

The 5-time Rejected Gamma & the Lycan King by Stina's Pen Chapter 83

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Lucianne shrugged, "Until we have more information, we can't be sure either. Our best guess is that killing pack leaders is just a cover-up. It's no secret that most rogues were rejected from their packs, by their Alphas or Lunas. So, killing them would make it seem like it was for..."

*Revenge. Rather than to siphon funds." Xandar finished, finally understanding.

Christian then muttered ominously, "That's one very-carefully thought-out system."

Xandar locked eyes with his cousin, "We've been kept in the dark for too long. Innocent people are dying. We have to step up and speed up this investigation."

Lucianne suddenly picked up a familiar scent. As Lucianne continued to sniff the familiar scent as subtly as she could, Xandar looked at the alliance and started speaking, "The locations mentioned in the rep-"

"Good morning, your Grace." Lucianne cut Xandar off when she saw Greg looking their way from the corner of her eye. It was Greg's scent that she picked up earlier. Everyone stiffened when they saw this other Duke.

Greg was walking close to the alliance to steal a glance at Lucianne. But he didn't think he'd get caught doing it. He'd been doing it for days! His eyes said it all. The Duke was surprised he was caught looking!

Greg composed himself and cleared his throat before he offered a small smile and a bow in Lucianne's direction as he greeted her in a gentlemanly manner, "Good morning, my Queen."

But Greg's smile faltered when he reluctantly turned his sights to his cousin and nodded the King's way as he uttered, "Your Highness." Lucianne and Xandar both nodded curtly in return. Xandar's face showed distaste but Lucianne's expression was unreadable.

Before the alliance could offer Greg an obligatory bow, Greg stopped them with a hand gesture and said, "I don't think you all have to do that. It's no secret that I'm not worthy of a bow."

The wolves looked at each other in surprise and confusion. Wasn't this Duke the self-entitled one? They looked at Lucianne, waiting for a signal of what to do next but her expression was unperturbed and her smile was flat as she noted to Greg, "Self-reflecting on that subject already, I

see.”

Greg offered her the same small smile, and bowed slightly as he said, “As my Queen commanded. I shall take my leave now. Apologies for the intrusion.” He felt the very hostile atmosphere by the way they were all throwing looks at each other and at him.

“No need for an apology, your Grace. I was the one who stopped you.” Lucianne said with the same unperturbed face.

Greg wasn’t expecting that cordial response from Lucianne. He bowed again with his small smile before striding away from their circle. The Duke stole the glances he wanted to steal before things got suspicious. What bothered him most was his cousin’s hand around the Queen’s waist. Not that

there was anything he could do about it. When he was far enough, he smiled to himself as he acknowledged the fact that Lucianne spoke to him. Him! 5

After he left, Xandar’s and Christian’s faces were still hard, watching the other Duke walk away, as if waiting to catch him doing something he shouldn’t be doing. Lucianne wrapped her arms around Xandar’s arm affectionately to get her mate’s attention before saying, “How about we continue this discussion later, darling? Maybe in a less crowded location?”

When Xandar met her doe-eyes, his heart melted and the corners of his lips curled up as his animal purred. He then pecked a kiss on her forehead, and faced the alliance as he suggested, “Maybe we could discuss this after lunch at my place?”

This sent another round of shock among the wolves. “Uh...” Toby tried to say something but even he was lost for words. They all were. Did the King really just invite them to his place? And by his’ place’, he meant his home right? As in where he lived? And he was talking to them, was he?

Xandar furrowed his eyebrows in concern in the awkwardly-silent atmosphere before he said, “Or we could reschedule if any of you already had something planned?”

Lucianne chuckled from his side, pulling Xandar’s attention to her as she explained, “They’re just shocked, Xandar. Look at them! Even the most-feared leaders and Gammas are taken by surprise! Again!” She continued laughing mercilessly at her friends.

The wolves narrowed their eyes at her until Toby taunted, “Well, I’m sorry that we’re not used to such gestures, my Queen. Not all of us have a way of taming and controlling the fiercest of beasts.”

Lucianne’s laughter stopped abruptly, and everyone else started chuckling at what her closest friend just said to her. Her eyes turned fierce when she took one step forward and said, “Toby! I’m gonna—”

Xandar hauled her back by her forearms and pecked a sweet kiss on her cheek as he cooed, "There there, baby. We've talked about this. And you know that I'm your indecent beast." Lucianne tried but failed to press back a smile as she blushed.

Xandar raised his eyebrows and his eyes sparked nothing but anticipation. So, Lucianne sighed and dotingly muttered, "I know."

