



108 THE APPREHENSION

"Would you imagine the insult?!" Alpha Brain demanded to the other Alphas once Erik had left the room. "An underdog referring to us like we are his mates." 1

"He is an Alpha." Alpha Cullen admitted. "If you think of it in a way, he is our mate."

"Bah! Don't come here with all that silly talk of justice. He is an underdog! A sef, and whether or not he is an Alpha, who cares? So long as he is a sef, he can never be seen as an equal." Alpha Brian argued.

"Xaden is keeping up waiting." Alpha Lockwood said. "I wonder what is going on." 1

"Xaden is a barbarian. I'll tell you! He must have returned to the wild where he truly belongs and left us here." Alpha James spat.

"Xaden has left us to suffer for our deed for not stopping Bale's attack on his family." An old Alpha called Williams said. "He knows that without completing the final ritual, all wolves would be turned to mere humans, and we will suffer until the next halo festival."

"if we even have another halo festival. If that happens, the goddess might never forgive us." The high priestess said. "She would plunge us with suffering beyond words. We can not let that happen."

"Then, if he won't be present, let's find another one to participate in the ritual," an Alpha said, and they murmured in agreement.

"No." The priestess said. "You will do no such thing. I will not sit and watch while centuries of traditions are swept under the carpet. Try me if you dare!"

They all went silent.

"Xaden has completed the first two rituals. He emerged victor for the first, and moreover, he is the Alpha of the pack where the halo appeared. It is he who is to finish what he has started. No one else." She said.

They went quiet, and then reluctant murmurs could be heard through the hall.

"None of you were fit to be victor that was why he won." She said. "And so shall it remain."

"There are a few hours left till the tradition begins." The King said. "Let's see how it goes."



The Alphas were forced to be silent and agree with what the King said.

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Belle was fidgeting in her room.

"This has never happened before," Corral said.

"Maybe he is just a bit unwell," Belle tried to convince herself.

"Or maybe he is dead," Cherry drawled as she sipped her wine.

Belle gasped and Corral turned to look at her aunt.

"Why would you say such a thing?" Belle asked.

"Because it might be true," Corral said. "An Alpha who was refused to appear all day? No one has made sight of him." 1

"They said he is fine," Belle said.

"And they also refused to disclose any other information," Cherry said. "When my parents died, they hid from everyone else. Until they were ready to announce me Queen. Those were the good old days." 4

"But I saw him yesterday," Belle said. "Not as soon as our plans are getting together."





"Something is up." Corral said. "Ignore your aunt. But he isn't dead. She is just pulling your legs I'm sure."

Belle already had tears in her eyes.

How much she wanted Xaden. If anything happened to him she would go insane.

"There are still a few hours until midnight." Cherry said sipping her favorite wine. "He would appear, relax."

"What if he doesn't?" Corral this time asked the question they were all thinking.

"Then we are doomed." Cherry said taking down all the contents of her glass wine. 1

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"Enough is enough." Alexander said stepping up. "Xaden isn't coming. I will be the one to take his place." 3

"We still have to be patient." The high priestess said.

"For how long?" He barked at her. "Until it's past midnights? We only have twenty minutes left to hit midnight. The moon is at its peak."

She rose up to her feet. "You will do no such



thing!"

"Try and stop me. I'm not afraid to lose another eye in the conquest." He glared down at her.

At that moment the doors bust open and a body was flung down in the hallway.

All eyes turned to the door.

"What in the goddess?" Someone demanded.

Xaden stood tall with Erik and Damian right behind him.

"What is the meaning of this?" Alpha Brian marches to his front and demanded at the dead body of the woman.

"I see I've kept you all waiting." Xaden said. "It was with good reason."

"This is the body of a hired desert wolf assassin, sent to kill me." Xaden said and there was an uproar amongst the men. "The high priestess here can testify."

The high priestess turned to king and he nodded. 1

She walked to the body and put a hand over the body and closed her eyes.



She opened them and looked up. "He tells no lies."

There was further gasps and murmuring from the men.

"Silence!" Xaden said and they all obeyed him.

"And we have found the one who did it." Xaden said. "Guards!"

The guards appeared behind him and marched towards the crowd of Alphas who in turn backed away.

But they only went for one. Alexander.

"What are you doing?" Alexander demanded as he was grabbed and pulled all the way to face Xaden.

There was a loud uproar of shock and confusion amongst the wolves.

"Do you have proof of this claim?" The King stood up to his feet.

"I expect you to support him. But of course I do." Xaden said and he showed the payment. "This is the payment that was made to the assassin, now this could be payment made from just anyone. But Desert assassin's leave their own mark from



who they have been paid from and it's coming from no one other than Alexander." 1

Xaden tossed it to the King to see it for himself and then the wolves around peeked to take a look.

"You know what the punishment is," Xaden said.

"This is a lie! It's a witch hunt! I had nothing to do with this! Let me go! Uncle! Uncle!" Alexander screamed in rage as he was dragged away.

