

A Gift from the Goddess by Dawn Rosewood Chapter 6

Chapter Six

"Ariadne stands accused of murdering the named Alpha heir by use of poisonous herbs," Aleric continued. "In doing so, she also endangered the life of one of our fellow pack members, Thea Woods. The trial today will look at the evidence to determine whether she is guilty of these crimes."

A cold sweat formed at the back of my neck as I discreetly scanned my eyes around, trying to see if I could spot Sophie. But I couldn't find her familiar face anywhere. It made me more nervous as every second ticked by.

"Do you swear on the Goddess' name, Ariadne, that you will tell the whole truth during this trial?" Aleric asked, bringing my attention back to him.

I met his piercing green eyes, a shiver going down my spine. How those eyes haunted me.

"I do," I replied loudly and confidently.

"And how do you plead?"

I held my breath, my heart racing in my chest.

"Not guilty."

A murmur went through the pack in hushed voices but I ignored it. Surely, they hadn't actually expected me to admit guilt to such a heinous act?

"Very well," Aleric replied. "We'll start by hearing the witness testimonies of those involved and any other supporting evidence. Once done, the ranked members, elders, and I will then vote, and your sentence will be set."

I swallowed hard, my throat feeling so dry.

...And, with that, the trial began.

The trial started with the pack doctor, being called forth first to give a medical opinion and overview of his involvement. I didn't know the doctor well, having only met him once the previous pack doctor passed away; my mother.

"The herb in question is Mortwert," Doctor Andrews started. "I believe Thea must have been giving this via means of ingestion. She lost the baby at three months but, given her bad fortitude, her health was also a concern. I did several tests and discovered she had ingested twice the required dosage amount needed to induce a miscarriage. Thea was presented to the pack hospital in critical condition. Her blood pressure had dropped

to an alarming rate and she was struggling to breathe. It took one day before she was stabilised, and several days after she remained bedridden before I allowed her to be discharged from the hospital. The evidence found inside Miss Chrysalis' room was brought to me in order to confirm its identity. I inspected the herbs and can confirm that it was, in fact, the same herb that Thea ingested."

Another murmur went through the crowd as they heard the Doctor's testimony. I gritted my teeth against their voices. How quickly they were ready to kill me from just one testimony.

But, in the end, it wasn't *just* one testimony. Several came forward to discuss the evidence found.

The warrior who had found the evidence was called upon next to recount his steps during the search of my quarters.

"I found the herbs the doctor mentioned under Miss Chrysalis' bed. They were well hidden and I believe had been placed in order to conceal their location. There was also a letter obtained from her bed. It was addressed to her father, former Beta Jarred Chrysalis. I believe this shows her true character, someone who would sympathise with a criminal that attempted to murder the Alpha."

But unfortunately, the testimony didn't stop there.

To my dismay, he proceeded to read aloud the contents of the letter to the whole crowd, causing everyone present to begin chattering once more.

"Silence!" yelled Aleric to them all, instantly making them quieten down. He then turned to me. "Is this your handwriting, Ariadne?"

I bit the inside of my cheek. He would know if I was lying as he had seen my handwriting many times before.

"Yes," I begrudgingly admitted.

It was humiliating to have something so personal read out to the pack. A letter where I expressed my love and admiration for a man who I'd believed to be disappointed by me my entire life.

The warrior continued with his recount. "In addition to the items recovered, we also found the former Luna by the door as we entered. She was in possession of a backpack with supplies and clothing. It is believed she had intended to run away that night. We also have several eyewitnesses who can attest to her admitting to trying to run when we took her into custody."

“Thank you, Jonathan,” Aleric said, gesturing for him to step down. “We’ll hear from Brayden now, our Gamma.”

Brayden took to the podium next, his face stern. I knew whatever he was going to say about me wouldn’t be positive.

“The morning that Thea’s pregnancy was announced, there was an incident inside the packhouse that several members witnessed. It was between Thea and the former Luna. I believe the conversation went that Thea was requesting forgiveness. However, the former Luna was unnecessarily cruel to her, saying horrible things. I witnessed Thea being so overwhelmed that her legs gave out. I believe this may have been a deliberate attempt to put stress on Thea and the baby, an act motivated by jealousy.”

My mouth hung open. I couldn’t believe they’d actually brought that conversation into evidence. Did no one care to see things from perspective? I would like to see them act so calm when their mates impregnated other women. I was certain most of them would have ripped their throats out without hesitation, yet I was being chastised for only speaking to her harshly.

It was true though, I couldn’t deny what he was saying. I was angry and jealous of her. Who wouldn’t be in my shoes? But to kill her child was unthinkable, an abomination. His testimony was painting me in a horrible light, fuelling the hostility in the air against me.

“Thank you, Gamma,” Aleric said. “Now we have one final testimony for you all today, one I believe will determine the fate of this trial. Everyone, this is Sophie Forrester, Ariadne’s main attendant.”

I felt numb all over, my breath catching in my throat. *They had Sophie.* She was here and she would clear me. She knew me better than anyone else.

Sophie walked up to the podium and looked physically fine, healthy even. I was glad to see they had been keeping her safe during the time leading up to trial. I was worried they had roughed her up or treated her harshly for her part in helping me.

However, whilst she did appear fine, I did notice how she looked nervous. Her hands were balled, her face showing a slight furrow. Something that made me wonder if they’d been pressuring her to convict me during this witch hunt for my head.

“I am Sophie Forrester. I have been Ariadne’s attendant for five years now,” she started, her voice shaking a little. “Over these years, I believed Aria to be a sweet girl who had only been dealt misfortune in her life, making it easy for me to treat her as I would my own daughter. I was the one who personally cared for her and consoled her through the many difficult times she faced as our Luna. So, I can confirm that I know her better than anyone else.”

I smiled at her, hoping to catch her eyes, but she wouldn’t look at me.

“Therefore,” she continued, “it is with a heavy heart that I stand before everyone today, bound by my oath to the Goddess, to inform you all of the atrocity she had me perform whilst under her command.”

My smile faltered and fell quickly. No, this wasn't right. Something was wrong. Atrocities? I'd never committed anything of the sort. How could she say something like that? She knew I was with her all week, knew how upset I was.

I felt sick watching Sophie stand at the podium, refusing to meet my eyes as a feeling of impending doom washed over me. It was clogging my thoughts, nothing was making sense. All I could hear was my short breaths of fear over the loud beating of my heart.

“An atrocity where Ariadne, the former Luna, ordered me to present Miss Thea Woods a herbal tea. A tea I believe caused her miscarriage.”