"Good." Xandar said in satisfaction before giving the alliance his attention again, "Uh, so? After lunch at my house?"

Toby smirked and said, "After what you've just done to save me from that dangerous five-foot thing next to you, your Highness, I have to accept." Lucianne narrowed her eyes at him in mock annoyance, and the rest of them laughed at their exchange as Xandar pecked another kiss on Lucianne's temple. So, it was agreed that they'd meet at Xandar's home after lunch.

The 5-time Rejected Gamma & the Lycan King by Stina's Pen Chapter 84

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At training, the Lycans were showing improvement. The alliance didn't fight. They watched and gave feedback, much to the dismay of Juan, Tate and Zeke, who all preferred to spar than watch and talk.

Lucianne watched and gave feedback to the Lycan warrior, Phelton, and Gamma Benedict. After losing two matches to the Gamma, Phelton finally came out victorious in their third match. Benedict shook his hand and congratulated him graciously on the win before Lucianne did the same. After thanking his opponent, Phelton knelt and kissed the Queen's hand before standing back up to convey his thanks.

After watching another three pairs, Juan came up to her and mind-linked, 'Lucy, just one. One spar.'

'What? No! We talked about this. Hale even...'

'C'mon, Lucy. One wouldn't hurt. I'm bored out of my mind!

'Does Hale know about this?'

'You both said I'm not to overexert myself. One spar doesn't do that.'

Lucianne hesitated as she locked eyes with her desperate Alpha. She then sighed in defeat as she gave in. 'Luna is going to kill us both for this.'

Juan's face lit up, 'You're the best sister ever!'

She smirked as she went to a mat with a pair of fighters who were taking a break, "Hey, guys. Mind if we borrowed your space for a few minutes?"

"N-No, of course not, my Queen." They immediately moved aside.

Juan exclaimed, "Wait, what?! Lucy, I didn't mean sparring you! I was going to ask Tate or Zeke."

"What are you two doing?" Tate asked with suspicion, coming over from where he was after just finished watching a match.

Lucianne stood on one side of the mat and responded casually, "Juan is bored. He asked for a spar."

Juan exclaimed, "But not with you!" His volume garnered the attention of everyone around them. "Tate's here. He can do it."

Before Tate could respond, Lucianne said, "Nice try, brother. Unfortunately for you, I don't trust you to not overexert yourself when you're with him. Your spars with Tate and Zeke tend to go very far."

Zeke came out of the blue, "Says who? You're the one who's able to take him down the fastest."

came

Lucianne replied, "The fastest spar will leave him the least exerted. C'mon, Juan. We've only got a few minutes."

Juan uttered to Tate in regret, "I should've been more specific about that request." Tate patted him on the back as a form of wishing him luck, throwing a cheeky smirk in Lucianne's way while he

was at it.

Juan took his position and his sister charged towards him but before he could land a punch, Lucianne flipped backwards, kicking his jaw while she was at it. Juan groaned and Tate and Zeke tried their best to suppress the laughter threatening to erupt from their beings.

After two minutes, Lucianne got Juan to surrender. She helped her brother up and patted him on the arm as she said, "Good fight, Alpha." 2

Juan narrowed his eyes her way, mocking a look of irritation. He then looked at Tate and Zeke, who were still trying their best to not laugh at him. Juan said, "Can you two at least take my side? That wasn't even fair! You saw those new techniques she used on me!"

Lucianne furrowed her eyebrows, "Since when was using new techniques unfair?"

"Did you guys spar?!" Toby exclaimed when he reached them after a jog from the far end of the training ground. His look showed nothing but betrayal. "I thought we agreed that..."

Tate filled him in, "Juan got bored. Not sure if he still is though."

Juan sighed when Tate threw him a taunting look. Juan then muttered, "Taking my Gamma's side like he always does. Of course."

Toby then said, "Still, we agreed..."

Lucianne then offered, "We could go next if you want, Toby."

Toby's expression of betrayal turned into one of horror when he said firmly, "No. Not today. Not when I'm in this state."

Suddenly, a pair of large hands made contact with Lucianne's waist from behind, and a deep voice spoke, "Babe, I thought the alliance wasn't fighting today."

Lucianne stiffened when she was caught doing something she shouldn't have done. She turned and showed him those doe-eyes again as she said in a gentle voice, "It was just one spar, darling. Juan needed an adrenaline rush."

Juan then said, "She cheated, your Highness. Used new techniques to cut our spar short."

"New techniques?" Toby asked in surprise. "That's not possible. She said she taught us everything she knew."

Lucianne then spoke like an excited little girl, "I got new books and I learnt a few new tricks!"

