

Chapter 205 A New Kind Of Weapon

Alexander

“Been a while since this entrance has been used,” I mumbled, sliding my fingers along the mortared seams of the ancient brick fireplace. After a few seconds of feeling around, I recognized the right spot by touch and took a knee in front of it. Yes, there it was— just enough space carved into the mortar that I could grip the front edges of one of the bricks, and pull on it...

The loose brick came forward about an inch, but that was as far as it would go. When I met resistance I released the brick and it slid right back into its place. I heard movement from within the wall to the left of the fireplace a couple seconds later, and then finally a large wooden wall panel began to creak open, sloughing a thick layer of dust off its top edge as it pivoted forward into the room.

Bright morning sunlight was beaming in from the nearby picture window. It lit up every individual particle of dust in the air as billions of them suddenly hovered and swirled all around us.

“Yeah, I can see that,” Kayden said, batting a hand against a dust current drifting toward his face.

There were two fireplaces in the Alpha King’s study, and each adjoined a hidden passageway. The one in the library enclave led up to the tower. This one, at the back of the office area, led to the armory.

Flashlights in hand, we plunged forward through the slowly settling dust cloud and entered the cool, dark hallway beyond. Kayden pulled the hidden door closed behind him, plunging us into pitch dark. We clicked our flashlights on and walked the short distance down to our destination.

“And how is your father doing, by the way?” Kayden’s low voice echoed down the passageway’s stone walls. “Any change yet, any updates?”

“No. His condition is still critical, and he is still under sedation.”

Kayden grunted in acknowledgement. There was nothing more to be said on that topic.

We reached the back entrance of the armory, a heavy, steel-reinforced wooden door that locked from this side. I slid back a steel bar to open the lock and eased the door open. It creaked on metal hinges rusty from long disuse. Once inside, I felt the cold wall for the light switch and flipped it over.

The lights staggered on, starting at the back of the armory where we stood and coming to life in a pattern moving forward to the other end of the long, narrow room. Shallow insets built into the walls featured bright overhead lights that shone down upon swords, scythes, and other ancient steel and silver weapons mounted to the stone. The center of the room featured a long, low wall of shelves accessible from either side, within and upon which were stored all varieties of weapons and ammunitions.

My Beta fished his tablet out of his pack and opened up the checklist he had prepared ahead of time. Then we started our slow tour of the armory, which we were here to inventory.

Kayden kept notes on his digital notepad as we evaluated everything that we had on hand. We decided what we would take with us to the valley and what to leave behind. And made a list of other items to order, as well—new and updated weapons we’d need for the coming battle.

Many of the weapons in the palace armory were obsolete, relics from a time when my ancestors were fighting insurgents of our own kind in the werewolf wars of old. These weapons – swords, flails, steel traps – were of no use against vampires. But we did also have an ample supply of newer weaponry fashioned for the express purpose of fighting the undead.

We finished our count in the armory and returned to my study to review the results.

“I’ll send the orders to the palace forge tonight.” Kayden was typing fast at my desktop computer while I paced nearby, reviewing the notes he’d made on the tablet. “Hopefully, they can get everything we need ready by end of week.”

“Not everything,” I mumbled absently.

“What do you mean? Is there something else I should add to the order?”

I turned away from my Beta while I thought over what I was about to say. When the click-clacking patter of his fingers on the keyboard suddenly stopped, I figured that he had sensed my hesitation.

“No,” I answered, turning halfway back to Kayden. “I’m thinking about something... something else. Not something that a blacksmith can make.”

I looked out the picture window and found an explanation for the sudden chill in the room. Thick gray clouds were darkening the morning sky, and distant trees swayed dramatically under heavy winds. A storm was brewing.

“We need a new kind of weapon,” I continued, finally returning my eyes to my friend and trusted advisor, who was about to become upset with me.

Kayden shook his head slowly. “Alex, tell me you don’t mean a bomb.”

I hesitated to respond, which was answer enough.

“No. You can’t seriously be considering bombing the canyon, Alex. We can’t—”

“I know we can’t, Kayden. I’d never endorse a plan that involves destroying a part of our own world.”

“...but?”

I exhaled heavily. “But perhaps we can find or invent a new kind of explosive device. Something that could expose the tombs and allow us access to them, without triggering a massive collapse or avalanche, or other natural disaster...”

Kayden narrowed his eyes at me. He clenched his teeth so hard his jaw twitched on both sides. He was thinking that I was insane right now, but he knew better than speak out of turn.

“I’d like to contract an expert to come and consult with us on this. At least have a conversation about our available options, and hear from them exactly what they’d predict the consequences of using such weapons in such an environment would be.”

Resigning himself against an argument, Kayden quietly agreed to find an explosives expert and schedule a meeting as soon as possible. He then returned his focus to finishing this and other tasks on the computer, while I called for some servants to bring us coffee service and come in to get fires started in the fireplaces.

The tension between me and Kayden melted away once we’d taken a short break to refuel ourselves. While the staff bustled around the study for a few minutes, we partook in some warm, fresh pastries from the kitchen and several piping hot cups of coffee. The warmth, caffeine and nutrition boosted our moods as well as our energy.

Returning to work, our focused shifted to a discussion of other strategies, now that we had completed our weapons inventory and orders.

“We need to find a pack that we can ally with near the valley. We will need help as we travel and prepare for the attack.”

Kayden got up and stood before one of the many maps mounted on the wall. “There’s nothing out here, Alex, for hundreds of miles. The resort is the only thing out in that part of the country.”

“Can’t be the only thing. There may not be many people out there, but there are some. There must be gas stations interspersed along that stretch of highway. Maybe an auto repair shop along the way, somewhere. Those small businesses would be staffed by locals.”

Kayden nodded, now tracing a finger along the highway route I had referenced. “Alright,” he mumbled, looking lost in a deep thought already. “I’ll look into it. See what I can find.”

“Two things I know for certain,” I mused. “We can’t be out in the open overnight. And we can’t camp at the resort. We need to find a pack that we can trust that can quarter us until daylight on the morning of the attack.”

“Let’s hope we can find one that meets both those criteria.” My Beta cast me a sidelong glance.

I nodded, reluctantly agreeing that his skepticism was well-founded. I had hope we would find a werewolf pack near the canyon that was capable of helping us. But forming alliances is never simple, and we would have to be very careful about how we even started asking for such help.

You’d think any pack would want to ally with us against the vampires. But almost anyone can be bought for a price. And we were talking about entrusting werewolves that were currently strangers to us with our very lives.