

Chapter 168: Tour

Tereshan

Keegan and I spend the next couple of hours showing the four Alphas around my pack lands. We start first with the area where he has planted our crops and began digging.

"We didn't continue digging, however, as you can see here," Keegan says, walking over to the table where his pack members were washing the gold, "we were able to find several pieces of gold just in the small bit where we did drill. And these aren't even the larger pieces. I took those, with Alpha Tereshan's permission, to buy the equipment that I needed for both types of mining."

"One drill and you got enough to pay for all of that?" Adam asks.

"Keegan, I think we need to show them the tunnels," I say.

"A great idea. You can't truly understand what we're working with until you see them," he says.

I send a mind link to Weston. 'I want to show our visiting Alphas one of the tunnels, but I don't want to get caught in one of your traps. Is there one that is safe?'

At that moment, Weston's head pops up from the tunnel that is nearest to us. "How about this one, Alpha? I was just starting to work on the traps," he calls.

As we begin walking, Elio turns to me. "If you're not planning

to drill, why do you have tunnels?"

"We think this is how Franco realized that my pack lands are on the gold mine. He owned that land behind us, back there," I say pointing to the northern territory. "The tunnels lead to a log cabin that has machines parked all around it. Machines that can be used for mining and drilling. I tried to purchase the land, but Roman knows about the gold and he refused to sell it. So, instead, Weston is setting traps in case they try to use the tunnels to attack my pack again."

"I heard Roman killed the ones who went against him for the Alpha position," Emine says.

"All but one. Beta Holden managed to get to my pack lands about a week ago. As of yesterday, he's still unconscious and in critical condition," I tell them.

"Why isn't his wolf healing him?" Adam asks.

"Roman apparently injected all of them with silver then ordered the pack to beat them and leave them to die slowly. I sent my pack members out but they didn't find any other survivors," I say as we get to the tunnel entrance.

Weston reaches his hand out to Emine. "Would you like some help Alpha? It's a steep climb down."

She sniffs the air. "You're an Alpha?" she asks.

"That's what Alpha Tereshan says. I have no memory of my life before I arrived on his pack lands."

Her face registers her surprise. "You're the Rogue Alpha?"

He shrugs, looking uncomfortable. "I have no idea."

She looks like she may say more, but I interrupt. "Weston has joined my pack and is my Lead Warrior. He is mated to one of my pack mates."

"I see," Emine says. I'll have to see if she'll tell me more about what she knows of Weston.

Weston begins climbing back down the ladder and Emine follows him. One by one, we all descend into the tunnel and once we're there, Weston takes the lantern that is on the floor and lifts it up. The collective intake of breath from the Alphas is much like mine and Keegan's when we first saw this place.

Alpha Adam walks up to the wall, touching the glittering gold before turning back.

"You said three quarters of your pack lands are over top of the gold mine? A gold mine THIS large?"

"I'd have to assume so. We'll show you the field with the plants that Keegan has started phytomining, but my plan is to use that process for most of the gold harvesting in the center of the pack," I say.

"But that won't capture the large chunks of gold like this, will it?" Elio asks, reaching out to touch the wall as well, feeling the gold underneath.

"No, my only choice to get to the chunks is to destroy my pack lands, which I am not willing to do," I say.

"Understandable," Nicholas says distractedly, turning in a

circle to see the gold glimmering in the light.

"Are you planning to at least harvest the gold in the tunnels?" Emine asks me.

"I haven't decided yet. I don't know what happens if, say, I begin harvesting this gold, and there is a vein that continues on and on. When do I stop, where does it end? So for now, I'm keeping it here until I need money to fund the process. So, there's really never a question that I won't be able to pay your pack members who decide to work for me."

I thank Weston, who has stayed unusually quiet, and we head out of the tunnel. We walk to the fields and Keegan explains the process of phytomining as the Alphas pluck flowers from the ground, looking at them and finding the trace elements of gold inside.

"This is crazy!" Nicholas says.

