Brandon made no effort to hide how hilarious he thought that was.

“You’re marrying a werewolf and you want vegetarian options?!” He’d cackled.

“Anyway, enough about me and my hectic life. Tell me about how things are going for you. How have you been since...” I trailed off, wincing at my absolute lack of tact.

Tasting the tension that now filled the air and our mate-bond, Zeke stood from his desk. With the peace treaties now signed in his hand, he gestured to the door with a knowing tilt to his lips. “I’m going to send these back to Asher and give you two a minute alone.”

“I swear I’m not going to break.” Breyona sighed only after Zeke had left, the door clicking shut behind him. “It...it sucks, yes. I’ll manage though. It’s closure, after all. That’s what I’ve been searching for all these years.”

Her shoulders dropped a few inches. It sounded like she’d been trying to convince herself of something and failed. A feeling I understood completely.

“None of us think you’re going to break. It’s natural that it still hurts, Breyona. Those Witches. took your parents from you. That pain won’t go away just because they’re locked away in the Tower.” I said not unkindly, taking hold of the hand that was picking idly at the label on her seltzer water. “If anything, we’re all incredibly proud of you.”

“Why would you guys be proud of me?” She huffed, barking out a laugh as she swiped under her eye.

I gave her a knowing look that lasted several seconds. “If I’m not mistaken, didn’t Lola and Ember offer to kill the witches for you?”

“Yeah, they did.” She giggled. “Clara said she’d help, too.”

“That she did, but you didn’t take them up on it. You did the right thing taking them to the prison. I might’ve never had the pleasure of knowing your parents, but I think they’d be proud.”

We talked for several minutes, going back and forth as we recapped the moments in each other’s lives that we missed. She told me about Vincenzo and how Giovanni’s family had fallen in love with the infant, showering him with presents and affection, while I went further into detail about the upcoming wedding they’d all soon be invited to.

Soon enough, Zeke and Giovanni appeared in the doorway. Both were wrapping up their own conversations when Zeke met my eyes, his expression softening as adoration swept across his rugged features. Breyona and Giovanni waved, saying their goodbyes as they slipped down the hallway and to the elevators that led into the main lobby.

“You ready to go, beautiful?” Zeke asked, his hand outstretched and awaiting my own. “Always.”

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Alpha Asher Novel [by Jane Doe] Chapter 248—Ember & Brandon

Seven Years Later – Ember’s P.O.V.

“Darcy Mathews, if I see so much as a single snowflake in the bathroom’s you’ll find yourself in detention for a week.”

This was the fourth time this month that the pipes had nearly burst from being frozen solid. Damn water elementals.

The squirrely brunette with her spattering of cinnamon freckles jumped a foot off the ground at the sound of my voice, unwittingly letting out a pulse of elemental magic that

spiraled down the corridor in a gust of chilly wind. It slammed several lockers shut, startling a handful of students.

“Sorry Headmistress.” She hung her head sheepishly.

There was once a time where Tessa and I couldn't search control our magic. It was easier for my twin. No one looked twice when you sprouted flowers in your wake or animated the topiary bushes. trimmed into animals. Starting fires, however, that drew attention.

“It's alright...” I sighed, taking it easy just this once. I already had a reputation of being a hard ass, but one more incident and I'd have the Witches council up my ass for the rest of the school year.

The shrill tone of this morning's bell sounded, chiming through the corridors of the Magisterium. Young witches flitted about, snatching books out of lockers, and ending conversations in a hurry to race to their classes.

“Everyone make their way to their homeroom, and remember ‘it is not the magic that makes the witch, but the quality of her character’.” I bellowed, reciting our Academy's motto as I made a beeline for my private office.

The moment my hand touched the handle and I pushed it open, I was grabbed and yanked inside. A jolt of surprise knocked me upside the head, even though I knew whose hands pawed at my hips and waist.

Magic crackled from my skin in a sharp burst, tainting the air with the scent of burnt fabric. There was a flash of crimson followed by a masculine grunt that made my lady parts clench. Brandon stared at me with wild eyes, his shirt singed straight down the middle. It cascaded down the hard lines of his chest in pathetic scraps.

“What the fuck, Ember?” He closed in on me a second time, forcing me against my office door which clicked as our combined weight forced it shut.

His breath hit my face in hot waves, the scent made stronger by his anger. This mate thing never failed to amaze me, even after all this time. The thought of breathing in someone's stale breath was revolting, but not when it came to Brandon.

