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Chest heaving and rage boiling, Eric stood before most of the members of his pack. His hard gaze turned to find Myra glaring up at him defiantly as she stumbled to her legs without the usual graceful movements she was known for. Refusing to lower her eyes in submission, Myra glided around snarling Chris to stand with the rest of the pack. From behind him he could hear Damon freeing his mate from her bonds. He wanted to rush to her. To run his hands over her and reassure himself that she was unharmed, but he couldn't. Until he was certain she was safe, he wouldn't move from his spot separating her from his pack.

When they'd followed Damon to where his pack had taken her deep in the forest of the pack's lands, he'd nearly attacked every wolf that stood before his helpless mate. They had dared to harm her and tie her up like she was a witch to be burned at the stake. This would never be forgiven.

Allowing his wolf freedom of its usual chains, Eric snarled at the group in front of him. In the distance he could see more gathering from the lodge. The fight for his mate had begun and he intended to win. "Who is responsible for this?" he hissed out with a voice more feral and lethal than anyone had ever heard before.

With a confident step forward, Myra smirked at him. With a sharp jerk of his wrist, Eric released his claws. Eyes glowing, he took a step forward to kill the woman that had dared to attack his mate. He would taste her blood for this.

Reaching her, his clawed hand shot out, gripping the slim column of her neck with dark intent. "I will kill you for this!" he rumbled in a low growl. Myra's heart quickened at his show of anger, but she didn't lift a hand to defend herself, which surprised him. Did she think he wouldn't do it?

"Alpha!" a hard voice called from amongst the crowd.

Not taking his threatening gaze from Myra's face as her smug grin faded, Eric heard others moving as several members of the pack stepped forward. Flicking his gaze to the side as another stepped close to him; his eyes took in the sight of the four elders coming to stand a foot from him and Myra.

"We ask that you release Myra." The female elder said with an aloof tone.

With a snarl, he tossed Myra to the ground, ignoring her cry as she fell painfully on her stomach. Ignoring the glaring gazes of the elders as several of them assisted Myra

to her feet, Eric turned to look over his shoulder at Rebecca. Damon had finally untied the ropes that bound her to the tall post. With a gentle arm around her waist, Damon helped to support her weight as she clutched at her ribs with a look of pain. With the sight of her in pain, Eric's wolf nearly exploded with rage.

Turning back to the elders, he seethed. "How dare you attack this human?" his eyes glowed dangerously as he took a step forward. "I should kill you all for attacking her; she is under my protection; as you know!"

Taking Myra by the arm, Elder Peter directed her behind him as he stepped between her and Eric. "That human—" he hissed out, pointing an accusing finger past Eric at Rebecca. "—attacked Myra; beloved daughter of the late Alpha. Punishment must be honored." He said with a stiff authority that had Eric rolling his eyes.

"I do not care." He stated without an ounce of caring. "This is not how we do things." He bit out, locking his displeased gaze on each stiff expression of the elders. "We do not attack and tie up humans to murder them."

"All due respect, Alpha." the female elder interrupted with a deep scowl. "You've taken your authority too far. It has been made known that this human as been allowed not only free reign at our home sanctuary at the lodge, but in our leader's very home."

"Not to mention that you have gone against the council's recommendations not to pursue the issue of missing shifters from other packs." Elder Derik added with an accusing tone.

"I. Am. The. Alpha!" Eric snarled. "I lead this pack! You want to challenge me; do it. But understand this; I will not make the same mistake I did with sparing the last person I challenged. I will kill any that oppose my judgment from now on!"

Jonathan, Derik and the female elder took a fearful step backward, but Peter held his ground as he smirked at Eric without fear. Something was happening that Eric wasn't seeing. His wolf paced with suspicion as Myra came to step up to stand beside Elder Peter with a look of smug confidence.

"Renounce your leadership to the elder council and we will let the human die peacefully. Regardless what happens here, Eric, she will die." Myra said with a smile.

"I will kill you before I let that happen." Eric vowed, flashing his fangs in rage.

