

Alpha's Nala Chapter 25 -

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Chapter 25. Human Trial

Legacy

The Red Moonball is like any other mating ball in this world.

Yes, it happens once a year, every year. And yes, it has the same goal of assisting mythical creatures in finding their other halves.

The usual setting...

Though, the difference with this particular ball is its concept, in which other species are not allowed to join.

It is tradition for events like this to involve other people, particularly different kinds of existences, in order to have a higher chance of pairing.

However, the mixed-race, knowing how unpredictable they are, choose to ignore the belief and decided to keep it for themselves.

Not to be selfish or strict now, but to be SAFE — For others' sake, to be precise...

Not to mention, they are a PROUD race. They make sure their generations consist only of PURE breeds.

No hybrids, or so they believed.

So when Axel questioned the attendance part — indicating that the ball should be a Vampire and Witch party ONLY,

Then connecting it to what Seth mentioned earlier about the rogue vampires and black witches' hunting season,

And me realizing that it should be HUMANS that needed to be hunted,

My eyes widened like saucers.

It can't be...

But why?

The palace knew how tempting the mortal race is. That's why they figured it would be smart enough to ban them to the ball.

And for what?

Since prey is prey. Surely, inviting one to the occasion could cause an uproar, or worse, a war — and wars are not really a good thing right now.

Then, all of a sudden, I recalled Cayden's words, reminding me of how real and possible my assumption was.

So Humans, my race, THEY will be attending the Red Moonball...

My breath hitched at the thought.

I was about to speak my mind out when Howard beat me to it, explaining, "Axel has a point. Those 'pests', even if impulsive, are not that stupid to go to a battlefield knowing there is no conflict."

"True, they are careful and strategic beings." Dad nodded his head, "But they wanted to HUNT, at the Red Moonball? They do realize the place will be filled by us once they get there, right?"

"Love, it's hunting season." Mum, turning to her right to face Dad, reminded gently. "Surely, the 'pests' will not mind if their hunting ground was packed or not. They only wished to feed and cause mayhem... That's all they seek."

Dad growled after hearing that.

"But it's a foolish move, Love. A wasted effort. They know every time they strike, they will lose. Yet, they keep on going. Like dying was some kind of a game for them." He paused and stared at Mum, "They were once our brothers and sisters... it's just annoying that instead of giving us a chance to cure them, they taunt us back. Insult us, in a manner of choosing death over family." He ended, pinching the bridge of his nose.

Mum let out a quiet sigh.

"That's their fault and not ours, Jacob." She placed her hand on Dad's chest, "Don't think too much about it. Okay?"

Dad only nodded while stroking Mum's hand on his chest. Then, the two started ogling at each other.

Howard had to clear his throat, twice, to break our parents' moment.

Thankfully, the two didn't mind and went back to eating.

The rest of us followed.

“I just can’t believe we don’t have any leads as to why they wanted to ambush at the ball.” Howard started after a long pause, “There’s nothing there to pique their interest,” he added and took a bite of his roasted chicken.

“I think — ” was all that I could say before Axel interrupted me.

And I’m like, seriously?

I frowned.

“Which takes me back to my point.” Axel snapped, sounding furious now.

For a sweet guy, and never have I seen this side of him, Axel looks very dangerous when mad making me flinched.

Note to self; always be on his good side...

“If this is about survival, then it’s not us who’s being chased here. It’s somebody else, and that, right there, confuses me.” He pauses and wrinkles his forehead in pure concentration.

Then, with a lick to his lips, Axel continued.

“The palace does not allow other people, primarily mortals, to come to the ball. So why are those ‘pests’ finally decided to come to the ball? On that specific day? What do you guys think draws them to HUNT at the event?” He queried, sounding almost intrigued and worried at the same time.

The space became dead silent then; all must be contemplating on what Axel just voice out.

As for me, agreeing that my assumption stays an assumption, I lowered my eyes to our marble table and took a sudden interest in my half-eaten plate.

Midway of eating my salad, Dad spoke.

“Now that reminds me, I actually got this notice regarding a new race joining the ball.” He announced, killing the silence that devoured the room.

Hearing this, Howard choke on his chicken while Axel on the water he was currently drinking.

Mum, on the other hand, snapped her attention at Dad, almost glaring at him.

Seth?

He remained quiet. Too quiet...

I didn't even remember his presence if it weren't for my sudden headcount.

