

## Chapter 124

Cullen and Cadifor were talking with a small group of alphas from outside of Cadifor's territory. Cullen was doing his best to look like he was enjoying himself. The last twenty minutes had been pure misery. He wasn't sure if Aislinn would be joining them or not.

Makeda and Sarah were pleased and impressed to see that even if Aislinn was upset she was managing to look every bit the part of alpha mate. It was an important skill that not everyone could manage. Bottling feelings when appropriate for appearances.

Aislinn felt guilty for having upset him so badly. She led the way through the people in the main room. Heads turned as members of the pack recognized them and pointed them out to others who didn't know who they were.

Cadifor saw them before Cullen did. When Aislinn's eyes met Cadifor's he bowed his head to her slowly as if he was mesmerized. Cullen and every other alpha in the group turned to see what or who had earned that great of a compliment from Cadifor. Cullen thought his heart might stop. Aislinn walked up to him and without hesitation she ran her hands up his chest and over his shoulders, pulled him down to her level and kissed him. Cullen slid his hands over her bare back and held her to himself as he kissed her back.

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Cullen, Aislinn broke the kiss and pressed her forehead to his. Tá brón orm. Tá grá agam duit. I'll do whatever you need me to do. Anything. Then she kissed him again.

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The group who had been talking with Cullen watched the pair kiss with amused smiles. Some of the men had women standing with them but most of them were alone. There was some joking about not being able to wait as Aislinn kissed him. Finally he pushed her away gently, before things got out of hand. Aislinn bit her lip and looked into his eyes. He was alright now. She smiled, having accomplished what she wanted.www.noVeIWorm.çøM

"Tá tú hálainn," he said and bowed his head to her. There were very few people who ever gained that compliment from an alpha. Cullen could see how she had managed to get it from Cadifor. There wasn't another woman in the room who Cullen believed could outshine her tonight.

"It's all the diamonds," she said and gave him a hard look that told him, he'd taken it too far.

He laughed. "I never get to have any fun," he grinned back. "Besides, no one will even notice the diamonds if you continue to smile like that."

The group Cullen had been talking with started to return to the conversation. They didn't know if Cullen would be rejoining them or not. "A man can only take so much blatant affection," someone said loudly and then there was more laughter.

Cullen looked back at the group and then to Aislinn again. "Alright. They'll bring you back to me when it's time. For now you're supposed to be mingling with the rest." He ran a finger along her jaw and his thumb over her lip and she kissed it before turning away.

Makeda and Sarah led her off through the crowd to introduce her to leaders from other packs who she would have to know. Cullen watched her disappear into the crowd before he returned to the conversation, a little out of place.

The next few hours turned into a political chess game and Aislinn was grateful that Makeda and Sarah were close at hand to help her with it all.

Cullen's eyes traveled the room. Most of the people here had no idea how much danger would be coming in that evening. Cullen wasn't sure whether he should hope for Jenna to get a grip and leave them be or if he should hope she'd just attack and be done with it. The worst case scenario would be for her to decide to come to her senses enough to not attack tonight but plan for a different night instead. Cadifor reassured Cullen that if the attack didn't come then they'd use the night as it was set up for, a diplomatic meeting, and worry about the next move later. Mostly Cullen was hoping that Jenna wasn't bitch enough to use the beginning of the ceremony itself as her cue to attack. But he knew full well that it was the most likely scenario.

Cullen and Cadifor were standing in one of the rare moments that they were surrounded by a bunch of people. "The part that bothers me the most," he said quietly, "is that there are so many strange faces here, Jenna could have her men in the middle of this room and there's no guarantee I'd notice."

Cadifor clapped his friend on the shoulder. "Stop worrying," he said quietly. "We're as prepared as we can get. The alphas are aware of the situation. They'll keep tabs on their own. Yours are still wary from the last time. We're ready for this. Enjoy the moment. When have you ever seen this many alphas in a room getting along? And druids as well," he said as excitement tinged his voice. "Our time is changing before your eyes Cullen. This is perhaps the most exciting party I've attended in centuries. I for one am thinking that this may need to become a regular thing."w(w)w.noV(ø)IW(ø)RM.cOm

Cullen had to admit that Cadifor was correct. He looked around. The place was nearly a United Nations convention due to the different groups that Cadifor had invited. Some of them had even flown in from different Council member's territories in order to meet the druids. Cullen knew that any number of the alphas who Cadifor had invited had come only to meet the druids and because of the need to understand the newest danger in their world. But the men and women were all mingling and there had been no angry outbreaks or threats. Cadifor had made it amply clear when the invitations went out that this was to be a friendly evening and he'd personally deal with anyone who made his friend's mating ceremony into a brawling match, outside of the possible attack that is. They all appeared to be staying true to their word.

It was getting toward evening and people had already begun to discard clothing. The smart ones had already left shoes and extraneous items in their cars so that they'd be able to find their things come morning. Others were delivering things to their cars in anticipation of what was to come.

Malik approached Cullen and Cadifor, "I was briefed on how the evening should go. But there are a number of others who wish to know if they are permitted to make use of the stone circle before your ceremony begins."

Cullen looked at Malik with concern. "What do they want to do?"

"Bless the event." Malik's gaze was unwavering. "It's one of our traditions and I must admit that none of them had thought they would feel inclined to do it. But after having observed you all night long they feel as though they wish to participate. Consider it a gift and an act of good will for our joint future."

Cullen looked to Cadifor questioningly. He nodded. "This is supposed to be a joining of the druids with the lycans." He smiled at Cullen's flat look, knowing that Cullen didn't like that his mating to Aislinn had taken such a dramatic political turn.

"Is anything required of me or Aislinn," he asked.

"No. But you may wish to be present. It should be beautiful to watch." Malik bowed in thanks and disappeared to tell the others that he had received permission.

Cadifor sent a couple omegas to tell the alphas that the druids were going to demonstrate a ceremony for them if they wished to be present. Cullen and Cadifor didn't have any trouble finding their women. They just followed the trail of moon-eyed young males.