



86 THE FEAST

XADEN'S POV 1

Xaden strolled to the dining hall, where all the surviving Alphas, their gammas, and Lunas were waiting for him.

He strode head-on, trying to forget what Elena had said.

She had been the one who had raised him as a child, and she had found him lifeless. She had to understand that he desired victory.

No matter the cost.

Even if it meant losing his head.

She had not done it for him well; someone else had.

That was enough for him.

He remembered how scared and hurt he was when he saw his mother being forcibly raped.

His father's head in their strategy room, their pack members, and his little sister are dead. 1



He knew that if his father had never loved them or didn't even have them all, he would have defeated him in a split second.

But Bale, his father's best friend, knew and used that against him.

He used his family as leverage to make him weak, and he still killed them after everything.

Xaden did not want that.

He didn't want to fall in love or have children because he would care for them.

He could never be vulnerable.

He could not love, but yet he cared.

There was a difference, and that was all that mattered.

He felt his chest where his heart had been ripped out and then stitched back in place.

No one knew. Not even Erik.

But they knew the consequences of being in his pack.

He would die protecting his people, and that was



it. He was loyal to them and did the most for them.

He sighed, and the doors were opened for him.

They were all dressed in their finest attire.

Rich and exquisite ball dresses of silk and valuable jewelry dangled around their necks and ears.

There was chatter as the guests spoke and laughed together.

"Alpha Xaden, Alpha of the Crescent Pack, and Victor of the Hunt Ritual!" Someone announced.

They all bow at him—even the royal family.

It was the only time the royal family could bow to him.

The only other time they did was when a wolf had accomplished an honorable act so much that it deserved a bow from the royal family.

But that was far from happening.

Xaden still hated them.

He walked to the queen, took her hands, and



kissed her.

"Queen Rose," he said.

She smiled. "Xaden. My favorite. The only wolf who can stand before my husband and disobey him."

He smiled. She was the only one he liked. She was the true queen, and the king was only the consort because he had married into the royal bloodline.

But she was frequently ill, and that made it hard for her to rule.

"It's good to see you well." He said.

"I wouldn't miss the Halo festival. Especially when it's been so long." She told him.

Then he bowed at the king, even though he did it reluctantly.

He turned to the other members.

The exiled Princess Cherry, sister of the Queen; Princess Corral, daughter of the Queen; and Princess Belle, granddaughter of the Queen herself, were the next heirs to the throne.



He kissed their hands one after the other, and when he got to Belle, she curtsied lower than the others, displaying a well-pushed-up cleavage.

He kissed her hands, and she gave him a coy and inviting glance.

She always gave him an inviting glance, and he, in turn, ignored it as usual.

He was not in the least bit interested in her.

She and the women in her family spelled trouble, and Xaden was too immersed in other issues to pay them heed.

He turned around and saw Alex standing beside them.

Alex was also a member of the royal family in relation to the King. He was the king's nephew.

Xaden gave him a dull look.

They still hadn't met head-on, one-on-one.

They only always passed each other.

"If you think I'll bow to you, you're out of your mind." Xaden said.



"I'm royalty, but I expect that from you." Alex said. "We have unfinished business."

"Are you talking about your brother? He was collateral damage." Xaden said. "I should have sent his remaining body parts to you and your entire family."

Alex's face twitched, but he remained calm. "You think you've gotten away with it, don't you? You think you have it all under control. But you have no idea what I have in stock for you. You have no idea what I have against you."

Xaden's brows pliqued with interest.

But then Erik came to his side and pulled him away.

"The feast is about to begin," Erik informed.

Xaden looked at Alex, who was grinning, and let Erik lead him away.

"That smirk," Xaden said.

"What is it?" Erik asked.

"He has something. He knows something." Xaden pointed it out.



"Who Alexander? It's just an empty threat." Erik said, waving it away. "He always makes empty threats. This isn't the first time you should know this."

"Yeah, I do." Xaden said. "But this is different. Something is just off."

Erik was quiet.

Then he cleared his throat. "He wants to get to you, and he is winning. But if you feel like he is doing more and you aren't safe, I'll simply assign some men to him to keep a close eye on him."

Xaden said nothing, freed himself from Erik, and walked to his seat at the large feasting table.

He sat at the head, where he was expected to be.

When all the wolves who were to be seated had arrived, he picked the duo

The glass before him said, "Welcome, my friends and enemies." 1

Someone choked and began coughing, but Xaden continued.



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"To the night of the feast. The third ritual is to be held on the eve of the halo festival." He said. "It's with my honor that I welcome everyone to my table."

"And don't worry." He said it with a wink. "You won't die, hopefully."



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