

Ascension of a Gamma by C. C. Chapter 58

Chapter 58 Rogue Gamma

– Rigel –

Gale should be back at the White Lake Pack by now. I could've started earlier but I had to make sure he wasn't going to come back. It'd ruin the plan. My friend had been waiting for months – what were a few more hours?

"Rigel!" shouted Mom from downstairs. "Come have dinner!"

I went down and joined her in the kitchen. She already had it ready for me on a hot plate – roasted beef and mashed potatoes. My mouth watered. No one cooked like Mom. I sneaked behind her then gave her a hug.

"Thanks, Mom!" I exclaimed then kissed her cheek.

She laughed as she put the plate down. "Grow up, will you?"

"I am grown," I replied, motioning to my body. She rolled her eyes and took off her apron.

"What are you doing back here? Are you

escaping work again?" she questioned with her hand on her hip.

I stuffed my mouth with the mashed potatoes. "Mmm... so good, Mom. Your cooking's the best!"

"So you are," she said, sighing. She sat beside me as she folded the apron. "Rigel, I understand it's been hard on you, but you have to let her go."

Next, I cut a huge chunk of the roast beef so I could chew longer. "It's what she would have wanted," she said softly.

I paused then shook my head and continued. It wasn't about what she wanted, it's about what I wanted. I wanted a future with her, and it was taken from me. I couldn't help but blame myself for what happened. Her life was on me thus, it was only right that I get my revenge. I'd never have peace until I avenge her, until that asshole was killed by my own two hands.

Mom held my hand. She spoke with that soft loving voice full of motherly love. "I know you're up to something."

I turned to face her.

What does she know? How?

She only smiled and placed a hand on my cheek.

"I know because you're my son. I can tell when you're hiding something. I can tell when you're hurting. I won't stop you from doing what you think is right, but always remember that I love you and Maya always loved you. If she was here right now, she'd want you to be happy."

I smiled at her. Taking her hand off my face, I placed a soft kiss on the back of her hand.

"I could never hide anything from you," I said, and she shook her head. "I want to be happy, Mom, but I can't be until her soul rests in peace."

"Who are we to say she isn't? The Goddess

"The Goddess understands what I'm about to do," I said, cutting her off. I let go of her hand then moved toward the door.

Even at this moment, I still won't see her cry. She had always been strong. After

Dad died, she kept it together for me. And now, just like Dad, I might never come home.

I felt her hug me from behind, her arms around me tightly like she wanted to keep me in place. At least, in our last moments, she wasn't distant and cold." Will I see you again?" she whispered, her voice cracking at the end. Gently, I removed her arms and opened the door, going outside without turning to look at her. I knew if I did, I'd run back to her and abort the mission.

I'm sorry, Mom, but I have to do this.

I'd already come this far. I'd already waited this long

I can't turn back now.

Slipping into the shadows, I carefully headed to the "Fun House", a moniker Gale didn't approve of explicitly. He liked it. It was just like him. It hid the true nature of the place.

Thick concrete with a customized interior to keep their screams shut from the rest of the world and a glass ceiling to give them a ray of hope. It was Gale's idea, the

sick bastard.

My friend hadn't talked yet so he should still have his sanity intact. Inside the building, the smell was nothing short of disgusting, and yet Gale's team of similar-minded bastards could spend hours in here.

"Rhea! Why don't you take a break, sweetheart?"

Something metal fell on the floor. Rhea was in my face the moment the clanging sound echoed in the room.

"We don't use names here, Gamma," she hissed through full red lips. A cutesy mask that resembled that of a cat's, covered half of her face. It was weird that one corner was decorated with a long feather when cats have fur.

I smirked at her then gently shoved her to the side. The man chained down on the floor had his head hung low, blood and sweat and saliva dripping into a pool under him.

"Are you scared he'll free himself and kill you?" I mocked.

Beta said

"You know what, why don't you do a little something for me?" I said, placing an arm around her shoulders.

I took out a box from my jeans pocket then handed it to her.

"I need you to send that to Liam. He's over at the White Lake Pack and I'm too busy to have to deliver it in person. Think you can do it?"

She escaped from my hold then faced me, tearing her mask off to show a very pissed-off expression.

"I'm not your errand girl, Rigel! What are you even doing here? You hate this place."

"Not everything about it," I smirked.

We were an item for a while before Maya came into my life. She backed off without any fuss, but there was no mistaking that she still wanted me. She could hold up a front all she wanted – she loved it when I was calling the shots.