Toby's eyes widened before looking at Juan who was still massaging his left shoulder, then returning his sights to Lucianne and concluded, "So you did cheat."

Lucianne rolled her eyes and explained, "I only learned it yesterday. I was going to show you guys this morning but our physiques aren't exactly up for it after the sleep deprivation from last night."

Xandar then asked, "But how did you even perfect the techniques before today? We were out the entire day yesterday."

Lucianne shrugged, "I read when we got back, before the 50-page report came. And I just rehearsed

the techniques in my room."

"In your room?" Xandar asked in worry and disbelief. Her room was filled with books. She could've hurt herself.

"Yeah. I moved the books to the side, gave myself a space and just copied the moves from the book. I'm really small so I didn't need that much room to practice."

Everyone around her was lost for words. Juan then broke through the silence, "See! She cheated!"

Xandar sighed in disbelief before looking at Lucianne in adoration and said, "Unbelievably amazing." He then pecked a kiss on her forehead before looking at her as sternly as he could manage, "But no more for today, Lucy. Save your strength for now, okay?" She pouted for a second before she said, "Fine."

Though internally proud of his sister for taking him down faster than she had ever done before, Juan continued to complain playfully, "Will it kill to get one of you on my side here? I mean, I know she looks small and cute and all but c'mon! Are you guys still falling for that?" 1

Tate patted him on the back and said, "Lucy just saved you from being lectured by your Luna for breaking your promise to her, Juan. Let it go."

Lucianne smirked victoriously at Juan, and her brother uttered, "You know, Lucy. Sometimes I feel that Blue Crescent only has so many allies because you somehow charm packs to like us, especially their leaders and their Gammas."

Lucianne mocked a look of revelation, "Really? I thought it was because I cheated when I showed them new techniques!"

Juan threw her an annoyed look before speaking to Xandar, "Just so you know, your Highness. My sister is more than meets the eye. You have no idea what she has up her sleeves sometimes. Try not to fall for those things would be my advice."

Xandar chuckled before pecking a kiss on his mate's cheek and telling Juan, "I'm afraid that advice came much too late, Juan. I've fallen for everything about her from the moment I laid my eyes on her. This beast has long been under her spell." Lucianne stared at the ground with a shy smile as Xandar watched her cheeks fluster. "Of course." Juan muttered in mock annoyance as he continued massaging his shoulder.

The 5-time Rejected Gamma & the Lycan King by Stina' s Pen Chapter 85

[/ The 5-time Rejected Gamma & the Lycan King by Stina' s Pen Chapter 85](#)

After training and lunch, the alliance met at Xandar's villa. They gathered in the King's huge study, and the cousins got spare chairs and a foldable table out of the basement. They laid the report on the round table, and Toby and Sylvia offered to take notes while they discussed, reading through the report again together to see if their thoughts matched those of everyone around them.

Xandar noticed that Lucianne was checking the time every few minutes but he didn't think much of it until her phone chimed in between their discussions. Lucianne stood from her seat as she said, "I have to go now. *My ride's here. I'll see you guys in the dining hall tonight.*"

Xandar reflexively held onto her elbow and asked frantically, "What ride?"

She furrowed her eyebrows in confusion at his question as she replied matter-of-factly, "The ride to take me to tea."

"What tea?" Xandar asked in jealousy as he thought to himself, 'Who is she meeting with? Does she have eyes for someone else? Someone better? WHO IS HE?!!'

Lucianne finally understood that Xandar forgot about who she was meeting. She smiled teasingly at her mate, and kissed him on his cheek before she said, "The tea with Annie, my indecent beast. Who else?"

"Oh." Xandar relaxed before muttering to himself, "Right. That's today."

Christian chuckled at his cousin's overreaction and said, "Let the Queen go now, cuz. *My wife isn't going to steal her away from you.*" The wolves around the table were already chuckling as subtly as they could.

It was only then Xandar realised that he was still holding onto his mate's elbow like his life depended on it. He pulled her towards him to peck on her lips before uttering, "Link me if you need anything. And be safe, okay?" She blushed and nodded dotingly. The alliance members were throwing cheeky smirks in Lucianne's way as she left the room.

Xandar's eyes followed her out, and when they heard the front door shutting, Christian glanced at his cousin before saying, "Everyone, let's see if the King focuses better with or without the Queen here."

Zelena's eyes sparkled with excitement as she exclaimed, "We should place bets!"

Xandar turned to his cousin and asked in a low, embarrassed tone, "Is this really necessary, Christian?"

Disregarding what the King just said, Toby got the ball rolling, "I'm betting with."