Nothing he did managed to disgust me. The man knew how to work my nerves and stoke my anger, but nothing-not the vulgar words he spoke or his annoyingly pushy demeanor- erased the need for him that was coded in my very DNA.

I stared up into his eyes, tracing the singular line of his blown out pupil with a defiant tilt to

my chin. This battle between us had been ongoing for the past seven years, and both of us were still holding strong.

“What do you expect, Brandon?” I let his name roll off my tongue like a praise and a curse, each syllable sinful in its own right. “You can’t corner a Witch with dominion over fire and not expect to get burned.”

To emphasize my point, I placed my bare hands against his chest, through the scraps of his t-shirt. Magic warmed my insides, flowing down my arms to where my palms rested against the hard grooves of his muscle. I didn’t exert much energy, not nearly enough to leave an actual burn, but enough to sting his skin with the thrill of heat.

“Give me one fucking reason why I shouldn’t mark you right here, right now.” He hissed, forcing each word through clenched teeth.

Purring like a fucking cat, I ran my lips along his jaw. Pretending to mull over the answer, I hummed against his skin. His nails scraped along the door, along my waist which he gripped hard-so hard that I wondered if he thought he’d float away if he let go.

A growl built in his chest, warning me I was running on borrowed time. This game between us would come to an end, and with how long it had been going on, there would be nothing silent or peaceful about this crescendo.

“You haven’t actually won anything.” I reminded him. “I told you if you caught me, I’d let you put your wolfy mark on my neck, but I never specified when.”

Brandon’s growl turned into a groan, one full of so much longing and pain that I nearly relented. “What better time than the present?”

“Oh, but I have something better in mind.” He shuddered as I whispered the words along his skin, tasting the thin sheen of his sweat on my lips. “You and me, the forest by our house. Midnight. If you catch me, I’ll let you mark me, but only after you tear off every article of clothing on my body.”

It wasn’t the first time we’d slept together, not by a long shot. Call me crazy, but it was easier having sex with somebody, no matter how intense and consuming the connection, than opening your heart to them. Hell, I married the man without blinking twice. Yet the thought of his mark on my skin, our souls tied together for eternity, filled me with an insecurity that I loathed.

Accepting Brandon’s mark, completing the bond that snapped and sizzled between us anytime we were near, was the same as opening my heart and soul to him. I hadn’t been ready-hadn’t been sure. He had ample opportunity to leave. To grow tired or bored. To chase someone else, someone easier, but he hadn’t.

Brandon had stayed.

His groan of utter relief coiled around my legs, tickling my skin as it slithered up my blouse and into the folds of my bra. My nipples grew hard, grating against the rough fabric to the point of blissful pain.

If he didn't get the fuck out of here, there would be no tonight. I'd burn the rest of his clothes off his body and wrestle him to the floor.

As if he could taste my impatience, Brandon chuckled. The sound was low and throaty. "Fine but wear that cute little skirt I love so much."

"I will." I promised, trying hard not to pant. "Now get the hell out before I change my mind."

Brandon pulled back, a lopsided and horrendously charming smile befalling his face. "Yes, Headmistress."

"You're a nuisance, you know that? I'm supposed to be working." I huffed, straightening out my blouse and blazer.

Brandon was halfway out the door when he shouted behind him. "You love it, firecracker!"

Breaking my own rule of no magic in the corridors, I shot a small plume of flame after him. His painful whoop echoed all the way down to my office, leaving a grin on my face that lasted the next several hours.

I managed to plan out several events for the year before an inevitable distraction knocked at my office door.

There was the Hallows Eve fundraiser followed by the Samhain ritual to mark the end of the Harvest Season, which paved the way into our yearly Festival of the Witches, a large-scale event that showcased all forms of magic and the incredible things they could accomplish. Last year had been an absolute hit, even with the Vampire's and Werewolves'.

Painting a murderous expression on my face, I wrenched open the door and glared at the interruption that dared pull me away from my ever growing mountain of work.

"Is there a reason you're bothering me during school hours, young lady?"

Breyona's eyebrows launched halfway up her forehead. She let out a startled laugh and held her hands up in surrender, a feat that was no doubt difficult with the baby bag she had slung over her arm.

"You've gotten pretty good at your Headmistress voice. For a second, I was afraid I'd get suspended." Her face broke out into a grin. It was so damned cheery that I couldn't fight the urge to return it.