Taking a step forward, paying no heed to him when he snarled threatening at her, Myra pressed her hands against Eric's naked chest as she leaned into his tense body.

Tilting her head back, Myra smiled coyly up at him. “It over, Eric. The power that you think you have over his pack is now mine to wield. Because of you; my mother was murdered by hunters—Human hunters. When you denied my father the right to avenge his mate, you destroyed him. When my brother decided to fight for the shifters, you would have killed him without pause.”

“Your brother was attacking and murdering humans. He exposed us to them. You are lucky he will simply be chained in a basement for the rest of his life and that your father is simply exiled.”

“Not any longer...” she cooed in a song like tone. “The time for hiding has come to an end.” She whispered. “Chose me and allow the pack to have their human prey tonight. It is within my power to shield you and your unfortunate pups from the wrath of the rest of the pack.” She whispered close to his ear. “Hiding from the humans is in the past now. We have allies now that have shown us how the world can truly be. No longer will be skulk in dark shadows, afraid of what we are. Join me.”

Stilling, Eric took in her poisonous words into his mind. This was worse than he’d even thought. It wasn’t just Rebecca his pack was after. They wished to war with the humans; all humans. It went against every ancient law of the shifters existence. In his bewilderment, Eric’s thoughts were jerked to a stop when his wolf snarled low in his mind.

The scent...it's on her...

Jerking to look down at Myra’s dark eyes, his hand cupped the back of her neck, jerking her up on her toes so that his nose could press against her throat. Inhaling deeply, he smelled it then. The scent of rotting, excessive sweetness lingered on her skin like a grimy paste. Jerking back, his hand tangled in Myra’s long blonde hair, jerking sharply. When she gasped in pain, he snarled at her.

“Someone attacked my home and nearly killing my family and Rebecca. Why?”

Smirking up at him, Myra lifted her brows at him. “You’ve had this coming, Eric. We’ve found a stronger leader than you and now you will beg me to take you as mine.”

When Eric released her with a jerking motion, she stepped back to look at the large mass of people that made up the pack. Her eyes locking on the elders as she raised her voice for all to hear.

"I evoke the Act of Revealment." Fear punched Eric in his gut as he heard Rebecca gasp in fear from behind him. Both Damon and Chris growled with anger at Myra's words. He knew that both would protect his mate with their lives, but he knew it wouldn't be enough to stand up against the strength of the pack.

"I am your Alpha and the right of Revealment cannot be invoked without my blessing." Eric growled out, his wolf furiously pacing within as a trembling hand touched his back. He shuttered at the feel of Rebecca touching him, seeking comfort and protection. His wolf urged him to give it to her. With the Act of Revealment called, there was only one way he could see out of this.

But was he strong enough to carry it out?

Walking around the elders, reveling in the protection their bodies provided her, Myra gave Eric an all too pleased look. "The Act of Revealment can be invoked without the Alpha's permission; if his judgment has been compromised."

"This is ridiculous!" Damon snarled. Shoving past Eric and Chris, he charged toward the crowd, turning his attention on Myra, whom; folded her arms stubbornly. "What's this? You can't have Eric so you stomp your feet like a child? Attacking this human in the Alpha's private room? Don't deny it. If you were so worried about keeping the secret of our existence you wouldn't have acted as you did. If anyone here deserves to meet some so called justice, it's you."

Myra's eyes flashed dangerously at Damon, "You are not a member of this pack. You have no right to speak here."

"He may not; but I do." Chris bit out, taking a step forward, he used the torch to point at Myra. The flames swished through the air with his angry movements. "This woman exposed herself to a human and doing so violated our most sacred law. The penalty is death for a shifter that attacks a human and reveals their true form!"

At the murmur of voices amongst the crowd, Myra glared with rage before turning to look at the elder council. Waiting.

With a nod at her, Peter stepped forward. "Enough." He bit out, his cold eyes sweeping over Damon and Chris like they were beneath him. Turning his attention on Eric, Peter held himself stiff as he spoke. "Alpha; as much as I hate to choose sides, Myra does have a point." The gray-haired elder turned to Myra, "What reason do you declare Revealment, Myra?"

