

## First Step to Offense Pt. 1

Lexi stared at King Arthur waiting for him to explain his logic for getting an apartment. He pointed at the door and suddenly Sally came into my oce. She said, "Oh umm... sorry. I need to borrow Lex for a second." I stood and we went across to an unused oce. Sally handed me a package. I opened it and smiled. "You got my calling cards for the guys?" Sally laughed, "Yeah, no one's had a problem with the necklace, but the wolves don't seem like the type that would actually wear your necklace." I said, "Thanks. I was actually wondering what to get them." I wrote a quick note and handed it all back to Sally. "Where are you going to mail it from?" Sally laughed, "I'm not mailing it. I'm just going to run back to the main house and drop it off. What's going on in there?" I sighed, "I asked King Arthur and Robert to come up with a plan to take down Noah. Remember?" Sally nodded. I said, "This is our scheduled meeting. Drop off the box and join us." Sally nodded and zipped away. I walked back into my oce and sat down. I said, "So an apartment?" King Arthur nodded, "Yes, your current home is somewhere Noah cannot get in. If he thinks he can get in a place you own... he will try. Obviously, the princess will have to set up some more fairy traps. If it's too easy Noah would smell a trap." I said, "Won't he know I'm not living there?" King Arthur said, "Well, you should stay there a few nights a week at least. Mix up the schedule." Haley said, "It wouldn't surprise the f\*\*\*\*\*g troll you got a place out in the open. He'll think you're sick of hiding, which is not what you're f\*\*\*\*\*g doing, but he will see it that way. He will think he's won."

Ted nodded, "I can see it. Especially if you never stay there on the same days throughout the week. He will think it's your attempt at giving yourself a life without being afraid of the threat he poses." King Arthur nodded, "Exactly. Now, this one I think you will like the most, but the others are also acceptable for our purposes." I studied the one he gave me. I did like it. It was fully furnished, and it was a condo style apartment. I said, "I do like that one. Are we saying the goal is for him to take me?" Haley snorted, "F\*\*k no." King Arthur smiled, "No, lass. I have subjects living in all these buildings. At night they will be our eyes and ears to watch the comings and goings. They know Noah is to be brought to me if he's seen. I also have contractors who are demons living in that particular building for the daytime." Sally came back in and sat down, "Why would they bring him to you?" King Arthur said, "Well, lassie, he hurt my child's mate. Robert has been searching for her for over a century. I will not let that stand. Robert is not only my child, but also my second. I am King after all." Haley said, "F\*\*k yes you are." Sally laughed. I said, "So we want him to break into my apartment?" Robert said, "Yes, now if you aren't there, we are going to monitor what he does. If he takes anything Haley is going to do something so that we know where it is." I frowned, "That sounds like a complicated Charm Haley." Haley said, "It's.... involved but I can do it. I'm pretty sure." I frowned. Something was going on with her.

King Arthur said, "In order to trap him you need to appear to be out in the open. It will give us an edge." I said, "I'll never be able to relax at home if I'm constantly waiting for an attack." Sally said, "You don't have to do this Lexi." Robert said, "You don't. It's just the best option to get him quickly." I shook my head, "No, I want to get back on offense." Haley said, "Good. Because we will probably get to kill some f\*\*\*\*\*g witch bitches this way." I frowned, "Why?" Haley snorted, "The f\*\*\*\*\*g troll isn't going risk himself coming at you fuckinggain. He'll send other people to die." Robert said, "Were you in the room when we came up with this plan?" Haley said, "No... I couldn't come to your home at night. That's insane. I barely made it out of there the last time. I'm not going back there. Is that a real question?" Robert said, "No." Haley said, "Then why the f\*\*k did you say that?" Susanna said, "Let's not get into that." I said, "How does this put us on offense? If they are still coming and we are killing them?" King Arthur said, "We don't kill them at rst. We interrogate them. This Noah character...according to Susanna, before he ed the Shroud, he was arrogant. I doubt he's changed. People rarely do. You mix arrogant and crazy, and he will speak of his plan to those who come for you. Robert is quite adept at getting people to talk, and he's rather upset about the attack on his bonded." I said, "So we are trapping people?" King Arthur said, "To attack we need some clue as to where his base of operations are. We can start by cutting his people off at the knees. Then he has no army. He'll have to poke his head out. He will be angry. Whoever is behind this can no longer control them. Actually, I argue they never could." Haley said, "A fuckingreed." I said, "Why do you think that? Haley, why do you agree?" Haley said, "Because of sally." Robert said, "Exactly." Ted, Sally, Susanna, and I all said, "What?" at the same time. King Arthur said, "If whoever is behind this truly could control Noah.... He never would've claimed Sally. He wouldn't have been at the ceremony. He would've rejected Sally and threatened her to keep quiet. Lexi, you would've known he wasn't your string, but if you didn't know about Sally.... You could've kept dating him."

