

The Dark Side Of Fate By Karima Sa'ad Usman Chapter 261

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Preparing For The Meeting

~Leo~

I could not believe Sean was a bastard.

Had we known he would betray us like this, we wouldn't have opted they give him head Alpha of the West.

It seemed right then because we needed the four regional alphas to agree to the kingship. Little did we know it would be a move we would regret.

I had suspected him when there was a high inflow of displaced people in the East and South. Every time the council reached out to him, he would have a logical explanation for it.

He would say they were packs belonging to alphas hanged for treason.

He would suggest that the pack members did not like the new alpha and decided to leave.

It did not corroborate what the people said, but how would we know? I had a region to run, Devin had a region to run, and the council had their hands full. The Royal family also had their hands full trying to balance Larry's stunt's financial and economic effects. We were too occupied to dig deep, and he took advantage of it.

What I did not understand was why he would think he deserved more. If anyone deserved more, it was Christian. He was with us through it all, even at the expense of his wife and son. Sylvester had forgiven their crimes for his sake, and Christian was content with it. Why would Sean think that way? He was a greedy bastard, and we made a terrible mistake by trusting him.

I noticed my father talking on the phone, and I did not need to guess whom he was talking to. I knew Erik had finally reached out. It made me nervous. I doubted I wanted to see the man based on trust alone. I did not know what to expect, and the fact that Amelia was pregnant made it more difficult. It wasn't like she was sick or something, and it wasn't like she needed me. I just wanted to be with her. I guess it was the excitement of it all.

"I hope we can trust the two of you," I finally spoke, looking at Grey and his wife.

"Our history with your family has not been great, with Susan being the exception. I would not trust you until you give me a reason to. It isn't personal, but I hate being played. If you say you are on our side, then you better be. There is too much hanging in the balance; another betrayal would be too much. It is not personal.

I do not trust my parents either. I haven't seen them in almost seven years, and a lot has changed within those years for anyone to remain the same.

I dislike pretending, so I am stating it out of respect. I hope I am clear," I said, and everyone was silent.

I knew no one expected me to be that blunt, but I had too much to deal with that I did not have time to investigate them or watch my back all the time.

I needed them to assure me with their actions that I would not need to watch my back where they were concerned.

"We have sworn our allegiance to the King. That should be good enough, but if you want us to prove it, I implore you to give us a chance. You should know that we have personal stakes, just like your parents. They have you and your mate to worry about, and we have our daughter and her mate to worry about. Susan is our only child and the only family we have left. We will be damned to want to ruin her life and happiness." Grey said, making much sense, and I nodded.

"Good enough for me. But I will still be watching," I said, and David laughed.

"We will all be watching. We shouldn't have to pay for a crime our great-grandfather and grandfather committed. Even our father had no hand in this, and I will come to my father's defence on this," David said, looking at Grey, who was slightly annoyed.

"Whether you like it or not, Beta Sullivan, there was an uprising, and your family was smack in the middle. They did it twice. The real person you should blame for depriving you of spending time with your daughter and forcing you into hiding is your brother Nicolas, not my father.

My father did nothing wrong by trying to hunt down and eliminate the threat.

If my father was evil, he should have wiped out your entire family. The law calls for it if you have been accused of treason, but he spared your brother, niece and daughter.

That has to account for something.

He let her grow up there and date his son, his heir, and only asked them to leave when he felt his secret was exposed.

He could have still killed your brother, daughter and niece for it, but he allowed Nicolas to move away with Susan, whom he believed had the knowledge of his secret and allowed your niece Glenda to continue living in the north.

You can't come here and try to paint my father as an evil man because he wasn't. He wasn't anything like his father or his grandfather. He was just a careful man with sentiments," David said. I had never seen him angry before, but I guess what Grey said about Maurice got to him, and he was right.

The law did state that if found guilty of treason, the entire family should be wiped out. It was Sylvester that recently abolished that law. Maurice did make an exception for the Sullivans. David was right.

We all stared at Grey, waiting for him to say something, but he was speechless.

"Even now, your family is still smacked in the middle of treason because of the massacre in Pridewood. Talk of being overprivileged," Dominic said, a bit annoyed, and I knew I had to calm the situation.

It was only a matter of time before the Volkovs start pushing back.

A lot of shit had been said about them, and they were made to look like monsters, but looking at the entire scenario, the Stepanovs were more monsters than the Volkov.

It was still a Stepanov versus Volkov war.

"We need to calm down," My father said, noticing the tension in the air.

"You can't ask us to be calm; you do not know what it means for your family to be dragged in the mud repeatedly. Our only crime is that we are Volkovs. My father's crime to his people was trying to protect himself and his family by sniffing out traitors. Traitors that we still had to deal with in our time.

Had my father successfully taken all of them out, including the Sullivans, Larry wouldn't have been a problem, and the people of Pridewood would still be alive,"

Dominic said, coming to his father's defence.

I knew things got pretty awkward because Dominic did not like his father. He was there for most of the bullshit his mother went through.

“Do not say that, Dominic. I am a Volkov too. There was no time the Stepanovs made me feel at home for it. Leo has a target on him because he is a Volkov, too. We all share in the taint. Ours is worse because our ancestor was a love child. Talk about being illegitimate, but that is the truth. Please Calm down so we can solve this. I am sure Grey was just speaking emotionally. Please be at peace,” my father said. Grey apologised to Sylvester, Dominic, Vito and David for speaking poorly of their father. Sylvester was silent through it all, and I wondered what was happening in his mind. I ordered the maids to give the Sullivans a room and opted to excuse myself so I could get ready for my meeting with Erik tomorrow.

While I headed towards the stairs, Devin and Clay approached me, and I wondered what their deal was.

“Hey, you have a minute,” Devin asked, and I raised an eyebrow, wondering what he wanted to ask. It was weird for him to speak like that.

“No,” I said, and the three of us laughed.

“Seriously, what is it?” I asked.

“I want to come with you to meet Erik. I am uncomfortable with just you and Theodore going alone,” He said.

“Me too,” Clay added immediately before I spoke. I looked at Devin, and I looked at Clay. They seemed serious about it. Who was I to say no?

“As long as you allow me to speak and handle the situation,” I said, and they both agreed.

“Okay, but no more additions,” I said, and they nodded and smiled. I wondered if they had discussed it or happened to just approach me at the same time.

“Leo,” I heard Sylvester call me after Devin and Clay left, and I knew he wanted to discuss the meeting with me too.

I went up the stairs and followed him to his room. Tamia was there, and Sylvester closed the door. I was a bit nervous about what they wanted to discuss with me.

“So, Devin wants to join you to see Erik?” He asked, and I knew he must have listened to our conversation. I nodded and sighed.

“Very well. I need you to be careful out there. You heard Grey. You are on his hit list. Besides my brothers and cousins, you are my strongest support and my cousin too; closer to me by blood than Marcel and Theodore, and Erik knows this. I do not want you to fall, Leo,” he said sternly, and I nodded.

He showed his emotions poorly, always speaking with a blank expression, and I wondered how Tamia dealt with it. She was like that too, so I figured they were perfect for each other.

“I know you will never do anything that would put my family and me in danger, and I know you will always look out for my good. I have discussed this with Theodore. I am giving you the right to represent me at that meeting and make decisions and agreements on my behalf.” He said I was in shock.

