

CHAPTER 71

www.novE1@or.M.com

71 Lucas: Preparation LUCAS “You’re positive?” My still-smoldering cigarette is crushed into oblivion within the crystal ash tray, along with twenty of its kin. Smoke is an intrusive guest within the cramped room, swirling around the heads of both deltas standing before me. Cheap motel rooms aren’t meant to house three large wolf shifter males, but it is what it is. “Positive,” Ryder reports, cool as a f@cking cucumber despite how much is riding on tonight. The decision to invade Blackwood wasn’t made lightly. Most of the pack fought against the decision, until two more scouts were found dead at the border. And, most importantly, a witness. That one was alive, though. “Council won’t move until we bring the official petition,” Ryder continues, flipping through the notes in front of him. “Even so, Silvermoon forces near the 33:01 LO 71 Lucas Preparation border are confirmed and ready if we call for aid.” The chair creaks beneath my weight as I lean back, but surprisingly manages to stay together. “With this act of war, Council will have lost its authority, anyway.” My deltas say nothing. There isn’t much to say—the fact that an alpha is willing to say as much is far beyond their pay grade. Silvermoon has allied with Westwood, and Aspen as well, though Clayton seems to be busy hunting down his own missing mate. It’s an epidemic, and I’m positive it’s all been orchestrated by the Blackwoods to weaken the packs. @ Swaying the chair from side to side, I glance at the ceiling, thinking in between rhythmic creaks. “Ryder, head to Silvermoon. I’ll contact you if we need the reinforcements. Vester, stay with us. You’ll head off any runners from the south. Our goal is to cut off Blackwood’s head today. I don’t want this war going on for years.” “Understood.” Lighting another cigarette, I inhale deeply, letting the harsh smoke fill my lungs before exhaling a plume into the stale air. My deltas are on edge, too, but they wait for my dismissal. Their last report weighs on my mind. My elusive mate has been sighted at her family home, under guard at all times. Further, that idiot alpha brought in an Unregistered into his territory. An Unregistered... I’d have never believed one of our own could be that level of stupid. We know better than to consort with those unwilling to abide by the standards we’ve set forth in order to live in peace with humans. And yet, Blackwood is truly that much of a dumbass. He has little connection with the humans in his territory. Consorting with an Unregistered is nothing to someone who doesn’t care about the humans in their lands. Between that taboo and the witness saved after the last attack, we finally have evidence. Now, we have a reason for war. Reasons that will allow the Council to be rebuilt in the aftermath, even as I ignore all convention to declare it without their approval. I don’t have time for that shit. I can’t risk them hiding 71 Lucas: Preparation her from me. In good news, it was ridiculously easy to slide under his radar, avoiding his scouts and settling all my wolves into a city near the heart of his pack lands. They have no presence in the human cities, and no humans here are loyal to the power of the pack controlling their territory. He’s done nothing to foster a relationship with them. Even the rogues we’ve run into have been dominated with ease. No alpha worth their rank would have allowed so many to settle in these human towns, and yet Blackwood has done so, leaving threats within his border without a second thought. Sheer arrogance. It’ll be his downfall tonight. I hadn’t expected it to be quite so easy to infiltrate. their lands, but I’m grateful for it. It’s kept her safe while I finally made my move. My sweet mate. A tremor of anticipation courses through me, fueled by the thought of her being so tantalizingly close after all this time. Tonight, she will be free from her pack. 11:01 71 Lucas: Preparation And hopefully, free to choose me... But I’m not stupid. I can’t force it. If I have to, I’ll bring her back to Cedarwood when it’s safe and woo her there. I lean back in the creaky chair, letting it groan beneath my weight again, pondering our next move. The invasion plans are sound, our scouts are in position, and allies await the call to arms. But a part of me bristles at the thought of storming Blackwood lands like some mindless barbarian. There has to be a better way—a surgical strike to extract Ava without shedding unnecessary blood. My fingers drum against the armrest, a steady rhythm matching the thump of my heart. Renard Blackwood is a sly old bastard, that much is certain. He wouldn’t keep Ava close without good reason. Is there a secret behind her? Something I have yet to learn? Why else bring an Unregistered to her home? The thought of others knowing more about her than me, her mate... A soft growl builds up in my chest, and my wolf snaps at the air in my mind. He’s on edge. Impatient. He wants his mate safe. 13.01 < 71 Lucas: Preparation The plans need to change. “Vester,” I growl, stubbing out my cigarette with more force than necessary. My newest delta straightens his shoulders. “Prepare a small team—no more than five. We’re going in quiet, just you and me at the front. The rest will hang back as support. Once *ur(w)w.noVetw@rmm.C@m*

Updates... *Ww.novELworm.c@m*

Www.Mövelw@Rmm.CoM

we have her safe, the plan will move forward.” He hesitates. My deltas aren’t too scared to run their mouths, but they know I have a short fuse when it comes to my mate. “You want to go in alone? With all due respect, alpha, that’s a hell of a risk.” “I’m not asking.” My tone leaves no room for argument. “If Ava is being held against her will, a full-scale invasion will only endanger her further. This has to be clean, precise. In and out before Blackwood even knows we’re there. We don’t know what that f@cking bloodsucker did when she was brought in, either.” “Once she’s safe, we can proceed to wipe them from this world.” Ryder exchanges a glance with Vester, but both nod in reluctant agreement. They know the lengths I’ll go to for her—have seen firsthand the fire that burns within 13 01 49 71 Lucas: Preparation me whenever her name is uttered. “As you wish,” Vester says at last. “I’ll gather the team and we’ll be ready to move at your command.” I give a curt nod, already formulating strategies in my mind. Getting into Blackwood territory undetected will be the greatest challenge, but I have faith in my delta’s skills. Once we’re inside, finding Ava will be my sole focus. The image of her face flashes before my eyes—those piercing blue irises, the delicate curve of her jaw, the softness of her lips that I’ve yearned to taste for far too long. She haunts my dreams. And now, finally, I have a chance to bring her home where she belongs. At my side. In my arms. In my bed. A feral growl rumbles deep in my chest as possessive instincts flare hot and bright. My wolf howls in my head, rage shimmering within us both. She is ours, and we will tear apart anyone who dares 13.02 < 71 Lucas: Preparation stand in our way. With a deep breath, I force the wolf back into its cage, steadying the storm of emotions that threatens to overwhelm me. Calm focus, that’s what I need now. I can let the beast off its leash once Ava is safe. “Get moving,” I tell my deltas, already rising from my seat. “I want to be in position before nightfall.” They move to obey, but I catch Vester’s arm before he can leave, pulling him close enough to taste the wariness rolling off him in waves. “One more thing,” I rumble, holding his gaze with steely resolve. “If it comes down to it? If she’s harmed in any way, leave no one alive. Burn that f@cking pack to the ground. I don’t care if they’re women or children, weak or strong.” For a beat, he says nothing. Then a grim nod. “Understood, alpha.” With that, he’s gone, the door slamming shut behind him. I’m alone now, surrounded by the oppressive silence and the lingering scent of smoke, my cigarette having burned itself out after only one puff from me. My mind is a whirlwind churning with the promise of 71 Lucas: Preparation violence and the tantalizing possibility of finally claiming what’s mine. 66 Lucas guessed wrong and yet still ended up right in the end- haha Comment 25 R Post your first comment! Vote 12