

“Ugh, so *bored!*” Samara yelled from her position, lying sprawled over the couch and kicking her legs in the air. A long-suffering sigh from the other corner of the room was the only response.

“I said I’m bored!”

“Well then go be bored somewhere else, it’s not my job to fix your entertainment for you!” Her twin brother, Cade, replied with a snappy tone, trying to focus back on the article he was reading, his fingers scrolled the page down as he parsed the information putting her out of his mind.

Samara kicked up off the sofa, walking away, she went to the window of the room, overlooking the streets below, watching the people pass by. Her eyes slid past several of them, slowly as she thought about them all, their boring lives, their boring looks...

Her eyes slid past and then snapped back. “Bro! Holy shit come here!”

“What is it now?” He said, looking over but not rising.

“You have to see this!” Samara said beckoning. With another sigh the other hyena rose and walked over.

“What exactly am I looking for?”

Samara’s jabbing finger pointed at one person, a lioness, seemingly out for a stroll alone. “Well, holy shit.” He said in a calmer but no less sincere tone.

“That’s her right? It’s got to be her!”

“Uh, Sam.” Cade interrupted, holding his phone up, a lion was being asked questions live by some news outlet, smiling gently as he tried to figure out how to give enough of an answer that he could go.

“Oh-ho-ho. Both of them are in this town? Well ain’t that a fun coincidence.” Samara said, her wide grin flashing her teeth. “You thinking what I’m thinking?”

“No but I can guess what you’re thinking, you want to have a little impromptu school reunion?”

Samara winked. “You get me, Cade.”

“I’ve lived with you most of my life, much to my chagrin. -Where are you going?” Cade asked, already predicting the answer.

“To uh... invite her in, of course.” The other hyena replied, receiving a shake of the head from her brother. “Why not?”

“We need to plan, let's discuss things, prepare, see where it leads us, if those two really live in this town we'll see them again, maybe from this very window. Let's take our time with this.” He replied.

Samara stopped, grimacing at the door as her brother walked back to the chair he'd been in and resumed where he left off before being interrupted. “I still wanna do it now!” She said petulantly.

“Well, just think about what we can do with prep, chase away your boredom with that and if you're still bored, then you can go play around with our current houseguest.”

“Oh shit, right, I forgot about him!” Samara said, suddenly walking to the door. “Why didn't you remind me about our visitor?”

Cade rolled his eyes. “As I said, it's not my job to fix your entertainment. Besides, if you need reminding of who we're lending the ‘guest room’ to, then maybe we should let him go. After all, we'll need the space if we're putting up two newcomers.” He said as Samara crossed to the door. The room she entered was lightly soundproofed, yet even after she closed the door he could hear the sounds of Samara's fun.

He shook his head as he turned back to his phone, ears twitching at a thumping crash from beyond the door. “I wonder where the lions live, hopefully someplace without neighbours, there's only so many times we'll be able to convince downstairs not to file a noise complaint...”

“Yo! Is that you, Ashari?!”

A voice called out from behind Ashari, the lion tensed, his subconscious made him a little more tense than he should be, for no reason he could discern. He turned around to see a large figure standing still in the crowd of milling people, a hyena woman. There was something familiar about her.

“It is you!” The woman said, wandering forward.

The lion really didn't want to talk to an old acquaintance, he hoped whatever this was would be brief. As she drew closer he finally recognised her. The revelation twisted his stomach and immediately set him on guard. Samara, someone he hadn't seen since his school days and would have been happy to have never met again.

“Damn, you filled out nicely, not that little slip of a kid you were before. Ah, I can see you aren't exactly thrilled to see me, huh?” Samara said, cocking her head with an apologetic, if wounded half-smile.

“Not at all, I’ve just uh- well, things have been on my mind. How have the years treated you?” Ashari replied, exchanging pleasantries. Civility was the only thing keeping him from walking away, or running.

“They treated me well, as you can hopefully see!” She said winking, when he kept the passive look she sighed and scratched the back of her head. “Aaah, well, this feels embarrassing and awkward. And I think I know why.”

“Do you now?” Ashari replied, he’d meant to keep that in but it just slipped out.