“I do not want a back and forth between us. It will take time, something we do not have. Talk to him and make agreements on my behalf, so we would know what we have and where we are heading,” he said, and I understood his reasons.

Sylvester wanted the meeting to happen once with results. It was a high risk on his

part, but it also meant he trusted me.

"I won't let you down," I said, and he nodded.

"I know you won't," He replied, and I excused myself from the room.

Who would have thought Sylvester would have so much trust in me? Only yesterday, he came after my region for treason and unknowingly rescued Tamia from the hell she lived in when I was still confused. I am glad it all turned out well, and our family and circle increased.

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Meeting Erik

~Leo~

I got ready for the meeting the next day. I was a bit tired because Amelia woke me up at night to discuss the meeting with the Sullivans.

She could not come because she was sleeping then, and no one was allowed to wake her.

I wished she was there, I knew she would have had plenty to say, but she wasn't, so I had to discuss the situation. She wasn't happy about it but understood she needed the rest.

Contrary to what I thought, Amelia trusted the Sullivans and had her reasons for it. She said it was normal for them to want to protect their daughter and her mate.

I could see it from that angle, but Susan and Devin were yet to claim each other. I let the matter drop so I could sleep.

The night's discussion had messed up my sleep, and now that I was getting ready for my trip to Hayland, I was feeling the effect.

I left the room and headed to the kitchen to drink coffee.

To my surprise, the men were there making sandwiches.

I remembered the darn bet we lost and grumbled. I was hoping to eat something nice for a change.

"Can't we just do something spontaneous and cancel this bet? We ate sandwiches three times yesterday. I love Amelia's sandwich recipes, but I am tired," I said, and Sylvester laughed and showed me a cookbook.

"We plan to take it up a notch today." He said with his messy apron.

I looked at Kyle and Max, who seemed the least interested in what was going on in the kitchen.

"I will eat with the staff," Kyle said, and Sylvester forbade him.

"We had a bet, and we lost. We cook and eat. That was the deal. We have to be men of our word," He said, and Max grumbled.

Sylvester putting it that way, had backed them into a corner. They weren't men of their word; that was how they lost a lot, to begin with. It was a silent jab, and we all knew it, so when everyone started laughing, I could not help but join in.

"Time to turn a new leaf, guys," Dominic said, elaborating on the matter, and Kyle placed his head on the table, grumbling.

The food was plated on the table, and to our surprise, the women had a different breakfast from us. It was mouth-watering too.

They had baked potatoes, Danish pastries, juice, smoked sausages, baked beans, fruit salad, toast, salad and different types of dressing.

"We had a deal," Sylvester grumbled while Tamia ate the spread.

"Yes, we did, my darling husband, but as I stated, we do not have to eat what you prepare. Besides, we can only eat so many sandwiches," She said. Looking at the sandwiches we made. They looked great this time, but everyone was tired of them. "Leo, Devin, Theodore and Clay can join us because they have a meeting to attend, and a full and satisfied stomach is required for it, but the rest of you must finish the bet. Be men of your word," She said, and all the men started laughing, including Kyle and Max, because she had said the same exact words that Sylvester had said to Kyle in the kitchen.

I ate some of the food, and soon, the others joined in. The women allowed it because the spread was much, but we still had to cook for the rest of the week. I was grateful for the meeting because I would miss a day of bad food.

Soon it was time for us to leave, and the Kappa that would drive us brought the van to the front.

We left for the meeting.

I noticed Devin and Clay were super excited, and I wondered what was special about this meeting.

Theodore seemed indifferent but very confident.

The drive to Hayland was about two hours on the express road. We had to be extra careful in case we were ambushed or something. I didn't want any surprises. We had no Nitric gas or masks. We were taking a considerable risk, and I hoped it would be worth it.

We arrived in Hayland peacefully but could not rest until we were out of the place. We had to avoid Alpha Gordon because he was a foe.

We could not tell him that Erik was in town, especially after learning that Erik was on Yuri's personal hit list.

I decided to call the number my father had given me to inform Erik that I was around. The line rang a couple of times before it was answered.

"Hello," A deep, masculine voice answered with confidence.

"This is Leonardo Albert; I am in Hayland," I said, going straight to the point because it did seem like the person on the line had time for pleasantries.

"Come to Vision route. There is an abandoned warehouse by a dead gas station called Fill It. Once you get there, walk into the warehouse. Someone will join you. How many are you?" He asked, and I did not know if giving him our real number would be wise. We honestly had nothing to lose, so I told him our number.

"I see you came with the calvary. No surprises, Albert," he said and hung up. He did not seem like a nice dude.

I began to suspect I had come with the wrong crew. David would have been best to liven him up. I guess our humour and confidence would have to do.

We ensured we weren't followed while driving through until we reached the Gas station.

It was a dead, run-down dump, and I wondered who the owner was.

The warehouse was there. It was a run-down building with part of the roofings gone. I wondered if Erik was living in the place. We found a place to hide our van in the woods and went to the warehouse. We were extra careful to ensure we weren't being watched.

We entered the warehouse, and it was empty.

I wondered if we had been played.

I could smell and feel our tension, but we were calm and silent. Clay was growling, and I knew his wolf was on standby.

A latch in the ground opened, and a shirtless white-haired man with moon-coloured eyes came out of the opening. He looked young, so he couldn't be Erik.

"Clay, relax," The guy said, smiling at Clay, and it was weird because he looked like Clay and Amelia.

"Nelson, what are you doing here?" Clay asked him, and he approached Clay and hugged him.

"Joining the cause, bro. Yuri has gotten out of hand. I heard you are on the Volkov team now," He said, breaking the hug and looking at me warily.

"I am on my father's team," Clay said, and Nelson laughed.

"Come on." He said, and we followed him.

"Leo, Theo, Devin meet my cousin, Nelson; he is Yuri's youngest son. His father disowned him a few years ago. He stayed with me a while before he went missing. Yuri is after him, by the way, but it has nothing to do with what is going on," Clay said, and Nelson laughed.

"I stole his coin and a shit load of money," Nelson said, and they both laughed. I relaxed a bit, and we went underground.

It was a lab.

Alexei wasn't lying when he said Erik saw himself as a scientist. I wondered what he was doing here.

I wondered if Gordon knew Stepanovs were working on various mixtures and lab apparatus in a hidden lab in Hayland. My guess was he didn't. The Stepanovs in the lab seemed happy and relaxed.

I saw two girls that looked a bit like Amelia but not as pretty. I wasn't being sentimental; it was true.

We were ushered to a door, and Nelson knocked.

"Who is it," I heard a loud, deep voice. The same voice I heard on the phone.

"They are here, Uncle," Nelson said, and there was silence.

Erik must have linked Nelson because he opened the door and let us in.

I walked in, and I was surprised to see a small-frame man.

About five feet seven inches tall. He was slender and had a lot of white hair on his head and beard. He looked neat and healthy. He had one blue eye and the other moon coloured.

"Have a seat," He said and looked at Clay.

We remained standing just in case it was a trap. It wasn't like we could do much in our situation, but it was best to go down fighting than go down quickly.

"Luis did replicate himself," He said, staring at Clay, and Clay greeted him.

"I won't want to waste your time. I am sure you all know by now what is going on; that is why you are here. What are the Volkovs offering in exchange for my help?" He asked, getting straight to the point. I swallowed immediately and tabled the offer.

