

The Alpha's Captive Matew by Taylor Caine Chapter 22

CHAPTER 22

Aaron

It was once again late when I returned to the ranch after spending most of the day in Ellisville speaking with Maryanne.

The Reynolds wolves had been causing some trouble with

the witches, while I'd heard rumors that the witches were targeting rogue or roaming wolves who didn't have the security of a pack to keep them safe.

The fate of some rogue wolves weren't really my concern, although I knew not all of them were bad. Some just preferred to live a life of solitude. It was a little worrying that some

witches might be taking advantage of their isolation, but

Maryanne had assured me it was mostly rumors and she had

taken care of a few incidences herself.

I wasn't sure if I fully trusted how exactly she'd taken care of

wasn't high in her priorities, but I had to choose my battles

with Maryanne carefully or else risk a new feud flaring up that

could leave numerous witches and wolves dead.

The Reynolds wolves were a problem-I'd seen that myself with Harper-but short of declaring an outright conflict with

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them, there wasn't much I could do. Maryanne, however,

expected me to take care of it somehow, because arguably was the most powerful Alpha in the north of the state, if not the entirety of Montana.

With everything going on my own territory, it wasn't really something I wanted to be dealing with right now, but I'd promised Maryanne I'd see what could be done, if only to keep the peace.

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Back at the ranch, I parked my truck and then made my way over to the main barn that housed the stables. It didn't take me long to find Connor, who was lurking and watching Heath where he was feeding and apparently talking to the horses.

"How's he doing?" I asked, making Connor jump like he'd been touched by a live wire. I had to swallow a laugh, knowing my buddy wouldn't appreciate it.

"Christ, Aaron, give a guy a warning before you sneak up on him."

"Sorry, didn't realize you were so deeply occupied." It was a joke, but if I wasn't mistaken, the barest hint of color appeared on Connor's cheeks.

What the heck was that all about?

"So?" I prompted, nodding a head toward Heath down the

row of stables. "How did the first day go?"

"Fine. Good," Connor responded, putting his hands in his pockets. "He's obedient and good with the horses and generally seems agreeable."

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I nodded in satisfaction. Getting Heath in addition to Harper had definitely been an unexpected bonus in several different ways. Especially in giving me leverage against Harper trying anything stupid.

Half the time when I looked at her, I could just see she was ready to flee. To run as soon as she thought she had half an opportunity. I was hoping she wasn't that stupid or selfish. I hadn't been bluffing when I'd said Heath would be punished in Harper's place, but it wasn't something I wanted to do.

"You know this is going to cause you problems though, right?" Connor said after a moment, his attention on Heath once again. "You've got three young omegas here now. That's almost unheard of these days. It might be tempting enough for other Alphas to challenge you for them."

The thought had vaguely crossed my mind, but I hadn't put

too much stock into it.

"I'd like to see them try," I said in a low voice, hint of growl to

the words.

Connor

only grinned at me. "You're one stubborn hard-a's, you know that?"

"If that's what it takes to keep the pack safe, then we both know I'm never going to apologize for it." I clapped Connor on the shoulder, before moving past him and closing the distance

to Heath.

He was rubbing the nose of a horse where it had its head

hung over the stable door, snuffling at him.

"Alpha," he greeted me cheerily. "You've got some really great

stock here." *www.mov.eLworm.com*

I reached up to stroke the horse along its sleek neck. "We take

pride in caring for our horses and other animals as well as we

take care of each other."

"Everyone knows your reputation," Heath said, eyeing me in a way that wolves lower in the pack never usually dared. "But

I could also tell you cared deeply about your pack. I don't

think you'd ever hurt anyone to be malicious, so I'm hoping that even though you've got me and Harper to pay the blood debt now, you won't hold who our father is against us. I'm only asking for fair treatment, especially for 1/8

I didn't

like being questioned, especially by an omega who was here to pay a debt and not even officially part of the pack. But I'd promised as much to Noah, that Harper and

Heath

wouldn't be purposefully mistreated.

"Ultimately you and Harper are responsible for your own welfare," I replied in a clipped voice. "If you cooperate -if Harper doesn't cause trouble like she did yesterday, and doesn't try to run-then your life here will be perfectly adequate. However, if either of you try anything, cause any problems within the pack or attempt to escape me, you will both be punished. Is that understood?"

Heath's gaze glinted, as if he wasn't all that impressed with

my words but was obviously smart enough not to argue. *@www.rD(+)eL@orm.C@m*

"Yes, Alpha," he replied dutifully.

"Good.

There's a small two-bedroom log cabin that you

and Harper will be living in. During the day, Sandy is taking

responsibility for Harper, but after hours, that responsibility falls to you. As someone who understands pack law and the way things work around a ranch like this, I expect you to

teach Harper as much as you can and ensure she doesn't do anything foolish."

"Yes, Alpha," Heath repeated, though there was no missing the defiance that crossed his features as he glanced away from

Heath might understand what it was to live as an omega, but sinking even lower that that-being bound to another pack by

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a subjugation deal-that was a whole other matter. But if

Harper and Heath needed to learn the hard way, I wouldn't hesitate in ensuring they understood how unpleasant things could become for them if they defied or displeased me.

"Aaron," Connor said, stepping up behind me.

I half turned to face him as Heath returned his attention to

tending to the horses.

"What is it?" I asked, noticing the pinched look on Connor's

features.

"The sentries patrolling our western border came across Reynolds wolves prowling the perimeter."

A small part of our western territory ran up against Reynold's lands, but it was way out in the wilderness, somewhere they rarely ventured, even under a full moon, running in wolf form.

"What were they doing?" I asked, not liking this development, I'd had with Maryanne earlier today.

"They just seemed to be waiting and watching," Connor answered. "But their Alpha was there. It might be nothing, but it doesn't look good."

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I nodded in agreement with Connor. "We need to check it out.

Get the horses ready to go."

It'd take hours to ride all the way out to the western border of

our territory, but I need to ensure the Reynolds wolves weren't thinking about hunting or encroaching on my lands. We'd probably have to spend the night out there, and for some foolish reason, my wolf was immediately forlorn at the idea of being away from the ranch house-away from Harper-when I'd done it a million times before. Usually I relished the chance

to ride way out into the wilds of my territory and spend the

night under the stars.

Maybe this was exactly what I needed. Some time and distance to get some perspective about this whole damn Harper thing.

Assuming the Reynolds wolves weren't up to no good, that

was.

If they were, then Maryanne might get her wish.

Because if the Reynolds wolves pushed me too far, I wouldn't hesitate in wiping them out and taking over their territory.