

CHAPTER 90

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0 Lucas Worries 90 Lucas: Worries LUCAS Only half my attention is on the information Clayton’s passing me. The rest of it is on the bandaged little she–wolf just beyond the door. Her scent has been changing daily, and I can’t quite put my finger on what it is. It isn’t a bad change, but it’s different. Add that to the way she blew up when my phone rang, and I’m starting to get a little worried that I haven’t been around for her during such a traumatic time. She’d been kidnapped, even if it was by her own family, and then viciously attacked after trying to run away. On top of it all, she has a mate that was stupid enough to reject her. I’m sure she has no idea how much she can rely on me, and I can’t blame her for being so evasive with her affection. We’ve made progress, but I keep pushing my luck—touching her, ki*sing her forehead, sniffing around her when I think she doesn’t notice... “Lucas? Are you still there?” Clayton’s voice cuts through my distracted haze. 117 LA 90 Lucas Worries “Yes, I’m here.” I pinch the bridge of my nose, halting my pacing in the hospital corridor. My obsession with Ava is becoming problematic, but my wolf is irritated that I took any focus from my brain onto anything else. If it was up to him, we’d be glued to her side until our mating mark was a year old on her neck. “You need to focus,” Clayton admonishes, his words laced with an edge I rarely hear from him. “This situation demands our full attention.” I nod, even though he can’t see me. He flew in to help manage the Blackwood Pack, and I ditched him to see Ava in the hospital. He deserves my full attention. Clayton’s too good of a friend for me to be distracted over my personal issues. “You’re right. Go ahead.” Clayton’s voice takes on a grim quality. “We’ve received reports of increased rogue activity in the area. It appears they may be mobilizing for an attack. Renard and the entire Grey family is still missing, along with a few other players from the pack. Our scouts are of the opinion that these rogues are working for Renard in some way, and might even be connected with the Unregistered. We’ve yet to locate 90 Lucas. Worries any connections with either of them, but we aren’t done looking.” A low growl rumbles in my chest. The mere mention of Renard and Ava’s shitty family ignites a simmering fury within me. After what they’ve done to her, I won’t rest until they’re all corpses. “And Grace?” “She’s still in the hospital. All treatment has been withdrawn, and they’re keeping an eye on her. So far, she’s stable, but still in a coma. If she doesn’t wake up soon, she’ll die of dehydration before the wolfsbane gets her.” “Good.” I have no remorse over this. The bitch deserves that and more. I only wish she was awake for the pain. “How are we dealing with the situation with the rogues?” “For now, we’re trying to gather more intelligence,” Clayton responds, his tone even and measured. “But we need to be prepared to defend. The real problem, of course-” “-is internal,” I finish for him, running a frazzled hand 13:24 3/9 90 Lucas Worries through my hair. “I know. We don’t know if we can trust them not to rise against us wh

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ile we’re defending against anyone.” “There are two schools of thought. Imprison everyone, or let the chips fall where they may. There are pros and cons to both.” I growl in frustration. Yes, there are pros and cons to both, but only one of them ensures that our men are safe. To me, everyone in the Blackwood Pack is worthless. The decision is easy. “Imprison all of them. They should be grateful I didn’t raze them to the ground the first night. If anyone struggles, kill them.” “Don’t you think that’s a little harsh?” Clayton suggests. “The Council might side with you on the evidence, but they aren’t going to approve of outright tyranny and murder.” “It isn’t murder when you kill the enemy.” “They’ve surrendered,” he points out, ever the voice of reason. 13 24 90 Lucas Worries f@ck reason. I don’t care if they’re all dead. But Ava might. She’s soft, even with everything she’s been through. I sigh. “I’ll fly out tomorrow. Between us, we might get a decent idea of who the real troublemakers are.” We both excel at interrogation. “Thanks.” “Don’t thank me. I’m the one in your debt.” I frown, wondering why Clayton’s been so damn.... Weird. Almost squirrely, even. “We’ll see about that. All right. Get your ass back here so we can figure shit out. Is your... mate doing okay?” I nod, even though he can’t see me. “Yeah. She woke up this morning. She’s doing pretty good, all things considered. I hate having to leave her, though.” “Should have thought of that before you decided to take over the entire goddamn pack, Westwood.” “Shut up, Aspen.” He’s not wrong, though. “I’ll get everything settled here and let her know I’ll be gone 13.24 58 90 Lucas: Worries for a while. f@cking politics gets in the way of everything.” I pause, realizing that he’s been there for me this entire time instead of looking for his own mate. “Hey, did you find your mate?” “Ah... Yeah. Yeah, I did.” “Good.” Since he doesn’t volunteer any details, I don’t pry. We don’t do that kind of shit. “All right, man. Thanks again. I’ll see you in the morning. I need to go talk to Ava.” He hesitates a beat too long for it to be normal, and I wonder again what’s wrong with the f@cking guy. “Okay. Take care of your mate, Lucas.” He hangs up on that abrupt note, and I stare at my phone, bemused, before shrugging it off and heading -back inside. Ava’s got her face on her knees. Is she asleep? Her breathing is slow and even, but it doesn’t look comfortable. When I approach, she turns her head and I can see those oversized glasses and her giant blue eyes peeking at me through the dark blonde hair that I love. It’s like silk against my fingers. 12 20 90 Lucas: Worries +37 I hate that I have to leave her again so soon. f@ck politics. “I’m so sorry to do this, Ava, but I’m going to have to leave.” “Leave?” she asks, stunned. Her face is pale. Of course. She must think I’m trying to keep away from her on purpose. I haven’t told her any details about the takeover, about how her family and Renard ran off when they realized they were outmatched. I scratch at my hair, groaning. I have no idea how she’s going to take this. “So, I haven’t told you everything yet.” If I thought her face was pale just moments ago, now I realize how wrong I am. Every drop of color drains, and she sways despite being seated on the bed. I watch as she stares off, before suddenly taking off her glasses and putting them to the side. Is she going to go to sleep? Is this the famous cold shoulder? But then she rubs her eyes, and something glistens against her skin. 1325 78 90 Lucas: Worries “Wait a–Ava, are you crying?” Comment View All > R Leave the first comment for this chapter, Vote