"Lordship to the legitimate heirs, restoration of the Stepanov name and the Western region," I added. There was no way I wanted Sean to still head the West. Erik laughed.

"A region already compromised," he said, and I shook my head.

"Sean would be dealt with and his title revoked. The King still owns the West," I said, and he nodded.

"He sent the right guy. I was expecting he would send one of his distant cousins for this," he said and laughed.

"Oh, but he did. I almost forgot that you are a Volov too, Albert," He said, correcting himself and laughing.

"When Ricky said you were coming, I thought the King wouldn't allow you, but he did. He must trust you. Even though he took your wife," he said, and I smiled and maintained my cool.

"We are where we were meant to be," I replied.

"Loyal to a fault," he said, observing, and I remained silent.

"What about you, Lord Orlov? You would allow the council leader to speak where you are present?" He asked Theodore, and he nodded.

"I am only here so you would know the King has a hand in this, and we respect you. Leo is in charge of this meeting," Theodore said, and Erik nodded with approval.

"Tell Sylvester that his offer is good enough for me. All the people that committed the crime against my lineage are dead. I have no qualms with him. I just want to walk in the daylight without dying my hair, wearing contact lenses and hiding my name. I want to be a noble again. I want my bloodline to be free." He said, and his eyes were misty. Their situation wasn't rosy, and it showed.

"Why does Yuri want to kill you?" I asked him, and he became angry.

"My mother made a mistake bringing that bastard along. He is too greedy for his good. He has wanted to be a king ever since we were little. I did not know he would pursue his ambitions like this. It seemed we were trying to preserve the family name and avenge our relatives, but after a while, I realised we were turning into monsters, which made me want out of the group. That was why we divided the group. But that isn't why he wants me dead," he said, and I frowned at him.

"So why does he want you dead?" Theodore asked.

"Because of AgK32," he said, and I frowned at him.

"Silver serum. While trying to replicate our genes, I made a serum that helps normal werewolves resistant to silver for a short period. It was meant to have a lasting effect, but it doesn't. See it more like a temporary preventive measure. The side effects are not so harmful. A rash and fever after twenty-four hours of usage.

You see, the serum makes us less unique because our immunity to silver is our superpower. Giving others the power, even if it is for a short period, would be risky for his plans to take over by force and rule," He said and laughed. A lightbulb went on in my head, but I held my tongue.

"Tell Volkov to put all he has promised in place, and he will have five hundred true Stepanovs at his disposal. I do not know Yuri's location, but we will snuff him out. His last known Location was Mountain, but I think he has moved. He is a master of disguise, so you won't catch him easily.." he said, and he had lost me when he said Yuri's last known location was Mountain.

"When was he in Mountain?" I asked, and Erik understood my fear.

"When Amelia arrived. I had people watching her from your woods," he said with a guilty expression because he wasn't supposed to do that. I wondered why he watched

my mate, but I would ask later.

"I am also sorry that I tried to capture you," he said, laughing as if it were nothing. I held my tongue and let him finish his statement.

"My people saw him in your settlement a couple of times, I have photos, but they won't be helpful because he was disguised. He left after they burnt down your plant. Gordon is in on it too. I have my ears to the ground. Yuri has much support, but we can take him out together. I need Sylvester just as much as he needs me. I am not too proud to admit that, you see," He said and went to sit.

He offered us seats again, and this time, we sat down.

Erik ordered Nelson to bring us something to eat. I still could not get over Yuri being in Mountain without my knowledge and Erik having his men in my woods watching us.

The Novel will be updated daily. Come back and continue reading tomorrow,

~Leo~

I knew it wasn't a good idea to eat with Erik, but I also knew it would be rude to refuse his hospitality, and since we had come for his help, we had to be on our best behaviour so we did not piss him off.

The man looked pretty weird, and his features were unexpected. His different eye colours made him look as if he were blind in one and could see with only the blue one. Other than him looking like a mad scientist, the man did not seem dangerous at all. Nothing like Andrew had expressed. I could see why my father rebuked Andrew's words as a rambling of an aggrieved child. It was, indeed.

I looked at Theodore and saw him contemplating the comfort too. Too bad neither of us belonged to the same pack; we could not link each other.

"Erhmm", Erik cleared his throat, drawing our attention back to him, and I wondered what he wanted.

"I am glad we had that talk, but that brings me to my desires," he said, and I frowned, wondering what he meant by his desires.

He took out a syringe and placed it on the table. Seeing a syringe with someone like him was scary, especially knowing he ran experiments on people. He composed himself to speak while we tried not to act spooked.

"I would first like to apologise for trying to forcefully take you from your pack. I did not ask them to extract you, but they got overzealous," He said, and my eyes bulged. He confessed to being responsible for the attack that happened in my woods.

"They almost killed me!" I exclaimed.

"As I said, they were being overzealous, and I am grateful they didn't," he said casually as if it were nothing. I began to suspect the man was just as unstable as the rumours implied.

"Anyway, since you are here, I want to believe you hold no grudge and we can be friends," He said, and it was a very odd way to apologise, so I just stared at him.

"I do not know if you have heard anything, but I am sure you know you have both Stepanov and Volkov genes," He said, and I nodded.

"I would like to run some tests on you. I mean, on your blood samples." He said and corrected himself immediately, knowing how the first sentence sounded.

"The Albert line is the only Bloodline with Stepanov genes that could still produce alphas and mighty ones at that.

I want to see why. I just need a blood sample. I promise I won't harm you," He said, rushing through his words so I do not interrupt him;

I did not know what to say. Knowing we needed him did not leave me any choice.

"If I give you the blood sample, you won't ask something else of me again?" I asked, and he nodded.

"I want to study you, Leo. I won't ask anything of you again, except if I am alive and your heir with Amelia Westwood happens to be an Alpha, then that would be a good study," he said with a glow in his eyes that let me know he would move to take blood samples of my children if he is still alive when they grow up.

One thing I had to give the man was that he did not bother to hide his emotions and intentions, which was a good trait on his part. He would be an easy man to deal with.

"Very well," I said, and he beamed at me; then he put away the syringe he placed on the table and brought out one with a larger container.

"hey!" I exclaimed, and everyone except Erik and me started laughing.

"What? It's just a little bigger than the one I presented," Erik said, pretending he had not just deceived me.

"You deceived me. You plan on taking a lot," I complained, and he sighed.

"Had I shown you this one, you wouldn't have agreed. It is not a big deal. You will eat and drink water, and the blood will be replaced.

I will even give you an iron supplement for free. Mine works like magic," He said with a creepy grin, and I looked at my friends and soon-to-be inlaw. They nodded and told me to go ahead.

Erik grinned and led me to a chair. He did not use the syringe; instead, someone brought a plastic adapter, a hypodermic needle and a vacuum tube.

Erik used the needle to collect my blood in a bag. It took about fifteen minutes for him to get a quarter of the bag. Then he took it out, labelled the bag, and asked a lady dressed like a nurse to store it in their bank. I wondered what they were doing in the lab.

"Well, that is it," Erik said, smiling at me and leading us out of his office.

"Sometimes asking just makes it easy," He said with a grin while he stood by the door as we walked out of his office.

"Be assured that I will not trouble you anymore," He said when Clay stepped out of his office.

Erik led us to another room with a table with six chairs and food on it.

The spread wasn't spectacular, but the fact that they could have that much food underground was mind-blowing.

