

Chapter 178: Irrational

Claire

Keegan came by not long after Tereshan and the others left. He brought Zoey with him, and she made sure that we stayed busy, keeping the pack running.

Every time one of us would get distracted, she was there, helping us to refocus on whatever needed to get done. Keegan managed the patrols, working with Jesiah and Jacoby and somehow, we got through the day, making sure everyone was fed and cared for.

However, after they left that night, I laid in bed, unable to find sleep. I could feel Tereshan's emotions throughout the day. He was furious, nervous and then he settled. I'm not sure what that means, but I know that he's not dead and that's enough for me, for now.

Early the next morning, I get out of bed, having barely slept. I drag myself to the kitchen to make coffee, but Feena is already there.

"You look about as good as I feel," I tell her.

Vivienne walks in, along with some other mates of the warriors that left yesterday.

"Looks like we need another couple of pots of coffee," Feena says, and we begin to make more.

"Luna, have you heard anything?" one of the women asks me.

"No, but I haven't felt any tether's snap, well, except the one," I say, looking at Vivienne. Yesterday when I felt the tether snap, I had raced to find her, but she said her tether to Weston was still there, so he hadn't died, he had rejected the pack. I knew enough about the plan to know that this was expected, but I also knew that Tereshan had been worried about what it would mean to have two Alphas in this pack.

"It will be okay, Luna," Vivienne had said. "Weston would never try to take this pack from you. He knows that this is your pack."

"But we can't have two Alphas in one pack, Vivienne. You know that."

"We'll figure it out, Luna. I know we will. Neither of us will lose our mate."

Things between us had been a little tenuous the rest of the day. Both of us know that it's impossible to have more than one Alpha in a pack. I never felt Weston's tether return, so he didn't rejoin our pack.

We're all going through the motions of getting through the day when we hear the howl that they are coming home. All of us race out the back door, most everyone being faster than I am since I'm shorter and farther along in my pregnancy. But I needn't have worried about being last to get to my mate. Magnor is first to rush through the crowd, heading straight toward me.

As soon as I see him, I stop. The fear of losing him, the happiness of seeing him safe and seemingly unharmed overwhelms me. A moment before Magnor would tackle me to the ground, he shifts, and Tereshan is scooping me up in

his arms.

I wrap myself around him, clinging to him, letting all the fear of losing him go, sobbing as I hold him to me as tightly as I can.

"I'm here, baby. I'm home," he coos, his strong arms wrapping around me, holding me to him as tightly as he can with baby Salvatore pressed between us.

"I was so scared. I was so scared something would happen to you," I say, my face in his neck.

"It's okay, baby. Shhhh, I'm okay."

He holds me until I'm calm again letting me breathe in his blueberry scent.

When I finally pull myself together, I sit back, looking up into my mate's face, his usually hard features, soft with his love for me.

"Better?" he asks me.

I nod.

"Good, we have a lot to discuss," he says, not putting me down.

He turns his head, speaking to those behind him. "When you're ready, join me in my office."

I look behind him, not sure who he is talking to exactly, but I see that most of the mates are in a similar position to me, clinging to their mates and crying against them, happy to have them home. I'm thankful to see Weston, holding Vivienne. Maybe things with him and Tereshan are still good.

Tereshan carries me to our room, setting me on the counter in the bathroom before turning to start the water in the shower.

When he walks back, he brushes the hair from my face.

"You didn't sleep," he says as he brushes his thumbs under my eyes.

I shake my head.

"Will you take a shower with me?"

I smile through my still-teary eyes and nod. He helps me get undressed and then lifts me, helping me into the shower.

"You need to sleep baby. I'm strong, Magnor is strong," he says as he sets me down and begins washing my hair.

"I know, but, this is Roman. He killed you in the last timeline. I'm so glad he's dead. I know that's wrong, but I can't help it."

I feel his hands go still in my hair. I look up at him. His teeth are clenched, and I feel the regret flowing through him.

"He's not dead?" I ask, my hands going to my stomach.

"He and Ivy got away. I'm sorry baby."

He leans his head down, putting his forehead against mine. "I'll find them. I'll find them and kill them. I won't let them get to you or Salvatore."

I smack him on his chest with both hands. He stands back looking shocked.

"But what about you, Tereshan? You said you'd make sure he didn't get me or your son, but what about you? You're willing

to die? Don't you get it? Don't you understand? This last 24 hours has been the worst of my life! I can't do it! I can't live without you! I won't!"

