

## Chapter Sixty-Six:: Agonising Wait

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Damon POV:

It's been an excruciating three days since we bowed to the Alpha King's demands, each moment stretched taut with tension and the echo of Phera's pain that haunts us ceaselessly. Axel, Zane, and I can barely fucking function, the connection through our mate bond transmitting waves of agony that cut deep into our souls. We know, with a sinking dread, that the torment we feel is but a shadow of the brutality Phera is enduring. Fuck! We have failed her in every turn of her life. Will we ever be worth her?

Every surge of pain that washes over us drains the colour from our faces, a grim reminder of our helplessness in the face of her suffering. It's a sharp, piercing reminder that she is out there, somewhere, facing unimaginable horrors alone. The thought is unbearable, a sharp thorn in our hearts that we can neither remove nor ignore.

Amidst this personal torment, the Alpha King's trackers scour the land, their efforts a constant buzz in the background of our chaotic existence. They're skilled, but the cunning of our adversaries leaves us fearing they might always be one dreadful step behind. Every report that comes back empty-handed tightens the knot of fear in my stomach.

Meanwhile, in the command center, Axel and Zane work tirelessly with the King's advisers. They're fighting a different battle—a financial one—as they attempt to stem

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the haemorrhaging of our resources. It's a critical front in the war being waged against us. Every drained account, every lost asset feels like another blow against our stability, our ability to protect our pack and recover our Luna.

But the challenges don't end with financial woes and our missing mate. The situation has escalated beyond our worst fears. Blue Moon has declared war, an aggressive move that shocks us all despite the tensions that have been brewing. It's clear now that the disturbances at our borders were just the precursor to a much larger conflict, one that threatens the very heart of our territory.

The declaration came through just hours ago, a formal notice delivered with a cold professionalism that belied the bloodshed it promised. It's a strategic nightmare, forcing us to spread our already thin resources even thinner to prepare for an assault we hadn't anticipated so soon.

As I stand in the middle of the war room, surrounded by maps and plans, the weight of leadership presses heavily on me. Each decision feels like a gamble, each gamble a risk to the lives of those I am sworn to protect. And through it all, the constant, gnawing worry for Phera, our Luna, the heart of our pack, missing and in pain. I rub a hand over my face, feeling the stubble and the weary lines etched into my skin from sleepless nights.

"We need to consolidate our defences, shore up any vulnerabilities at the borders," I instruct Nate, trying to focus on the immediate threats while part of my mind, my heart, remains with Phera.

Axel nods grimly, his eyes dark with the same pain and

determination that I feel.

"And we need to push the trackers harder. There has to be something we're missing, some clue to where they're holding her."

Zane, usually the more relaxed of us, lets out a frustrated growl.

"And what if we're too late?" His voice cracks with the strain, a rare break in his usually controlled demeanour.

"We won't be," I assert, more to bolster my own faltering hope than anything. "We can't be."

The resolve in the room is palpable, a shared commitment to fight on every front until we bring Phera home. It's the only outcome we can allow ourselves to consider, the only future we are willing to work towards.

Axel POV:

The room is a hive of controlled chaos as we coordinate our defences, each of us grappling with the dual threats of financial ruin and impending war. The air is thick with tension, the maps on the walls covered in notes and strategy lines that seem to multiply by the hour. Just as we're about to review the latest patrol reports, Adam bursts through the door, a look of urgency etched across his features.

"The Alpha King has sent reinforcements," he announces, his voice cutting through the murmur of conversations.

I pause, processing the news. Reinforcements could mean a bolstering of our defences, a much-needed aid in our time of crisis. Yet, the timing and the necessity make me wary of the King's true intentions.



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Zane scoffs, his frustration boiling over.

"He's toying with us, playing both sides to keep his hands clean while he watches us squirm."

His accusation hangs heavy in the room, a sentiment I'm sure many of us have considered. The Alpha King's games are no secret, his political manoeuvres designed to maintain his power over the packs under his rule. I rub the bridge of my nose, feeling the weight of my responsibilities pressing down.

