

Mated to the Alpha and His Beta Chapter 387

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Xander

"Bro, I thought wolves were ruthless," Mason thought to me. "Vamps are even more brutal. Damn."

"Tell that to the High Council. And our father," I thought back grimly.

My brother's faint smile faded right away. "Fuck."

Yeah, I guess you're right. But we aren't them."

"No," I agreed through the mind link. "We need to be cautious. Strong. But also careful not to jump into anything without all the details. I don't want to be responsible for innocents getting hurt...or worse."

"What if they're not innocents?" My brother thought in a practical tone.

"That's what we need to determine."

"Who are the people who live in Standard that don't know about Brightsky?" I asked the council. They all looked uncomfortable, squirming around in their seats and refusing to look at me. Not a one of them answered me. I sighed. "They don't all know about the enclave, do they?"

"No," said Charlotte.

"How many do know?"

She didn't reply. I sighed again, and this time, my voice had an edge of command in it. They were all really starting to piss me off. They might not respect me just because I was an Alpha...but they would learn to respect me. "How many sources do you have?"

"Three," Malachi said finally.

I sat back in my chair. "And how many other residents are there?"

"A couple of hundred. No more than that," Melina said.

"But you're willing to sacrifice every one of those lives on the off chance that some new people are a threat?"

My voice lowered to a growl, and my wolf flashed in my gaze. "That's the most ludicrous thing I've ever heard."

"You have an awful lot of concern for a bunch of people you don't know," Malachi said. For the first time since the leadership council had reconvened, Jacques spoke up. I hadn't had much interaction with Melina's husband, so I was more than a little wary when the air crackled around him.

She'd said he was a warlock, but I couldn't tell if he was showing emotion or actually trying to spellcast.

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"Let him try it," my brother sent through the mind link, picking up on my thought.

"Who even is this guy?" Jacques's voice sounded like the pop and crackle of logs splitting in a fire. It set my telethon edge. "Malachi, with all due respect, I get that he's mated to your kin, but seriously; who is he? Or should I say, who does he think he is?"

"I'm Xander Constantine, Alpha of the Constantine pack, son to Orion." My lip curled back over my sharp

canines, and my wolf blazed in my eyes. "Who the fuck are you?"

"Someone who's lived in this enclave a hell of a lot longer than you have," he shot back.

"Too bad the entire world isn't this enclave," I said with a sneer. "Because it's totally obvious to me that for

all of you at Brightsky, you are completely out of touch."

Mason's Alpha energy swirled and knotted with mine.

He didn't say anything though. He just gave me a nod of agreement.

Melina stood up. "I agree with my husband. We aren't bound by anything you or your brother have to say.

Malachi is right. The arrival of these new people in Standard constitutes a threat. I say we should pull our

sources at once. Bring them back to Brightsky. Then we cut the power to Standard."

"It's the middle of winter in Alaska. Without power, those people will be dead within a day," Mason bit out

the words around a growl. "That's murder!"

I stood to match her energy. "You don't even know if any of those people are snooping around or doing

anything suspicious. Do you? Have your sources reported anything like that?"

Melina flinched and cut her gaze from mine. She sat back down and muttered a reply.

“They just reported

the arrival of new residents. Nothing else.”

“Well,” I said, also taking my seat. “All I’m saying is that maybe, just maybe, instead of going off

half-co cked, you have your sources monitor the situation. It doesn’t have to be forever, but at least another day or two. See if there’s anything suspicious other than their simple existence before you go wiping out an entire town.”

wolf.”

Malachi snorted. “I have to say, this temperance is not what I would have expected. Not from an Alpha

“When you bite without looking first, you tend to end up with a mouthful of something that makes you

sick,” I told him. “Better to make sure of your prey before you try to eat it.”

The vampire laughed. The tension in the room eased, but only a little. The warlock was still giving me the stink-eye. So was his wife. Charlotte, on the other hand, gave me a grateful look.

Mason and I were going to have to have a conversation with her.

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Lanie

Zane had returned from his brief, private conversation with Greyson looking a little strange. When he pulled me into his arms for a kiss, though, I accepted it gratefully. We kissed and hugged every single day, but I was really needing the comfort of his embrace right now. With our other two mates away, it was just the two of us.