I'm screaming by the time I'm done, my fists beating against him, angry that he's so willing to die to protect me.

"Baby, stop. Stop," he says, kneeling down and pulling me to him. I start sobbing all over again.

"You said together. We agreed together. You can't just change that now. You can't plan to die to save me, Tereshan. Don't do that to me. Please!"

I pull back, looking at him. "Please don't leave me to live this life without you. Not now, not after everything. Please promise me that you won't do that," I say, taking his face in my hands.

"Okay, okay, okay. Baby, please, you're getting yourself too worked up. It's not good for you or Salvatore."

"Promise me, Tereshan. Promise me you won't sacrifice yourself for me."

He stands, pushing me back under the water. "You know I can't do that, Claire. I won't stand aside if it means saving your life. Don't ask that of me. I can't promise that."

"Then make sure that we're together. Make sure that we fight them together." I say, knowing that he'll never agree.

He growls looking down at me. "I will never allow you to fight while you are pregnant. Do you hear me? You protect our pup, I protect you. That's how it works."

"Tereshan..."

"NO Claire. You're being unreasonable. I won't allow you to fight while you're pregnant. I won't put you and our son at risk. I said no, and that's final!"

We finish showering and get dressed in silence. When we're done, he takes my hand, and we go to his office. I'm thankful that he pulls me into his lap, and I snuggle against him, needing reassurance that we're okay.

He wraps his arms around me. "I love you. We can argue and I will still love you."

I nod, tucking myself against him. "I love you so much, Tereshan."

As everyone begins to enter the office, I send a silent prayer to the Moon Goddess pleading that our final battle with Roman and Ivy does not occur until after my son is born, so I can be there with Tereshan.

Chapter 179: Next Steps

Tereshan

As everyone begins coming into the office, my mind is still reeling from Claire's anger, fear and sadness. I know things are different for us in this timeline. I know that I would not want to live without her, but her request for me to not protect her and save myself is unconscionable. I could never do that. Even if I wasn't an Alpha, she's still my mate and she's carrying my pup. Nothing in this world is more important than Claire and Salvatore, not even my own life.

I tried not to get too upset with her. I could feel that her fear of losing me was overriding everything else and the doctor did warn me that she would be more weepy than normal, but this morning was very unexpected, and my voice became sharp at the end of our conversation.

When she snuggles against me, I know that she needs reassurance. My mate is exhausted, scared for my safety and now she's worried that I'm angry at her. Her emotions are all over the place.

When she finally settles, I place a hand on her stomach, feeling my son shifting around inside her.

I focus, knowing that we have a lot to discuss today. I've asked Dane and Weston to join us, and both have brought their mates. I've also asked Jesiah because he needs to know that Roman and Ivy are still out there. I'm surprised when Keegan arrives, knocking on my door.

"I heard that you were back. I wanted to check in and see how things went," he says.

"Come in, I'm just about to go over everything," I tell him.

"I take it that my mate can join as well?" he asks, stepping aside so I can see Zoey.

"Absolutely."

As we sit around the table, everyone pulls their mates on their laps, wrapping their arms around their mate's stomachs so they can hold their pups at the same time. Zoey must be due in the next couple of weeks. Her pregnancy must be going well for Keegan to have brought her here. That, or he can't stand the thought of being away from her for any length of time.

I take a moment to think about the incredible difference in my life, all because of my sweet mate who is terrified of losing me.

I send her a wave of love through our bond, feeling her relax as she snuggles closer to me. I kiss the top of her head as I look around.

"I wanted to bring everyone together to talk about the events of yesterday. First and foremost, Roman and Ivy got away. We need to continue to be diligent."

"Wily bastard, how'd he get away?" Keegan asks.

"We'll get to that," I say. "For now, we need to keep our eyes and ears open. We need to know where he'll pop up. I don't want to be surprised by him."

“Alpha Eason’s pack is the most likely place he’d run,” Jesiah says.

“A good point. We can send scouts over there to see if they can lay eyes on either Roman or Ivy.”

I look at Weston who nods. “We also have a new Alpha in the room. Alpha Weston,” I say and I feel Claire stiffen in my arms.

Magnor purrs softly, helping her to relax again. “Weston will be taking over Franco’s pack.”

Keegan looks calculatingly between the two of us. “I’d be interested to know how it is that Weston ended up becoming an Alpha when the original plan was for you, Tereshan, to take on the pack members.”

