

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

chapter 2

/Untouchable

1038 Words

(Caius) The rogue made the mistake of running. They always ran. It never helped them. I caught him at the tree line, my hand around the back of his neck before he had taken his third step into the woods. He was large for a rogue, well fed, which told me he had been taking from somewhere he had no right to take from. I could smell the blood on him that was not his own. He had killed recently. More than once. He twisted in my grip and snapped at me with his teeth, half shifted, his eyes yellow and wild. I looked at him for a moment. Just a moment. Then I took his head. The sound of it silenced the rest of them. There were eleven rogues left standing in the clearing behind me and every single one of them went still when they heard it. I let what was left of him drop and turned around and looked at them. None of them moved. Good. "On your knees," I said. They went down. All of them, one after another, dropping to the ground with their heads low and their necks exposed. That was the thing about wolves. When something stronger than them was standing in front of them their body knew it before their mind did. Their instincts made the decision for them. My warriors moved through the clearing, securing the ones that were still breathing. I walked back toward the center of the field and looked out at the damage. Three of my men had taken injuries, none of them serious. The rogues had lost nine before the rest surrendered. It had taken less than ten minutes from start to finish. It always did. My name is Caius Blackthorn. I am the Alpha King and I have not lost a fight in eight years. Not since the night I took the title from the wolf who held it before me, the one who thought age and reputation were enough to keep him standing. They were not. I had been twenty years old then and I had already known that the world understood one thing above all others. Strength. Not titles. Not bloodlines. Not the respect your father earned before you. Strength was the only currency that mattered and I had spent every year of my life collecting it. My beta, Zeron, came to stand beside me. He was the only man in my pack who could stand beside me without being told to step back. He had earned that a long time ago. "Six of them have been on our eastern border for two months," he said, looking at the kneeling rogues. "The others we have not seen before." "Where are they from?" "Three different packs by the scent of them. Cast out or ran, hard to say." I looked at the ones who had surrendered. Some of them were young, barely past their first shift. Others were older with eyes that had seen too much and given up trying to make sense of it. Rogues came in all kinds. Some were dangerous. Some were just lost. I did not have room for either in my territory. "Process them," I said. "Find out what they know and where they came from. If any of them have information worth having, keep them alive long enough to give it." Zeron nodded and moved off to carry out the order. I walked to the edge of the tree line and looked out at the land beyond it. The Wraithbone Pack's territory stretched for miles in every direction, more land than most packs would ever control, taken one border at a time over years of war and negotiation and the kind of violence that left other alphas thinking very carefully before they let my name come out of their mouths as anything other than a title. I was not a cruel man by nature. I had learned a long time ago that cruelty for its own sake was a waste. But I was not a gentle one either and I had never pretended to be. I did what was necessary and I did it without hesitation and I slept without trouble at the end of it because I had never once acted without reason. Every wolf I had ever killed had earned it. I heard boots behind me and turned to find my gamma, Raith, crossing the clearing toward me with a look on his face that meant news I had not asked for yet. "What is it," I said. It was not a question. "Message came in while you were dealing with the rogues." He held out a folded piece of paper. "From your council. They are requesting you make the Ashcrest visit this week. Rodan has been pushing it back for three months

and the council says it cannot wait any longer." I took the paper and read it. The council was not wrong. Rodan had been avoiding this meeting since the start of the year and an alpha who avoided his king was an alpha who was hiding something. I had let it go longer than I should have because my attention had been on the northern borders and the rogue problem that was now mostly solved at my feet. Rodan ran a mid level pack with nothing particularly notable about it. Average warriors, average land, no strategic value that made him worth significant attention. But every pack in my territory answered to me and every alpha who forgot that needed reminding. I folded the paper and handed it back to Raith. "Tell the council we leave in two days," I said. Raith nodded and walked away. I looked back out at the tree line. Ashcrest was three hours from Wraithbone territory, a small pack by any measure. The visit would take half a day at most. I would assess whatever Rodan had been avoiding, deal with it, and be back before the week was out. I turned back toward the clearing where my warriors were finishing up with the rogues and looked at what was left of the morning's work. Clean. Efficient. Done. I walked back into the clearing and got to work.