"Get the hell in here." I chuckled, yanking her through the doorway and into my arms. Pulling out of the quick hug I smirked, "you get suspended a lot in school, huh?"

She waved me off, winking at Giovanni as he sauntered into the room. "Oh, you know. Here and there. It's Lola that was the troublemaker. I just tagged along for the ride."

"Hah! I can believe that."

As I settled into my chair, I quickly realized we were missing a head. Breyona and Giovanni were both here, but their little one wasn't.

"Where's Vince?" I asked curiously. It had been too long since I'd last seen the curly-haired pipsqueak.

"We dropped him off at the daycare." Breyona replied, referring to the service we offered all our staff here. There were a few single parents working at the Magisterium, and I'd be damned if I left them without a safe means of childcare.

Giovanni grunted, which seemed to be his main form of communication. "The daycare was a good idea."

"Wasn't it?" Breyona gasped, her enthusiasm evoking a wave of pride that swelled in my chest. "Holly's been thinking about opening one back home."

"I can confidently say it's changed the way the professors and staff work around here. They don't have to worry about where their children are or who are watching them. Tell her to give me a call if she has any questions. I'd be glad to help out."

"I'll make sure she gets the message." Breyona chirped.

Just then, the door to my office swung open a hair. The face of my assistant, a young witch named Mariam, poked her head through the opening.

"Sorry, ma'am. There's been...uh, a bit of an incident in the daycare. There's a young boy that was just dropped off that's...well, he stole a child's toy and made it vanish."

A curse slid past Breyona's lips. "Was the toy wolf themed, by chance?"

Mariam nodded, her dimpled chin bouncing hurriedly. "Yes. It was a figurine, actually."

“Don’t worry, I’ll handle this. Stay and chat before we head out.” Breyona ran her fingers along her mate’s shoulder before slipping out the door, following the delicate clink of Mariam’s heels along the linoleum.

My lips peeled back in a grin that was all teeth. “I see Lola isn’t the only troublemaker. My only question is did Vince inherit it from you or from Breyona?”

Giovanni’s unusually stoic demeanor shifted as his eyes twinkled and the corner of his lips quirked up. The man was the Vampire equivalent to an unbreakable safe. Coaxing more than a handful of words from him was difficult for most, but I’d often get the feeling Giovanni and I had more in common than I initially thought.

“Do I look like a troublemaker?” He asked in a slightly accented voice.

I made a show of looking him up and down, starting with his mess of curly hair. He’d thank his Italian ancestry one day when he was ninety years old and still had a head of ebony hair. Not only that, but his skin would remain the same rich bronze that I had to bake under the sun for hours to emulate.

“You’ve got a calm exterior; I’ll give you that. I’m still willing to bet there’s a troublemaker just below the surface.” I said teasingly. “Vince has a thing for wolves?”

“Calling it a thing is putting it lightly. He’s obsessed with them. Breyona believes it’s a sign he’ll shift later in life. There’s no telling which side he’ll lean more towards genetically.”

“He’s still drinking blood though, correct?” I asked, taking Giovanni’s grunt as confirmation. “Seems he’s falling right in the middle of the spectrum. Only time will tell, but I’m excited to keep watch. Remember to send me any new developments so I can record them. It’ll be beneficial for future mixed generations. Anyhow, tell me about things in your pack. How’s Lola and the twin’s doing?”

“I’ll make sure you get what you need. Lola’s doing well. The twins just turned five. It’s a bit eerie how much they take after their parents. I’m sure you’ve heard the news. If you haven’t, you will when you head over and see them.”

Since Tessa’s pregnancy announcement eight months ago, the pack has been even more hectic than usual. Both the Wolves and Witches are bursting with excitement to welcome in the newest leader. It’s why Lola and Asher made the trip all this way, along with Breyona and Giovanni. The others would be arriving any day now as well.

Soon, the celebrations would begin.

There was a weight to Giovanni’s statement that gave me pause, something I couldn’t help but feel was missing. The pieces snapped together with an audible click, and my mouth dropped in surprise.

“She’s pregnant again, isn’t she?”

The slight tilt to Giovanni’s head told me I was correct. He ran his fingers down his neatly trimmed beard. His dark eyes flashed once, then twice. For just a moment, they seemed far away. I recognized that look because more than once Brandon had pointed it out on my own face.

“Things are so different now, aren’t they?” I mused, my voice no louder than a whisper.