"New race? What new race?" Howard immediately inquired after drinking the water I had offered him.

"Humans, that's the new race." Seth finally uttered, and when I shifted my gaze to look at him, he was already looking at me.

I felt myself go stiff then and there.

Not because of his stare now, but because of his statement; he just unintentionally confirmed to me that HUMANS ARE ATTENDING THE BALL.

Shit!

Still, even if I already had an idea about this, I trembled in my seat. While everybody else, who was not expecting that, looked shocked.

"WHAT!" Both Howard and Axel screeched.

Seth, quite amused, raised his perfect eyebrow at the two.

"You heard me right. Humans will be attending the ball this year, well next year. Thanks to the hunting season." Seth confirmed, sounding nonchalant.

"But, " Howard started.

"Why?" Axel finished the question.

"Two words, Human Trial," Seth replied, earning confused faces from us — and I mean, ALL of us.

"Human... Trial..." Dad — who I believe just got out of his shock — finally spoke, his tongue rolling like the word was in a foreign language.

"Care to elaborate, sweetheart?" Mum asked while sitting up straight on her chair.

Seth nodded at her and one by one, he shot us a knowing look; It's storytime.

Everybody made themselves comfortable on their seat and seeing that we are all situated, Seth began speaking.

“To start, let me do a little history lesson first.” Seth started and crossed his arms in front of his chest, “Three years ago, before the war between the werewolves, the Hue Kingdom encountered a problem. This problem revolved around the RED’s difficulty in breeding. And seeing that it was a big issue, the elders of the mixed council started questioning our race’s future.

With this, and being determined on saving the bloodline, the Hue Kingdom step in to work. It took them half a year to find the right ways to resolve the conflict.

For whoever knows what kind of solutions they have come up with and used, our species started to successfully thrive once more. It was small in numbers though.

Still, it was good enough to keep the generation going. Well, not until three years later — the time after the war, and happens to be this year, the same old crisis occurred. But this time, it’s far worse because — ”

“WORSE! What do you mean worse?” Howard interrupted, he sounded troubled.

“The red match count dropped.” Seth bluntly responds, frowning at him — Big brother hates disruptions when he’s talking, “Before, we can reach eight out of ten or even a perfect ten — with or without the formulated solution.

Now, we only get two out of the ten, even with the same procedure and solution used three years ago. We don’t know why but we assume that the case is related to the recognition of the new breeds — specifically, the hybrids.

Not that we could blame them for their existence but it does reduce the chances of finding a pair. Hybrids tend to block the scent of the pure breeds, making the REDless confused and somewhat, mislead.

Nonetheless, the situation was disturbing. Especially, when the elders spoke about how our figures decreased this past nine months... We are at our lowest, two percent to be exact. That’s almost two childbirths every four years.” He explained, his frown turned into a scowl now.

“So you are saying that we’re probably endangered, brother?” Axel straightforwardly asked, worry was evident in both his face and voice.

“No. Well, not yet but we’re slowly getting there. Yet, we do have a plan.” Seth turned his attention to me, “Do you remember what I promised last Monday, boo?”

“Yes, ” I chirp through my confusion, “you promised to tell me the reason behind your guarding duty.”

Seth only nodded.

Others look perplexed as to what we are talking about.

But before anyone could even inquire or proceed, I quickly fired questions at Seth — mostly inquiries as to why I was involved and the reason behind the job.

Blame the long wait I've experienced from Seth; I just wanted this to be done and over with.

"Boo, slow down." Seth interrupted my grumble as he chuckles. "One topic at a time, please. And before you ask another question, make sure I had already answered the previous one. Got it?" He added.

I frowned at him but nodded my head in agreement.

Satisfied with my reaction, Seth proceeded with his 'lesson'.

Hopefully, my answers are next...

"After the failed attempts, the Hue Kingdom decided to search for another way to solve the breeding problem." His crossed arms made their way to the table and then he relaxes there, "That's how the 'Human Trial' was born. It's the same procedure with the RED matching, only more choices since..."

All Seth was saying was falling into deaf ears now because my mind went numb the second I heard the word, 'Human Trial'.

It didn't help either when fleeting ideas about the invitation, Seth's confirmation about Human attendees, Red Moonball, mixed-race breeds, Cayden's words, and the new process they call Human Trial swirled inside my brain.

Calculating, processing all their connection...

And then, like a snap of a finger, I got it.

I gasped.