I wouldn't be surprised if they had a place they grew stuff underground. The place was massive. It was wider than the size of the warehouse above. They did not have loud machinery that would cause vibrations and expose them. It was quiet and serene.

"Please manage our meal," Erik said with a grin, and I nodded.

It was okay.

Nelson finally joined us, grinning.

It was fair to say he loved Erik more than his father. That spoke a lot of volumes.

"Do you have any record of Yuri when he was in Mountain? You said you had people watching him. You also said he is a master of disguise. I would like to see how he was able to infiltrate my people." I asked, and Erick nodded.

"He didn't only do that; he befriended the lovely Amelia too," He said, and I was in shock.

"Do not worry. He had no intention of harming her. He tried to use her for information, but she was no good to him. She is a tight-lip woman. My men watched them," he said, took a sip of water and chuckled.

"Yuri dressed like a displaced person, and Amelia gave him food. Mainly sandwiches. We have pictures," Erik said, and it was taking a lot for me to calm down.

Knowing that Amelia was that close to danger and I was ignorant about it made me worried. I wondered what I would have done if he had nefarious intentions and had carried them out.

My stubbornness must have driven her to talk to strangers back then. I thanked the goddess for protecting her and keeping her safe.

"May we see the photograph?" Theodore asked, sounding curious, and Erik smiled.

Someone walked in five minutes later with a small stack of pictures. Erik went through them and passed a few around. I noticed the shock on Theodore's face when he held the photo. I was eager to see what was on it.

Theodore passed it to me, and I saw the same photo I had discovered in the sachel I found in the woods when Max and I went to search for clues. The picture of the displaced man handing something to Amelia.

"When we saw that, we assumed she had joined Yuri, but we soon figured that wasn't true," Erik said, and I remembered what was written at the back of the photo.

"Was that why they wrote 'Send to Alpha; she is in' at the back of the copy of the picture?" I asked him, and he frowned at me. I took out my phone and scrolled until I got to the image and the writing behind it. I passed the phone to Erik, and he read it.

"Where did you find the picture?" He asked me with concern.

"In a sachel abandoned in my woods," I said, and he nodded.

"The man that took this picture went missin' before you went to the North for the meeting. I have been looking for him since. I used to think you had him; now I know Yuri's people must have taken him," He said with sadness in his eyes.

"I should have pulled him from there once Yuri showed up, but I did not expect Yuri to know he was watching him. I was stupid. The man was kind," He said, and I could see the genuine regret in his eyes.

"The answer to your question is yes. That was what the writing meant," He said and ate his potatoes.

I could not get over Yuri being in Mountain all along. It troubled me that he was this close, and we did not know. Amelia even gave him food. It was disturbing.

"So, how do we begin? Because I would like everything to return to normal," Theodore finally spoke up, and Erik answered.

"Tell Sylvester to keep his promise and do the needful; it would make it easier for me to get willing volunteers to fight Yuri. As for the army on your side, I am sure they could handle a little rash. I can produce high quantities of AgK32 and administer it before the battle. Although I would need some level of freedom in Hayland to produce the needed quantity," he said and grinned at me.

"As head alpha of the East, I am sure you can get Gordon out of the way and cure this place for me to work. I will also have my scout out there trying to fish Yuri out, but we would have to work together and pass information between ourselves effectively to

move fast.

I also suspect he would be in the South because that is his strongest hold. We also have to subdue alpha, Sean, of course. He is a sly bastard and might ruin our plans if we allow him freedom.” Erik said, and I nodded.

“We will need you to write everything down and sign so there won’t have a misunderstanding. All these things can be arranged,” Theodore said, and Erik nodded. We ate the food in peace, and I was eager to see the outcome of this partnership.

~Leo~

We did not leave the underground lab until late in the night. The Kappa driving us had made friends with some female scientists and was sad that we were leaving. I let him know there was time for everything and this was the time to be focused.

Nelson wasn’t thrilled about Clay leaving, so he pleaded with Clay to visit when he could.

“We left the place, and our Van was intact where we kept it in the woods. Our visit was successful, and our trip out of Hayland was peaceful.

Although we remained vigilant throughout the drive back, no one was chasing us.

“I can’t believe that was Erik,” Devin finally said. We were all amused that it was Erik.

We expected a brawny tall man with Stepanov features, but what we saw was a scruffy, short skinny man with Stepanov features. I wondered why he had two eye colours.

“Why are his eyes like that?” Devin asked because Erik was the first Stepanov that would have two eye colours.

“Leo, ask your father when we get home. He seems to be friends with Erik,” Theodore said, and I nodded. I was equally curious.

“I guess it went well,” Clay said, bringing our attention to our achievement, and everyone agreed.

We arrived at Mountain at night and decided to go to bed.

Theodore promised to convey everything to Sylvester via the mind link while we all waited to discuss the issue in the morning.

I hoped we wouldn’t have to cook again because I was tired and needed good food.

I entered my room quietly, and Amelia slept peacefully in bed.

I went to shower, snuggled beside her, and spooned her.

She adjusted to fit into my embrace, and sleep came for me too.

I woke up in the morning on an empty bed. The sounds coming from the bathroom indicated Amelia was there. I heard retching sounds, so I got up quickly to see what was happening.

Amelia was sitting by the toilet seat. It was clear as he was vomiting.

She looked pale, but her eyes lit up when she saw me and smiled.

“I heard it is morning sickness. They said it goes away eventually,” She said, and I went to her.

“Good morning,” I said, squatting in front of her, and she smiled and patted my cheek.

“Good morning, Hope you are ready for kitchen duty?” she asked with a mischievous grin, and I grumbled.

She giggled and soon started retching again.

I patted her back gently and rubbed it while she tried to vomit. Her stomach was

empty, so she just spat into the toilet.

We were there for ten minutes; then, I decided to run a hot bath for her to sit in and relax.

After spending forty minutes together in the tub, we exited the bath and prepared for the day.

Amelia headed to the dining room while I went to the kitchen. Surprisingly, the food was ready, and they seemed to have done a fantastic job.

“There were croissants, bagels, bacon, sausages, baked beans, garlic bread and onion soup with cheese.

“How?” I asked, and Sylvester looked at me and winked.

“How isn’t a greeting,” he said, and I greeted them laughing.

I went to the oven and touched it. It was warm then I saw the trash and widened my eyes.

There were boxes and empty food packs from a confectionery, a pastry shop and a restaurant. The food was bought, and I was sure the soup was too. They were cheating.

“This is cheating,” I said, and David shook his head.

“Technically not,” he said.

“I remembered the rule. They said we were in charge of food for a week, and the Omegas weren’t allowed to help us. That was all. They did not prohibit us from buying food and serving it.

Thanks to head Omega Macy, we purchased the finest food from the stores. We have three pregnant women, and we cannot subject them to top crap,” David said, and I frowned, wondering who was the third.

“Three? I thought it was just Avery and Amelia?” I asked, and David nodded.

“Katya is pregnant too. She had been hiding it for a while because of the stress, but your mother figured it out then Claudia confirmed it.” Marcel said, and I smiled and looked at Dominic, who seemed over the moon about the news.

I went to congratulate him, and instead of a handshake, I hugged him. We were both going to be fathers for the first time. It was thrilling.

The food was plated, and the women were surprised about the meals. Avery and Amelia were the first to dig in. I figured Amelia would be hungry because she had emptied her stomach in the morning.

