

Chapter 154

"Lycan," he answered.

"What?"

"The PC term is lycan."

"You can't be serious."

"Hey, our world has its politics, same as yours." Trey was measuring her. At least she was referring to the fight she taped as real instead of denying seeing it. That was progress.

"So prove it," Natalie dared. "I want to see it with my own eyes."

"I thought you already had."

"It was dark and I was looking through a camera. That's more different from seeing up close than you might imagine."

"Tell me where the tapes are."

"You show me that I'm not insane and I'll take you to the tapes personally," Natalie growled right back.

Trey stood up and walked over to stand in front of the door. He didn't want her freaking out and bolting after he shifted. He thought for a moment trying to decide which form would be least intimidating. Finally he decided that he would be better off taking the hybrid form. At least that way I can talk back if I have to.

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Taking a deep breath, Trey rolled his head back and forth across his shoulders a couple times. Natalie heard it crack, as he shook his shoulders and seemed to stretch, like some athlete getting ready for the big event. Natalie brought her hand to her mouth, partially to stifle the scream as Trey's body began to grow in all directions. Hair covered him, his face elongated; the tattoos seemed to flow into perfect patterns that followed the line of a wolven muzzle.

It was all she could do to keep from fainting as the lycan took his final form, standing there in front of her. Natalie could feel her heart racing and she couldn't slow her breathing. As the room started to go black, she heard a strangely slurred voice growling, "SSShit, ssshez faintinggg."

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A few moments after the text announcing Nora's death, a follow up text sent a chill through every lycan in the manor. "Initial findings indicate she was attacked by a lycan." Cadifor checked the number that the text was coming from only to find that it was blocked.

The confusion and upset immediately following the texts about Nora Senach was comparable to the uproar following JFK's assassination. Each of the various leaders had runners looking for their subordinates and colleagues. Private meetings were being called. Suspicious glares were crossing the room between the lycans who fostered the link with the Circle and those who had opposed it.

Cadifor gathered his allies and followers and laid claim to one of the main meeting rooms. Cullen and Keith recognized Stephen La Rayne, Neill Odgar, and Sean McDougal as they took seats at the table alongside all the others. Rollo Ganger was there with his men as well and Makeda had joined them in a rare appearance at this kind of meeting. That alone was enough to make Cullen sit forward in his seat and pay more attention than he already did.

Standing from his chair at the head of the table as the last of the men filtered into the room, Cadifor slammed the door shut and walked over to Rollo. After a brief quiet conference between the two men, it seemed that Cadifor was elected to head up the meeting.

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"So here's the situation," Cadifor began with his usual angry intensity that commanded everyone's attention. "I think we've all heard what apparently has delayed the meeting which was called for this evening. I don't have to tell any of you that the kind of information that was texted to everyone is not normally distributed that way. Whoever sent the information either is looking to give us a heads up or to cause conflict between the Council and the Circle. At worst it was meant to delay the meeting for some reason. At best this information will only cause a brief delay in the original intent of this gathering. At worst it could put the rift between the Circle and the Council firmly back in place. We don't even know if the information is accurate at this point. Though, the absence of the Circle representatives leads me to believe that there may be some truth in the messages.

"The original meeting was meant to discuss if we should act on a recent break in at a government facility which released a large number of the weres Rafe created." Cadifor sighed heavily and his forehead creased with concentration as he appeared to think carefully over the next few sentences. "So we need to consider that the page was sent by someone with access to all of our numbers and who might want to cause trouble within the Council itself as well as with our allies. It could be the NSA trying to delay us and cover up whatever happened. It could be Jenna or Brennus or whatever the hell they are trying to cause trouble. It could be something else entirely. I'll entertain any reasonable suggestions at this point."

There was a pause as everyone considered the levity of the situation. When the pause continued with no response, Rollo sat forward, tapping the table unconsciously with his fat hand. "I'm not sure what you're looking for Cadifor. You've pretty much covered all the bases. Actually, I'm not sure what we're doing here. We are all forced to wait for confirmation of the messages. One fool started calling meetings and the rest of us followed suit. I assume, because we feel as though we need to act. It's in our nature. But I don't know that there's anything we can do at the moment." Rollo sat back and then looked over at Cullen, even though he continued to project his voice as if he was speaking to the entire room. "Not unless you have some way of getting information from the Circle that the rest of the men in this building don't."

Cullen shifted uncomfortably in his seat, seeing exactly where the comment was going. "Aislinn remained behind. Not to mention, she is not directly connected to the Circle. She was raised human and her alliance with them is tenuous at best."

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Rollo nodded. "But rumor has it that the girl is able to obtain information from visions or contact people with her mind," he suggested.

Growling, Cullen looked to Cadifor. "If you want me to contact Aislinn and ask her to look into it I can. But I'll tell you now, that she is close to the end of the pregnancy and had a vision or two recently that make no sense as it is. She already told me about those and I see no immediate connection to the current situation."

Cullen turned his focus back to Rollo and tried to not sound too annoyed with the man, knowing that he only had rumors about what Aislinn was capable of. "Aislinn, unfortunately, doesn't get to control her visions. The Fates tell her what they believe is important and leave it to the rest of us to interpret. So whatever she might find out is subjective at best that way. And she has never been able to contact the Circle or anyone other than me mentally by volition."

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Rollo held his hands up as if to say he was giving up the argument and sat back in his chair. "It was merely a suggestion. We're all grasping at straws here."

"I have to ask," Cadifor said, drawing everyone's attention again. "I would be a fool, after what we've learned of Aislinn's visions to date, to not ask what she saw."

Cullen thought about the various mental images that Aislinn had conveyed to him on the car ride here. "Okay, but I have to preface with the caveat that I did warn you it doesn't make sense." Cullen could feel the attention on him as if he was the single most important person in the room. He hated that kind of attention. "There was something about a girl in a straight jacket, maybe in an asylum. But there was no indication of who the girl was or where the actual place was. There was something about a large open door covered in runes. And there was a last warning about Jenna and the birth of our children."