"You will be using humans as part of your breeding process, aren't you?" I asked Seth, sounding more concerned than curious.

My big brother stared at me, surprised by either my quick thinking or my tone. And then, recovering from his astonishment, he nodded.

"Yes, that's why the Hue Kingdom invited the humans to join the ball, to increase the chances of getting matches. Especially the long-term REDless, which includes me."

"Oh." was all my response.

“Your quick, Boo. I thought I need to explain that further.” Seth compliments.

I could only shrug.

“Not to hurt your feelings brother, but isn’t it all too dangerous?” Howard protested, “I mean, hello, humans are PREY and we are PREDATORS. That kind of relationship is not really symbiotic in nature, you know.”

Well that, I didn’t think further...

Seth was about to respond when Mum cut him off.

“Actually Howard, sweetheart, that non-symbiotic relationship you’re talking about might change once you get into the process.” Mum said and I caught a glimpse of her smiling at Dad, “You see, when you get to meet your RED, you instantly feel this pull towards them, telling you that she’s your other half.”

“And when you get to face them, or even the slightest to touch them, a glimpse of your future with her will explode inside your brain, and that would seal the deal for you. The rest will be natural phenomena such as falling in love, being comfortable with each other, the chemistry... things like that.” Dad explained, smiling like a fool at Mum.

“But the most powerful aspect of the pull that you will feel is the urge to PROTECT. No questions or second thoughts, just protect. So if this means the same for the humans, then I can guarantee their safety around our kind.” Mum, once again, described and good thing the two of them stopped drooling at each other.

I quietly sighed.

“Of course, you can’t kill what you love.” Howard simplified in understanding.

Mum nodded at that, the rest did the same while I happen to have been fascinated by the explanation.

So that’s how RED matching works...

“But wait, ” Axel’s eyes went directly to Seth, “what’s it got to do with Flower then and why you, among all people, guarding her?”

I paused, almost forgetting that part of the story. However, instead of paying attention to Seth’s answers, my senses instantly concentrated on the intention of absorbing — much like savoring — all the information I heard.

So Humans at the Red Moon Ball, huh?

Hopefully, they will be safely partnered with either a Vampire or a Witch, as Mum and Dad had declared. Then, their role on helping the mixed-race breed and multiply.

But would that mean hybrids then?

Though I honestly can't picture how breeding would be for Humans, but that's good. Surely, the mixed-race will avoid another extinction issue...

Yeah, Humans, once they considered prey, are now the main key to save their race...

Ironic.

Humans...

HUMANS?

Wait.

But,

I'm...

HUMAN, too...

My heartbeat quickened and I felt a shiver run down my spine as the realization hit me, HARD. I quickly stood up from my chair out of horror, while making everyone around me shot me a fearful look.

"Lily, what's wrong?" Mum asked, hurrying to my side.

"Don't come near me, please," I said, voice shaking. I held a hand to stop her in time — I don't want to be touch in any way for now.

I then pressed my palm on my forehead, feeling something wet bothering me there, and when I check the hand, it was cold sweat.

No, not now...

I frantically scanned the table to search for 'him', but he was not there. Only the others, who were looking upset with me.

Truly, they would look like that with this kind of behavior for I never did this, well not in front of them. But the need to know made me proceeded on searching the face that I wanted to see.

I made a few frantic steps away from the table and when I turned, I saw him finally beside me.

His green eyes were full of worry and he was holding me, steadying my weak posture. I then notice myself shaking uncontrollably.

“Tell me, ” I swallowed hard, my mouth was dry but it doesn’t matter for I have to continue — I wouldn’t let a panic attack stop me from asking, “am I part of the ball?”

I don’t know if it was loud enough for Seth to hear but I did felt his body stiffened around me. Then, without a word, he reluctantly nods to answer the question.

Instead of a gasp, a whimper came out of me.

I’m like, WHY?

I should have never been naive about this, never thought that I would be an exception.

But can you blame me? Especially when I lived my life under a roof full of mythical creatures? Making me feel like one of them.

Still, I should have known better... Should have been more aware.

Even so, I will be part of the Red Moon Ball...

I guess being invited to the Lion’s Den is Seth’s reason for guarding me.

Of course, I’m his sister...

Guarding me is not because he’s some kind of an elite member of the security team, but because he was my brother.

He genuinely wanted to protect me...

I understand everything now, making me so dizzy that before I could even think straight, the darkness consumed me.

Making me faint then and there...