“Look, I’m glad I saw you, I remember you, you and Ofenna both and I want to apologise. We were arrogant, asshole kids. Spiteful, jealous, I’m sure you could find many ways to describe us.” Samara said.

Her words seemed to have had an effect on Ashari though, some of the tension left the lion’s jaw. “Thanks for saying that, in turn I’m sorry for the times I lashed out at you and your brother.” It was again, the polite thing to say, regardless of the wounds that were starting to open. “Well, Samara, I hope you stay well, I have to get on with my day though, take care.” He said, body language shouting his desire to turn away.

“Wait wait, is Ofenna still in town? What would you say to a nice get together, we own a place here, or if that doesn’t suit you we could meet in a cafe or something, catch up?” She said, smiling warmly, though inadvertently making the lion shiver. He’d seen that smile used to convince teachers that she and her brother were just playing in their youth.

“I’m sorry Samara, you didn’t exactly leave our lives on good terms, it’s probably best if I don’t even mention you to Ofenna. I don’t think a meeting would be a good idea. Let’s just let the past be in the past, we’re mature adults now, no need to dredge up ancient history?” He said, trying to sound reasonable, though his spite railed in his head, he refused to give the two terrors of his school years the satisfaction of getting out of their guilt with a simple apology. He turned around and started to walk off.

“Wait, Ashari. Ash, come on!” Samara called. The lion’s ears flicked but he didn’t turn around, nor did Samara follow. Soon he disappeared around a corner and with a sigh Samara moved back.

“Shit, do you think he saw through my intentions?” She asked her brother as he came out of the shadowed alley behind her.

“We agreed he’d be the more civil one to approach but that didn’t mean I expected him to just want to shoot shit with you after all this time.”

Samara frowned, waiting a few seconds before she advanced only to be stopped by a hand on her shoulder. “What?”

“Don’t follow him, if he spots you he’ll assume you’re stalking which would be bad.” He said exasperated as if he was irked at having to point it out.

“But this is our chance, what if we don’t see him again?!” Samara hissed under her breath.

“Trust that we will, don’t let yourself always be so impulsive. It’s not like we’re fully ready to accommodate them, anyway.” Cade insisted, holding on until Samara shrugged him off. She was unsatisfied but she stopped.

There was a moment of quiet as the world kept on around them, while Cade didn’t say as much, he was frankly a little relieved, approaching the lion in broad daylight and in a crowded setting should have made it seem less threatening but it also had its own risks. Too many eyes, it would just take one person watching and remembering to land them in a spot of bother.

“Alright, let’s go do some more shopping.” She said to change the subject and take the edge off her frustration.

It had been days since Samara’s failed attempt to persuade Ashari and neither hyena had seen him since. Days became a week before Samara was out walking when she saw a different yet equally familiar shape, Ofenna. The lioness was walking away from her and hadn’t spotted her!

Without Cade to tell her no, Samara refused to let this chance evade her, especially after she’d been pulled back twice by her brother and moved to follow. Samara took some caution when things grew quieter, the suburban area was becoming more sparse by the moment, which made the hyena excited. She had no idea whether the lions lived together or separately but it seemed that Ofenna was unwittingly leading Samara to her home.

Several minutes later, on the outskirts of the area, Ofenna walked to a lone house. Hiding in a position to watch, Samara saw Ofenna walk to the door and then fish out a key, confirming her thought. The sound of a car approaching made Samara quickly scurry into the bushes, pressing in. The vehicle went on its way, however Samara’s heart was pounding, she was within the boundaries of the house Ofenna had entered, if she backed out through the bushes and someone was walking past she’d be seen. To her logic it meant the only option was to go forward, toward the building.

Cade scowled as a message popped up from Samara, preventing him from reading what he was engrossed in. “Come to this location, bring the car!” Was all it said with an address appended.

His fingers flashed. "What do you mean? Where is that?"

Silence followed. "Sam? Hello?". There was no response or indication the messages were being read, what the hell was she doing now.

After sending the message she'd muted and pocketed her phone, creeping up to the window. Ofenna had closed the front door behind her and so, if she was doing this, Samara would have to find another way in.

