

Chapter 49

Talks Between Alphas Part 2

"You know, you've been doing a whole lot of talking, Rhys." Dylan sat back in his chair in a faux semblance of indifference, but where Xavier sat beside him, he could see how hard the male clutched the stress ball in his hand. "It's really a shame that you don't seem to have anything of important to add."

Rhys' face twisted with unearned superiority, "That's where you're wrong again, princeling. It's never a waste of breath to remind ourselves of the mistakes of the past. Lest we be doomed to repeat them, an all that." Xavier clenched his teeth until he could feel them grind against one another, but he managed to keep himself together. He refused to rise to the bait Rhys dangled in front of him. The whelp had barely been out of Pampers during the events three years ago.

What smarted was that, in a sense, he was correct. The events surrounding the attack that had ended his sister and his friend's lives had shaken not

just the Red Moon Pack, but the very foundation of the Alliance to its core. Until then, the Alliance had strictly worked as a team - or at least appeared to do as much. Xavier's father withholding information of a potential threat became all the more severe because, up until his loved ones were murdered, no one had heard of a rogue threat before.

Even now, precious little was known about the shadow organization, if it could even be called that. There were so many questions left unanswered, simply because no one had been able to gather enough information on their whereabouts, intentions, or goals.

At this point, it was a tossup whether they were even Wolves or not.

Missing the signs pointing to the rogue infestation had been a dire red mark on August's otherwise stellar reputation. If his father hadn't just stepped down in order to pass his title on to Xavier, he would have been forced into an early retirement.

For males as virile and temperamental as those of Alpha blood tended to be, there were only two acceptable means for denouncing a throne - a peaceful, planned passing of the torch, or a bloody trial by combat.

A trial by combat for the privilege of leadership hadn't been seen in the Northeastern United States since the Alliance had been formed generations ago. The lineages had been established and each Alphadom

was handed down whenever the next generation came of age, with their father beside them, to share their wisdom and guidance.

For August to be denied that right would have been a slap in the face to his three decades of leadership. Coming straight off the heels of his daughter's murder, the shame may have driven him off the deep end.

As it was, Xavier's father had immediately begun insisting that Red Moon be ruled almost militantly by the Alliance's most arbitrary rules. Any threat to the Red Moon Pack's authority and standing withing the Alliance could not and would not be tolerated.

Xavier couldn't help it when his mind turned to Ava. There had been so many extenuating circumstances surrounding his sister's and Sam's deaths, as well Ava's conviction. The Pack comes first.

Those words had echoed inside of Xavier's mind more times than he could count, informing every official decision he had and had not made over the three years he'd spent as Alpha. He'd heard those words the night he'd sentenced Ava to a life of imprisonment, and he'd heard them every nice for months afterward.

Soon, his mother became increasingly distraught over the losses they'd suffered, and his father had become increasingly demanding, urging Xavier to save face, correct his mistakes. Xavier hadn't been able to afford to dwell on something that had already been done. To call his father's right

hand into question, or go against his father's directive and call his own first decree as Alpha into question...

It wasn't a question. Xavier would have thrown the Red Moon Pack even further into chaos. The Alliance would have completely lost faith in his family's judgement, and they would have been forcibly removed while the Alliance elected someone else of Alpha blood to the head of their territory.

All of that weight had been on a nineteen-year-old boy's shoulders. And now, after three years he wasn't at all sure that he'd made the right decision. Had it been right for his family? Yes. The Pack, most likely. But had it been the right decision, overall? Xavier wasn't so sure.

The Pack comes first. The words had stopped ringing in his ears years ago, through the sheer force of his own willpower. But, recently, the words had come back, and they wouldn't leave.

At Sophia and Sam's crime scene, the only scent that had lingered in the area had been Ava's. And the only evidence that there had been anyone else at the scene had been the text messages on Sam's missing phone.

Liam tapped on the map, bringing Xavier out of his illuminating reverie. "We should stay focused on the here and now," Xavier knew that the male was speaking to Rhys, but he concurred. There would be plenty of time to reflect back on the ways he'd fucked up so many lives later.

"As you can see, I'm currently in the lurch trying to supply enough Wolves to adequately patrol the area of interest. Silver Moon doesn't currently have the manpower to cover and properly investigate the way we'd like to." Xavier nodded, "So, we're talking footmen and funds enough to cover supplies and compensation?"

"The usual," Liam nodded.

"All for a threat that might not even exist," Rhys snapped. He sat with his arms crossed over his slim chest, already mentally retreating from the bid for assistance.

"Weren't you the one who was just going on about not repeating the mistakes of the past," Dylan posed. "Sending one another aid in times of need is what the Alliance is for, Bennet."

Rhys threw a derisive hand at the map, "Because a few squirrels ended up where they weren't supposed to be? This isn't a time of need, it's a waste of time. And money. Both of which Silver Moon would have more of if their leader weren't so eager to embroil his Pack in battles that they had no business taking part in."

Liam went deathly still, but Rhys - the imp - was already rising to his feet. He snapped his fingers and two of the guards he'd arrived with opened both double doors for him as he swept out of the room. "Call me when there's a real threat to be dealt with."

With that, he was gone, and the Alliance was down to a total of three.

"Fuck 'em," Dylan spat. "It'll be his ass on the line when we find and neutralize the rogues ourselves. No one likes a coward."

Xavier sighed against the ache building up in his left temple, "Eclipse is the wealthiest Pack in the Alliance. Their help would have been essential to making this operation go smoothly."

"Miller's right," Liam finally spoke up. "Bennet's cowardice will catch up to him one day, even if today isn't that day. We can still pull this off without his assistance. As long as I have your aid, that is."

Dylan tapped his fingers anxiously on the table, "I would give you my hand in a heartbeat if I had that type of authority, brother. As it is, I'll have to have a conversation with my father before I can make any promises."

Liam nodded, "Understood." He turned his earnest gaze toward Xavier's still form. "Xavier?"

Slowly, Xavier nodded his head, "You'll have the Red Moon Pack's support in this."

Liam exhaled a relieved breath. Before he could voice his thanks, Xavier continued.

"On an unrelated issue, I've known the both of you for a long time. Over the years, I've come to consider you both confidantes and friends. So, I feel I owe it to you to make myself clear," Xavier met both of their gazes. Dylan's was confused while Liam's was filled with cautious apprehension, but he had both male's undivided attention.

"The both of you need to stay the fuck away from Ava Davis."

Dylan immediately rolled his eyes. "Goddess, we're doing this again? I already told you I'd lay off, man."

Xavier had anticipated Dylan's reaction, but he couldn't have said how the soft-spoken male would react to the blatant threat. He didn't want to come to blows with his old friend, but that night in the Green Light Club had taught him that, when it came to Ava, the decision wasn't always his own.

But Liam didn't react. In fact, his only acknowledgement that he'd heard Xavier at all was a small crease that appeared in between his eyebrows.

"Ava Davis," he said finally. "The female from the club?"

Xavier only stared at him, Dylan's vigilant gaze darting between the two. A sudden look of revelation filled Liam's face, his ever-alert eyes becoming hyper focused on Xavier.

"It's Ava, isn't it." He muttered, "She's Red Moon's traitor."