I closed the small distance between us then tipped her chin.

"You're being disobedient, Rhea. You know I don't like that."

She rolled her eyes at me. "I won't fall for that, Rigel. It's been two years. I've changed," she said, forcing herself out of my hold. "I'll send your stupid box, but you don't have to stoop this low."

She backed away from me then opened the door. "Maya wouldn't want you to either," she said as she slammed it in my face.

I stood still, blinking at what just happened, my ego damaged. A laugh came from my friend.

"Smooth," he said hoarsely in between laughs.

"Shut up."

Everyone around me was changing in one or another. They were all moving on with their lives while I was frozen in time. I had to do this – else I'll be stuck in the past. I got the keys off the hook and began to set the prisoner free.

He fell face flat on the floor with a grunt. Groaning, he stood up and stretched his arms and legs.

"How are you still alive?"

He smirked. "My fruit basket didn't want me to die," he said as he helped himself into the potions to help his wounds heal faster.

Whatever the fuck that meant.

"Your pack has a witch?"

"None of your business," I replied, and he chuckled. He groaned as his wounds started to close up. The acceleration intensified the pain.

Investigating matters that involved rogue involved rogues, themselves. That rogue was supposed to wait by the borders. He was selling information on the Blue Moon Pack and I was his client. Apparently, so was this bastard.

Unfortunately for the two of us, fucker just had to breach the boundaries and attack Anna. Then he was taken out because he was hanging around the boundaries. He was simply at the right place at the wrong time.

"Serves you right for volunteering to get caught."

"I wanted to see her," he said nonchalantly.

"You wouldn't have gotten the chance to if I wasn't there. The rogue almost killed

her."

"He's dead and she's alive. That's all that matters." He ripped his shirt off and threw the rag on the floor. "I need a bath."

"You'd need more than that," I replied. His wounds were finally healed. "Let's get out of here before the next shift. My team's next and with your slow shitty ass, we'll both get caught."

"This doesn't do shit," he replied, opening his arms.

"By the way, your prisoner escaped. He's back at the White Lake Pack as we speak."

He grunted. "Doesn't change a thing. We're still doing this, yeah?"

"All the way," I said firmly as I went out.

I was the only one who knew about that rogue. Until he spouted shit that he was meeting with him. I got to learn that a ghost pack was looking to take down Myron. I met up with his Alpha. We got talking, and now, I was helping his Head Gamma escape so we could proceed with the plan.

We had only one goal: kill that fucking bastard.

Andrix inhaled loudly beside me then chuckled. "I feel like going for a run."

I ignored him and made my way towards the borders. He followed in silence. Until five minutes later, and after every thirty seconds, he kept asking, "How much longer?" in annoyance.

As Head Gamma, I knew where everyone was posted and when. One would think it'd be easy for me to slip in and out of this territory unnoticed, but I also knew what they were capable of – what my own team was made of.

I could maybe pull this off alone, and with a plus one, my chances drastically took a plunge. Still, it wasn't impossible.

Voices came from our side. I paused then hid behind a tree. "This should be fun,"

Andrix whispered as he made to move towards those voices.

Getting louder now, I lunged at him and tackled him to the ground. "Shut the fuck up and wait," I warned. I wasn't going to lose everything at this point because his short-tempered ass wouldn't wait. So here I was, on top of a full-grown man, a hand covering his mouth to shut him up.

The patrols passed us by, none of them taking notice of two men behind the bushes. I was relieved but also disappointed at these assholes. An enemy could've been in my place! What the fuck was Gale teaching these kids! 1

When I was sure that they were gone, I got back up on my feet and gave him a hand. "Now shut it. We don't have much time. We have to get out of here before my team takes over the shift," I said firmly as I turned my back on him and continued walking

"Are you gay?" he asked, catching up to me. My wolf gave me a mocking look.

"You know why I'm doing this. What the fuck makes you think I'm like you," I

spat in a low voice,

The fact that you were on top of me just moments –

I smacked him in the head with a fist to shut him up. He groaned silently as he massaged his scalp. Now close to the borders, the current patrols were preparing to receive my team. I had purposefully assigned the newbies on the northern borders for this very purpose.

"Stick to the plan," I told him then left him in the trees as I showed myself to my men.

"Who goes there?" one of them asked as the others aimed their Moosberg 500 shotguns at me.

Nice.