“After taking out Roman’s Beta, I went searching for Roman. My ultimate goal of this battle was Roman. Weston, Holden, Dane and Bryson were tasked with taking out the pack members who were in allegiance with Roman, including Ivy. However, when I got to the packhouse, I realized that Roman had created his own mini brothel inside. There were women shackled to the floor and the walls. They were obviously being abused and held for the ranked members to use as they chose.”

Claire gasps in my arms. I hadn’t had a chance to warn her in advance. I can see that Dane did brace Feena for the information.

“While I was releasing the women, Roman and Ivy escaped, the pack members that were in alliance with Roman were eliminated and then Weston began converting the pack to him as Alpha.”

I stop, turning to Weston. It's really his story to tell.

He nods before beginning. "The men in the pack were fighting and we were on the verge of having to start killing them. Roman had given them the Alpha command to fight to the death, as we had expected. So, rather than killing them while we waited for Alpha Tereshan to return, I began converting them to my then non-existent pack."

He leans in, kissing the side of Vivienne's head as he thinks through his next thoughts. "There is something familiar about that pack, about those pack lands. I don't understand it, just as I don't understand many of the déjà vu moments that I have, but I feel like I was meant to be the Alpha of that pack. It feels right to not only take on the Alpha role, but to do it in that pack."

He looks from me to Keegan. "I have no intention of taking either of your packs. I already talked to Alpha Tereshan about creating an alliance with both of you. He agreed, but I would like to speak to you more while you're here about an alliance with the three of us. I know that your relationship with Alpha Tereshan is very strong. I want to become a part of that inner circle."

Keegan looks at me before turning back to Weston. "We can talk. I'd like to hear what you have to say."

"Thank you, Alpha," Weston says.

"That leads me to my final points. One, we have some new pack members that we need to assimilate," I say looking down at Claire. "We need to find space for the few women that I found. Some wanted to come live here."

"Where are they?" she asks, instantly going into Luna mode.

I look up at Dane.

"I had Nita take them to find clothes and showers."

"Let's go," Feena says to Claire, both of them getting off our laps. As she goes to walk away, I take her hand, pulling her back to me. I tuck her hair behind her ear and lean in to kiss her.

"I love you," I say softly, reassuring her again and making her blush.

"And I love you," she says.

"We're coming too," Zoey says as she and Lucy also climb off their mates' laps, Jesiah following to guard Claire.

When they leave, I turn back to the group.

"What was the other thing?" Keegan asks.

"My pack members are starved. They need food and they need it fast." Weston says. "I would like to talk to you about my plan, and then see if you would be willing to allow me to take some food to my pack. But I need to head back no later than tomorrow morning. I've left Holden there to run things, but the pack has been lacking strong leadership for a long time. I need to get back quickly."

"I'll go check on the patrols and begin getting the scouts ready to send out," Dane says, getting up to leave as well.

When it's just the four of us, Weston leans forward, tucking Vivienne into his side. "I told Alpha Tereshan that I want to talk about splitting up the land between the three of us. I would like to expand my pack, you need more space to grow

farmlands and Tereshan needs more land for his mining. My pack needs food and work so rather than selling the land, I want to barter for it. An alliance between the three of us would not only help all three packs, but it will also allow us to have a common border that we no longer have to protect, giving us the chance to focus our efforts on our other borders, especially while Alpha Eason and Roman are wild cards."

Keegan looks at him and then at me. "You're okay with this?"

I look at Weston and he waits for my verdict. "I won't say I don't have some concerns, Alpha Weston. We don't know your history, and that makes me nervous as an Alpha that will share a border with you. But your actions since coming to my pack have been nothing but stellar. I also understand the value of second chances and the difference they can make in your life. So, I'm willing to create this alliance between the three of us and to share borders. As you said, it adds protection to our packs and creates a stronger alliance as Keegan and I have already found."

Keegan looks at Weston thoughtfully for a moment. "If Tereshan believes in you, then I'm willing to give you a chance as well," he says, and I can see Vivienne relax.

"We would never do anything to betray you, either of you," she says, looking at both of us.

I smile at her. "You know you're a Luna now, Vivienne?" I ask her.

Her eyes go wide but she nods. "Thankfully, I have some great role models that will help me to become the best possible Luna that I can be," she says.

"Before you and Keegan begin figuring out food, is there anything else we need to discuss?" I ask Weston.

"Ahhh, one more thing," he says sheepishly.

I raise an eyebrow. "What's that?"

"I'd like to ask Jacoby to be my Gamma."