The Sullivans and my parents joined, and it was a very happy breakfast. Clay, Andrew, Max and Kyle seemed most happy about the food. I guess they were tired of sandwiches too.

Tamia and Linda were suspicious about the food, but it seemed everyone was tired of eating food cooked by amateurs that they ignored the oddities and just enjoyed the spread.

I just hoped they wouldn’t say anything. We were already three days into the bet and had four more to go. It would be a breeze at this pace as long as Macy does not tell Amelia the truth.

We discussed our meeting with Erik and his odd behaviour. My father and Grey Sullivan laughed all through. It was what they had expected, and Erik had acted accordingly.

I noticed Theodore had left out the talk of Yuri and Amelia. I knew he wanted me to

discuss it on my own time. I was grateful but knew it was time to tell her, especially now that I knew who the man in the picture was, so I brought it up.

Amelia was shocked that she had given Yuri food. I showed her my phone so she would see the image.

“I honestly thought he was a displaced man from the West. He had a lot of great advice. Telling me to hang in there, that I was lucky to find a home after being displaced. He seemed harmless,” she said and sighed.

“I also knew it was strange that he kept asking me questions about the pack and Leo’s plans. He said he was considering joining Mountain but wasn’t sure if it were the right place for him or if Leo would allow him to join.” She said and bowed her head at the table.

“Had I known what was happening back then, I would have figured it out—the bastard. I fed him for over a month,” she said, and Linda consoled her.

“You should be grateful he didn’t grab you and run,” she said, and we all laughed, making light of the situation, but there was no doubt it was a close one.

“So, Erik wants me to fulfil all his requests before he springs into action,” Sylvester said, and I nodded.

“He isn’t asking for half,” Theodore said, looking at the bright side, and Sylvester nodded.

“He would get us the Stepanov army we need, this magic concoction that could help us gain some of their abilities temporarily and also help us find Yuri?” Sylvester said, and Theodore nodded.

102 Resting

~Sylvester~

After the lengthy discussion during breakfast, I decided to retire to my room to think of all that had been discovered and said.

The plan seemed simple, but Richado was right. It might take some effort to execute. I did not trust the others involved besides the people close to me.

I never knew Larry’s words weren’t to be ignored. I guess we wanted to end the conflict so badly and enjoy the peace that we ignored his blatant warnings as the rambling of a madman.

One thing I was going to do was talk to Larry when I got back to the North. I was glad he was still alive. The man clung to life so hard that I doubted death would find him soon. 1

Uncle Lucas was also right when he said Larry could not have masterminded all that had happened. If he had followed us to the East, he would have laughed at us and said he had told us so.

Returning to the North meant Uncle Lucas would be actively involved. He had been searching for an adventure for a while now, so it was a given he would want to be a part of this—the more, the merrier, anyway.

“Where are you going?” I heard Tamia’s voice in my head.

“To our room; I need to think,” I replied.

“I will join you now,” she replied, and I was glad we would have some time together and maybe brainstorm on the matter. I walked away, trying to organise my thought and set out the plan in my head.

“Sylvester, when are we leaving?” Dominic said, approaching me at the staircase. I turned to look at him and saw David and Devin behind him.

“I guess it is a general question?” I asked, and he nodded while the other’s smiled.

“We will return in incognito mode tomorrow. Leo, Amelia, Alexei and Clay will be seen, but we won’t. I do not want Yuri to target us.” I said, and he nodded.

“What about Andrew? I don’t trust him. He tried to make us side with the bad guy and divide the kingdom just so he could avenge his father, who, by the way, was dirty,” David said. I was surprised my brother felt that deeply about what Andrew did.

“I want to believe he was misled,” I said, and David shook his head.

“We should keep an eye on that one. I say we take him with us and watch him. Clay has been secretly watching him for a bit.” David added, and I frowned.

“I did not know either until Clay had to travel to Hayland with Leo yesterday, and he asked me to take over from him stylishly. Max and Kyle are watching him too. They don’t trust the guy. Since Max and Kyle are going to arrest Gordon and we are travelling, we should bring him along. We do not want him slipping notes or calling Yuri to inform him of our plans. I still can’t shake off the fact that he tried to make us go after Erik because of his father, who, based on Richard and Grey’s account, wasn’t a good person. It is dubious, and we should watch out. We have a lot at stake,” David said, and Dominic and Devin laughed.

He did sound paranoid, but he was right. There had been so many surprises lately that we needed to be careful. It was also unfair if we slipped up and something terrible happened; Susan and Devin deserved their day to be special and trouble-free, and we deserved to hold our children and live peacefully.

“Very well, we will bring the guy along. I think Leo doesn’t trust him either, and you know how he gets when he suspects people,” I said, and everyone laughed. Leo was vindictive, and it would be bad for Andrew if he got in trouble with Leo.

“Very well, may I be excused?” I asked, and Dominic laughed and patted my shoulder.

“We all need some shut-eye after that incredible breakfast,” David said. We laughed, knowing we had found a solution to completing our punishment with ease.

We had to pretend to cook in the kitchen while we warmed the meals and set them in dishes. It was a great solution, and I did not feel bad about it. Just as David had pointed out, we weren’t breaking any rules.

I went to my room, and Tamia was already there. She must have taken the other stairs. Leo’s packhouse was very large. Knowing he is a minimalist, I wasn’t expecting he would build something of this magnitude, but he surprised me.

He had the money to do it, and he went for it. His taste was exquisite, but I doubted he and Amelia would live here once this was over.

They seemed to cherish the small bungalow more than the pack house. I was glad I could come to the South with my children whenever and won’t worry about where to stay, i

As a king, I could not stay anywhere, and hotels were out of the question. I was grateful for this and hoped to experience the East better after all this.

“Took you long,” Tamia said, sitting at the foot of the bed. She had nothing but her underwear on. I knew it was deliberate, and I grinned.

“The guys stopped me at the stairs to discuss Andrew and the departure time,” I said, and she laughed.

"They, too, don't trust Andrew,* she laughed, and I nodded.

"Poor guy; Amelia does not trust him either. Nicole said Clay has been keeping an eye on him," She said, and it was the same thing David said.

"I hope for his good he is clean because I doubt any of these people would be merciful, especially Amelia,' She said, and I frowned.

"Don't let that fragile face fool you, darling; she is hard and mean. You needed to see how she watched Alice's torture. She handled it like a pro. And she is far from emotional. Always rational,' Tamia said, praising Amelia.

I figured she was happy to see Leo happy. She had been more at peace since we came to the South. 1

I went to sit beside her and lifted her hand to my lips.

"I noticed you are happier now that you see Leo happy," I said, and she was surprised at my words.

103 Fallen But Hopeful

~Leo~

We spent the entire day preparing to leave. After breakfast, Sylvester retired to the room, and we did not see him and Tamia until lunch.

I would lie if I said I wasn't nervous about what would happen in the North.

I just wanted it to be over so we could live our lives. Knowing that I would be a father soon motivated me to do more.

We decided to gather at the lounge in the evening to relax and discuss the following events. At the same time, Amelia chose to party with the women.

On my way to the lounge, my father linked me, telling me he had something urgent to discuss with me. I had to see him before heading there.

He was in a small living room with Grey Sullivan. I wondered where my mother and Rebecca were.

"Just the two of you?" I asked, entering the living room, and he nodded.

"Amelia invited Martha and Rebecca to hang with the ladies. They deserve to be around younger women for a change," My father said, laughing, and I nodded in agreement.

