

Making Changes

Chapter 17

Maksim's POV

I was on the phone the whole time we were heading back to the pack. I had things I needed to do, but I wanted to spend time with my mate once we got back home. Which reminded me, I needed to get Dad to design it. We could get it built in the new area. I loved my parents, but for us, it was just a quick run to get to the new location. I wanted Isabel to have the home she wanted, so Dad had been asking her questions on the way back.

Isabel thought they were innocent questions, but my father was getting an idea of what she liked. Isabel wanted a wrap-around porch. She enjoyed having a view. My father knew that she would like to be near the small river, which ran through the area. No one's built there yet, despite it being available for the last ten years. Most are happy to live in the pack house so they don't have to cook, and their friends are there. It was like living in a hotel.

Melina asked for her home to be built next to ours. She is ready to move out. I am sure it's because she can't keep up the brave face act. She doesn't want them to feel bad for her, so since he is building ours, he can also create her dream home. I would be thrilled for my sister to live next door to me. I will ensure that Melina is safe and protected for the rest of her life, regardless of whether she chooses to take another mate or not. I think that in time, she will come to find her second chance at love. That is what she wants in life. I'm just praying it won't be any of the unmated wolves here—the chance of them accepting her would be like it was with Trevor. I won't let her go through that kind of pain again.

I was on my last call with Alpha Brian now. He answered on the fourth ring, "Hello?" I guess he didn't look to see who it was, just picked up the call. I'm sure he was busy, but I needed the favor.

"Alpha Brian, this is Maksim Fedorov, you might not remember me," I started to say.

"Oh, I remember you. I wouldn't be here without you. How can I help you?" Alpha Brian replied. His tone was calm and unbothered. He was no longer focused on what he was doing.

"I need your brother's assistance in building a contract. I don't want to involve you in it, as I don't want you to get into trouble. The short version is that our job is dangerous. I'd like to see if Jaden can come and help us write up the new contract. I want specific clauses built into it. One to protect us in the future. I will tell them I wrote it. I don't want you, your brother, or your pack to be involved in the fallout. This will be between us and the High Council, so there will be fallout. I no longer have the trust I used to have in them," I answered.

"You didn't have a way to deny them before?" Alpha Brian asked in surprise.

"No, we were committed to take them, no matter the danger. We did it, despite the danger, because we thought we had a relationship built on mutual respect and trust. I was wrong. Today showed me just how wrong I was when they turned their back on my sister," I replied.

"Is Melina okay?" Alpha Brian asked.

"She is safe. Thank you for asking about her. Kira was able to save her," I replied. I knew my anger and frustration came through in my tone. I was furious. I wasn't going to take the disrespect. None of us were.

He was quiet for a few minutes before he said, "I'm sorry, Maksim. I know the situation had to be serious for Melina to be hurt. I won't ask you what happened. Just know that you have our full support in whatever you need. I know you and your team are exceptional people. I will contact Jaden today and see if he can take some time off to assist you with this. Just let me know if you need anything else from us here at Dark Mist. I'm more than willing to help you and your team out in any way you need us."

I was glad that Brian was so supportive of us. If the Council found out they had anything to do with it, they could be sanctioned. The Council was going to punish anyone who sided with us. Which is why I spoke to most of the team about it on the way back. Mates were called and asked about their thoughts on the matter, with the decision being unanimous. Melina was the only one who was concerned about the potential blowback over it. I hated to ask Brian for the favor. I never intended to call in the favor. I did what I knew was right when I saved him. I got off the phone two minutes before we arrived at Black Adder.

Everyone was glad to be home again. The team loved jobs where we didn't have to be away from our families for long. I did as well. Everyone immediately headed to their homes. Luna Brenna met us at my parents' house. Adrian, Chase's mate, was there as well, but they left soon after. They knew we needed to speak privately.

