

Chapter 127: Francine. Again.

Tereshan

I need to make sure that I get my own sparring in. So, I told Dane to stay at the end of training. He's the strongest member of the pack now besides me and I need a challenge. I love sparring with Claire, but that's to make her stronger, and she's getting there, but I need to hone my skills and keep them sharp too.

I had worked with Jesiah, but I can tell that he's still growing from the warrior to the Gamma status in strength and speed.

Dane, however, is a smart fighter. He trained Claire in the last timeline and made her stronger. I taught her how to fight like an Alpha, he taught her how to fight and win. They are similar strategies, but Alphas are stronger, we can do more, push harder. Unless you're an Alpha, you wouldn't know that.

I bounce on my feet and give Dane the 'come on' gesture. "Let's see what you've got big guy."

I'm doing what Dane calls showboating, but for me, it's my energy level. I bounce because I have so much pent-up energy. Dane, on the other hand, is stoic, until he lashes out at you. And that's his strength, you never see

it coming from him. He can go from zero to deadly in the blink of an eye.

We've been sparring for a while and Dane is holding his own. He gets hits in, and I've been getting mine in. Unlike when I'm with Claire, I don't hold back with Dane. I need him to move faster, if he's fighting an Alpha, so I fight him full on. I finally take him down, pinning him to the ground.

"Nice, good job, next time...." I stop mid-sentence, sniffing the air. I release him my hold, but my eyes don't leave his.

"Something you want to share, Beta?"

The bastard has the audacity to get a self-satisfied grin on his face before he pulls his shirt aside to show us his new mate mark.

"What? When?" Jesiah asks.

"Last night. I thought about what you said yesterday, Alpha and I talked to Feena last night. When she said yes, I didn't give her a chance to change her mind."

"Congrats, man. Truly. But just remember, Claire and I are marking and mating first. Then you two can duke it out over who goes next," I tell him.

Jesiah looks thoughtful. "You just asked her, and she said yes?"

"Oh hell no. I groveled, argued her points until there was nothing left for her to argue and then when she finally gave in, I had her mark me right then."

"If you really want her, keep chipping away at her. Keep telling her you want her, you don't care about the risk to yourself, you just want her. Do the romantic thing, buy her flowers, hell, go find some of the quartz that I found and have a jewelry set made for her."

"What quartz?" Dane asks.

"Didn't I tell you?"

"No," they both say.

I tell them about it and how I have necklace and earrings being made for Claire. "Actually, that reminds me, I want to take her back out to get another piece soon. Keegan's scientist, or whatever he is, said there are all different colors of quartz. I want to have one made in every color we can find."

"What color did you find?" Jesiah asks.

"Clear, white, something like that, I think. It's hard to tell when it's in its rock formation. Anyway, I dropped it off a couple of days ago to have it made. I'm hoping to hear from him in a few more days."

"Where did you find it?" Dane asks.

"Claire and I followed the lake to one of its riverbeds,

looking for reasons why Franco wants our pack. At the end of the riverbed, the water had some rust deposits and some quartz. I'm still not sure if the rust is something in the water or something else. Claire was concerned about it, so I need to dig into that a bit deeper, to make sure that Franco isn't dumping anything into our water source. Although the lake is clear, so I don't think so. Maybe someone just dumped something near the end of the riverbed."

"I'll take Feena and check it out. I'd like to get a piece of quartz myself, if that's okay Alpha," Dane asks.

"Of course. You too, Jesiah. Feel free to go get a piece. There were quite a few of them and I know we have other riverbeds that I want to check out too."

"Why don't we do that then?" Dane asks. "Kill two birds with one stone. Jesiah and I can take our mates to check out the different riverbeds that branch off the lake and we can search for quartz for our mates while we're there."

Jesiah agrees.

"Perfect. It's better to have more eyes anyway and maybe you or your mates will have an idea on the rust, if you even find any," I say.