One thing I was sure of was that the women would have a blast. Everyone there knew how to have a good time, even in hard times.

"Please have a seat, Leo," my father said, and I sat on a single couch to listen to what he had to say.

"Grey has something to tell you. It might not mean much, but I implore you to listen and convey it to your friends," He said, and I frowned at him and looked at Grey, who was slightly nervous.

"I know you do not trust me and my wife, and that is why we kept this from all of you this morning, but we have now confirmed it as true," he said, and I became nervous. My heart was beating fast because the least I wanted to hear was that we were compromised.

"The South fell yesterday," He said, and I frowned at him.

"Word has not spread because Yuri wants it to be a surprise. But every Yuri group member has been asked to report to Greenville," he said and handed me his phone. A text instructed them to report to Greenville and receive new assignments.

“Does Devin know?” I asked them, and Grey shook his head.

“Yuri is pulling all the strings at once to set things in motion, and he is doing it and ensuring word doesn’t get out. A lot of people were imprisoned last night, Devin’s Beta inclusive.

I do not know if Yuri would kill him, but he has yet to appear in the South. He has representatives there, and one of the representatives is one of Erik’s men,” he said, and I realised why he was looking worried.

“Do you think Erik was lying to us?” I asked, and he shook his head.

“Grey, just tell him everything. No need to watch your words,* my father said, sounding impatient. I guess he got the bug from my mother. She was the impatient one.

“You need to secure Erik in Hayland because a friend told me the East is next, and it will happen soon...” He said, and I frowned at him.

“All you have control over are Hill Valley and Mountain; all the other alphas would fall within this week. Since they have refused to join up, a kill order has been sent to eliminate them this week. Erik might not make it past this week because of the traitors in his circle. We have told him, but he has nowhere else to go,” Grey said, and I could see the concern in his eyes.

“So what do you suggest? He has a lab down there?*” I asked, and my father nodded.

“Erik is a significant player in this. Yuri would never be at peace until he dies because of the AgK32 and the fact that Erick controls half of the Stepanov fighting force and could make more if he likes,* My father said and cleared his throat.

“Speak with Sylvester and take Erik to the North. Let him prepare in the North. We will lead the army in Mountain and hold the forte here. It has been long since we’ve been in a battle, but we aren’t rusty. Be assured Yuri will strike the East now that the South is gone, but we will be here to push back for Mountain,” My father said, and it was a serious matter.

I stood up, acknowledging it wasn’t in my place to make such decisions. I might be head alpha of the East, head of council, and maybe soon a Lord without an office, but this wasn’t my call to make. I still answered to Sylvester and the Lords.

“You have to join me in the lounge and explain these things extensively so we can brainstorm there,” I said, and Grey looked worried.

He had annoyed the Volkovs the last time; I knew he would be worried.

“They let things go easily. You should not stress yourself that much,” I told him, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

We returned to the lounge together, and everyone acted as if having my father and Susan’s father there was normal. They seemed relaxed about it. Sylvester looked well-rested. He deserved the rest because he had much to do when we got to Lucland in the North. I didn’t want to be in his shoes.

Grey soon told them all he had told me, and Devin did not act surprised.

“Aren’t you the least worried for your people?” Kyle asked him; surprised by his words, he shook his head.

“We saw it coming. I had already given Lukman directives, and I am sure he followed them accurately. They were meant to surrender when Yuri came forthem. I did not want anyone dying,” He said and sighed.

“Why would you do that?” Sylvester asked him, realising what Devin had lost.

Devin sighed and looked at all of us.

“I might sound proud and overconfident, but I believe in this team. We have done it once, and I am sure we can do it again. We have things that Yuri doesn’t have. We have family, love, trust and loyalty. Yuri has led his people and devotees with fear, so they are always quick to give him up when caught. I know we will win. If we don’t, I am willing to live in the North with my mate and raise my children quietly. Nothing is worth dying for. The pack members would equally have a good life under Yuri, just as they did under me. Unless he has insidious intentions towards the people, the only thing that would change for them is leadership; why should I then require them to lay down their lives so that I remain in power? Susan and I had discussed it, and we are fine with not being Luna and Alpha of any pack. Blessed be the moon if we win and get back the South. If not, blessed be the moon. As long as we are alive and we get to raise our children in peace, I am fine,” he said, and I realised that he had indeed made peace with himself on the matter.

I doubted I could let go of the East like that, but we weren’t in the same situation. I had loyal alphas that would risk everything to keep it intact; he had traitors easily swayed in the South. We weren’t working with the same material.

“We will get it all back, Devin. The South has been under the Corriganes for hundreds of years. I won’t let them take it from you.” Sylvester said with determination in his voice and looked at me.

“You need to call an eastern council meeting this evening and warn the alphas of the danger that is coming. You and your father need to educate them on all that is happening and teach them how to fight those things because no matter what, we have to be in the North tomorrow and set things in motion,” Sylvester said, and I nodded. It was an order and not an advice.

I got the message loud and clear.

“Alpha Richardo, tell Erik to transport himself, Nelson and two of his trusted scientist to Hill Valley now. He has to ensure he gets there safely. Alexei will bring him, and I will be taking him to the North. Even though Gordon will be arrested, he can no longer continue to stay where he is because he has been discovered,” Sylvester said, and my father nodded. It was amazing how Sylvester took charge almost immediately. Indeed he was raised for this.

He looked at Clay, and Clay paid attention, waiting for his orders.

“Tell Alexei to wait for Erik to arrive and help us transport Erik to Mountain tonight. He should also secure his mate and pack members. If Yuri is going to pull the strings at once, he plans to kill everyone. Alexei should bring Timothy too. His granddaughter is recovering from silver poisoning, so they can move him here to be close to her. If Grey and Richardo are here, Mountain will still have some resistance,” Sylvester pointed out, and we agreed.

“After we arrest Gordon, we will be here to help them out,* Max said, and It was the best offer we could get. There was no way they could go wrong with three Alphas and a strong Beta. We also had Nitric acid in Mountain, so it would work out.

“I have made arrangements with the airline company transporting us. Amelia, Clay, Alexei and I will be the visible passengers. At the same time, the rest of you will travel in disguise as part of our crew. Some Kappas will come along to make it believable,” I said, letting Sylvester know that I had made the arrangements already.

He nodded and smiled, then took out his phone to make a call.

I moved away to call for an emergency meeting on my phone. It meant the meeting would hold at night, but it was necessary because I was beginning to suspect Yuri already knew what we were planning and was trying to delay us from acting.

Once he takes the East, he would have successfully divided the kingdom without asking.

If he pulls the strings at once, it means the attacks and eradication of the ruling families in the East will happen at once. It meant he was willing to unleash an army of weirdos on every pack in the East simultaneously; it also meant they were already in the East awaiting orders. No matter what, it was paramount that we act immediately. I looked at Andrew while on the phone and saw Clay staring at him. We had to keep an eye on him to be sure he could be trusted.

104 Pre-Meeting

~Leo~

I waited for Alexei to arrive so we could attend the meeting together. The fact that the alphas did not complain about the sudden meeting meant they knew something was wrong.

It was odd of me to suddenly call a meeting impromptu.

Knowing that Alpha Gordon would be there made me want to cringe. I knew I would have to arrest him right away for arson. So I instructed Max and Kyle to accompany me too. They might no longer own packs, but they were eastern Alphas.