Haley snorted. I sighed, "I don't think so." Robert said, "To him though. You could've been upset and hurt, but eventually, you could've come back to him." Haley said, "There would've been no one to come back to because he'd have been f\*\*\*\*\*g dead." I didn't have a single doubt in my mind that without Sally... Heath would've killed Noah because I would've been honest with him about what Noah said to me. I spoke, "Even without Sally. He lied to me saying I was his string." King Arthur said, "Kind of proves our point Lass. There's a bigger plan in play. Whoever is behind it has to care about Noah or they'd have killed him. Honestly, whether they care or not...if they were smart, they'd kill him. He's obsessed with getting both yourself and Sally." Sally said, "I'm sorry Lexi... I can't get an apartment like you can." I said, "Of course not. You're pregnant." King Arthur said, "No, I'd suggest you stay hidden Sally. It would seem odd if you were suddenly unafraid of Noah and his actions." I said, "So the plan is to draw them out? Question them and gure out where Noah and my mother's ex-boyfriend are?" King Arthur smiled, "I'm hoping that part comes from someone taking your things. We will have to let some of them be successful, rather we let them think they are successful. Of course some will have to fail if they are to believe this isn't a plan to trap them." Haley said, "I'm charming things for GPS and some with sound. If we can get a location and ears where they are...." I said, "Haley... How can you do that?" Haley said, "I'm stronger now. If I can't do it, I'll let you know but I really think I can." I said, "What on earth have you been reading?" Haley sighed, "Well I haven't been reading on earth. Eric and I have been going to Faerie. Aiden won't let me bring the books home, but it's a long f\*\*\*\*\*g story. I'm not... I don't know.... what the f\*\*k is going on... it could be big. Could be nothing. I haven't decided yet." I frowned. King Arthur was studying her along with Robert. Both of their eyes narrowed as if they'd realized something.

Susanna cleared her throat. Robert said, "Right. Once we have a better understanding of their plan and where they are based.... We should be able to plan an offensive attack. After studying Noah..." Haley glared at him. Robert sighed, "I'm sorry the f\*\*\*\*\*g troll, I think he will have someone break in to steal something as a test run. Obviously, they will have to run into some fairy traps." Haley said, "I prefer fairy hijinks." Robert said, "Of course you do. Fairy hijinks have to be in place, and then I think Noah will send someone he trusts once someone is successful. That's where we will gain our leverage." I thought about it. It made sense. From the door we heard, "He's right." Everyone but the Vampires jumped. I said, "Heath what are you doing here?" Heath said, "I heard there was a meeting. I decided to join. It's a good start to a plan. You are right Lex. We've been on defense far too long. Time to take the game to them." Haley said, "In an ideal world the f\*\*\*\*\*g witch b\*\*\*\*h that has the f\*\*\*\*\*g troll protected by iron will come to your apartment. Then I can just kill her and pop my happy little ass to him and take him to the Hackura realm. I'd even put a bow on his head as I kicked him to Bjourn." I laughed, "You don't have a little ass." Haley smiled, "Thanks! I've been doing A LOT of glute bridges. Eric likes it." I laughed, "I'll bet he does." Heath said, "That right there Haley, is proof you weren't raised in this realm." Haley frowned, "My ass is proof I wasn't raised here?" Heath snorted, "No that Lex said you don't have a small ass and you weren't pissed." Haley frowned, "But I don't want a small ass." I couldn't stop my laughter.

