

## Chapter 171

The number on the caller ID was not one he recognized. Cullen briefly debated letting the voice mail pick up the call, but then thought again and hit the answer button on his cell. Recently mysterious numbers had related important information. He didn't want to take the chance that this was one of those calls.

"Arnauk," he said into the phone. His automatic answer programed in for years.

Tor couldn't help smiling at his brother's voice. "Been a long time, but I still know that ridiculous in-charge attitude of yours. It comes through even when you answer the phone."

Cullen felt better for the first time in days. It was the last call he would have expected. Not that Tormaid's phone calls were ever expected. He tended to get in touch randomly ever 5-10 years or so. "It's good to hear your voice. Where have you been hiding this time?"

"Same place I've been for a few decades now," Tor vaguely responded.

Cullen didn't press the matter. He figured Tormaid would get around to letting him know what was going on his life when it suited him. His older brother had always been that way. Similar to his father, he only gave out information on a need to know basis. The less you say the smaller the chance that something can come back on you. Last Cullen knew Tor had taken up some mercenary work.

"Is there a purpose for the call or are we just catching up?" Cullen asked.

"Straight to the point? Wouldn't you rather have friendly banter first?"

Cullen chuckled and Keith looked up at him curiously. It was an odd sound from his friend lately. "Banter first' implies that there is a purpose."

"Being Alpha has made you far to serious," Tor responded. "I hear you've mated. Somehow I knew you would before me."

The smile dropped from Cullen's lips. Of course this would end up being about Aislinn. "Yes. I wish you had been there."

"I would have. But I only heard about it after the fact. Sometimes I regret not keeping in better contact. You could have called me. Was Wenda there?"

"I tried to call both of you. Neither of the numbers I have for you are currently working. Maybe send me a note the next time you change it?" $\hat{W} \odot \hat{W}. \mathbf{Nov\hat{e}(l)(w) \sigma \pi \mathbf{M}.com}$

$\mathbf{W}\mathbf{W}w.\mathbf{Nov\hat{e}lw}\mathbb{O}(r)(\mathfrak{m}).\mathcal{C}r\mathfrak{m}$

"Sorry. I have been tied up for a while now. May not have made it anyway."

Cullen growled at his brother. "You know I always wonder if the two of you have ended up dead when I can't get a hold of you. I should really try finding Wenda again."

"True. Sorry."

"So considering the trouble of late," Cullen began wanting to get to the point, "You want to tell me what's going on? I assume this isn't about you coming to visit and meet Aislinn."

"Well honestly I would like to do that too. But no, it's not about a family visit. It's about the mess you're currently in."

Cullen's brow furrowed. "What do you know and how do you know it?"

"I know that you mated to a would be druid slash were cat, that some mixed up weres are on the loose, and that Jenna Tairneach has some paperwork that needs to be retrieved. Does that about sum it up?"

$\mathfrak{w}\mathbb{W} \odot .\mathfrak{nov\hat{e}l}(w)(\mathfrak{o})\check{R}\mathfrak{m}.co\mathbb{M}$

There was a long pause before Cullen responded. "Most of it. Again I have to ask how you know all this."

"I work for an organization that has spent the last eon cleaning up collateral damage to keep the human populous unaware of our existence. Unfortunately this mess is too big for us to deal with. We need more man power."

"How much man power are we talking and to what end?"

Tor considered his words carefully. He knew that Mira wanted as little involvement as possible at the same time he knew that the pack Council would want as much information as possible if he was going to glean their cooperation. "We have information that could help the Council accomplish what they want and clear up a few matters. I assume that once they have the information they will act on it. Essentially that's what we are after. Since our organization would prefer to remain anonymous, I was hoping that I could give you the details and you could take credit for it."

Keith watched Cullen with interest. The little bit of the conversation he was getting did not sound good.

"How exactly," Cullen responded, "am I supposed to explain to the Council where I came up with a bunch of new information suddenly? I'm having a hard enough time convincing them of the information I already have."

"I'm sure you could think of something. Maybe Aislinn could have another vision."

Cullen growled loudly. "You know an awful lot for not having been around all this time. Who exactly do you work for?"

"Cul the information about your mate is pretty much public knowledge. Don't go sounding like that." Tor sighed. "But I suppose I may owe you a bit more detailed explanation considering I'm asking you to take so much heat."

"I'd say so."

"I ended up taking a job some time ago and then stayed working there. They have contacts everywhere. Though most of the contacts don't realize who they report to. The organization is kept small. Easier to keep secrets when there aren't many people who know what's up. They keep an eye on things and when one of the major powers screws up, fix it quietly."

Cullen considered the vague references to "they" and the fact that the Council would not be happy with the anonymity. "You know that won't work for the Council."

"Well they'll need to decide what's more important. Names or information. If they can't accept it on our terms then-"

"Hey," Cullen interrupted. "You called me for help, not the other way around."

"Can't you at least try and work with me on this? Considering all I've done for you in the past I'd think you'd give me some slack here."

"You can't possibly be calling in favors right now. I've got too much at stake to play games with the situation," Cullen responded with annoyance.

"I'm not sure I know exactly what you're getting at there. I know you work pretty closely with Cadifor and that your pack was rather intimately involved in the recent trouble, but you make it sound like you have a personal stake in this."

$\mathfrak{w}\hat{W}\mathbf{W}.n(\mathfrak{o})\mathfrak{V}\mathfrak{e}lw\mathbb{O}\mathbf{R}\mathfrak{m}.com$