

Fatal Temptation: Between Two Alphas

novel Chapter 17

Chapter Seventeen

“What?” I turn to Eric.

He shrugs. “I control the entire Western Seaboard. From Alaska down to Mexico. I thought you knew.”

Uh, no.

I purposely stayed off the radar, and while back in my former pack, I wasn't overly concerned about politics or pack dynamics. Our lands and ruling family had been stable for generations. I knew Eric was powerful and controlled a lot of the West Coast but I didn't know to what extent. Same with Corinne's Ravens. I'd heard of them, but we weren't at war with anyone, so I didn't pay much attention to gossip in other pack regions.

“It wasn't long after you decimated them that Ashley and her parents showed up on our doorstep,” Jace says.

A sinking feeling spreads across my stomach.

“They show up,” Jace continues. “Cameron claims her immediately. They get mated within hours of her arrival.”

Eric lifts his glass. “All's well that ends well, I guess.”

Jace throws his napkin on the table. “No. I don't think anything ...ended.”

His face contorts as if something important is just now occurring to him. “Did you send her to our lands?” He eyes the wolves at the doors of the room and the Ravens in the middle of the table.

“What are you implying?” Eric asks. There is a change in his voice. It’s subtle but I sense it.

“We’ve had close to three hundred million dollars siphoned from one of our corporations. We’re working on tracing the money now.”

“Sorry to hear that,” Eric says.

Jace rises from the table. Liam, Tyler, Mikhail stand too. Declan twirls his knife. “Her pack swore fealty to you—and all those funds go missing... Cam is sick. You try to claim Mia—and Cam’s kids. I’m gonna bet everything leads back to you.”

Oh my god.

I look at Eric as if seeing him for the first time.

Could this all be tied to him!?! Some twisted plot to break the Healmsworth pack and to extend his rule to the east.

There are too many coincidences to overlook.

Jace’s eyes flash golden. “I’ll ask you again. Did you send Ashley to infiltrate my people?”

Eric slowly stands. His chair scrapes against the floor.

As he rises so do Corinne and her female warriors. They roll their shoulders, teeth already dropping and hands stretching into claws.

“Eric?” I whisper.

What the hell is happening?

“I won’t apologize for being powerful or unifying the western packs under my leadership. That is my right as Alpha and our people have thrived.”

But at what cost? “Is it true what Jace said? Did you attack and claim Ashley’s lands, specifically?”

He looks confused as to why that might be a problem. “Yes.”

I swallow hard. “Is that why you want me? Because I’m leverage against the Healmsworths?”

“No. My wolf chose yours—I choose you.”

“But you have to admit, there is an advantage here. And you could use my kids—”

“I was never going to use you or your children.” His dark eyes are earnest.

I want to believe him but... “Look me in the eye and tell me you never would have attacked my old pack.”

He doesn’t back down and I hold his stare, daring him to lie.

“Answer me, Eric.”

“It... was not a primary objective,” he tells me. “But over time, I may turn my attention to unifying all of North America.”

The entire continent!?

“Mia,” Jace says. He swings his arm to encompass Eric and his packmates. “You aren’t safe here. Whatever issues you might have with Cameron, don’t let yourself be used as a pawn to bring our pack to its knees.”

But I’m not the pawn—my pack already cast me out. My kids...that’s what he means.

As if Jace and his father and even my father wouldn’t do the exact same thing. As if they wouldn’t see my kids as anything more than a means to an end. And if Cam does die—and the thought suddenly knifes my chest—my children’s fate will be sealed.

The Healmsworths will demand the children remain with them.

We aren't like humans with shared custody or the kinds of laws governed by divorce courts.

Blood would reign.

The blood ties to Cameron as Alpha would negate my children's ties to me as their mother.

I step away from the table.

Away from Jace.

Away from Eric who holds his hand out to me.

Corinne smirks. Maybe this was her plan from the start.

"I'm leaving," I tell them. "And if any of you ever cared for me at all, you'll leave me be."

Jace shakes his head. He has orders, I realize.

Eric starts toward me. "If you think I'm letting you go after I've waited an eternity to finally find you—you've got another thing coming."

I'm a bone caught between two dogs.

They flex and growl, about to fight over me.

Then we hear it. The beating of helicopter blades.

A second later come the screams.