Alexei did not arrive until seven in the evening.

Erik had listened to my father and gone to seek him. Hill Valley wasn't far from Hayland, so the trip was quick and easy. Timothy looked worried when I received them at the door of the pack house. He felt something was wrong.

"Leo, Leo," He said, walking towards me, and I saw Alexei shake his head with boredom.

"Leo, you can't trust this man; he is mad," Timothy said, pointing at Erik, and I looked at Erik, who was laughing at Timothy. Seeing Timothy now, I knew it was true when they said he reported everything to me.

"What did you do?" I asked Erik, and he shrugged.

"He told me age is an interesting topic, and he would like to run research on me. He tried to take samples off me," Timothy complained, and I looked at Alexei, who confirmed what he said.

I could not scold Erik for it, so I just told him to apologise to Timothy for giving him a scare.

"I wouldn't have done that if he wasn't going on about my appearance. It gets to me, you know," Erik said, and I could understand his angle, but I wouldn't blame Timothy; the guy looked weird. Especially with the two eye colour that I was now uncomfortable asking him about after hearing questions about his looks got to him. I guess that would remain an unanswered question.

Alexei walked up to me, and we extended handshakes.

"The whole gang, right?" he asked, and I nodded.

"Did the alphas make a fuss?" he asked, and I shook my head.

"I guess they knew," I said, and he nodded.

“What will we do about Gordon?” he asked, having the same concern as me.

“Arrest him quietly tonight. He just won’t show up in Hayland. By the time they figure it out, we would have put everything in place in the north the day after tomorrow. Kyle and Max will secure Hayland tomorrow just to be safe. It might create a slight issue, but there is no other way. If I speak to the alphas tonight, he will convey our meeting to Yuri, and we can’t have that,” I said, and Alexei nodded. We walked into the pack house.

“Have you secured Alia?” I asked him, and he nodded.

“The pack members have moved to the bunkers. Max didn’t have many pack members left, to begin with. The men above ground were the people I brought with me,” He said, and I knew that part already.

“By the way, Clay told me how you cheated,” I said, and he smiled and rubbed the back of his neck where the device was embedded.

“Stealing is a crime, you know. I bet the mad scientist does not know you have it,” I said, and he shook his head, smiling.

“Anyway, it served its purpose,” I said, and he agreed.

“I must confess that I was shocked to see Erik in Hill Valley. Who would have thought he would end up being our ally? After listening to him, I realised he was misunderstood. Andrew exaggerated things, claimed he wanted to have Amelia reproduce with his son and so on. The man just wanted a blood sample from Amelia and the rest of us. He has taken mine, by the way, and I am sure he will ask Clay and Amelia for theirs,” Alexei said, laughing.

“He took mine too,” I told Alexei, and he frowned at me. I knew why he would frown because there was nothing spectacular about me as a person.

“Well, according to him, I am the first Alpha with Stepanov genes,” I said, and he gasped.

“Don’t worry; we aren’t related. Apparently, my ancestor, Patrick Volkov, mated with a woman from the Stepanov clan. Alberts are products of both of them,” I said, and he widened his eyes with shock.

“Patrick is Sylvester’s ancestor,” he said, and I nodded.

“So you are related to Sylvester,” he concluded, covering his mouth with his eyes almost bulging out.

“You are closer to him than the Orlovs, Sidorovs and Balyeavs,” he said, and I nodded.

I did not know how to feel about it, but I must say I felt good that my lineage was known to me. I knew where I came from, and my silver healing abilities were finally explained.

“Interesting,” he said, and I nodded.

“So, is Andrew still on our team?” he asked me. He was worried. I figured he didn’t trust Andrew either; they did not trust their cousin anymore. All three of them; Amelia, Clay and Alexei. It was amazing to see how they could switch quickly. It doesn’t take much to lose favour with the three of them. However, they might not have grown up together, but their behaviours were alike.

“He tried to use us to get revenge for his father. My father and Susan’s father clarified the issue. Yuri sent Mikhail to eliminate Erik, but Erik got lucky. That was what happened, and that was why Yuri could not cry foul. Mikhail’s hands were dirty, and

he believed in Yuri's actions. Meanwhile, Erik is just a scientist that wants to be free." I said, and Alexei nodded.

"I could see that. He was desperate enough to try to change his eye colour with science. That is why he has two eye colours. He performed an experimental surgery on one and left the other because he was scared he might go blind," Alexei said, explaining the two eye colours. Though having two eye colours wasn't impossible, seeing it on a Stepanov was just odd. They all had grey moon clouded eyes. It has a uniform look.

"Did you ask him about it?" I asked Alexei, and he shook his head.

"Timothy did. He answered Timothy's question and took out a large syringe to ask for his blood," Alexei said, and I laughed.

We both laughed.

Sylvester, Marcel, Theodore, Devin and David approached us in the Foyer, and I reintroduced them again. Alexei was very respectful and treated Sylvester and the Lords

with the utmost respect.

"You will soon be joining us in the north," David said, and Alexei nodded.

"Alia and I plan to move there," he said, smiling, and they frowned at him.

"What about your pack?" Marcel asked, and he shrugged.

"I only took over the pack to slow down the takeovers. Now that we will deal with the problem, there is no point holding on to the pack. I want a quiet life; running a pack isn't easy, and my wife is already exhausted," He said, and we all laughed.

the officeless lordship title. There was just so much I could do at once.

"Well, in that case, you will be most welcome. A property will be secured for you in Lucland to your liking, or you can just stay in the Stepanov estate. It will need a lot of renovations which we can arrange," Sylvester said, and Alexei nodded and smiled.

"I look forward to it." He said, and Sylvester looked at me.

"Shouldn't you be off to your meeting? It should start by nine," he said, reminding us of our engagement with the eastern Alphas.

"Kyle and Max must follow me because we must arrest Gordon tonight. I would not want to risk the douchebag conveying the proceeds of our meeting to Yuri. The bastard should not know that we are ready and prepared." I said, and Theodore nodded.

"I am sure Gordon would have told him about the meeting. If he doesn't hear any news from Gordon, he might hold his horses and stay put," Theodore said, and it was a plausible outcome. I hoped for it because whether they had nitric acid or not, it would still result in a blood bath. It was a war we had no business being caught up in, but here we were, right in the middle of it, taking all the hits the players were throwing. Alexi and I left the lords in Foyer. Alexei went to settle in to prepare for the meeting while I went to dress up for the meeting.

I linked one of the kappas to take Timothy to the hospital so he could spend time with his granddaughter while she recovered.

It was important he remained by her side. As for Erik, Nelson and the two nurses they came with, they had each been given a room, except for the nurses who have to share space with the Omegas for just one night before we leave for the north tomorrow

105 The Gathering

~Leo~

Amelia was in the room. I knew she had not retired to the room. It looked like she had come to use the bathroom and get something. She exited the bathroom, and her eyes fell on mine.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, and I smiled at her.

"Called a meeting with the other Alphas, came to dress up before I leave," I said, and she frowned.

"Do not tell Susan this, but the south has been taken already, and the next stop is the East. Yuri plans to take the East this week. I am trying to ensure that every Alpha has equal fighting chances. So I called for an emergency meeting tonight. Because we are leaving for the north tomorrow. I am also arresting Gordon tonight so he does not convey the meeting's outcome to Yuri," I said, and she sighed and walked up to me. She searched my eyes just as she used to when we first met, and I wondered what she was looking for in them this time.