Mom was waiting at the door when we pulled up. She ran out to hug Melina and held her tight for several minutes. She was now sitting between our parents, and I could tell she was trying hard to keep it together. Dmitry was there with Tatiana, and Cara had arrived to sit in on the conversation as we were about to discuss how to move forward. The High Council is not going to take this lying down. They will strike out once they realize they no longer have control over us.

I wanted to take my mate to the apartment that Jaxon had given us to live in until our home was built. I wanted to mark her immediately and make sure everyone knew who she belonged to. I knew she wanted to tell me something, and I knew it was big. I hope that when I introduce her to the group, she will feel that she is in a safe space. That way, if she wanted to share her story, she could.

I started the meeting by telling them that Alpha Brian's younger brother, Jaden, would help draw up the contract, and that I would take the credit for creating it with the Council. Grey Mist was a much smaller pack. They were more vulnerable to the potential punishment that the Council might impose. I reminded that it won't just be our coven feeling the heat. Anyone willing to assist us could be in jeopardy.

"Jaxon already told me what happened. I agree, we can't let this go. The coven is just as much a part of this pack as anyone else. We will stand with you. I will increase our order of dry goods to prepare for any potential issues that may arise. I wouldn't put it past them to try to force our hand to get a new contract drawn up when they discover it. The Council is just like any other entity, with both good and bad aspects. I'm sure they will react badly once they figure it out," Luna Brenna stated.

"I'm sorry you're being dragged into this with us. I hate knowing that you will bear the brunt of it, as you are under their control. As a coven, they are less likely to come at us. They know attacking us would be a death sentence to whoever tried it. They can't control us after the contract is changed. They have their own legal team, effective at drafting contracts. I will wait a few weeks, as we have a month and a half before the current one expires. The situations are becoming more dangerous each year. We have mates too, ones we would like to come back home to. I think it's time to renegotiate. I think that includes a higher fee, say double the current one. That will get them to focus on just that part of the contract," I advised.

"That's a great idea, Maksim. They'll be so focused on not wanting to pay up for our services, they won't see the other changes. They will be expecting some blowback from us after how we were treated today. It's best to make it obvious, so they don't expect us to slip anything else in. They were watching us when we left. I'm positive they called the Council as soon as we were clear of Still Waters. They hate having to pay us more money. They get a percentage from each pack every year. They make plenty of money. I'm sure most of them joined the High Council when it was established over ten years ago, to make sweeping changes. The only real changes that I've seen being made have been into their own pockets. Greed makes people do things that they normally wouldn't do," my uncle Alexei replied.

"I don't want to cause trouble for any of us. I'm back now and safe. Kira healed me, and it's over and done with. I don't want anyone I care about getting hurt trying to fight for me. I'm done," Melina interjected.

"Melina, what Still Waters did to you was wrong. They took something away from us that we can never get back. Please allow us to ensure that the Council knows that, despite their power, they were wrong in this instance. They showed us that what we thought was a close working relationship we meant nothing to them. That had to have come from someone, or more, in the highest positions. Now that we know, in their opinion, we're all expendable, things have to change. The catalyst might have been because of you, but after we see what their opinion of us is, how can we allow it to pass? If we do, what will happen later? I'm on the team, along with my brother, my children, and soon, my grandchildren. How can I allow the people I care about most to be hurt by a Council that refused to help us after such a horrible deception?" our father asked.

My mother was observing my father. He said what he needed to, without mentioning exactly what the loss was. He doesn't want to say the words out loud and hurt Melina all over again. Most people in the room knew what had happened. Only Mom was in the dark. She was already upset about what had happened to Melina. She wouldn't be able to take the loss of her first grandchild easily.

Cara looked at my mate with a gentle smile on her face and introduced herself, "I'm Cara, I'm Alexei's wife, and now your aunt. I wanted to welcome you to our family and the Black Adder pack. I know Brenna mentioned that she had an apartment ready, but I'd be happy to set up a little love nest near here while your home is being built. A new couple needs space, and I could have it ready for you in the blink of an eye."

"That would be great," I replied. I wanted my mate all to myself. Plus, I would be close enough to help if Melina needed me while our homes are being built.