"Wait until you see the riverbeds," Keegan tells them, and we walk to the original one that Claire and I found.

Again, Keegan explains the process on alluvial mining here. He digs his hand in the sandy bottom and even then, he finds a small piece of gold.

"And this is runoff from your lake?" Elio asks, looking back in the direction we came from.

"Yes," I say.

"So, you will have chunks of gold, you'll just be getting them from the riverbeds," Emine says.

"Exactly."

Keegan and I answer the rest of their questions, as we walk back to the packhouse. Their awe is similar to mine when I first realized what Claire and I had found.

"I know you have dinner planned, but would you mind if I sat with my rogues? I'd like to get to know their mates more while I'm here."

"Of course. But I would ask you not to say anything about what we've discussed today. I haven't yet made the announcement to my pack. I was waiting to see what we would be able to accomplish once I had spoken to you three and we talked about the possibility of bringing in some of your people to work."

"Understood," she says.

"And I'm not sure what time everyone is planning to leave in the morning, but I'd appreciate it I could have some of your time either this evening or tomorrow morning," Keegan says.

"I vote for tomorrow morning. Personally, my head is spinning," Adam says.

"Mine as well," Elio says.

"Then, let's eat and talk of other things this evening and we'll save the rest for tomorrow," Keegan says, just as Claire comes in and announces dinner.

I walk to her, taking her in my arms. "How was your afternoon?"

"Good. How was yours?" she asks.

"It's better now that you're back in my arms," I tell her, and I mean it.

Emine POV

"Would you be willing to have me join you and your rogues for dinner?" Alpha Nicholas asks me.

The man is persistent, I'll give him that.

I turn and face him. "If I wanted to go have dinner in a foreign country, would you take me?" I ask, truly wondering if he would drop everything for me.

He frowns. "What country?"

I shrug. "Any country, other than this one."

He scratches his head. "Well, we'd probably have to get a passport first, but if you happen to already have one, then I'd have to make flight arrangements and I need to make sure the pack is in order before I leave..."

"But the answer is yes?"

He shrugs. "Yes, I just wouldn't be able to take you tonight, most likely."

"Hmmm," I say, turning and heading into the main dining hall.

I hear his feet rushing to catch up to me. "Did you want me to look into it?"

"No, I was just wondering," I said.

He's quiet for a moment. "What's going on in that pretty head of yours?"

"I'm assessing your intentions," I tell him.

"By having dinner in a foreign country?" he asks slowly as if trying to figure out where the assessment part is coming from.

"No, to see if you would actually do it."

"Oh," he says, looking smug. "Then I guess I passed."

The man really is charming and sweet. So far. My father and my brother were never either of those things.

When we get to the entrance of the dining hall I stop. I look at my people, the people I chose to care for, who chose me as their Alpha. Their lives are still my responsibility and what I'm seeing is that, now that they have their mates back, living in the wild won't work for them. They need a pack, a home, a roof over their heads.

I make a split-second decision and turn to Alpha Nicholas. "My people need a place to live. If you are willing to give them a home, a real place to set down roots, I'll agree to mark you."

Nicholas looks at me a long moment, before pulling my hips against his. "When you agree to mark me, I want it to be because you want to, not because you are doing it for the betterment of your pack. Your people are welcome in my

pack, so long as they follow the rules and don't hurt anyone. And I want you at my side, but I want it to be because you want it, not out of some obligation to your pack. So, let's bring them to my pack, let them get settled and when you're ready, you can mark me. And hopefully, someday, you'll be ready to let me mark you too."

I lay my hands on his arms. "You're a difficult man to resist, Alpha Nicholas."

He raises an eyebrow at that. "You've done a damn good job of it so far, Alpha Emine."

On instinct, I lift up on my toes and peck his lips with mine before pulling away and walking into the dining room.

A moment later, he catches up, taking hold of my hand and walking with me to a table to sit with my people. It's impossible to not notice the big, dopey grin he has on his face the rest of the night.