Juan continued, "With." Xandar threw Juan a look of disbelief but the usually-serious Alpha didn't seem affected as he threw the King a cheeky smirk.

Zeke then yelled out, "I'm betting without."

They went around the table until everyone placed their bets, leaving their King flustered.

When Lucianne opened the car door to the passenger's seat, a familiar voice called out, "Aunt Lucy!"

"Russell? You came?" Lucianne asked in surprise at the little boy seated at the back with a safety belt fastened across his chest. Lucianne then turned towards Annie for an explanation.

Annie explained, "When he knew I was meeting you today, he didn't stop asking if he could come along until I said yes."

"Aww. That's so sweet of you, Russell." Lucianne said as she got in and closed the door behind her.

As Annie drove them to the cafe she had in mind, Lucianne asked about the families living with them, and Annie admitted that they *were* getting kind of bored, so much so that they offered to help the kitchen staff with the cooking.

When they entered the cafe and took a seat at their reserved table, the waiter took their orders before getting Russell a high chair so that he could build his next contraption on the table.

Annie then started their conversation, "So, Lucy. I asked to meet you because I wanted to know: how do you do it? How do you... get on with life and... be okay after... well, after everything that has happened to you?"

Lucianne was a little confused, "Do you mean the five rejections, Annie?"

"Well, it's not just that. You weren't affected when G-Greg said... those condescending things to you. And even the other night, Christian said you were harassed by a minister last year, and yet you don't seem afraid."

"I'm not."

"But how? How do you find the power to stand back up again? I mean, you've taken quite a lot of hits. Christian keeps saying that Xandar's biggest worry now is life throwing more things at you than it already has. Yet you seem okay. Better than okay, actually."

Lucianne thought about her question before saying, "Well, I didn't want to stay where I was. I didn't want to stay sad, depressed and afraid. I was afraid of getting up and facing situations that would make me question myself again but I was more afraid of staying afraid. At least, if I tried to stand back up, I'd actually get a chance at freedom from everything that was weighing me down. That was all I was going for, to be honest, a chance at freedom."

Annie digested what she said as she took a sip of her latte. After a moment, the Duchess asked, "But don't you get tired of doing it over and over again, Lucy?"

Lucianne smiled as she recalled the night she broke down with Xandar after meeting the Kyltons. "I do. But the chance to be free and happy always seems tempting so I always chose to get back up, despite my pessimism."

"How do you hold yourself together when people try to bring you down? And you're even able to shut them up. That must require a lot of skill."

"It doesn't, really. Through the years, I learned that the best way to... put certain people in their place is by showing them that they can't push my buttons, even if I'm breaking on the inside. It

takes time and practice but eventually, anyone can get the hang of it."

"So, when you break on the inside, you just hold it there and then breakdown when no one's watching?" Annie asked, saddened by what she was hearing.

Lucianne said matter-of-factly, "Yeah, I've cried to myself behind more closed doors than I can count. But the most recent time, Xandar was with me."

Annie asked in a shocked, hushed voice, "You broke down recently? Are you okay, Lucy?" Even Russell stopped playing and looked up at her in concern.

Lucianne chuckled lightly, and her hand started stroking the little boy's hair as she told the Duchess, "I'm okay, Annie. It's normal for me. I'm not perfect. I put on a strong front, a brave face but I do get hurt too. I'd be lying if I said that I'm not affected by the five rejections. I moved on from them but uh... I still struggle with the feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness sometimes. It doesn't really go away. It just becomes manageable."

"How do you manage it, though?" Annie asked in curiosity.

"Well, I tell myself that so long as I'm still here, that the Moon Goddess is still keeping me alive, there must be some level of worth in me. There must be something I have to do, some way that I can help. And I do everything I can. At first it was to fill the hole in my heart but as I progressed in training and formed alliances, I realised that it was also to make me happy and to give me a sense of fulfillment."

Annie nodded, and she took another sip as she thought about what Lucianne said. Lucianne then asked, "Annie, if you don't mind me asking, what is this about? Is everything okay with you?"

The 5-time Rejected Gamma & the Lycan King by Stina's Pen Chapter 86

Annie placed her cup back on the saucer before she explained, "I'm sure you've heard about my past already, especially when it comes to the other Duke."

The fact that she struggled to say Greg's name earlier and was avoiding saying his name now didn't go unnoticed. The fear and discomfort was very much alive and lingering in Annie even after all these years.

Lucianne's face was unperturbed as she said softly, "I have."

