

Chapter 128: Them or Us

Tereshan

The moment Francine leaped at Claire, I grabbed her by the throat, holding her in the air. She begins slashing at my arms and kicking at me, still trying to get to my mate.

Magnor's roar of fury is deafening. Instantly, my patrols drop to their knees, their throats exposed. Francine goes still in my hand and Magnor pulls her face within an inch of mine.

"Give me one reason why I don't kill you for going after my mate," he snarls in her face.

She whimpers but doesn't answer.

"What about Holden?" Claire asks and I see Francine's eyes go wide.

"He's your mate, right? And yet, he suffers with your infidelity. Tell me, did you ever bother to reject him, or do you just prefer to lead him along, tormenting him? Or maybe he falls for the big, fake tears you drop at a moment's notice." Claire asks.

So, Franco's Beta wasn't just in love with Francine, he was her mate. No wonder he dropped everything to

come get her in the last timeline. It's disturbing, because it's so much like what Bryson did with Ivy. He was willing to give up everything for a mate that didn't love him, and now it seems that Holden did too.

'So, Roman killed Holden, Francine's mate, then took Francine as his mate in the last timeline, but really, he wanted Ivy. Francine just ensured that no one questioned his validity as Alpha, since she was Franco's daughter. Is that what you're thinking?' I ask Claire through the mind link.

'Yes. This whole thing is so convoluted. What do we do here? Holden won't know that Francine attacked me, but if we let her go, there is a possibility that she'll fight against us. She did in the last timeline,' Claire says.

'I'm guessing Roman ordered her to, as her Alpha. She's no fighter.'

'No, she isn't. She's a sneaky manipulator, a spy.'

'The battle coming, no matter what we do. So, the question is, do we care if Francine dies?' I ask Claire out loud.

Claire looks at me and I see the Alpha that she was for a year pushing forward. The Alpha that had to make hard decisions and the Alpha who wanted to do everything right but in the end, it still didn't save us.

'If it's a choice between her or us, I choose us,' she says,

knowing that she's sentencing Francine to death.

Francine begins thrashing in my hand again.

"So be it," I say, extending my claws and ripping her throat out.

She drops to the ground, dead. I look at my patrols.

"Put her body as far down the road from our pack lands as is safe, then get back here. War is coming and it's coming soon. I'll let Dane know that we'll be tripling our patrols."

I shake my hand, trying to get Francine's blood off of me. The wounds she inflicted already healing.

I look over at Claire. I can smell her tears. I take her chin in my clean hand and tilt her head to mine.

"There was no other way."

"I know. I know you're right. I just hate it."

"Believe it or not, I don't like it either, but it's like you said. If the choice is them or us, we're surviving."

"Alpha, do you want us to let Beta Dane know?"

"No, I'll tell him," I say, taking Claire's hand and beginning to walk back to the packhouse.

"I think I'll call Holden anyway. He was an honorable

Beta, or at least, I think he was. He should know that I killed her for threatening you. He probably doesn't even know that she's here."

When we get back, I call Dane into my office and tell him about what happened as I wash my hands. I tell him to triple the patrols here and at Keegan's. "We need to get those spotters up at Keegan's and we should consider it here as well."

"Yes, Alpha."

"Do we have any woodworkers in our pack that you know of?"

"We have a few. I'll get them to start making those ASAP."

"Order the wood, I don't want to put pack members at risk by sending them off the pack lands at the moment."

When I come out, Claire is waiting for me. I sit in my chair, pulling her into my lap. I dial Franco's main pack number and an unknown voice answers.

"I need to speak to Beta Holden."

"I'm sorry, our Beta is unavailable at the moment. Can I take a message?"

"Tell him Alpha Tereshan is on the phone and I know what happened to his mate."

I hear a gasp and then the phone being set down. It's quiet for a long time and then I hear a snarl before the phone is picked up.

"What did you do?" he snarls into the phone.

"I protected my mate. The same thing you would have done if my mate had attacked yours. I don't know how you've tolerated her infidelity for so long, but I've instructed my pack members to leave her body outside my pack lands. I wanted to let you know, in case you wanted to come pick it up."

"Is this a trick? You kill my mate and then lure me to your pack lands to kill me too?"

"She came to me, she wanted a private audience with me, even after seeing me with my mate. My mate confronted her about her reasons for being here and she attacked her. I didn't start this Beta Holden, but I did end it. At least her part of it. You are welcome to come get her body, or it will be left for the scavengers. That is your choice."

"I'll be there in an hour."

"I'll have my patrols keep an eye on her body to make sure no animals get to her before you get here."

I hang up and run my fingers through my hair, gripping on to it.

My mate's sweet hands come to my face. "Hey, you did the right thing. And we learned something very important."

"Oh yeah," I say, pulling her against me, wrapping my arms around her and burying my face in her neck, breathing in her sweet lemon scent.

"What's that?" I ask, my voice muffled against her skin.

"Now we know that the money Ivy stole is still here on our pack lands. We just have to find it."