"It's Rigel!" another exclaimed and they lowered their firearms.

Not nice.

I walked up to them with a smile. "Good to see you fuckers are awake."

"We don't sleep on the job, Sir!"

"Call me Rigel. My team here yet?"

As I made small talk with the gathered crowd of five, Andrix sneaked around them and knocked off one. The kid fell limp on the ground. Having caught them off guard, I knocked two to sleep while he dealt with the remaining two.

"That was easy," he commented.

"Newbies," I answered. "You're welcome."

"Rigel?" said a familiar voice behind me.

Shit, they're early.

"It's the prisoner!" shouted Nalia.

I turned around to face them – my team. Except for Reese, they were all handpicked and trained by Liam and me at the initial stages of their unit's development before I was given full authority over them. Their purpose: keep the Alpha blood safe.

We werewolves prided ourselves with the bond within the pack and respected the hierarchy. The Alpha bloodline, the Beta bloodline, the Gamma bloodline – these were all utmost importance for they held the pack together, generation after

generation.

Nalia had her katanas out. Sabri had one revolver aimed at me, the other at Andrix.

"Where are the others?" I asked casually.

"We're enough to take you down," Nalia replied.

I trained them well. One look and they already gauged the situation.

"You'd raise your arms at me?" I questioned authoritatively.

"We serve one purpose. You endanger the pack..." answered Nalia.

They began to move in a slow arc to surround us.

"You don't want to do this," I said as I shielded Andrix from them.

"You betrayed us," said Nalia with a stern look on her face.

"Run," I told Andrix.

"One versus two hardly seems fair," he replied, chuckling as he faced the two women.

weun nave me TUI TITS, you ass. UIT my signal..."

Andrix sighed, understanding my words. With a wave of his hand, he said, "Send my regards to your Beta."

At the same time, Sabri fired two consecutive rounds while Nalia came charging at me.

Now!" I shouted as I dodged the bullets and a razor-sharp blade. Andrix shifted to his wolf and sprinted.

Nalia attacked with both katanas now out.

Fuck. I brought no weapons with me.

I let her go and escaped her range, only to have to dodge as Sabri fired consecutive shots at me while coming closer.

Fuck, they're good.

Now that I was within Nalia's range again, she moved faster with every thrust and slash of her katanas, powerful, intended to kill. I moved towards Sabri as she loaded her guns, but now I was trapped between them..

As I got closer to Sabri, Nalia's moves got faster still. It would've been impossible to

dodge had I been an ordinary human. Sabri had reloaded her guns at the same time I within her range. Quickly, I dodged the shots and grabbed her by the wrist, hard, to me, then twisted her body to the side with more than enough force to take her down. Her guns now on the ground, I picked up one and smashed her face with i

Nalia came charging. Blood dripping off her face, I picked up Sabri and aimed the gun at her temple. With an arm around her neck, she struggled weakly with her head still dizzy.

"How could you!" Nalia shrieked.

"Drop them."

She didn't.

I pressed the tip of the barrel on Sabri's temple. She complied, both swords dropping to the ground.

"One move and you can kiss Sabri goodbye."

Sabri began to squirm that I squeezed her neck more as I dragged her towards the borders. Nalia glared at me the whole

time, watching helplessly as Sabri and I disappeared into the woods.

"Don't... Rigel..." said Sabri.

"Shut up!" I shouted then threw the gun to the side with much force that it broke into pieces as it hit a tree. I freed her and she dropped on all fours, coughing. Squatting in front of her, I tried to cup her face, but she kept swatting my hands.

"Hold still," I hissed.

Ripping my shirt off, I moved her hair out the way and wiped the blood on her face with it as gently as I could. Her lips pulled into a snarl. With a grunt, her fist met my jaw in a powerful uppercut, it had me falling on my back.

Fuck. woman!

Straddling me, I caught her fist as she attempted another hit, then caught the other as well. She pulled to free her arms but when I didn't let go, she head bumped me. Sabri groaned, as did I. Her fists lightly pounded my chest as tears fell on my face.

"You...you... you!!!" she screamed in rage.

"I'm sorry," I whispered. Pushing herself off me, she stood shakily.

"Sabri..." I whispered, raising a hand to touch her face. She avoided it like my touch would burn her.

My wolf whimpered.

I didn't have time for this! I forcefully cupped her cheeks to force her to look at me, but she kept averting her eyes.

"Look at me!" I demanded.