I was surprised at how nice that felt. With Zane, I never felt like I had to fight to prove my strength. He was always there to support me. Oh, sure, Xander and Mason loved me, and I loved them. But they were Alphas, and they would probably always balk a little bit when they had to let me be as strong as I knew I could be.

Not that I felt very strong right now. Tucked up in Zane’s arms, I looked down at the children eating so happily. Alaina and Isaac had grown even more and could use silverware like they’d been doing it for years. Stella daintily separated her vegetables from her meat and the Applesauce in small containers. It would be easy to convince myself nothing could disrupt this happy little scene.

Zane tipped my chin up for another kiss. “Hungry?”

“Not really. I’d love that glass of wine though. We can let them eat while we sit on the couch.”

“They’ll make a mess,” he said with a laugh.

"And we'll clean it up," I told him. "Together. Isn't that what you and I do?"
He stared at me for a long moment before a slow smile quirked the corners of his lips. "Yes. That's exactly what we do. You go sit, love. I'll bring the wine."
I settled into the comfortable couch with a sigh. My mind was still whirling with the book I'd found, what I'd learned, and all the empty places ready to be filled with what I still did not know. I took the glass my mate handed me and took a long, slow, and grateful sip.
I sighed. "This is good. Brightsky sure has the best of everything."
"Yeah." Zane's voice lacked enthusiasm.
I scooted closer to put my legs on his lap. I put my head on his shoulder for a few seconds, careful not to spill the wine. "You don't like it here."
"I like it here. I just..." he trailed off and rested his head on mine.
Both of us were keeping our voices low, mindful of the children not so far away. I knew I should tell him that I suspected Stella could hear us even if we whispered.
quiet.
Maybe even if we simply thought to each other. But in that moment, all I wanted to do was enjoy the

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The silence between the strike of lightning and the crash of thunder.
"Greyson said something to me that's been on my mind," Zane said.
I moved so I could look at him. "What was it?"
Zane frowned and swirled his wine around in the glass before taking a sip. He swallowed and licked his lips, not looking at me. "I'm not sure how I feel about it, that's all."
"Zane," I said quietly. Gently. "What did Greyson say?"
"We were talking about Charlotte. And you. Being hybrids. What that all meant, what I should be ready to do to support you."
I waited, but he didn't say more. "And? That makes you nervous? I know it was hard seeing me do that test my grandfather wanted. But-"
"No, Greyson said he was cool with it. If he is, I have to be, right?" Zane chuckled and shook his head. His smile twisted as he cut me a sideways glance. "He warned me there'd be a lot of surprises. And I have to agree with that. Since the moment the council gave you to me...to us...Lanie, everything about you has been one surprise after another."
We both laughed at that.
"It's true," I admitted. "I'm surprised you haven't all run away screaming. Thank you for loving me even though I'm the reason your entire life is in a shambles."
Zane's eyes narrowed. "Don't say that. I wouldn't have it any other way."

I hesitated, thinking of Alice. "You didn't always feel that way."
"I do now, and that's what matters. Lanie, I love you more than I thought would be possible. I would do anything for you, anything to make you happy. To serve you." Zane cleared his throat. "I mean that."
I studied him as a pulse of Beta energy nudged at me.
"I love you, too. But I think I'm not quite catching your meaning."
"The other day, when you were in charge...you know."
He laughed self-consciously.
Heat flooded me, hard and fierce. "Ohhh."
I put a hand to my cheek, feeling the blush rising. I cast a glance at the children, still eating. Okay, so they were playing with their pizza a bit. I'd deal with them in a minute.
"I think I know what you mean," I said and let my gaze pin his. "And, just so we're clear...I liked that, too. A lot."
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Mason