In all her time there, no one had walked or driven by and there weren't even any other houses immediately in line of sight of the property. She crept around the corner to the back of the building, holding her breath and scurrying to the wall when she heard the back door creak. Ofenna was carrying something as she strode to a container for garden waste and tipped the contents in, returning to the house after, though she hadn't locked the door behind her...

Samara grinned, she couldn't believe her run of luck today, just when she'd been on the verge of giving up on finding either lion, too. She realised inadvertently she'd given herself a time limit by calling her brother, if he arrived too soon Ofenna would investigate but what was done was done, if it all went wrong she'd need a getaway or backup.

She snuck through the door, the sound of her entrance masked by a roiling electric kettle, fortunately for her Ofenna wasn't being quiet herself, it was easy for Samara to get closer, the house was definitely too big for one person but she only heard Ofenna there.

The mean side of her was bubbling up, excited at the prospect of seeing more of Ofenna's life, finding things to tease her over, one the hyena reignited their acquaintance.

She heard some tell-tale signs of a bathroom in use and so she started closing in and waiting. She heard the basin running and positioned herself on the far side of the door from the kitchen, the lioness would likely be going back for the boiled water and head that way.

Holding her breath she listened to the quiet shuffling as hands were dried, time feeling like it was slowing before the soft eared head peeked out from the room. Samara struck, an arm wrapping swiftly around Ofenna's neck as she leapt forward to put her in a choke hold! "Surprise!" She yelled, in the same tone that she'd used when she'd tried this move on the lioness in their shared youth.

Her grin turned to wide eyed surprise as the lioness pitched forward, using her momentum and throwing Samara. The hyena hit the floor hard, scrabbling to defend herself but Ofenna had taken one glance at her and was moving away at speed to a phone!

Samara shook herself, adrenaline already firing her as she ran and tackled the Lioness from behind. "Nice moves, Fenny, learn that in dance class?" She hissed as she grappled her way

up. The lioness was closer to her in strength than she had been before but Samara had the leverage and the experience in wrestling others.

“Who the hell are you? Get off me!” Ofenna shouted grunting as she squirmed then gasping as her neck was grabbed again.

“Aww don’t be like that, how could you forget your old friend?” Samara said with a chuckle as she squeezed the lioness into submission. Ofenna fell still seconds later and Samara grinned before a small voice in her head whispered, “Hold it, she’s faking.” True enough no sooner had the whisper stopped than the lioness tried to shove her again, she’d tried to pretend she was out to get Samara to release early. “Well someone’s grown crafty!”

Samara held until Ofenna slumped, counting to three before she let go. The lioness was really out cold. She dragged her quickly to the nearest room, dropping her on a chair. Reflected light shone a pattern through a window and Sam glanced up, her twin’s car had arrived, luck really was with them today. She hurried to the front door, opened it, waved him in and made a swift gesture, mimicking her arms being bound. Cade felt the urgency, running to grab a spool of rope from the back of the car and then jogging up to the door.

By the time Cade entered, Ofenna had been fixed to the chair by Samara’s jacket, knotted sleeves holding on. She was groaning, stirring and Sam quickly snatched the rope out of her dazed and surprised brother’s hand, lashing Ofenna’s ankles to the seat then running the rope up, between her legs to meet her arms. “There, that should hold her!”

“Holy shit Sam, this was bold even for you.” He hissed, glancing out the window. The house was on a slight incline, thus they were looking down at the road, lowering the odds anyone would see.

“Shut up and make it look like we’re visiting. Still, it seems like a quiet neighbourhood. Seen one other car in the time I’ve been here.” She said, finding a cloth to shove in Ofenna’s mouth before knotting another in place.

Cade meanwhile took a scarf from a coat rack and swiftly wrapped it over Ofenna’s eyes seemingly just in time as she started to make more obvious sounds of waking up. He looked up to see Samara’s back vanish round the corner, sighing in exasperation. He double checked the window until he was confident there was no way they’d be seen from outside unless they stood up and against the edge. Hopefully him leaving his car in the driveway wouldn’t cause too many upsets or curious glances.