“Sometimes I think I’ll wake up and find myself still working for the Vampire King, and that all of this was just one big dream.” Giovanni said, folding one of his legs atop the other. Despite the thoughtful tone his voice had taken on, there was a weight to it that wrapped around my heart and squeezed to the point of pain.

“It doesn’t feel real, does it?”

His eyes slid across the room to meet my own. “No, it doesn’t.”

“You and Breyona came from different worlds, yet you made it work. How’d you give in so easily?” I couldn’t help but take advantage of this moment alone with him and ask. The question had been weighing on my mind ever since finding out about their history. Even now, the mark on his neck shone brightly, a beacon that warned off all unmated Vampire’s and Werewolves.

Giovanni seemed to consider my question for several seconds, staring down at the palms of his hands as though they held the answer.

“I knew I wanted her the moment I felt the connection between us. I might’ve grown up wealthy, but that meant nothing to the Vampire King. You were either his servant, or you were his enemy. I’ve had to fight for what I wanted the entirety of my life, but I’d never wanted something the way I wanted Breyona. When you’re that desperate for just a fraction of happiness, the consequences just fade away.”

I nodded slowly, trying my best to understand even though there were parts I couldn’t fully grasp. “You weren’t afraid she’d leave you?”

Giovanni tilted his head, regarding me in a way that made me feel like a specimen on display. “No, never. Even if I had been, the prospect of a life with her was worth enduring that fear. Whether it be weeks, months, or just a few short years, any amount of time with her is well worth it.”

All day Giovanni’s words tumbled in my head, fueling the fire that Brandon had ignited earlier this morning. By the time the final bell rang, there was an aura of certainty that filled my entire being. I hadn’t realized it until now, but with it came a sense of security I’d been searching for my entire life.

I drove home with a grin plastered on my face and excitement thrumming through my veins. Slipping in through the front door, I could feel the warmth of eyes on my back, peering out at me from within the forest.

Inside, I was greeted by the remnants of cinnamon and search apple. The potpourri I'd been boiling this morning had cooled, filling our house with its mouthwatering scent. The skirt Brandon

had been talking about was in our bedroom, tucked away in the top drawer of our shared dresser.

It was a last minute decision to forgo underwear. A squeal created by the pull of pure adrenaline built in my throat, but there would be plenty of time to let it out later on.

Tonight was the night, I'd decided. Brandon wouldn't have it easy. I'd fight back, I'd make him work for the hunt, but the end result would be the same.

Finally, I'd let my mate put his mark on me.

The wooden slats of the front porch were cool against my feet. With a hint of elemental magic,

my skin began to warm, chasing away the chill of midnight. I took each step slowly, with purpose as a single pair of eyes watched from the forest line.

"Come and get me, big bad wolf."

Read Novel Alpha Asher Novel [by Jane Doe] Chapter 249

Alpha Asher Novel [by Jane Doe] Chapter 249—**Reunion**

Lola's P.O.V.

10 Years Later...

"Ramona, so help me! If you don't stop stealing your cousin's toys I'm going to sick Aunty Ember on you, and you know she won't hold back." I shouted from the kitchen, craning my head to look over my shoulder where I locked eyes with my dashing mate.

Asher was leaned against the wall, his arms downright bite-able in the fitted t-shirt he wore. He brought the beer in his hand to his mouth, lips twisted in a knowing smirk that had me contemplating a fourth child.

If this man doesn't calm down, we're going to have to hire a second nanny.

He returned his attention to Zeke and Brandon as though our little heated exchange hadn't occurred. On cue, Ramona let out a shrill scream that quickly morphed into pulses of erratic laughter. A familiar pang of longing hit my chest as it did every time I heard my daughter's laugh.

She sounds just like Mom.

Ember's monstrous roar emerged from the living room, followed by a cacophony of giggles from the other children. There were so many you'd think we were building our own army. A soft tug to my apron drew my attention downward, to Maven's sweet smile and head of dark hair.

"Mom, you're going to burn Granny's custard. Here, let me do it."

I stepped aside and watched as Maven took search control, stirring the bubbling mixture and scraping the spoon around the edges of the pot. He cranked the heat down just a hair and tossed in a dash of salt.

The grief in his voice made my throat constrict as a knot began to build. No matter how hard it was, I swallowed the tears that threatened to fall and pasted a loving smile on my face.