"We can't afford to speculate on his motives right now," I counter, trying to keep my voice even. "We need every ally we can get, even if it's from the King's own guard."

"But he could end this war with a single command," Zane persists, his voice rising with each word. "If he truly wanted to help, he wouldn't just send reinforcements; he'd call off Blue Moon entirely."

"The law doesn't work that way, Zane," I snap, frustration bleeding into my tone. "You know he can't directly intervene in declared conflicts between packs unless there's a clear violation of the accords. It's up to us to navigate this, with or without his troops."

Adam nods in agreement, though his expression is grim.

"Axel's right. We use what we get and keep pushing forward. It's all we can do."

The room settles into a reluctant acceptance. We turn our attention back to the large screen displaying troop movements and supply lines, each of us lost in our own thoughts about loyalty, duty, and the tangled web of pack politics.

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As we finalize the deployment of the King's reinforcements, ensuring they're integrated into our defense strategy without compromising our autonomy, I can't help but feel a simmering anger at the whole situation. Phera's absence is a gaping wound in our hearts, one that bleeds into every decision, every action we take. Her safety, her return, remains my primary focus, even as we maneuver through the dangerous game laid out before us.

The session drags on, each hour blending into the next as we fortify our positions and prepare for whatever Blue Moon might throw our way. The weight of command is heavy, but it's a burden I carry willingly, fueled by the fire of my need to see Phera safe, to bring her back where she belongs.

Zane POV:

The tension in the room is palpable, a thick cloud of frustration and anger that seems to choke the air around us. I pace restlessly, the constant throb of pain through the mate bond with Phera—my sunflower—making it impossible to focus on anything else. Every pulse of agony that courses through her, I feel echoed in my own body, a relentless reminder of her suffering.

As Axel and Adam discuss logistical strategies with the Alpha King's reinforcements, my patience wears thin. My sunflower's every scream, every moment of fear she must be enduring under the hands of her captors, ignites a fire within me that I'm struggling to contain.

"I can't stand this!" I burst out, slamming my fist on the table.

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The maps and papers flutter in the breeze of my frustration.

"We're just sitting here, planning and strategizing while she's out there, alone and in pain!"

Axel shoots me a warning look, his eyes sharp.

"We're all feeling it, Zane. But we need to be smart about this. We can't just rush in blindly."

He's right, of course, but knowing that doesn't quell the storm raging inside me. The need to act, to do something—anything—to bring her back is overwhelming. Just as I'm about to argue further, ready to abandon everything and join the search myself, the door swings open. A man strides in, one of the Alpha King's elite trackers, his face etched with lines of fatigue yet alight with a spark of urgency.

"We've found her," he announces without preamble, cutting through the noise of the room like a sharp blade.

The room falls deathly silent, every eye on him, every heart suddenly caught in throats.

"She's on Earth, on the coast of a small town in Italy," he continues, his voice steady despite the bombshell he's just dropped.

Relief, fierce and palpable, floods through me, followed by a surge of renewed purpose. Italy. Earth. It sounds so far, yet now it's the only destination that matters.

Axel is the first to recover, his warrior's mind kicking into gear.

"How sure are we of this intel?" he demands, his tone all



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business.

"Very sure," the tracker replies. "We triangulated her location based on the last known coordinates of her captors' vehicle and satellite imagery. She's there, but she won't be for long. They're on the move."

"We need to go, now!" I insist, the urgency propelling me forward. "We can't waste any more time."

Adam is already on his phone, coordinating with our contacts to arrange a jet on earth.

"I'll handle the logistics. Let's get ready to move," he says, his voice a calm in the storm of our emotions.

As we spring into action, the weight of the past days seems to lift slightly, giving way to a sliver of hope. The possibility of having Phera back, safe, becomes a beacon guiding us forward.

"We're coming, sunflower," I whisper under my breath, a promise to her and to myself.

A vow that I intend to keep, no matter what stands in our way. As we rush to prepare, the room buzzing with activity, I feel a resolve settling over me. The pain through the bond still pulses, a constant ache, but now it fuels my determination instead of crippling me with fear.

We will bring her home. We have to.



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