We've just turned to head inside when I get the mind link from the patrol. "Alpha Tereshan, Alpha Franco's daughter is at our borders, should I let her through?"

"No, I'll be there shortly. Keep her there," I say, immediately contacting Claire.

Franco's daughter shouldn't be here yet. It never happened this early on in the timeline, but her appearance always initiated the first battle.

I go to the library and collect Claire.

"It's too early for her to be here," she says, echoing my earlier concerns.

"I know. This means we have to delay our marking. I can't risk the pack, they aren't strong enough yet to fight and win without the two of us with them."

I stop, pulling her to look at me. "Listen to me, if this battle is going to happen soon, you're not strong enough yet in this body to fight. We know in every timeline that Franco's men have broken into the same safe room. If this battle comes early, you are in the safe room. We need to make sure that particular safe room is stocked with weapons, and I need you to start training longer with the knives."

Thankfully, Claire doesn't argue with me. Instead, she smiles when I blow out a breath of relief at her compliance.

"I don't want our pack members to die either, Tereshan. And let's be honest, they survived in the last timeline because you were there. You aren't pulling me out of the

fight, you're putting me in a different battle knowing I will make sure we win. I appreciate your confidence in me, and I won't let you or our pack down," she says.

"My sweet mate, you never have," she says.

When we get to the border, I can hear Francine ranting about now being allowed access to my pack lands.

I take Claire's hand as we walk up.

"Alpha Tereshan," she says and I watch her make note of me holding Claire's hand, "these goons wouldn't let me pass. I need to speak with you. It's urgent," Francine says.

This time, I do recognize the alligator tears for what they are, fake, manipulative drama.

"I'm afraid your father and I are not on good terms at the moment, so I asked my men to hold you here," I tell her.

"But that's why I'm here." She takes a step toward me, looking like she plans to reach out and touch me, but before I can say anything, Damara's growl rings out loud and clear.

"I suggest you keep your hands to yourself, Francine. If there's something you need to discuss, feel free to discuss it in front of my mate," I tell her.

Her teeth clamp together and just like Claire said last time, the tears dry up as quickly as they started.

"I was hoping to speak to you in private, Alpha.

"That's not going to happen, Francine. So, if that's all..." I turn, intending to leave.

"Please, Alpha, my father's a monster. He wants to put me in the brothel," she cries.

That's new. Of course, so is Claire and I going to the brothel. However, I can't look past the possibility that Franco is so maxed out financially that he's willing to sell his daughter. I mean, she's here and she fucked me like a champ in the first timeline to get intel from me. So, why wouldn't he?

"What did he say?" Claire asks her.

"What?" Francine frowns, looking at Claire.

"Your father. You said he wants to put you in the brothel. What did he say?"

"He said...he said it was time to earn my keep," she says. It's the words that he's used with all of the girls. I'm on the verge of letting her in, when Claire squeezes my hand, stopping me.

Claire smiles at her.

"'Earn your keep'. That's an interesting term. What do you think he meant?" Claire asks. I have no idea where she's going with this, but I know one thing. My mate knew Francine was lying from the very beginning. If she

thinks Francine is lying now, I'm not going to interrupt.

"He meant I had to get on my back and spread my legs you moron, what do you think it means," Francine snaps. Her disrespect has Magnor coming forward.

"Watch your tone with my Luna," he snarls, pushing his aura out, easily making her submit. Geez, is she even an Alpha female? Magnor had a harder time getting Roman to submit.

"So, you're telling me that you're not here to try and find Ivy's missing money? The money that she stole from Tereshan and was planning to use once she became Franco's Luna?" Claire asks.

Son of a fucking bitch! That's why Dane had such a hard time getting her off the pack lands in the last timeline.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Francine says and even I can tell she's lying now.

"Well, you can tell your father that we've found the money and it's back where it belongs, in our pockets."

"You fucking bitch!" Francine screams before flying at Claire, her claws extended.