Samara came back with two steaming mugs of coffee, draining the kettle that Ofenna had clearly meant for herself. The lioness’ nose twitched and she grunted, shaking the chair. “Oo, welcome back. No, this isn’t for you.” Samara teased handing a drink to her brother.

“What’s your bright idea, here?” Cade said as he ignored the mug at first, taking it only when Samara insistently waved it near his face. He carefully avoided dropping names in case Ofenna hadn’t identified her attacker.

“Look, I saw an opportunity, I wasn’t going to miss this after the last one. Besides, if we need to leave in a hurry we’ve got the car.” Samara said with a laugh. “Anyway, you take this and watch her, I’m gonna go see if there’s anything around we need to know about or what skeletons she’s hiding in her closet.”

“Mmnnnhph! Hnnngh!” Ofenna growled, her jaw working to try and push the cloth out and the chair jumping from her sharp struggles.

Cade shrugged as Samara left, then he turned his gaze to Ofenna watching to make sure nothing came undone but otherwise he didn’t move. The fact there were two people in her house had obviously done something to unnerve her but so had the idea of one of them checking things.

Her voice still sounded saturated in anger and outrage rather than anything else, shouting out and even tossing her head to remove the blinding cloth. “Mnnnh!”

Cade sipped the drink quietly while Samara explored the house, a sudden whoop and then a few cackles sounded and it seemed she doubled back to one room a few times, eventually she came down with a bag and a book of some kind, a calendar on closer observation.

“A’ight, so, she doesn’t live alone but it’s not Ash with her and this calendar says her roomie won’t be back for three months!” Samara gloated, throwing the book to the couch beside Cade. “Also, checked that roomie’s room out, look what they had!” Samara said, digging into the bag and pulling out two rounded leather paw mittens.

Cade nearly choked on his coffee, putting the mug down beside him. “From the look of that bag that isn’t all they had?”

“Hell yeah, bro. And wait till you see what’s in little Fenny’s room!”

Cade froze, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath while Ofenna let out a gasp. ‘Bro’ and ‘little Fenny’, an old nickname the hyena’s had given her at times, if she hadn’t blanked them from her memory she surely knew who had accosted her now. He grunted. “So, what’s the plan? Bundle her up into the car and go back home, or what?”

“You know, our place is kinda small... got a crazy idea for ya,” Samara began as she reached down to Ofenna’s tied arms, she’d been scratching the rope to some effect but the thick restraining mittens would put a stop to that. “What say we make ourselves at home here once we have our gracious host all dolled up? Certainly would be a welcome change to be the visitors for once, eh?”

Cade paused, on paper it sounded like a grand idea, especially since this place was even more remote and cozy than their own, this it would answer his own concern from before. No neighbours to overhear strange noises. Samara had fixed both the mittens over Ofenna's hands and buckled them at the wrists by the time he opened his mouth to speak, somehow he felt that it would work, no he knew it would work.

Samara untied the cloth between Ofenna's jaws. "Cade?! Samara? What the hell are you doing here, get out of my house this instant you bastards!" Ofenna yelled with pure vitriol in her tone. "Ohhh, you assholes don't know what's com-nnhh! Grt off!" She hissed as Samara slapped a muzzle over her face instead. It fit poorly but it did the job it needed to. Buckling more securely behind the head.

"Huh, guess that's made for someone else after all. Pity. Heya, Fenny. Oh I can't wait to catch up with you and Ash!" She said again producing a padded blindfold she'd scavenged and for now just buckling it over the top of the scarf.

Cade cleared his throat. "I'll head back home and make sure the place is locked up right, need anything? Besides the obvious."

"You know what to get and you can work it out when you're there." Samara said. "From here I reckon we've got enough to bait him back, just give me a night with her phone and I'll figure out how to lure Ash in."

Ofenna growled again, tugging until she was tired, the two hyenas were out of her worst nightmares, she'd always told herself the things she'd do to either of them if she had them alone and at her own mercy but it seemed the scales were as rigged against her as ever. Cade walked to the door, opening and closing it as he left. The lioness was alone with Samara, that meant there was still a chance if she could just get free from this chair...