

Chapter 87

Cullen woke up early in the morning. The sun was just beginning to peak over the balcony. A nosy pigeon had noticed that the sliding door was no longer blocking his entrance and was poking around the glass. Cullen threw a pillow across the room at it and scared it out the window. He stretched and moved away from Aislinn before he got anymore ideas. Although she had pretty well exhausted most of those last night. He smiled at the memory.

"Stop thinking like that or you'll not be allowed out of this bed," Aislinn said without moving or opening her eyes.

Cullen chuckled and leaned down, placed a kiss on her check and then jumped out of bed. "By the way," he said as he headed for the bathroom, "I'm leaving it to you to call maintenance and explain to them why they need to come up here and replace the door."

"I didn't break it!" she called after him.*w(w)w.novèL@orm.©(o)m*

Cullen laughed some more and closed the bathroom door behind himself. It didn't take him long to clean up and as he headed out of the bathroom Aislinn pulled herself out of bed and limped toward it. "Are you okay," he asked with concern about her walk.

She looked over her shoulder at him with a broad smile. "I'm fine. Just a little sore." She stretched deliciously in front of him. "And I'll probably harass you into doing it again sometime soon. Maybe not tonight," she added. "But soon," she said as she walked into the bathroom for her turn in the shower.

That comment almost had Cullen delaying his morning plans. Gods sometimes she amazed him. He growled to himself and rubbed his face with both hands, getting control of his wolf again. By the time Aislinn was out of the bathroom Cullen was dressed and headed for the elevator. He knew too well that if he stuck around he'd get to see her dry off and then it'd be all over.*wwŴ.ñO(v)e1Wor(m).©ôṁ*

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He stopped her in the main room and pulled her too himself to plant a kiss on her lips. After a long moment that left her breathless he pulled away. "Good morning beautiful," he said with a smile. "I'm going downstairs to deal with the others before my good mood fails. Then I've got some phone calls to make. I'm probably going to have breakfast in my office. I suggest you take some time to mingle with the masses, find Sarah and see if she needs anything done. Maybe get yourself something to eat. I plan on heading us all back to the reservation this evening. Good?"

Aislinn nodded. She felt like she had just been bowled over by the lengthy instructions. He smiled at her again and headed for the elevator. Cullen hit the button for the basement. The elevator seemed to take forever to finish the descent. He had finally decided what to do with everyone. He was still bothered by the fact that they had turned. But he did understand why. And as much as it galled him to admit it, Aislinn had made a very good point. He had built this pack on family and caring as well as loyalty. He wasn't about to destroy all that because a handful, well more than a handful, of his men had betrayed him to protect their mates.

Cullen walked out of the elevator. The basement was actually several floors deep. There were underground living quarters just in case they were needed for security purposes. Cullen hoped that they'd never have to be used. There was an extensive gym, with a pool, track, basketball court, and training facilities. That room was always in use. There was the security suites and the holding area. It had never been used to hold his own men before. He growled at that. Then there were the tunnels that gave access to the local subway system. Most of the pack was unaware that the den had an escape route in the basement. But again, Cullen hoped it would never have to be used. But he didn't become alpha without having a mind for the future and all contingencies.

The elevator only went as far as the first level. That was the floor the gym was on. Cullen headed for the stairwell that led to the security suites and the holding area. That was in sub-basement level 2. The cameras caught his approach and Liam met him at the door when he came into the main entry way. The two men clasped hands and Liam nodded his head in greeting.

"Glad to see you early. The men are getting antsy. They all think they're as good as dead," Liam said soberly, looking for Cullen's response. He obviously wanted to know what was going to happen.

Cullen nodded. "I'm not killing anyone. Though I did consider it," he added.

Liam's relief was evident. The two men headed through the security door and back to the holding pens. Liam had allowed the doors to be left open. The rooms were mostly small cells. They had kept the main door latched but he had allowed the men to move amongst each other, especially after the women had insisted on joining them in the cells.*Ŵw(w).n0Vë1wor@.com*

Cullen looked around at all the distraught faces. "Does anyone have anything to say," he asked in a hard tone.

Ranaild stepped forward. He was the only beta in the group. Though there were quite a few thetas present. The rest all had lower ranks. That made Ranaild the spokesman. "We've all agreed that we deserve the worst of what you could do." That comment had half the women sniffing and the other half bowing their heads in shame. "But we ask that you spare Pete. He's lost enough and he tried to tell you what was going on. We stopped him to save our own. I would say, that if it meant getting our women back safely and we were asked to do it again, I am sorry Cullen, but we would." There was more crying.

Cullen looked around. His brow was furrowed. "I would be lying if I said that I didn't spend a great deal of time thinking about how nice it would feel to rip your throats out personally." The men in the room flinched. If he asked they would have lined up and offered their necks to him one by one, watching as each of their fellows went before them. "But, to your incredible benefit, Aislinn has managed to convince me that there was more to consider than the fact that you betrayed me." That had every man and woman looking up at him again. The women with hope in their eyes and the men with shame.