"Please be safe, Leo," she said, took my hand, and placed it on her lower belly.

"It isn't just you anymore," she said, and those words hit me hard.

"I won't be reckless, Moonlight. I promise to keep it safe and come home," I assured her and bent to kiss her.

I kissed her and felt calm wash through me. Along with it came courage and hope, just what I needed for the coming days.

She left the room to return to the ladies, and I headed to the closet to get dressed for the meeting.

My father, Alexei, Max, Kyle, and I headed to the town hall where our meetings were held.

I was nervous, but it was expected after all we had heard and experienced so far. We also had to watch our backs in case an attack ensued.

"Do you know the irony of all of this?" Kyle said while in the van, and I looked at him to speak quickly.

"We are going to the town hall to arrest Gordon and have a meeting. What if Gordon has already told Yuri, and he decides to take all of us out there? Look at it this way. Every Alpha leading a pack in the East will be there tonight. Won't that be an easy kill?" he asked, making a lot of sense.

"We will have to take our chances. We won't get anywhere if we have to calculate every move and outcome. There is risk in everything we do, and you have just mentioned the risk of what we are about to do. The best Leo can do is make the meeting quick and not spend as long as usual," My father said, and Alexei sighed.

"I agree with you, Alpha. Let's see how it goes. Worst-case scenario, we will fight and run away," Alexei said, meaning his words, and as cowardly as it sounded, I agreed with him.

I could not afford to die now that I was about to have my own family. I understood his plight; he would soon be a father too. We had so much to live for. Being cowards was allowed. It was best to run away and fight another day. Call it being a coward; I called it being wise.

The rest of the ride was silent. Kyle's words had put some unspoken fear in us, but we were all brazen about it.

We finally arrived at the town hall, and almost everyone had arrived. It was surprising to see how people responded quickly to my call. Alpha Gordon was there, and he seemed relaxed. He wasn't behaving like a guilty person, but he could not fool me. People were surprised to see my father. Especially those who were alphas before I took over from my father. They had attended meetings with him.

They came to greet and welcome him, and he was warm towards them.

I kept an eye on Gordon, who remained where he was sitting. Soon I went to sit where was designated to me, and the moment I sat, everyone proceeded to their seats.

"With all due respect, head Alpha, Kyle and Max no longer own packs; they aren't supposed to be here," Alpha Thomas, the spokesman, said, and I sighed,

"Max is representing Alpha Timothy of Brentwood, and Kyle is here on my request," I said, and they relaxed.

I greeted all of them and thanked them for coming.

I looked at everyone and took a deep breath before speaking. I had to make it quick so we could head back.

"I know you might all wonder why I called this emergency meeting, but I am also sure that you have all heard of the strange things happening in the south and part of the east about the silver immune terrorists," I said.

People began to murmur, confirming my thoughts on the situation.

I banged the gavel to silence them, and they were attentive.

"I am forced to believe that there is a ploy to take over the south and east, and we are the ones caught in the middle," I said, and I could hear the worry in their murmur.

"With all due respect, Alpha, we should ask Alpha Kuznetsov to explain himself. All this started happening when he took over hill valley, and Alpha Max accused him of cheating with silver. He must be immune to it and have a hand in this," Gordon said, and I fought the urge to shut him up.

"I will get to that later," I said, and he smiled and sat back down.

"Unfortunately for Alpha Corrigan, also known as Bane, he has had many traitors in the south. Because of that, the south has fallen to a man called Yuri Stepanov of the Stepanov bloodline we dared not speak of," I said. Some of them gasped, meaning most of them knew what was happening.

"I thought Lord Dimitri Volkov eradicated that bloodline," someone said, and I nodded.

"So we thought, but that has not been the case. They live and walk among us," I said, trying to sound mysterious in the process.

"Yuri Stepanov has taken over the South, and he is coming for the East," I said and cleared my throat.

"I know these people have approached some of you, and most of you have refused to collaborate with them. I commend those who rejected their offer and chose to be loyal for your loyalty and bravery. Because of you, the East has remained impenetrable," I said, looking around. Then I signalled Kyle and Max, who immediately stood up and when to stand beside Gordon.

"I want to commend those of you that have refused to allow greed to drive you and stand for what is right. Whilst doing this, I will also want to condemn someone in our midst," I said, and Gordon wanted to get up, but Max and Kyle held him down. Kyle pulled a silver cuff and clamped it on Gordon's wrists, arresting him.

"Alpha Gordon, I am placing you under arrest for arson at this moment," I said, and

people began to murmur.

"You will have the opportunity to defend yourself, of course, but I have a Kappa that claims he told you of my Nitric plant the night it was set ablaze. The significance of that plant has forced me to take the matter seriously." I said, and Gordon began to protest.

"Why would I burn down a Nitric plant? Why?' he asked, trying to sound like a victim, and some people agreed with him.

"On the surface, you will have no reason to do so. It is useless to you, but when it has been used successfully to combat the silver mutants, it begs the question of why it would suddenly be set ablaze after it had sat there for many years," I said, and people were silent. They knew where I was headed.

"Just as they did in Pridewood in the south, Yuri Stepanov sent his men to do the same to Brentwood. They were to pump silver into the air while the occupants inhaled it and died. Luckily my father had a bright idea of dissolving the Silver with Nitric Acid. It was a guess, but when we went to help Alpha Timothy, and they attacked, we had to use it, and it worked. We were able to save Brentwood with it, and because of that, Mountain is safe, and the East still stands.

That is why we think Gordon burnt it down,' I said, looking at Gordon in the eyes.

"Because he is working for Yuri Stepanov," I said, and people gasped.

"Call me paranoid, but I will hold you in Mountain. Until you can prove otherwise," I said and nodded so Kyle and Max would know to empty his pockets. I also knew we couldn't waste time as usual. The earlier we disperse, the safer for all of us.

"Guessing that Gordon has been compromised, we cannot linger here and argue as always. I will just convey my message, and we will all leave to ensure we do not allow Yuri to attack and kill us at once because I believe his men are in the East right now, awaiting his orders,' I said, and everywhere was silent. They were all attentive.

"I have inside information that Yuri plans to strike this week. Make sure you send your civilian pack members underground and only leave the warriors above ground. Wear goggles and gas masks; have tons of Nitric Acid on standby to pump into the air if they attack. Once you do these things, they would have no choice but to fight you physically without silver. Without their silver weapons, they are easy to kill.

If they inhaled the silver themselves, they could only shift partially. Their healing capacity would be slow, strike them and create mortal wounds. Do not underestimate them; they are more advanced and enhanced than us," I said, and they murmured.

"What about you, head alpha?" One of them asked me, and I nodded.

"My father would be in Mountain to hold the forte. While I try to gather an army to take the war to the south where I believe this Yuri Stepanov will make his resting place," I said, and they stood up.

"When the time comes, call on us, and we will be there to fight beside you, Alpha," Thomas said, and the rest agreed.

They had all offered themselves and their warriors at once. Which meant we would have more warriors that would use Erik's AgK32. We stood a chance against Yuri. The meeting ended, and everyone dispersed. We did not spend up to thirty minutes in that meeting, but the minutes counted, and we had hope.

Holding Gordon in our van, we returned to Mountain to secure him as our prisoner and prepared to head north the next day.