It had been one month now since Grandma had been called back home by the Moon Goddess. Much like with everything else in life, she had known it was coming. I think in a way we all did. She'd been surrounded by her family and friends when the time finally came and her spirit slipped away, guided by her oldest friend, her wolf. There hadn't been a dry eye in sight, but the hardest part was explaining things to Ramona and Maven.

The two of them had adored their great-grandmother, but it was Maven that formed a special connection with her. Mere hours after her passing, we found a book of all her recipes atop his bed. Baking was something they often did together, and as the years passed and Maven's skill grew, I knew it was because of her.

There was something else Grandma had taught Maven-something we only recently noticed.

Maven was using magic.

For all intents and purposes, it shouldn't have been possible. In the entire history of Witchcraft there had never been a male witch, but I knew what I had seen and so did Asher.

After careful planning and lengthy meetings with Tessa, Ember, and the others, we decided that the best course of action was to send Maven to the Magisterium. More

than anything, though, I wished I could've asked Grandma about Maven and his budding magic.

For some reason I wasn't sure I'd ever understand, fate saw it fit to grant my wish.

The night Grandma slipped away, after I'd cried my heart and soul into Asher's chest, I found myself in the grove where ten years ago I said a final goodbye to my brother. Grandma was there, standing in a way that made me wonder if she'd been waiting for me.

She had changed, but in the best of ways. Time no longer weighed her down, tugging on her shoulders and warping her posture. Her face was free of lines, but still held all of the wisdom she'd bestowed on everyone she came in contact with.

"He is special, Lola. Ramona too. Protect them, my dear, and the wonderful life you have built. Watch them usher in a new era, and never forget how much I love you. Until we meet again, sweetheart."

After watching her walk into the mystical grove Sean had vanished into all those years ago, I awoke in bed surrounded by Asher's arms, cradled in his embrace. Tears streaked my face and as I looked up, I found myself staring into his open eyes.

"She's gone, isn't she?"

It wasn't just grief that weighed on my heart, but happiness. Joy. Grandma wasn't gone.

No, she had just gone home.

Now, as I looked into the eyes of my son, my body thrumming with the pure love I had for my family and friends, I understood that sentiment more than ever.

Maven cocked his head the way I'd seen Asher do thousands of times. "What's wrong, Mom?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all. You're pretty amazing, you know that? Granny left her recipes in the right hands." I said, ruffling his hair. The proud tilt to his lips reminded me of myself, even if his demeanor was more like Asher's. A small squeal came from the living room, standing out amongst the other maelstrom of noises. "Think you can handle it from here while I check on your brother, Mave?"

He puffed out his chest, which was made even more adorable by the smear of powdered sugar on his cheek. "I've got this."

Before I could slip into the living room where chaos awaited, I was pulled into Asher's arms. The sparks hadn't lost their intensity, even after all this time. They were the one thing that renewed my energy when life started pulling in too many directions.

Asher smirked down at me knowingly before planting his chin on top of my head.

“How’s fatherhood suiting you, Brandon?” I teased.

Brandon took a long swig of his soda. There were some dark circles beneath his eyes, but it wasn’t due to his drinking habits. No, Brandon had given up alcohol a long time ago. These circles had a life of their own and went by the name: Niko.

“Oh, you know. I absolutely love only getting three hours of sleep a night.” Despite his complaints, there was a twinkle in his eye whenever he spoke of Ember and the baby. Zeke barked out a laugh, slapping Brandon on the back. “Aw come on, Beta. You should be

the lack of sleep, man. Besides, isn’t it worth it?”

Brandon glanced towards the living room where little Niko sat bundled in his Aunt Tessa’s arms. There was an almost dreamy quality to his expression when he said, “yeah, it is.”

“I don’t know about the rest of you, but I’m dying to see if little Niko is going to inherit his Momma’s magic.” Zeke grinned, rocking on the balls of his feet. Brandon cast him a look which he shrugged off. “I know, I know. Boys don’t inherit magic, but you’ve seen Maven over there. If he’s inherited his mom’s magic, who’s to say Niko won’t inherit Ember’s?”

Asher and I locked eyes, and even though neither of us said anything, there was an odd sort of understanding that passed between us.

I shrugged. “The times are changing. It makes sense that Werewolves, Witches, and Vampire’s might change along with it.”

With that in mind, I slipped out of the kitchen and into the eye of the storm.

Toys were strewn about, varying in age level. A sea of search Lego’s blocked my path, eying my feet with obvious hunger. I avoided those death traps at all costs. Next were the toy trucks and action figures, most of which were missing limbs, courtesy of Ramona, or covered in thin vines, courtesy of Tessa’s little girl, Willow.