She glared at me with heated fury like she wanted to kill me that I lost the words I intended to say.

"You piece of shit," she spat.

"Your piece of shit," I replied before capturing her lips. She squirmed to break the kiss, but I wasn't having it. Pushing her against a tree, her lips parted, and I took advantage of it by plunging my tongue inside. She fought me, but like always, I won. Soon, her hands were on the back of my head, pulling me to her.

I kissed her until we both needed air. Gasping, I brought my forehead to hers as I closed my eyes. This was for Rain. One

last kiss before we leave our mate.

Shortly after Maya passed away, we found out that we were second chance mates. I wasn't ready, and she understood so we kept our relationship secret from everyone. I cared for her. Rain cared for her, but I couldn't bring myself to love her the way he wanted me to. It felt like I was betraying Maya.

Instead of mates, we were more like fuck buddies who helped each other out when

either one of us was in heat. She had fallen for me. She said so herself. Just after the pack's attack, I got a confession.

Sadly, I couldn't reciprocate her feelings. I turned her down and rejected her. After sharp slaps to the face, the door slammed.

I cared for, but it wasn't enough to make me forget Maya. I could only love my first mate, my true mate. Sabri deserved someone better. She was a strong, marvelous, gorgeous woman, but she wasn't mine to mark. I already had a mark, and I had already marked Maya.

This was enough for me.

"I won't involve any of you," I promised.

Her brows furrowed – she'd understand soon.

My wolf howled in pain and fought to emerge.

I'm sorry, Rain.

I stepped back from Sabri, watching as her face changed to that of shock.

"No," she whispered. I simply smiled then turned my back on her.

"Rigel," she cried. Rain growled at me." Why?"

For Maya.

"Accept my rejection," I said coldly as I shifted into my wolf. Now free, he pushed me back harder, but I fought to keep him in the backseat. Then, I sprinted before I could hear her cry.

The feel of the wind on my fur, my feet pounding on the dirt – the world zoomed past me in a blur.

I'm sorry. I cut myself off the pack's link.

I'm sorry. I cut myself off from Lexy's link.

I'm sorry. I cut myself off from Gale's link.

I'm sorry. I cut myself off from my mate's link

I tried to be patient. I spent my time investigating, looking for clues, and interrogating countless assholes just to search for concrete evidence that the Blue Moon Pack was responsible for their deaths. For two years, I kept looking...

I had run out.

Why must that bastard Myron live while Maya and Sarina and Samila died?

It wasn't right. I had to set things right.

He was too weak to do it, but I'm not. I didn't give a fuck on who he was, who he used to be, and what he is to Liam. I didn't give a fuck about Salina. I was going to even out the scales. A life for a life.

Fuck you, Alpha. I cut off the last link, officially branding myself a rogue. Pain throbbed in my head, pulsing in my ears. I slowed down and swayed on my feet. I could feel my connection to the pack pull

itself apart, stretching and stretching, until at long last, it snapped.

I fell to my side, exhausted and panting. I had no intentions of going back. I had no desire to be accepted back into the pack. Gathering enough strength, I got back up on my feet.

I was a rogue. I was free. I was alone.

Sympathizing with my wolf, I stared up at the moon and howled. He understood my reasons, and whichever I chose to do, he was with me.

It's just you and me now, Rain.

"Took you long enough," said Andrix, emerging from behind a tree. "You stink."

I shifted back into my human form. "That's you, asshole."

He chuckled as he came over. "Didn't think you'd actually do it."

"Any news from your Alpha?"

"Like I said, we're still doing this," he said, grinning

"About time," I took a step forward when vertigo took over and I fell.

Andrix caught me halfway. Going rogue drained my physical body.

Andrix held me up with my arm around his shoulders and let me lean into him

"I know a place where we can camp for the night," he said.

I closed my eyes and nodded. Dragging my feet, I let him lead me to safety. I should be alright after a few hours of rest.

"If we make it out alive, you're more than welcome to join our pack," he said.

I let out a soft chuckle. "No, thanks. I only have one pack."

"Offer still stands, my friend."

I was a rogue now, but my heart would always be set on the Red Claw Pack – my home, Maya's home, Sarina and Samila's home.

I was a rogue now which meant there were no restrictions. Sleep well. I'm coming..

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Chapter 59 These Conclusions

– Liam

I played with the Head Gamma's ring on my hand, my thumb rubbing over the center stone, an oval-shaped star ruby. A star-like pattern appeared as the light hit it.