I said, "Heath...you're not going to make sense to her with this one." Heath sighed, "Anyway, after Robert and I discussed some things..." I said, "Whoa...Robert called you?" Robert said, "Who better to speak to than Noah's best friend? Because of you he will not betray our group. We have a common enemy we want taken down. There is one person who knows best how Noah thinks. That is your brother. A man like Noah wouldn't have let you or Sally in how his mind truly works. He and your brother had to share mission strategies. Heath is the most logical person to talk to." I nodded. Heath said, "I believe if Noah has one minor success, he will think that you are vulnerable Lex. He's used witches..." Haley gagged. Robert said, "Apparently we have to call him the f\*\*\*\*\*g troll." Haley said, "Thank you Robert." Heath said, "Okkk. I think if the f\*\*\*\*\*g troll has success with the witches, he's paying to try to break into your apartment.... then he will send someone of actual importance. He might do two dry runs, but we will when the person of importance comes because they won't be a witch or warlock." I said, "Who else would it be then?" Heath said, "They could be hood, mintor, or a demon. Vampire is unlikely, but also an option. He won't use werewolves because...." Heath trailed off. I knew what he was about to say. He was about to say because if I told a werewolf I was an Alpha's mate... They'd most likely back off. Heath glanced at Haley then said, "Because of your relationship with Haley and who she's married to."

Haley said, "You can bet your ass it won't be a Hackura then either." Heath snorted,

"No, your people have shown a disdain for No.... I mean the f\*\*\*\*\*g troll since you met Lexi.

They wouldn't even do missions with him before this went down." I said, "Since you met

me? Not after my string ceremony?" Haley looked away. I raised an eyebrow. King Arthur

snorted. I said, "Haley?" Haley smiled, "Yes, Lexi." I said, "Since we met, Hackura didn't like

the troll?" Haley said, "Well I mean honestly, who would like him? He's a s\*\*t stain of a

supernatural being. I don't even think humans would like him. I can't actually think of

someone who deserves to have him in their lives... Well, I can but they are dead. Most

because myself or someone I knew killed them." Heath laughed. I was trying not to laugh. I

said, "You made your people be mean to him.... this entire time?" Haley said, "Made them is

such a strong f\*\*\*\*\*g word." Susanna said, "What's the right word?" Robert kissed her,

"You, my Susanna, are very wise for your age. Many vampires don't know how to talk to

fairy for at least a decade." Haley stuck out her tongue, "Because they'd try to f\*\*\*\*\*g drain

them dry instead of talking. The right word would be strongly encouraged. I might have

implied he reminded me of a fairy or two. Which is f\*\*\*\*\*g true! Don't any of you say he

wouldn't be the piece of s\*\*t type who belonged to my Uncle's ring." Sally said, "No, he is." I

glanced sharply at her. Heath's st curled. He spoke, "If everyone could excuse us, I need

to speak to Sally." Sally said, "No, Heath it's ok. You can ask. Haley and I have actually

talked about it."

Heath turned to Haley. She said, "It's like you forget I'm studying to be a therapist. I

have also been in COUNTLESS therapy sessions for myself. I know what I'm doing. People

like talking to me. I'm f\*\*\*\*\*g awesome." Heath turned to Sally, "Did he.... Sally.... did he

ever..." Sally said, "Yes, he raped me often. Most of the times I honestly didn't realize until I

talked through it with Haley. I thought because I was his string even if I wasn't in the mood

or I said no then....it wasn't rape. Haley helped me realize if I say no then.... It's not

consensual. The night he found out about Lexi and Raphael.... was a bad one. That was

the rst time I would've said he raped me before Haley, and I spoke. He would also punch

me in the stomach on occasion. I also thought it wasn't so bad because it was never more

than once." Heath said, "The night of your string ceremony. Did he rape you?" Sally sighed

and looked at Haley. She took a deep breath then said, "He did. I said I wanted to wait. I

wanted him to be over Lexi. He didn't take no for an answer. I thought because...." She

turned red. Haley said, "It's ok Sally. It's your body's natural reaction. He was your string."