Pointing her finger in Rebecca's direction she addressed the council. "As I have told you; that human attacked me. Out of fighting for my life my beast was exposed. If not for three members of the pack coming to my rescue, I knew she would have killed me. She knows our secret."

"That is ridiculous!" Eric's voice thundered.

"What, Alpha? Is she better than any of us? Are you willing to risk her telling other humans as well? How long before we're put in cages, our pups taken too? How long will we wait to take action to protect our families? We will be hunted and killed like mindless animals as our kind was in the times of old." at Myra's startling words the voices of pack members around them rose in fear and anger.

"What say you, Alpha?" Elder Derik asked.

Turning toward Rebecca, Eric was met with her terrified eyes. Lowering his voice, he attempted to gentle the aggressive tension of his body. "Tell me this is a lie and I will protect you. Tell me that you didn't hide the truth from me and that you didn't know all along."

Eric felt his heart squeeze painfully in his chest when tears streaked paths down her pale face. Unable to answer him, Rebecca pressed her lips together before turning her face away from him. He hadn't wanted to trust Damon's earlier words. He couldn't see Rebecca hiding such a thing from him; he didn't want to believe it. But was it true?

He suddenly felt anger at the knowledge that she'd lied to him, that she'd kept something like this from him. Even worse; he was angry at himself for not seeing it. Thinking of all the times he had held himself back when he should have claimed her properly because he worried that he'd frighten her if she knew the truth, made Eric's face harden.

"What is your decision, Alpha" the female elder asked with a firm voice.

Eric turned back, his eyes flashed unyielding over everyone until he turned back to look at Rebecca's averted face. There was no stopping this now. He had no choice. "I will be the bearer of the Revealment." His tone was cold. Distant. His jaw clenched tightly as his expression grew dark.

No going back now...

"Alpha, the duty falls to your hunters, not you." Derik said in a quite tone.

Eric's gaze flashed over the men of his pack that stood off to the side of the massive crowd of bodies. Hunters were the soldiers, the killers, the protectors of every shifter pack; they carried out the orders of the Alpha when others stepped out of line. His hunter's eyes watched eagerly from the shadows, the way they looked over his mate made his protective instincts go into overdrive. He would never let them near her.

Reaching behind him, Eric shackled Rebecca's wrist, pulling her to stand at his side. "I will handle this and eliminate this threat to us." He addressed the whole pack. Hearing Rebecca's swift, fearful inhale, he chose to ignore her for the time being. Pausing, his expression turned emotionless as his voice rang out with displeasure. "From this moment forth, I hereby banish Myra; beloved daughter of the late Alpha. If she returns to my lands, my hunters have my orders to kill her on sight for risking the safety of this pack. I am assuming total and complete control over the leadership of this pack." Turning his hard gaze on Elder Peter; who met his gaze unflinching, Eric's next words had every elder's mouths gasping. "The elder's council is no more."

A hushed silence came over the grounds around him. The elders looked at him with looks of rage and horror at what he'd just done. Though as the Alpha, he held the power to lead and protect his pack, the elders had abused their power as advisors. For too long he'd allowed their threats of turning the pack against him to control his actions as leader. No more. With just a few words, he'd burned every traditional aspect of the Black Claw pack and he was grateful for it.

"If any of you have an issue with that step forward, I will tolerate no violence against the human world. Any that disobey this will be given no mercy." Many members of the pack shouted in anger, their clawed fist clenched in that air, others stormed away vowing vengeance against the humans, while the rest of the pack stared solemnly at him.

Lips curling in anger, Myra quickly shifted into her wolf form and disappeared into the woods. Staring after her retreating form, Peter glared at Eric with a look that told him that the elder would not accept his decree lightly. "You shall regret this night, Alpha." He sneered with rage.

Ignoring the stunned looks around him, he tightened his hold on Rebecca's arm before turning toward the dark interior in the direction of the lodge, pulling her along with him.