“Lola! Look at what I painted.” The voice of my half-sister, who had just celebrated her ninth birthday, rang out from across the living room.

Her curly hair, the same warm shade as Flora’s, was a tangled mess around her shoulders as she parted the sea of toys and vicious children with a sheet of paper in hand.

She didn't give me the chance to glance down before shouting, "Do you like it? It's me and you!"

Sure enough, there were two hastily painted figures, one taller than the other. Both had long hair, though the taller figure was dark and pin-straight. I smirked at the golden crown she'd added to both our heads.

"Princess Daisy has a nice ring to it, doesn't it?" I winked, causing her to giggle. "I can either put this on my fridge or if you want, you can hold onto it for me." T

Daisy eyed her artwork with obvious interest before reaching for it slowly. "I think I'll keep it, but I'll make sure it stays extra safe!"

As Daisy pranced away to continue painting, I scanned the obnoxiously crowded living room for the newest addition to the family. Luckily, our house had plenty of space to accommodate so many people and children, something I'd never take for granted.

On the extra-large sectional that divided the living room in two was my dad and Flora. Dad had his arm around her slender shoulders, while my youngest sat on her lap.

Wyatt's baby blues found my face and his chubby cheeks puffed out as a grin took over his face. He squirmed on Flora's lap, thrusting his hand in my direction to point at where I stood.

"That's my mommy." He squealed.

Wyatt hadn't yet shown any signs of magical abilities, but now that we knew male Witches were a possibility, I was keeping my eyes peeled.

"How're you doing, kid?" Dad asked, his gruff voice hiding almost all traces of his obvious sadness.

I pegged him with a smirk. "I haven't been a kid in over ten years, dad."

"You're always gonna be a kid to me, kid." His chest trembled as he chuckled. The humor that twinkled in his eyes was fleeting, though. As it faded, so did the laugh lines around his mouth and eyes. "Really, though. How are you handling all of this? How's the twins?"

I glanced over at Ramona, who bore resemblance to both me and my mom. The only thing she got from Asher was his eyes and his temper. She was in deep conversation with Ember, both of them speckled with mud, which made sense considering the back door was wide open.

"They're doing as well as can be expected. They understand what death is, but it's

permanence. As for me, I'll be alright. It's...different without her here, though." I stumbled over my words, feeling young and out of place. Thirty-two years old and I was still stumbling through life.

Dad patted my hand, covering it with his own. "You're doing an incredible job, Lola. Not just as a mom, but as a Luna and a Queen. There's always gonna be times where you feel lost, but you've got family here to help keep things on track."

A heavy ache settled in my chest. "You're going to make me cry if you keep sweet talking me, and then Wyatt's going to cry."

All of our attention was drawn to Clara and Mason's daughter, Iris, when her twinkling laughter sounded from across the room. She'd been playing dolls with Tessa and Zeke's daughter when the three-year-old Witch made flowers sprout along the carpet. One of them. worked their way into Iris's curly hair, it's petals unfurling as it blossomed.

"Willow gave you a flower, Iris." Clara said brightly, looking over her shoulder to share a laugh with Mason.

With his parents watching from the end of the couch, Vincenzo called out, "can I have one?"

"Sure!" Iris replied.

One of the flowers, which resembled a lily now that I stood closer to them, vanished in a puff of shadow. It reappeared several feet away, resting in Vincenzo's palm.

While Breyona and Giovanni laughed, fawning over their little boy's display of magic, Holly and Tristan's daughter skipped into the room. In her arms was a tea set, which she plopped. down on the floor and started sorting through.

"Aunt Lola?" Odette called out. "I made us rose tea!"

"Rose tea. How'd you know that's my favorite? Who told you?" I exclaimed, sharing a smirk with Holly. Tristan hovered at her side, his expression soft as he watched Odette play. It had been years since I'd seen a true scowl on his face.

Sinking into the couch, I watched the kids play and marveled at how quickly they seemed to grow. Grandma's absence was palpable, a force that lingered in the room like a noxious cloud. That was the grief speaking, though. I knew more than anything that Grandma was here, just not in the way we wanted.

Half an hour passed when Maven charged into the living room. The oven mitts on his hands. were huge, swallowing both of his forearms.

"The cookies are ready!" He announced proudly.