Annie smiled meekly before she took a deep breath and said, "When I slowly started to believe that Christian really loved me, my fear of the people he works with never really went away. The other Duke was the worst but it wasn't just him. Some ministers and random people we'd see at government functions were really condescending as well. They said things that made me feel..." she groped for the right words.

Lucianne then whispered, "Small? Unworthy? They make you question your very existence?"

Annie's eyes widened, and she exclaimed in excitement at someone understanding her, (This novel will be daily updated at) "Yes, exactly! I felt like I had no place in Christian's life. Him being the second most powerful person in the Kingdom, and me being a girl from a small town, who had to depend on aid and scholarships to get through my education. And unlike him and his type of society, I never went to the best schools. I was just happy to get into a random school that would give me a degree to get a job that makes money. We're so different, Christian and I. I've never told Christian this but, on my worst days, I sometimes ask myself whether...my husband made a mistake in choosing me, whether I'm anything of value in his life."

Lucianne then asked her seriously, "Annie, do you think that there's a reason for your existence?"

Annie was surprised by the question but she said, "I don't know, Lucy. I guess it depends on who you ask. If you asked Christian, then

"No, Annie. It doesn't depend on who we ask." Lucianne then inched towards her and looked her in the eye before she declared in all certainty, "There is a reason for your existence. You ARE worthy. Your life MATTERS. These things don't depend on who we ask. The only person who has a say in these things is yourself. Not Greg. Not the Ministers. Not even Christian. Just you. When you realize that you're here for yourself, to live your life on your own terms regardless of what anyone may think of you, you become truly free. You get to choose who you want to have in your life, and who you want to listen to. Everyone is entitled to their opinion of you, of me and of anyone else, Annie. And we are entitled to NOT care." 6

Annie couldn't help the grin that was slowly gracing her features when she felt the strength from Lucianne's words. She muttered as she internalized them, "Everyone is entitled to their opinion of me, and I'm entitled to NOT care." Lucianne nodded with a smile while taking a sip from her cup. After a short moment of silence, Annie was still smiling as she said, "I like that. There's so much power, and so much truth in it."

Lucianne nodded gently with a smile, "There certainly is. Look, Annie. Whatever people throw at

you is just a reflection of themselves. It has nothing to do with you. They see things how they want to see and they react accordingly. I pay heed to the opinions of the ones I care about and who care about me but beyond that, I honestly couldn't care less. I'm not saying that their words never affect me. All I'm saying is that... I won't dwell on it."

Annie nodded as Lucianne spoke before uttering with a smile, "You changed your story. You refused to play the weak character in your book."

Lucianne returned her smile as she said, "We're the authors of our own lives, Annie. We hold the pen, and we OWN the book. Whatever life throws at us are just pen smudges or coffee spills. We can still turn to a new page and start better and stronger than before." 3

Annie shook her head with a radiant smile as she said, "Goddess, we're so lucky that you're our Queen. (This novel will be daily updated at)You have no idea how many people need your strength."

"A Queen isn't the only person who can project strength, Annie." She looked at the Duchess and said gently, "We all can. We just have to choose to do it. It's a choice. It can be the most difficult and uncomfortable choice to make but in the end, it's still a choice. Anyone can make it."

Annie shook her head again with a radiant smile, and scoffed lightly before saying, "Your humility reservoir really doesn't run dry, Lucy. But I get what you're saying. Thank you for helping me understand this, to understand that I get to choose."

"Thank you for asking. I didn't think I would get to spend time with you this soon." Lucianne admitted happily.

There was a glint in Annie's eye before she said, "I don't know, Lucy. We might get to spend time together again very soon too."

"Really?" Lucianne asked in curiosity.

Annie was contemplating as she smiled, "I've always wanted to join Christian when he attends government events. You know, to show support, maybe even to contribute in some way as Duchess. But I've been hiding all these years because of what happened in those few weeks, almost two decades ago. Maybe it's time to stop hiding."

Lucianne reached for her hand and squeezed it gently in encouragement as she said in assurance, (This novel will be daily updaed at)“You’ll do great, Annie. You have a good heart. And you won’t be alone. We’ll be with you even after you’ve taken off your training wheels to assimilate yourself into that part of his world again.”

The Duchess threw the Queen-to-be a grateful smile, and for the first time in a long time, she actually felt hopeful that she could be in the same room as the people who she tried to avoid all those years.

After Lucianne and Annie settled the bill, they walked out of the restaurant with Russell holding tightly to Lucianne’s hand. When they were making their way to Annie’s car, Lucianne caught an unfamiliar scent. It was pungent and she almost choked on the smell when it reached her nostrils. She commented in passing, “What is that smell?” Annie stopped in her footsteps as she asked in bewilderment, “What smell?”