

Tereshan

"There is something else I'd like for you all to consider," I say, halting everyone as they begin to eat.

"I am already fighting with Franco on two fronts, here in Keegan's pack and in my own. However, we can expect that his efforts to try to take over Keegan's pack will increase now, most likely with the help of Alpha Eason and his pack. While I will do my part to protect the pack lands, it would be wise if each of your packs could provide a couple of additional warriors to help guard the food supplies."

They all look at each other. They voted against Franco. They have to realize that if he were to gain access to Keegan's lands, take over the pack, he would make every one of them suffer for it.

"Yeah, I can send some warriors," Nicholas says.

"Me too," Adam says.

I watch to see who the last ones are that agree to assist. Those are the ones that I'll need to watch. The ones like Alpha Noah that are trying to either stay neutral or are trying to assist as minimally as

possible to show alliance but may actually be working with Franco. If they are neutral, fine. If they are working for Franco, I will bring their packs to their knees, same as his.

When we finally sit down for dinner, I continue my conversations with the Alphas, watching their reactions and seeing which ones engage quickly and which remain standoffish.

Claire is talking with Zoey and some of the other Alphas that we know are on side. Alpha Elio, in particular, is surprised at her knowledge of his meat sources and how his farm works. Of course, she knows all of that from working with him in the last timeline.

I reach out to touch her often, partly to maintain my own calm, partly because I want to reassure her that I'm here and partly because I just want to touch her.

When dinner is finished, everyone begins readying to leave. I've been setting up meetings to speak to some of the Alphas that I trust, wanting to discuss starting omega training with their omegas. It worked well in the last timeline, and it also provided an opportunity to strengthen the relationships between the packs and give the omegas a chance to find their mates.

I'm just about to get Claire and head out when Alpha Nicholas approaches me.

"Alpha Tereshan. Might I have a private word with you and your mate?"

I lead Claire back into the conference room where we had dinner. The omegas have already cleaned up the dishes from dinner.

Alpha Nicholas closes the door behind us and scrubs his hands over his face. "I'd like to ask you a personal question and I know you may not be comfortable answering me, as it's none of my business, but I wanted to know why you wear a mark, Alpha Tereshan and your Luna does not. I noticed the same thing with Alpha Keegan and Luna Zoey. This is the first time I've ever seen it and now I've seen two at once."

I look at Claire before turning to Alpha Nicholas. "You're right, this is personal. Do you mind telling me why you want to know?"

He looks between us. "I found my mate, but she's a rogue. She refuses to accept me, refuses to even come into my pack lands to get to know me. It's like she's terrified that I'll force my mark on her, force her to be my mate. That's not the kind of

relationship I want with my mate. I want what I see between the two of you, a partnership. But I gather that there is something else going on. I understand what it is between Keegan and Zoey, so I wanted to find out why you also haven't allowed your mate to mark you," he says the last part to Claire.

I wrap my arm around Claire. "You may know that I haven't been a very good Alpha in the past," I say, looking down at Claire. "I wasn't good to my omegas, and I wasn't good to my mate."

I look back at Nicholas. "I am building trust. You know as I do, that if she marks me, I carry the burden of the bond until she allows me to mark her. She can feel my emotions, even hear my thoughts more clearly, but if I were to reject her, I would be the one to feel the bond break, not her."

He nods and looks at Claire. "Is it working? Is it helping you to build trust in your mate?" he asks her.

"Yes. I no longer question if he has ulterior motives to what he says or how he acts. I know exactly what he's feeling, how true his words are."

He sighs and turns away.

"You said she's a rogue. Did she attack your pack? Is that how you found her?"

"No. Well, yes and no. I believe she is living with the group of rogues that has been attacking, but I've never seen her during an attack. Maybe because she smelled the mate bond, or maybe there's another reason."

He turns back and looks at us. "She smells like an Alpha, just like Zoey. I think....goddess, I don't even want to think it, but there are rumors that Eason has a sister. No one has seen her but, if he's been working with Franco and we know what Franco did to Zoey and her sister...."

"You think she chose to go rogue rather than become a sex slave?" Claire asks.

"It's possible. Or maybe she's working with them and she's in charge of the rogues," he says.

"But you don't think so?" I ask.

"No, I don't. She's too...skittish. Too fearful of even entering my pack. There's fear there. If she was working with them, I'd expect arrogance, confidence, and there is some of that. But I think that's the Alpha in her more than anything." He smiles at that, his eyes warming as he talks about her.

"Would you like me to talk to her?" Claire asks.

Both of our heads jerk to her. "You would do that?" he asks.

"I can't vouch for what your intentions are, but I can tell her about my relationship with Tereshan and how it has helped me to trust him. If she can feel your emotions, your intentions, and you are being honest, you could gain her trust."

He looks at me. "Maybe instead of a video call, you and your mate can come to my pack. I'll show you around and you can talk to my mate...if she lets us get close."

"She will. I'll talk to her." Claire says, confidently.

We make our plans to see him in a few days and then Claire and I make our way to Keegan and Zoey.

"Alpha Adam is going to handle Parker's pack. I'll know in a day or so if they left, or if he absorbs them into his pack," he tells me.

"Keep my patrols informed if anything changes. They will let me know."

"I will." We say our goodbyes to Keegan and Zoey before heading home.

"You know, you are one hell of a Luna, Claire." I say,

as we sit in the backseat. I'm sitting close enough to feel the warmth of her body against my side, her proximity helping to relax my mind even after tonight's events.

She turns, looking at me. "And you, Tereshan, are turning out to be one hell of an Alpha."