He finally did it. I expected it to happen but hoped it wouldn't since the slight change in him when Anna was around. He cared for her in the same way he cared for Sarina. However, it wouldn't have been enough to make him do this. It was something else, or more accurately, someone... who meant the world to him – Maya.

"He's going after him," said Luca.

"He's not our concern now," I replied. "He's a rogue."

"Rigel and Rain are our brothers!" he shouted, growling.

I drank the last of the bourbon then set the glass down. "If he was really our brother, he wouldn't cut the bond. Face i

t, Luca, he hated me for it."

He growled. "It's suicide! We have to go after him. I'm not losing my brother."

"That was his choice to make..." I said calmly.

We grew up together and trained together. We weren't brothers by blood, but we shared a strong bond, nonetheless. It had always been the four of us – me, Gale, and Rigel as the three idiots with Lexy as the only voice of reason. I didn't

want to believe things had changed since we both lost our mates, but he proved me wrong last night.

"... and I choose to save my Luna over a traitor."

Someone slammed the door open, interrupting my thoughts. It was Lexy. Her high ponytail now a hanging mess, she stood by the door seething then strode over to me.

"I don't want to hear it, Lex."

She pointed a finger at me with a hand on her hip.

"You have to get him back," she said

firmly. "I'm not losing my brother over a stupid suicide quest."

I rubbed my temples in annoyance.

"Lex, he let the most important prisoner escape. He threatened to kill Sabri in front of Nalia," I argued as I showed her the ring. "He returned his ring, Lex. He denounced his position before going rogue. He's not one of us now. Whatever he does is none of our business."

"He is our brother!" she shouted, emphasizing each word. "We four stick together no matter what."

"We're not having this talk," I said, standing up. "He's not one of us, Lex. Let that sink in."

She narrowed her eyes at me like I just said the most stupid thing in the world. It sounded stupid to me, but his actions proved otherwise. This was Luca trying to manipulate me into changing my mind. I ignored her and headed for the door. I had a meeting to attend to. I had to save my mate.

"If you won't do anything, then I will!" she screamed.

I stopped. Slowly, I turned around to face her and she stepped back until her leg touched the edge of the bed.

Is she stupid?

I wasn't going to let her risk her life for that traitor.

"No, you won't," I said firmly.

Her eyes widened. She tried to get past me, but I held her arm. I was faster.

She pushed at my hand to try to free her arm. I tightened my grip.

“Don’t you dare!”

I can’t lose you, too.

“You will not involve yourself in any matter concerning Rigel.”

“No, don’t. Please, bro...”

Tears began to build in her eyes.

You have too much to lose.

“You are to stay with your mate until he recovers,” I continued. She froze. “I give you this Order, as Alpha of the Red Claw Pack.”

Our link glowed red indicating that the Order had been set.

Gale gave her an Order? No matter.

She looked away, defeated. I let go of her arm and sighed.

“Since when?” she asked softly.

“I was counting. First, it was twice a week. Now, it’s four to five, twenty-four hours,” I replied.

I was busy with the pack, the investigation, and with the search, but it didn’t mean I pushed my little sister to the side.

“Also, Gale confirmed – «

“Does he know?”

I shook my head. “I don’t know. Sorry, Lex. There’s nothing more we can do for him.”

Her eyes wandered to the ring in my hand. “That’s his,” she said.

Luca agreed with a howl. When the three of us ascended into our positions, it was understood that we’d always have each

other’s backs no matter what. The three of us, looking out for our little sis and keeping the pack together. And when Goddess willed, our tight circle would expand to our own mates.

“Liam,” said Gale, entering the room. “It’s time for the meeting.”

That was what I needed to hear. I strode out the room, leaving her behind.

"I haven't given up on him, Liam. He's still our brother."

He was our brother.

Gale followed silently.

"It's not your fault," I said as we rounded a corner.

"I should've killed him," he spat. It was the first prisoner to ever see the outside world, but...

I looked him in the eye and firmly said, "I wasn't talking about the prisoner."

When the rogues attacked that day, Gale did what he could. It wasn't his fault Sarina was outside, wasn't his fault that Maya was with her. Someone had to pay.

Rigel was just impatient.

The Blue Moon Pack was one of the strongest packs. We needed compelling evidence to take them down, not mere speculation. I would not have my warriors attack the innocent. I would not have Myron have his way and destroy everything my pack stood for.

