

## Chapter 168

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"The other option is for you to stay here, help us come up with a plan for action that may resolve some of the other issues and it's possible that Jenna will turn up in the mix. She doesn't have anywhere to go. She needs help and resources if she's going to manage to get anywhere. There are very few entities out there that might help her. She's going to run out of places to hide in short order. When she does my trackers will be on her. For now get your head back in the immediate situation and stop pissing off the Council."

Neither of the men had noticed the open door to the Council chamber. "Excellent advice," Rollo added curtly. "Will the two of you be rejoining the meeting?"

Cullen nodded with respect and re-entered the Council room. Keith was still sitting in chair next to the one Cullen had vacated. He had the look of a deer in headlights and seemed more than a little relieved when Cullen reappeared. "I apologize to the Council for the interruption."

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"Need we ask what caused your urgent exit Arnauk," Kyran asked.

Cadifor pushed Cullen over to his chair. "Arnauk's mate is pregnant and there was an emergency."

Annoyed looks passed around the room, but the meeting moved on at that point. Most of them understood, even if they didn't like, the situation.

Cullen decided that at the very least, Keith was going back to the Madadh-alluidh Saobhaidh. He had never known anyone as good at hunting people or information down as Keith was. Cullen figured that the best approach might be to take all the roads available and see if they met in the middle. Cadifor was right. It all seemed to be involving Aislinn in one way or another. Since all of her visions ended up being the main means to the end of the problems that had been amassing, Cullen wanted to make sure that Mira was a top priority for the Council.

Frustration gripped the steering wheel as Tor turned around in the field at the dead end.

"We're going to be out of gas. We are going to have to go back, if we can find out way back," Natalie said with concern.

"That's what the two reserve tanks of gas in the trunk are for," Tor rumbled.

Natalie sighed. "I'm sorry Tor. I was scared and desperate that night. I really thought I could find my way back."

Tor heaved a heavy breath and took a moment to calm down. "It's alright. I didn't really think it would be an easy task after you described to me what you did. Maybe I should have arranged for the helicopter instead. I figured if anything were going to be noticed by the feds it would be a random helicopter in the airspace near the city. But I suppose if we got to the tapes and got out fast enough it wouldn't matter." Tor sounded distinctly as if he was thinking out loud.

"Okay," Natalie blew a stray red curl out of her eyes.

Tor smiled as he looked at her, curly hair going kinda crazy around her face from a day in the car with the windows down. Her bright green eyes shining in the light from the setting sun. "So lets go back to the main highway," he said, putting himself back on track. "We'll take that little map you sketched and throw it out. Let's see if we can work backward in the dark. That's when you did this after all. We'll just take it slow and see where we end up. Either way we have to be back by morning."

Natalie was getting nervous. She knew how much depended on finding those tapes. She stared out the window trying to take in both sides of the road at once, desperately looking for any landmark that might point her in the right direction. She pointed Tor down one dirt road and then another. Finally she screamed. "Just stop."

"What?" Tor stopped the car and Natalie got out, stomping down the road in the car's headlights.

"This is pointless," she said through tears, wiping her cheeks. "I remember thinking that all this looked the same on my way out of here. I thought how good that was since it would be so hard to find my way back that no one else would be able to figure it out at all."

Tor followed her down the road. "We don't have time for this Natalie."

"Look around. I mean look," she blurted. "You can't even see over the overgrown fields. We need a periscope or something. How the hell am I supposed to figure this out?" She turned around staring at Tor. "I don't know what to do."

"Calm down." Tor pulled her to his chest and wrapped his arms around her. "Just breath."

Natalie buried her face in her hands and tried to catch her breath. His arms were more comforting than she wanted to admit. Suddenly she pushed away from him. At first Tor thought he had gone to far. "Turn off the lights," Natalie said and trotted toward the SUV.

"Huh?" Tor followed her a bit confused. "What are you thinking?"

"Just turn off the lights. This is a far shot I know. Just do it." She climbed up the hood of the car and stood on the roof. From there she could see over the fields. The moon and stars were bright tonight and with the city so far off there was decent vision for quite a way.

"What are you doing?"

"I told you there were a bunch of trees around the house. I was thinking that if we can see far enough maybe a patch of trees would stand up high enough over these fields to be seen from a higher point. Really your talking about the helicopter I think is what gave me the idea."(w)(w)W.itoV£LW(o)rM.com

"Well?" Tor crossed his arms over his chest. He was skeptical that the idea would get them anywhere.

"I see a dark something up over the fields off that way." Natalie pointed across the fields to the right of the car. "I don't know if it's a patch of trees or not. It's far off."

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Tor shrugged. "Might as well try it. What could we lose at this point?"