Sally sighed. "I thought because I was wet down there...that maybe I did want it. He said I

must have because of how wet I was for him. I just thought it was normal. It wasn't like it

ever took a long time anyway." I gave her a hug. "You are the bravest person I know Sally

Quaid." Sally smiled, "I'm in a healthy loving relationship now. Derrick and I are actually

going to a therapist together. I told him I needed to keep going, and I'd like for us to have

the tools to talk through things. Not that we are in trouble. I just don't want us to get there.

I don't want to retreat into my shell. Things trigger me, and that's not his fault; however, I

want someone there to guide us through this time." I said, "That's really smart Sally."

Heath snorted, "I might need the name of your shrink." Haley said, "Why?" Heath said,

"Oh umm..." I raised an eyebrow then Heath said, "My best friend did betray me and lied to

me for three years. He hurt my little sister and put up a wall between us. He separated us."

I raised an eyebrow at Heath. I knew that wasn't the reason he wanted the name of Sally's

therapist. It didn't seem like he was going to share though. So I said, "The war goddess

told me he did it on purpose." Heath's clenched his jaw so hard it ticked. Haley said, "Of

f\*\*\*\*\*g course he did. The f\*\*\*\*\*g troll is the f\*\*\*\*\*g worst." King Arthur laughed, "Lass, I

do so miss the nights where I was around you all the time. Though, I wish those

circumstances hadn't happened the way they did. I also wish you had managed to not be

injured throughout my entire waking moments." Haley said, "None of those things were my

fault." Robert snorted. King Arthur said, "Really? How do you NOT see running around on

your feet that were stripped of the skin and getting grass and all sorts of s\*\*t into them; re-

opening any sort of healing that your body had done to go outside to see your wolf as not

your fault?" Haley said, "I'm twice light bound to Eric. I HAD to see him. That's not my

fault." Heath laughed. I said, "She's got you there." King Arthur groaned, "Lass, I look

forward to our next meeting. Lexi, you have an appointment at the condo leasing oce in

the morning." I said, "You knew I'd pick that one?" King Arthur said, "Susanna was sure." I

laughed, "She would. We lived together in a few places for several months on missions."

Susanna blew me a kiss, "And what fond memories those are." Her vampire took her in his

arms and sped out of the room.

Haley said, "I feel so proud. Now we just need to get the she wolves to consistently rile up their mates.... the world will be a better place." Heath snorted, "I doubt that." Haley said, "Uh huh. You don't know anything Heath Scott. It's not like it's hard. Susanna said she and Lexi had fond memories, and he sped off to claim her." I laughed, "She implied there was a s\*\*\*\*i component to our living together." Haley said, "But there wasn't, and he didn't ask." I said, "That's true. I need to speak to Haley. Everyone out." Heath said, "Thanks for coming by big brother. Oh you are so welcome little sister. Your hospitality overwhelms me." I rolled my eyes, "Thank you for coming by Heath. I know no one knows the troll better than you." Heath said, "Oh, I think someone does. I just don't know who that is yet. I'll gure it out though." I grabbed his arm as he turned to leave. Heath smiled, "I'm getting mixed signals here. You say go, but you're stopping me from leaving." I said, "Be careful. He knows your moves just as you know his." Heath said, "Which is why I'm so proud you were smart enough to ask someone outside of me for help. I can't say I would've presented you with getting an apartment as an option. It's smart but it has an element of danger to it. Noah will know that I had nothing to do with the idea. It's why he will believe this is your independent streak aring up." I nodded. "Just be careful big brother." Heath smiled, "I will be. You stay safe as well." I nodded. He walked out and Ted shot me a questioning glance before I shut the door.

