

Claire

It's been a couple weeks since Alpha Franco attacked our pack. Things have gone back to normal, and the pack is running like a well-oiled machine. Dane is a fantastic Beta, and now that Bryson is back to full strength, he's been great in helping me to make the pack more cohesive.

Today is our meeting with Alpha Keegan to go over the food supplies, and I want to hear how the death of Alpha Franco is impacting the local supermarkets. Since we never need to use them, I'm out of touch.

I make sure Tereshan is in the office so he can hear what is being said. He may not have been the best Alpha during his time, but he's intelligent and he understands pack dynamics in ways I don't always get.

After making sure our sweet-toothed Alpha has his snack and coffee, we get down to business.

"It's not good." He says, getting straight to the point.

"I wouldn't imagine that it would be but why in particular?" I ask him.

He looks from me to Dane and back again. "Did you know that your old Beta defeated everyone in the pack and is now Alpha Franco's replacement?"

"Roman is the new Alpha?" I ask incredulously, turning to look at Tereshan. His face has gone pale.

I tap my leg under the table, a sign that we've developed that he can come to me if he needs comfort. Usually, he declines. Today he walks over. I pick him up and put him on my lap.

Alpha Keegan frowns, looking at Tereshan on my lap.

"Claire and Roman have a...history." I say, looking down at Tereshan.

Alpha Keegan looks at us for another moment before resuming his story. Tereshan leans back against me. I wrap an arm around his waist, holding him in place and comforting him.

"Yes, Roman is the new Alpha. He killed Alpha Franco's Beta in their battle."

"Beta Holden." I say.

He nods. "And whether by force or agreement, he has marked and mated Francine, Alpha Franco's daughter."

He looks at me. "He's also made Ivy his Beta."

"This is bad." Dane says.

Alpha Keegan nods. "And that's not all. He came to me, insisting that I break my alliance with you and create one with him."

"Why?" Tereshan asks.

Alpha Keegan looks at him, surprised. It's not common for omegas to speak out, especially around so many ranked members.

"He said it's because he wants the specialty food that he knows I make for this pack. That and he thinks all packs should have to buy their food from him."

'Roman doesn't give a shit about the packs, Claire. He's up to something. We need to figure out what it is.' Tereshan says in the mind link to me. He's being careful not to speak out too much in front of Keegan.

"He wants to corner the market. Push prices up." Dane says.

"I'm not sure, but he's given me a week to break my alliance with you and make one with him."

"What happens at the end of the week?" I ask.

"He said he'll begin attacking my pack non-stop until he takes it over forcibly."

I look at Dane. "Then we have a week to reinforce the borders of Alpha Keegan's land and ready ourselves for a constant attack. That is, assuming you want to maintain your alliance with us, Keegan."

"I do."

'It's more than that, Claire.' He says, and I can feel his mind whirling around with possibilities. He may be in my omega body, but his mind still works like an Alphas.

"Alpha Keegan, what happens if he begins to attack you?" Tereshan asks him.

"What do you mean, young lady?"

"I mean, what about the food supplies? Franco's

supermarkets supply all of the packs with their food. If Roman is attacking you, are you still going to be supplying the food to him to stock his stores?"

"Of course not." Keegan says. "I've already halted my shipments for this week."

Tereshan looks up at me. I nod. Now is not the time to hide his intelligence from Alpha Keegan.

"From what I know of Roman, he doesn't care about his pack, he cares about himself. If we go on the assumption that he's not doing this for his pack, why is he doing it? The only reason I can think of is that he wants you to stop supplying food to the stores."

Dane sits forward. "For what purpose?"

"To blame us." I say, catching on to what Tereshan is thinking.

"Exactly." He says.

"And if he tells the other packs that this is our doing, that we are responsible for the lack of food, maybe even telling them that we are hoarding it and keeping it all for ourselves, what will those packs do?" I ask, looking at Dane.

He and Keegan realize the implication at the same time.

"The packs will unify and attack together."

Keegan falls back against his seat, rubbing his hands over his face. "What can we do?"

"Which packs do you have a good relationship with?" I ask

Keegan.

"I have friends in a couple of packs." He says.

"Reach out to them, tell them what is going on. Let them know that they can buy direct from you when the food supplies dry up."

"But if I'm under attack..."

"We'll figure it out." Dane says.

I look at Dane. "We need Alpha Elio on our side. He sells directly to the packs, if he's on our side, we can say it will be like that. We'll make sure the packs know that it's not because of us that the food supply is gone, that it's because of Roman."

'We won't get all of them.' Tereshan says to me in the mind link. 'Roman has friends in the packs too.'

"We need to get to as many as possible this week. Roman has probably already been putting out feelers to the packs that might join him."

I think for a minute. "Dane, you and Jesiah focus on the patrols and protecting Keegan's borders. We'll need to reinforce ours as well. Bryson and I will begin calling the packs and making sure they know that we aren't the ones doing this."

"I can help with calling the packs. I'll start with my friends and have them come buy directly from me this week, so they can begin spreading the word." Keegan says.

"Great idea."

I'm about ready to get up and start making calls when Keegan stops me.

"There is one more thing, possibly unrelated, but maybe related."

"Okay."

"My gardeners have noticed something strange in the soil around the area where we planted the berries on your pack lands." He says.

"What do you mean, strange?" I ask, frowning.

"I'm not sure yet, and I don't want to speculate until I know more, but I'd like your permission to take soil samples and perhaps dig into the ground to see if I can determine what it is that they are seeing."

"Do you think the soil is poisoned?" Dane asks.

"Again, I'm not sure. If you are in agreement, I'll take some soil samples today and begin testing it for poison. I'd like to put your jam production on hold until I know more."

"Of course. We definitely don't want to weaken our pack right before we're attacked." I say.

"Agree."

Keegan gets up to leave and I set Tereshan down, standing to walk him to the office door. Keegan stops, turning to Tereshan.

"Are you sure you're an omega, young lady? I've never seen the type of deductive reasoning you showed today from an omega."

"One thing I've learned, Alpha Keegan, is that omegas, given the chance, will surprise you." Tereshan says.

"A good lesson for me to remember. One I should have learned just from the changes in my pack from having our omegas become trained fighters."

He looks at me. "I'll be in touch soon, Tereshan."

"Thank you, Keegan." I say as he walks out with Dane.

I turn to Tereshan. "Let's get to work. That bastard isn't taking our pack."