Just then, his foot hit one of the many toys strewn across the floor. The toy truck he kicked unleashed a howl, its headlights flashing. As Maven's balance was compromised, time seemed to slow.

The tray of cookies in Maven's hands went soaring, while Maven himself was carving a path straight to the floor. I lashed out with my magic, an act that was now second nature after all these years of training. Just a small pulse was needed, a wave of energy that surrounded Maven and kept him from falling, depositing him back on his two feet.¹

Before I could save the sheet of cookies, they vanished in a plume of inky shadow. They didn't remain gone for long, though. Vincenzo looked all too proud of himself as the sheet of cookies reappeared on the coffee table.

Right as food was being served the others showed up. Deacon and Bridgette sauntered in through the front door with their son Elias in tow. Dina and Spence came next, followed by their son Dante. Even Claire and Killian made it in time.

There was thirty-one of us in total. Twenty adults and eleven children. Dinner was absolute chaos, but there wasn't a second that passed where I wasn't enjoying myself.

After everyone's stomachs were full and the sun had drifted down the horizon, we herded the children outside and into the backyard. The youngest ones, Willow, Wyatt, and Niko, were placed in a playpen where they could watch tonight's ritual.

Every single one of us, children and all, were given a white pillar candle. All it took was a single speck of my magic to make each one ignite, the flame dancing around the large circle we stood in.

"Tonight we perform a ritual meant to honor the dead and to celebrate the lives of those who's spirits touched us the most. It was almost twenty years ago that Ember and I performed this ritual for our parents." Tessa began, her voice silencing the excited giggles that came from the kids. (1)

As the final remnants of light faded from the horizon, leaving behind a sky cloaked in darkness and speckled with silvery stars, Ember stepped forwards and began.

"Those of you who have magic, release it into the air. Let it fill the circle we stand in. Let its beauty give thanks to the universe and the Goddess herself."

What happened next was nothing short of incredible. The shadows slithered from the forest, gathering at the edges of the circle. They pooled around my feet and around the feet of Ramona, Breyona, and Vince.

A pulse of magic exploded from my fingertips. Shimmering orbs of golden light winked into existence, gliding through the air like a swarm of lightning bugs. They circled my shoulders, but it wasn't just me they seemed attracted to, but Maven as well.

All along the ground flowers sprouted, petals of various shapes and colors unfurling to release a melody of sweet scents into the air. Roses and daffodils, flowers that glowed under the cloak of night. There were hundreds of them.

A crackle of pure electricity hit my ears, tickling my skin as it radiated from where Clara stood at my side. Even she seemed surprised at the power she possessed.

The candles we held in our hands flickered, their flames exploding in a myriad of color that changed with the passing seconds. Their glow was reflected on our faces, a rainbow of light and laughter that affected both child and adult alike.

I'd never seen anything so beautiful.

As silence rang true once more, I knew it was my turn to complete the ritual.

"I call on the one's lost, but never forgotten. The old and the young. The one's who were taken too soon, and the one's that left us when it was their time. I call on the one's who fill our heart with strength and our soul's with love." The thunderous beat of my heart matched the tempo of my words and the soothing river of magic I poured into the air. "Come to us! Come to us in this final goodbye."

What happened next was something I couldn't quite put into words, even decades later. The magic I wielded was old, ancient even in its prime. It was a subtle magic, the kind that transcended the planes of existence and delved somewhere deeper, somewhere untouched.

Gasps rang out amongst all of us, and as my eyes swept along the others, I realized it wasn't just Grandma I had called on.

"Mom. Dad." Breyona croaked, her hand covering her mouth.

"Ember, I can feel them. I can feel our parents." Tessa cried out; her arms secure around her twin.

"Good to see you again, old friend." I swore I heard Deacon murmur.

"My son." Dad said hoarsely, followed by Flora's broken whisper. "Mom...is that really you?"

I looked up to the sky, to the full moon that hung above our heads. It could've been my imagination, but I swore it was larger and brighter than I'd ever seen it before.

"Thank you." I said quietly.

With those two words I was met with a swell of love that filled my body with unending warmth. The sincerity behind it brought another swell of tears to my eyes.

I had so much to thank the Moon Goddess for.

'We have the rest of our lives to thank her.' Maya, my wolf and oldest friend, reminded me.

'That we do.'

With a gust of magic, we said our final goodbyes to the ones we'd loved and lost along the way, knowing that someday we would meet again. (2)

Until then, we would live.