Haley said, "So, what's up?" I said, "I was curious. You haven't mentioned my string anymore. Or his situation you were looking to x." Haley said, "I'm being f\*\*\*\*\*g nice. It's horrible." I laughed, "Why are you being nice?" Haley said, "For Eric. Cassandra thinks it's because of her advice.... like I give a s\*\*t about that. Someone in her mind though, I'm listening to her. Even though I f\*\*\*\*\*g said BEFORE my damn meeting I was going to nice. It's somehow all because of her that I've turned over this new leaf. New leaf... The f\*\*k even is that?! I'm nice to MOST people." I frowned, "What else did that b\*\*\*\*h say now? I know there's more" Haley said, "She also said something about honey and bees. Like that makes any f\*\*\*\*\*g sense. A y would get stuck in honey and die. I told her it should be bees. Bees like honey. Plus she's f\*\*\*\*\*g wrong. Nothing is happening with me being nice. After New Year's I'm gathering everyone up. We WILL be having a chat, and I'm doing being nice." I laughed, "How soon after New Year's?" Haley said, "The next day." I laughed, "Naturally. Why give them an extra day?" Haley said, "Right? They don't need an extra day. I'm only being nice that long because of the holidays. Google says they are stressful and important. Christmas seems to be...the most stressful of all. I don't f\*\*\*\*\*g get it." I laughed, "Because you can conjure people what you want. Some people have to go to the store or buy things online. Things could be out of stock. Family comes into town. It's a whole thing." Haley snorted. "Eric's family is always in town. If I can deal with that then everyone else can deal with temporary stress." I said, "How is everything going with his brother's mates?" Haley sighed, "Molly's great."

I said, "I didn't mean with Molly." Haley sighed, "I want them to like me." I said, "I think they do like you, but I sense a but in your statement." Haley sighed, "But they hurt my feelings, and they act like it was nothing. Everyone acts like I'm overreacting, but I'm not." I said, "No, I don't believe you are." Haley said, "Thank you! I don't f\*\*\*\*\*g get it. If someone had done this to Eric instead of me.... he'd be irate. Because it's Cassandra everyone's like.... oh it's ne. You're not overreacting because of your past. Even my brothers think that. I'm f\*\*\*\*\*g not ne. Really! I know none of it happened, but she could've caused a s\*\*t ton of bad things! All in this insane notion that she controls the f\*\*\*\*\*g universe.... UGH... and I'm trying to get over it." I said, "But." Haley shouted, "BUT she acts like she did NOTHING wrong! After my mother died, she had the AUDACITY to act like I was a b\*\*\*\*h for wanting the triplets to go to the Hackura realm and be guarded by my family. She took it as some personal affront. My mother had just died, and she STILL made it about her. About what SHE wanted. No one sees that though, and I can't say that to anyone but you. What can I even say at this point? I love Cassandra because she gave me Eric. I can never not have love in me for her. She tricked me though. She made me feel part of something that I'm not. She wants some cookie cutter version of a mate for Eric, and I'm not it. Everyone f\*\*\*\*\*g says that she does love me. She doesn't though. She loves the idea of me. Some badass who can ght with Eric, but she wants a Yes person. I'm not a f\*\*\*\*\*g yes person. I say what I want and do what I want. I call people on their s\*\*t. I'm not who she wants for Eric and it hurts." I said, "I will never understand that Haley. You are everything a mother-in-law should want in a daughter in law. Honestly, there's nothing about you that is not loveable."

Haley said, "Apparently that fact that I didn't kill Arion sooner is the point she wants to

cry about. That's not the point though. I'm really trying to put it all behind me. She just

keeps walking around as if I'm the unreasonable one. She thinks..." I said, "What does she

think?" Haley sighed, "She thinks I'll come to my senses and see things her way. That I'll

say she was right. She's just f\*\*\*\*\*g WAITING for me to say she was right." I said, "How do

you know that? Did she tell you?" Haley laughed, "You can't hide your motivations from a

fairy. I also heard her over say it to Shana and Jessica. They thought I was asleep on the

couch." I smirked, "Why did they think that?"