I admired my brother's determination, and I was right there along with him. Of the two of us, though, I figured I was the one with a little bit more...finesse.
When I stood up, Jacques grumbled, but Melina shot him a look. He quieted down. Malachi leaned back in his chair with a wry smile. He flicked his fingers at me for permission to speak.
"Ancient as shole," Xander muttered through the mind link.
"Everyone, Xander has made some good points. So has Malachi." I paused. "Sorry, man. Consider it diplomacy," I added through the link. To everyone else, I said, "It's been clear to both of us that Brightsky does, in fact, have a superb security system. But any system is only as good as its updates. And nothing is without flaw. My brother's concern about striking hard at the town of Standard is about the innocents who live there. Neither one of us is willing to have that on our consciences, and I doubt any of you want that, either."
Malachi shrugged. "Life is short."
"Not for vampires," I told him. "And since the rest of us only have as much life as we're granted, it seems particularly cruel to steal that from people who've done nothing to harm you."
I wasn't sure I was getting through, but at least the vampire looked uncomfortable. Jacques didn't, but most of the others were nodding and looking thoughtful.
"Anything we do through fear is bound to come back to bite us twice as hard. That's why it makes more sense for us to gather more information before acting. Are we all in agreement on that?" I looked around the table.
"Generally, the leadership council takes action items to a vote," Jacques said in a bitter voice.
"Not that I'd expect Alphas to get why having everyone's input is important."
"So much for everyone being welcomed here at Brightsky," Xander retorted with half a snarl.
"You talk a big talk about how everyone's got a place here, but it turns out, the only place you

want us to have is under
your heel.”

I put my hand on my brother’s shoulder to stop him from leaping across the table and probably tearing out that jackwad’s throat. “Bro. We just talked about not bringing down violence where it wasn’t warranted,” I thought to him.

“Key word being unwarranted,” Xander thought back, but he stayed in his seat.

“You know, I think it might behoove all of us to consider some inclusivity training,” piped up a small, clear voice from the end of the table opposite Malachi.

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“Begging all of your pardons, but wolves have been rare here in Brightsky, and it seems like at least some of you are holding onto some..erm...well, I’m just saying that it’s nice to have some differing viewpoints.”

We all turned to look at the young wolf who’d been speaking. I wasn’t sure of her name or even if I’d ever seen her around, but nobody else looked affronted that she’d spoken.

“You make good points, Goldie. You can head the committee.” Malachi nodded at her. He turned back to

me and Xander. “So, how do you suggest going about this? What should I call it? A reconnaissance mission?”

“How much do you trust your sources?” Xander asked him.

“As much as I trust any source,” Malachi said. “Which is to say, only after they’ve proven themselves.”

“And they have?” I ask him.

“Any trusted source can turn out to be untrustworthy,” Melina said smoothly. “Your closest friend can turn

on you at any point.”

“I bet she’s a joy to be mated to,” Xander thought to me.

Aloud, I replied to Melina, “Fine. Then send someone new into the town to act as a backup source. Have

them all observe the new arrivals. Set up fresh surveillance. You can do that, right?”

“Of course we can.” Malachi snapped his fingers.

“We’ll send a dozen or so of the spiders.”

Xander coughed. “The what?”

“Enclavian spiders are intelligent, empathic, telepathic, and psychokinetic,” Jacques said with a sneer.

“We’ve had them observing you two since you got here.”

“And tell me, what have you discovered about us?” I kept my voice neutral even though now I was the one

who wanted to jump across the table and throttle him.

“Pr ick,” Xander judged through the link.

“Major,” I agreed.

Jacques shrugged but didn’t say anything else. I ignored him and sat back down. Melina leaned to whisper something in his ear that made him frown.

“Send the spiders,” I agreed.

“I’ll go,” said the young wolf, Goldie. “I’ve never been to Standard. I don’t know any of the sources, and I’m willing to bet they don’t know me.”

I looked to Malachi for confirmation of this. When he nodded, I smiled at her. She ducked her head in embarrassment but smiled back after a minute.

"Just get pictures for now, Goldie. You should be able to get photos of every resident, not just the new

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ones.

Bring them back here for identification. We can start there," I told her.

"And what happens if you recognize someone?" Jacques demanded.

"If we do, then we'll go from there," I promised. "And if there's proven danger, I promise you, we'll do

whatever is necessary to protect the enclave."

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Zane

"Papa?" My son's little voice called out from the bedroom. "Come see!"

