

## Claire

I watch as they take Bryson away, shocked that Tereshan actually listened to me.

"You know," I say, looking up at him as he watches them take Bryson, "we know where Ivy is."

Tereshan frowns, looking down at me. "We do?"

"We do. Remember, when she ran in the last timeline, Roman found her in the brothel," I say.

"You're right." His eyes narrow in thought. "You know, there is something bothering me about that brothel. Does Alpha Franco own it? Somehow, I feel like it has something to do with all of this. Every time I went, they gave me whatever and whoever I wanted. I paid for them, yes, but it didn't matter if they were already slated to be with someone else that night. I always got first choice."

"Is that because you're an Alpha?" I ask.

"No, even if other Alphas were there, I got first choice," He says.

"And, even as I hear myself say it, I realize I should have known something was wrong. I wasn't in an alliance with Franco, so why did I get special treatment? Roman and I would go in and we'd get whoever we asked for. And now that I think about it, Roman always went with me."

He looks at me. "I need to go to the brothel. I need to see if I

can find out what is going on, who owns it and if they know anything that can help us. And it would be good to know if Ivy really is working there," he says.

I don't want him going to a brothel. I know what happens in those places. And I know that I've marked him, and I can feel his emotions, but once again, I feel fear for what his true intentions might be.

"I know this is a strange request, and I want you to feel free to say no, but...would you come with me?" he asks.

"You want me to go to a brothel with you?" I ask him, not sure I understand what he's asking of me.

"Yes. I know it will be uncomfortable, but sadly, men take women there all the time, so no one will think it's weird. But the women may be willing to tell you things they aren't willing to tell me. I really feel like it's a key to part of this. I don't know why, but it's a gut feeling," he says.

"Okay, then, we'll go," I say feeling sick to my stomach at the thought.

'He's not going to sell us to the brothel, Claire,' Damara says to me.

I don't think he'd do that, well, not really, but the thought of being in a place where I know the women are mistreated like that, makes me feel sick.

"Just like today, you won't leave my side, Claire. We'll talk before we go and if something happens, you will run. I'll fight to protect you, but you will get back here to the safety of the pack."



"Do you think they would try something?" I ask, now feeling uneasy for a completely different reason.

"I'm not willing to make any assumptions at this point. We've been wrong too many times, been infiltrated on too many points without realizing it."

I think about it a moment as we start to walk back to the packhouse. Tereshan takes my hand as we walk.

"You know, I think you might be right. Roman went to the brothel in the last timeline even though I didn't go with him. He asked me all the time, but when I didn't go, he did. That's how we knew about Ivy."

"Honestly, that could just have been Roman being Roman, but we should be sure. We can't leave any possible options open this time. We have to shut Franco down and in order to do that, we need to know what he's after."

Tereshan stops, turning me to look at me. "Because, Claire, he's desperate. If you think about all the ways he's trying to get to us, Heath, Ivy, Roman, the mole, Zoey and Amelia, possibly the brothel, I mean I don't want to become paranoid, but even that delivery guy today didn't sit well. It's like he's everywhere and we never knew it. Those are the actions of a desperate man. We need to figure out what has made him desperate."

He looks at me a long moment, then turns, kneeling in front of me. "Hop on," he says.

He turns looking at me over his shoulder, waiting to see if I will do it. I walk up, wrapping my arms around his neck, his arms hook under my legs, pulling them to his sides as he

stands.

"Together?" he asks.

"Together," I say, smiling.

We walk in silence for a bit. He periodically reaches up to take my hand, pulling it to his mouth for a kiss. I can feel the calm flowing through him at having me so close.

"So, I was thinking..." he says.

"About?"

"How about you and I have a little wager."

"A wager, about what?"

"Well, you seem pretty confident that our omegas will find Ivy's hidden treasure. I think it will be a warrior. How about we make a bet. If an omega finds the money, you get half of the remaining money, or a quarter of the total amount. If a warrior finds it, I get the money," he says.

"Where will the rest go?" I ask him.

"Back into the pack funds. But this way, you and I can cheer on our pack, give each group a cheerleader and maybe begin rebuilding the pack bond that you built in the last timeline. I hate that this pack is still so divided. What do you say?" he asks.

"I think it's a great idea. And you, Alpha Tereshan, are going down," I say confidently.

He's laughing a real, true laugh when we walk back into the



packhouse, drawing the surprised looks of everyone around us.

That night at dinner, Tereshan stands in front of the pack.

"Attention everyone. I have a couple of announcements to make."

The room goes silent as he pulls me up beside him. "Your Luna and I would like to set up a treasure hunt for the pack."

There's a lot of mumbling about it before Tereshan raises his hands and everyone goes quiet again.

"Most of you know that Ivy was put into our cells a couple of days ago. What you may not know is the reason. She has been stealing from this pack for years. Every penny that was given to her for clothing, bedding, heat, hot water, anything for the omegas and even for some of the warriors, went into her pocket. I was blind to that for too long, but when I realized what was happening, I took action."

Tereshan has everyone's rapt attention now.

"At best guess, Ivy has taken over \$10,000 from the pack."

That causes a lot of murmuring from everyone.

"And because we have no idea where that money might be, your Luna and I thought it might be a good idea to set up a treasure hunt to find the money. Now, to be fair, we have no idea if that money is on the pack lands, but we feel pretty sure that it is hidden somewhere on our territory."

Now the excited chatter gets even louder. Tereshan raises

his hands for quiet again.

"What I'm proposing is this, whoever finds the money, keeps half of it." There are gasps all across the room.

"So, if she stole \$10,000, the winner gets to keep \$5,000."

Tereshan looks at me as everyone starts talking at once. He waits for them to get quiet.

"In addition, your Luna and I have set a side wager. She thinks that our omegas know this packhouse and pack lands better than anyone and has bet against me that it will be an omega that finds the money."

The omegas begin to cheer, and I clap for them.

"I, however, think that it will be a warrior that will find the money."

The warrior cheer is deafening with lots of hoots, wolf whistles and foot stomping.

"So, to add to the fun, if an omega finds the money, your Luna will get half of the remaining money, or \$2,500. If a warrior finds the money, I win the bet."

He looks around the room. "Any questions?"

Heath raises his hand.

"Alpha, what if my mate and I decide to work together? I'm a warrior and she's an omega."

I step up and Tereshan lets me speak. "Anyone who searches in pairs, would be expected to split the winnings evenly



among the group searching for the treasure. If a warrior and omega pair win, Alpha Tereshan and I will also split our winnings," I say looking up at him.

"Any other questions?" he asks and answers a couple more questions.

"Before I let you get back to your evening duties, I have one more announcement. Some of you may have heard from Jesiah that I am going to begin cleaning out the storage room in the unused section of the packhouse. I intend to make it into a library where everyone can go to read, a place where I will bring in tutors to teach those of you who cannot yet read and a place to go when you just need a quiet place to relax. It's something this pack has been missing and anyone interested in helping should join me after warrior training tomorrow morning."

I look around and see the excited faces of many of the omegas. The announcement of tutors is new as well.

"Any last questions?" he asks.

Tereshan turns to look at me. I look out over our pack.

"Let the Treasure Hunt begin!"