We reached the kid's office and barged in like we owned the place. He'd been helping out with the search and although it was still tense between us, he wasn't asserting a useless claim anymore. Good for him because I would've pummeled him if he pissed me off.

There was a map laid out on a long table that wasn't there before. Two Alphas and my Beta. He had no Head Gamma because

I have her

I could only imagine what my mate was going through right now. She loved her father, but her true origins were hidden from her. Was she confused, lost, alone? Luca whimpered. Could I bring her back? It'd been three months and no word from her.

Are you still mad at me?

I did some digging with the paperwork. My pack was associated with the Old Alliance. There had to be records. 2

The three of us discussed the plan. This wasn't an attack. It was a retrieval, a covert mission. Sneak in, sneak her out.

"Do you know about the Old Alliance?" Flynn asked.

"They're a ghost pack," I replied. "The alliance attacked their pack, weakening them. Do you know what happens to a pack recently attacked?"

"The smaller packs band to steal their land if they're being merciful. Rogues tend to get bolder," he answered.

At least he knew his homework.

"It's a good plan," I said, stretching my neck from side to side.

He raised a brow at me. Gale had a stern look on his face.

Will this work?

"My pack will take back our Luna. She is n

o longer of your concern."

His brows furrowed then his lip twitched. "You... You are not cutting me off from this mission. We have a truce!"

(Then I have a favor to ask."

It has to.

"What favor?"

"You want Anna back, don't you? When this mission succeeds, there's no guarantee she'll talk to you, let alone see you," I said, and he frowned.

"You don't know that."

"After what you did? She hasn't spoken a word about you since she left this pack."

It wasn't my place to forgive him. He'd been helping us, and I could tell he regretted it and he'd given up on her, but just like Rigel, leaving the pack doesn't sever the bond. Growing up together, going through life and death situations together – these create a bond far stronger than links and blood.

Damn it, Rigel!

"What do you want?" he asked, sighing,

shook his head. "Their location allows them to see all that approaches their pack from a good distance. Guests must be escorted because of the spells. Pack hasn't seen a rogue in years..."

Since Myron took over, or so I heard.

“What does this have to do with Anna?” he asked. “I heard about your Alpha Duel with Alpha Myron. Don’t think I’ve forgotten that you turned us down when you were under siege. She could’ve been – been...”

“That was me,” said Gale, avoiding my gaze. “Frankly, we couldn’t risk accepting aid from a pack that abused our Luna.”

You didn’t tell me about this.

Flynn’s face hardened. None of us said a word for a while.

“You have to let me talk to her,” said Flynn.

“I can arrange that.”

She’d probably hate me for it, but... I had to take my chances.

“Mate will understand,” said Luca. “She’s kind.”

“We’re exploiting her kindness now? What kind of mates are we, Luca?”

“The sweetest, most caring, and most protective. We’ll get her back and let her decide on her own, but whatever she decides on, we’ll continue to love her every day like it’s the last. For every moment without her is agony, and every moment with her is sinful bliss. Anna – she’s the air that we breathe that’s never enough. Her voice is the music that plays, a serenade in the wind. A fully bloomed rose who captivates all despite her thorns. She’s our captor, bound to her in more ways than one. Our sole liberator, and yet we’d rather she keeps our freedom. A gift born from an alignment of the stars, the one speck from this vast universe destined for us. What kind of mates are we? We are but lucky; undeserving of her. What kind of mates are we? We are but the speck destined for her. Nothing more and nothing less.”

I chuckled. “You incurable romantic.”

He smiled.

IMtu.

“We... incurable romantic,” he corrected.

“Gale will go with you. Help me get our brother back, and I’ll get my mate to talk to you.”

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Chapter 60 Forgiving Imperfections

Anna

"Please talk to me," said Alpha Emery. For the last thirty minutes or so, he'd been begging me to talk to him. Why couldn't he understand that I didn't want to talk to anyone, especially him! I pulled the covers up to my neck and didn't reply. He could keep talking for all I care.

"I'm really sorry, Bella," he repeated. For what – for lying, for kidnapping me, for killing my father? Why did I even stay in the first place? I was free to go. Why didn't I just up and leave?

Why do I keep getting myself stuck in messed-up situations!

He sighed. "I'm sorry. I'll leave you alone."

"I didn't mean for any of this to happen, Bella. I'm sorry couldn't tell you. How could I, knowing you'd hate me for it," he said softly. "I'm sorry. I just wanted my daughter back." 1

I heard the door click close.