The tension coiling between me and my Luna didn't dissipate, but we both laughed softly and pulled away

from each other. Having three kids meant so little "private time." Lanie leaned in to kiss me.

"Later," she promised, her hand on my thigh. She squeezed gently.

My cock throbbed. I wanted her, but more small voices called to me again. "I've been summoned."

"Should I be jealous they want their Papa and not me?" Lanie's head tilted as she grinned.

I brushed a stray strand of her hair off her forehead and studied the shadows in her eyes.

Something was

going on in her beautiful mind, but I didn't want to pressure her. So I kissed her, instead.

"Why don't you go take a long bath or something?"

Do a little self care," I told her. "I can handle the little monsters."

"Don't," she said sharply as her wolf flared in her eyes.

She made an obvious effort to soften herself. "I mean, don't call them that."

"Sure, love. I was just teasing." I kissed her again.

Definitely something going on with her.

"I think I will take that bath," Lanie said. "Are you sure you can take care of the pups? They'll all need

baths, too. And bedtime stories....."

"I'll take care of everything. You go relax." I got up and poured her another glass of wine.

She stood and took it. Her eyes shone with love. "You really do take such good care of me, Zane."

"Forever," I promised.

"Pappaaaaaaa!" Three small voices chorused.

I laughed and kissed my mate one more time, then went to see what was so important.

"We made this for you," Alaina said proudly.

What they'd made was a big mess, but my heart swelled at the sight of the fingerpainted signs. I

ignored the pots of fingerpaint and the messy hands as I gathered all three of them in for a hug. I didn't even care that they were getting paint all over my clothes. That's what washing machines were for. This was my life. The woman out there. These three young ones in here.

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Lanie

waited until Zane went into the bedroom before I grabbed up the big book from the shelf. I took it and

my glass of wine into the big bathroom the four of us shared. I locked the door behind me. I need privacy, and

with three mates, I knew it was entirely likely that at least one of them could burst in on me without warning.

I filled the large tub and added some scented oils. I lit a few candles and put the wine on the edge of the tub.

I laid down a towel and put the book on it.

When did all my muscles start to hurt? I hadn't noticed until I started taking off my clothes. I checked the

large mirrors, turning around to check my body from all sides. No bruises, even though it felt like I'd been

pummeled. I pressed my palm to my heart. It was just stress, I told myself.

I eased into the steaming water with a sigh of relief.

I'd forgotten to pull my hair up on top of my head, and the ends dipped into the water. I couldn't be bothered to do anything about it now and simply let myself relax into the heat and steam.

The wine warmed my tongue as I sipped. Faintly, I could hear the rising sound of laughter from Stella's bedroom. And then the sound of Zane...singing? Some kind of nursery rhyme, or that's how it sounded.

Amazing how sound carried through the vents, since most of the time our quarters were fairly soundproof.

Which was a good thing, I thought with a chuckle. I didn't want anyone to be able to overhear what the

four of us got up to.

I couldn't hear them anymore. I sipped more wine and put the glass carefully on the ledge. I closed my eyes. I wanted to look over the book again, but suddenly, was so tired that it was all I could do not to fall asleep right then and there.

Lazily, I let my hands drift over my body. I imagined my mates. Their mouths and hands. Their cocks. I thought about Zane admitting that he'd liked it when I was in charge, and my heart started to beat just...a

little...faster...

"Lanie!"

The sound of my name being shouted startled me awake. I sloshed water out of the tub as big hands pounded on the bathroom door. I blinked, shaking water out of my eyes. Had I really fallen asleep? Had I slipped beneath the water?

More pounding. I managed to get out of the tub and grabbed a towel. I was totally awake now, and kind of pissed off.

“Hold on!” I shouted. “For the love of the Goddess, Xander, I’m coming!”

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Too late. My Alpha kicked open the bathroom door hard enough to splinter the wood. He goggled at me standing in only a towel.

“What the f uck?” I snapped at him.

“You weren’t answering...”

“I just wanted some peace and quiet,” I told him. I waited for him to demand to see the book I’d left on the tub ledge, but I didn’t need to worry about it.

When I turned around to check on it, the book was gone.