

Chapter 161

Malik was torn as was the rest of the Circle. There was the half that believed Nora's death and the destruction of her home was due to breaking their tradition of noninvolvement. That group was already in the process of packing up to disappear as so many of their ancestors did in difficult times. Then there was the group that was starting to believe the noninvolvement was what lead to all the deaths.

"If we had controlled Rafe instead of ignoring his actions and indiscretions in the beginning," Malik responded, "then most of the difficulties we currently face would not have come to pass. I remember Nora standing against our passivity with him and being out voted."

An older man sighed heavily and sat back in his chair. "We aren't equipped for fighting Malik. We watch and learn and pass on knowledge."

"To what end? We share none of it save with our own. What good is hidden knowledge?"

"I believe most of us have debated that point with ourselves at various times. It serves little purpose other than to cause frustration. Malik, we have tried to fight the Fates. First the vampires, then the lycans and various other weres in an attempt to stave off our own end. After each attempt our numbers dwindled more and we still found ourselves hiding. In the end we persevere. Fighting back is not the answer. Better to trust the Fates than to cause more destruction by opposing them."

A rumble of agreement filled the small room where the meeting was taking place.

"So we vanish," Malik responded with a rare vehemence in his voice," leave no word to the lycans as to what happened or why, trust that the Fates will resolve the conflict, hope that in the process the human population does not discover and route us out. Am I missing anything?"

No one answered.

"I believe we owe it to Nora and to the lycans, who just started to trust us, to see this through. I don't think it's right to leave them now to clean up what is ultimately something one of our own started."

Concerned faces and shaking heads faced Malik. "You are young yet. Most of us are far past the age when fighting would be feasible. Your path is your own Malik. If you wish to join with the lycans and attempt to aid them, that is your choice."

Frustration coursed through him. Malik was usually calm and placid as any of the druids. Seeing the bodies of the people close to him dismembered by Rafe's creations was tearing him apart. He found himself wanting not only resolution but revenge. As much as he told himself that it was an unproductive path and would lead to no good he could not let it go. Each time he closed his eyes he saw Nora. He saw the bubbles of blood on her lips as she died and he heard her words echoing in his ears. "See this through."

"I believe I will not be the only one who wishes to stay and aid the lycans," Malik finally responded.

"All of you who stay behind and go to their aid will be cut off. We cannot have our new location known to anyone who may become a liability at some point."

"I understand," Malik looked around at the other druids present. It seemed that none of them were willing to make eye contact with him. "I'll wait until you have all gone before contacting the lycans."

Cullen was awake before dawn. Aislinn's concern in the back of his mind was enough to keep him from any reasonable sleep. He dressed and left his room hoping that Cadifor would be up and ready so that he could let him know the new information about Jacob and whoever Mira was. He stopped at Keith's room and knocked loudly before turning the handle and walking in.

What? Is it morning already,

Keith grumbled and pulled his pillow over his head.

"Come on. Time to move," Cullen responded unenthusiastically.

"The sun isn't even up," Keith moaned. "You work me till all hours of the night discussing things that have no resolution and now you want me to wake up before the roosters. Go away."

"Keith, Aislinn had another vision. I have new information for Cadifor. You're lucky I didn't decide to deal with this last night. You're not the only one sick of this place."

Noting the frustration in Cullen's voice, Keith got up and started getting dressed without any further complaints. He was well aware of the stress that Cullen must be feeling. Not only to be away from Aislinn at the moment but to be stuck here with no real knowledge of when they would be done had to be killing him.

The pair walked down the hall toward Cadifor's rooms. They weren't the only ones out and about that morning. No one was resting. They Council was getting stonewalled trying to reach the Circle and they're government contacts. It was a rare occasion when the Pack Council was at a loss for what action to take. That alone was enough to put everyone on edge.

Cullen rapped on Cadifor's door and the quick response told him that the man had not been asleep either.

"I expected you'd be up already," Cullen said when he saw that Cadifor was already dressed. Makeda was still in the shower, but would probably be done shortly. Even she had been relatively sedate during the proceedings of the last couple days.

"I take it that you have something important?"

Sitting down in a chair at the small breakfast table Cullen got straight to the point. "I don't know if this will help, but Aislinn had another vision. She said that she saw Jacob, the druid that Jenna kidnapped to lead the dire experiments, dying. He told her to convey the message that the lycans didn't do it and to find a woman named Mira. Mean anything to you?"

Cadifor sat down at the table with Cullen. His brow furrowed as he tried to think. "That's it?"

Aislinn said when she asked Jacob who Mira was he said he didn't know."