I moved out the covers, resting my back against the headboard. Staring at the walls, with the moonlight seeping through the blinds, I let my thoughts wander.

I thought about the days I was growing up – my time with Father, with Alpha Fraser, with Beta Colton, with my best friends, Flynn and Carson. Trained as the next Head Gamma, I learned to fight for myself and to put others before me. It was my duty.

I thought about the day they were taken from us, and what my life was like after. It was hell. Being scorned every day for their deaths, my love for cooking, and Carson risking his position were the two main things that gave me hope. Along with a promise that I'd fulfilled. I returned the Alpha ring, not as his Luna, but as his friend. That should be enough to free me from my promise.

I took a deep breath.

Then, I thought about my days at the Red Claw Pack. They'd been kind to me. Right from the start, they treated me like I was one of them. Me, a stranger! They looked

after me like a sister. Lexy, Gale, Rigel – I missed those three. Lexy and Gale fighting over the simple things like children, Rigel being the dirty-mouthed oddball that he was, would cross his arms and watch them with an amused face until he gets annoyed and smacks Gale in the head. In the end, all three would laugh like idiots – actually, it was all four of us laughing like idiots. We'd create a racket that Liam would have to ask us to keep the "noise" down because he had to work.

I missed those days – when we were having fun.

When the pack was under attack, I saw just how strong their bond was. I saw the strength of the pack under their leadership, under his rule. What did I do to deserve him?

He was simply amazing. His pack respected him, and he stuck to his principles. Then I saw the man behind the statue. He was broken, alone, and hurt – just like me. Willingly, he showed me the ugly parts of him. He trusted me enough to let me in...

Why did I ever doubt him? I know what I saw, but he wasn't that kind of man. He wouldn't cheat on me. How could I have been blind? So, what if I didn't hear him say it back – hadn't he always looked out for me? Even without his memories, he...

A sob escaped my lips.

What have I done?

I promised I'd always stay beside him. I left. I saw what he was like... but I- I still left him.

Liam...

If Father was here, what would he say? If Mother was here, what would she say? I was confused. I understood what happened. I understood their intentions, and yet I was still mad. At the lies. All their lies!

I miss you, Father. If I forgive him, I'm betraying you. But he's still my father and I can understand why he did those things.

"Goddess, won't you show me a sign? I don't what to do. My father killed my father. I'm doubting what I saw my mate de Luet found out my mother laud ma

1. do. I just found out my mother loved me, too."
You have the heart of an Alpha.

What she meant; I had no idea. The only thing I knew was that I was confused, and I didn't know what to do.

I missed them a lot. I wanted to see him again. I was worried about them. It shouldn't have taken this long for me to realize that I cared about them regardless of their shortcomings – I was nowhere near perfect myself.

So why did I stay? What is it that I wanted?

For two years, I wanted my freedom. And yet, every time it was presented to me, I turned my back on it.

Why did you do it, Anna?

I don't know.

Did you regret it?

I let the question ask it itself over and over again in my mind. The outcomes weren't easy, but...

My lips pulled into a smile.

Moving the covers aside, I got out of bed and headed to the door.

One father. Two fathers.

I am your daughter.

It'd take time – to forgive myself, to forgive him – but I was willing to use that time to heal.

All my life I had been running. I thought that if I wasn't around them anymore, if I left for someplace else, things would be better – that I'd feel better.

I was done running. I was done being afraid. We didn't have much time left – I didn't want to die with regrets.

Mother gave her life for mine. Living this gift to the fullest, with no regrets, with people I cared about and cared for me – she would've wanted me to be happy.

I wasn't sure about this Alpha thing. It was something we could decide on later. Right now, I needed to talk to my father, Alpha Emery.

I needed to go back to my mate, to my

Alpha

I needed to go back to my old pack and see Carson, and... maybe talk to Flynn. I had to know why Alpha Fraser hid the truth. I had too many questions that only he could answer.

There was so much I had to do than stay in bed and push them all away.

Running through the hallway, my steps sounded on the cool tiles. Past the library, past mother's room, down the stairs, and across the living room – I came to a stop. It couldn't be. This woodland fragrance, fresh and calming, could only belong to

him.

I turned around at the sound of footsteps. A gasp escaped my lips.

He stood in the shadows, a tall silhouette.

"Anna," he whispered, sending a shiver down my spine. Wha-what is he doing here?