

## Chapter 54

"You're a fucking liar," Colin snarled, suddenly leaping to his feet. Rita let out a squeak and tried to snag his arm, but he moved too quickly. He stormed towards the siren and we all just watched.

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While I was staring at the woman who had possessed me I felt so much empathy and so much guilt. I felt like an awful train of actions and reactions related to me caused her to be in the position that she was in.

But it seemed that every word of her lips only fueled Colin more, to the point that neither of his parents could contain him. When I saw his eyes alight, I feared that he would make those bruises and half healed scratches look like they were from a kitten. Kind people, when pushed to the limit, could do awful things.

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"Hey," Ajax barked. His green eyes were narrowed, but he didn't move from his seat. He didn't need to. "Stand down, Colin."

Colin jaw clenched, but he froze, much like he had when the siren possessed him. He kept his gaze trained on her, thoroughly convinced that she was the enemy, but the royal tone impeded him from doing anything more.

"Don't order my son around, you self important ass," Henry snapped and I had to admit that it was the most offensive thing that I had ever heard come out of his mouth. Where was the man who laughed and joked with his sons while eating fried chicken. "Who the hell are you to intervene? My son is barely clinging to life because of something she did and you don't want answers."

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Keiko, the sweet but strong queen visibly flinched. Ajax, who had seemed mildly interested at best, perked up. A solid hand landed on Keiko's lap, but her gaze refused to lift from her own hands.

"If you think calling me an ass is going to make me let your son beat the shit out of the only lead we have you seriously doubt me as a king. I'm going to let it slide because your daughter and I are capable of understanding that this is a hard situation for you, but I won't tolerate this again," he warned. Though his words were well spoken and calculated his body language was not. He twisted his body into a protective posture, guarding Keiko from her father's eyes.

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Strangely enough it was my parents who broke the charged silence.

"She's not lying," my father announced, his voice shaking.

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"Oh, and you know this how?" Rita challenged.

"Because I used to lead under Robert. I know what kind of man he is."

Ajax tossed a strong arm around Keiko, tucking her against his side before looking at my father. "Well, you are the new alpha now. You challenged him and you won. So tell us, what kind of man was he? What makes you think he could do this?"

My father swallowed hard, looking at my mother for strength. She was pale and shaking, but gave him an encouraging nod.

"Robert is so bad that I blame him for whatever crime Caleb committed. Having that man for a father would've been damaging for anyone. He wasn't physically abusive to his own family, but verbally and emotionally. When he lost Caleb I knew it was going to get worse. And when Charlotte was mated to the man who killed his only son I had to get her out of here."

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I stiffened at the mention of my name, feeling like I had been watching everything from the outside. I met my father's gaze and was stunned to see tears there. He hadn't cried when he kicked me out and he hadn't shed a tear when I came back. Why cry now?

"You sent me to be with a man that everyone thought was a crazed killer," I protested, feeling my own eyes well up.

"I know, and I was terrified every day. But, there was a chance he would be good to you. You were his mate, he could love you and care for you. There was no chance that Robert would leave you alive. He blamed you for Caleb's death. He thought Hades came here and killed Caleb because he wanted you to himself, didn't want any competition. Robert would never forgive that."

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"But when I came back you kicked me out again," I whispered, feeling a single tear roll down my cheek. "I needed you, I was so afraid. I didn't understand anything. I thought that Sebastian was going to kill me or maybe make me some kind of accessory to his crimes."

"We were so happy to see you when you came," my mother denied with a shake of her head. "To see that you were well enough was amazing. I mean, you had lost a little weight and you were more pale, but you looked fine. You were alive."

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"Then why?"

My mother crumpled against my father's side as he scrubbed his face with his hand. It seemed that was all she could manage because my father took over again. "Robert threatened us, Charlotte. All of us, even Tabitha. He said that he would lock us up for months if you ever came back. I swore that you wouldn't set foot on this land as long as it meant that he would stop hunting you. We agreed that it was the best way. You were alive and safe, even if you weren't with us and you were free from Robert."

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"So he went after my son instead, not voiding your agreement, but still getting revenge," Henry muttered, almost to himself.

"Why wouldn't you just tell me?" I asked, wiping away the solitary tear.

"You're too stubborn for your own good. We worried that you would try and outsmart Robert because you were never good at following rules and desperate people do desperate things. God knows what would happen if you got caught. And we saw you. We knew that you were safe enough when Robert really started to go down hill. Wherever you were, it was better than you being here. Maybe it was wrong and maybe there was a better way, but we did what we thought was right. There's no instruction manual on handling cases like this."

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"How did you know that Charlotte was going to need your help today?" Ajax asked, interrupting the emotional moment. "You showed up just in the nick of time. That seems rather convenient."

"We didn't know she was coming or that he was planning anything. He stopped including me in meetings weeks ago, only meeting with our best warriors instead. But her car drove right past our house. We knew it was her. But she has no reason to come here except for us. And she was speeding. Charlotte has always driven like a well behaved senior citizen." My dad paused to give me a grin, but his lips trembled. "We walked down the road, just checking to make sure that she was okay. She was quiet, we didn't hear her, but we heard Hades."

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Just then a very quiet voice spoke up. "Charlotte, he's awake," Tabitha murmured.

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~~~Distraction Section~~~

Hello all, I hope your summer is going well! Tell me about the most exciting thing that happened to you this summer.

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Mine is pretty lame. I went for a hike, ended up getting a little turned around and completed a much harder hike with incredible views in an alpine meadow.

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Question of the Day: If you had unlimited money to start and sustain your own business what would it be?

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I would do a horseback riding camp. For those of you who don't ride, it's bloody expensive! I'd love to give kids who can't afford it an opportunity to try it. Plus, it has great therapeutic results as well!

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