

Chapter 100

Whatever it Takes

A day after their meeting with the fae, Xavier was still reeling from their revelation. The discovery that Montgomery Bennett had been conducting shady dealings behind the Council's back was little more than interesting gossip for most of the Wolves in attendance - after all, most members of the Council had their hands in the dirtiest of dealings at any given time.

There was no reason to further analyze the unsuccessful ventures of a dead male.

But for Xavier and his father, this information was everything. There was no doubt in either of their minds who the mysterious 'M.B.' from Victor's letters was. Beneath his skin, Alexandre paced back and forth in agitation, reacting to the chaotic energy buzzing through Xavier's veins.

He was done with the revelations. He wanted action. Now. And he wouldn't be told to wait again.

"We need proof."

"No. I'm tired of waiting around for fucking proof," Xavier snapped. "Victor's been walking free for weeks even though we know what that fucker did. Now, Bennett-"

"Is dead, so there's no rush," August said, his calm demeanor wearing thin. "I taught you better than that, Xavier. Victor is a bottom feeder Omega and ours to deal with as we see fit, but Montgomery Bennett was an Alpha and leader of the wealthiest Pack in the Alliance. If we want retribution against Eclipse, the Council will insist on getting involved, and for that, we need irrefutable proof."

"Our word should be enough," Xavier said, pushing from his seat to pace around his father's office. "After the centuries our family has put into the Alliance and the hoops they made us jump through after the bullshit rogue rumors right before Sophia and Sam's murders, they owe us the time of day."

"You know that's not how it works, Xavier. The Council doesn't like disruptions to the status quo. It threatens too many private dealings," he scoffed.

"Then fuck the Council! We found the rogues they were so damned worried about. They were right under their noses the entire time. Too bad they were too deep in their own bullshit to realize it." "Look, I know that this isn't ideal-"

"No, you don't know. You've never known because you've always been so fucking content to stay in line, just like the Council demands."

August refused to react in that aggravating way he had. In tense situations, his father liked to refuse to engage until he gathered the information he needed to gain the upper hand, "Is this about that girl again?"

Xavier paused, his automatic denial drying up before it left his lips.

"Ava? You know what, yeah, it is. And it's about you, too," he said, his voice slowly rising in pitch with his growing frustration. "And the Council, and the Alliance, and the way you and I sit around and let Sophia's murderers get off so that other people wouldn't have to feel fucking uncomfortable, Dad."

"You'd best get a handle of yourself, boy."

"I am," Xavier exclaimed. "It's taken too damn long, but I'm going to do what needs to be done. Not what the Council wants me to."

"If not for the Council, then for the Pack, Xavier!" August shouted. "Did you once think about your responsibilities during this childish little epiphany of yours? I'm trying to help you, but if we get on the Council's radar, Red Moon will suffer." "Then let it suffer! We shouldn't have to roll on our backs to keep the Pack happy. They will survive." Xavier paced to the window and back. "You've never understood that, Dad. That the Pack isn't your only responsibility." August's fangs were on full display as he bared his teeth in a show of warning, "You watch your mouth. I've always done my duty."

"Yeah, maybe...." Xavier paused to rub a hand over his mouth, knowing full well that he was about to cross a line, but too over the pomp and circumstance to care. "Have you spoken to Mom lately?"

His father grew still and not in shock. It was that deathly stillness that told Xavier everything he needed to know regarding that particular subject.

"Yeah...." Xavier said, shaking his head as he made his way to the door. "Don't worry; I'll get you the Council's proof. My way."

Admittedly, it was Ava's first instinct to call Xavier with the news that she'd found what she was fairly confident was the cipher decoder he'd mentioned needing the other night. She'd picked up her phone and gone so far as to begin dialing his number before the feeling of guilt caught up to her.

It was inevitable, this feeling of betrayal dogging her every waking thought. Ava knew that she found herself straddling the line between opposing forces and, whether it made sense or not, she felt beholden to both sides.

She'd gone into Noah's office hoping to find the evidence she needed to definitively push her one way or the other - either Noah and his coupe was a dangerous threat, or it wasn't. What she'd ended up finding only further pulled her into the mire.

The information that the decoder revealed could exonerate her love or damn him. But she'd need to give the smoking gun over to Xavier to make the final ruling. And that wasn't something Ava was sure that she was willing to do. She'd racked her brain trying to come up with a solution. Even after sleeping on it, Ava still couldn't figure out how she could give Xavier the decoder without telling him where she'd gotten it. Not without outright lying, and she'd just made him promise that they'd be straight with one another from now on.

"Fuck," she muttered, cursing into the quiet, empty expanse of the place that used to feel like home.

Ava jumped as her phone rang. She almost let it go to voicemail, scared to death that it would be Noah on the other end. They hadn't spoken on the phone since her snooping last night, and she hadn't had the chance to fortify her emotions enough to lie to him yet. He was so entuned to her that he'd immediately know that something was wrong.

When she did pick up the phone, she was relieved that she wouldn't have to face Noah, but this caller was only marginally better. Even though she'd sworn not to lie to Xavier, Ava was reasonably certain that he wouldn't be able to tell if she did. And that was something, at least.

"Hello?"

"Ava, hey...." Hesitation sounded strange in Xavier's gruff voice. She was used to hearing him yell, growl, and even sigh with pleasure. But contrite was still new to her. Hell, it was probably new to him, too. "How have you been?" "Xavier...." She sighed, letting the silence do the talking for her. Not because she had nothing to say, but because she had too much.

"Right, right," he rushed on. "I'm calling because I wanted to tell you that we figured out who M.B. is. Montgomery Bennett." "H-how do you know? How did you find out?" Ava asked breathlessly.

"The fae king and queen, if you can believe it," Xavier huffed out an incredulous chuckle. "They'd crossed paths with him a few years back while he'd been trying to get a line into Axis, himself. Apparently, he'd been running a whole underground cabal out of Eclipse for years."

"So arranging a hit on a couple of teenagers and framing another one for murder wouldn't be outside of his wheelhouse, then?"

Xavier let out a shaky breath, "Exactly."

Ava struggled to focus as her head went foggy and her ears began to ring. Montgomery Bennett. Noah's father had arranged her best friend's assassination. He was responsible for her incarceration. Her thoughts became chaotic, wild accusations flinging in and out of existence as she fought to process this new information.

Is that where Noah and Neia got their plan for the Pixie Dust? What else did Noah know? Could they have been involved in the assassination?

Stop. She was being ridiculous; everything Noah was doing was seemingly to spite his father's memory....

All of a sudden, the muddled clutter left Ava's mind as the angle she'd been searching for finally appeared to her. Montgomery Bennett, may the fucker rot in hell, had ruined so many lives, but if the plan forming in Ava's mind came together, he'd stop a war before it had a chance to start.

"Xavier, what are you going to do?" She asked, a determined calm settling her nerves.

"Proof," Xavier spat. "It all comes down to a fucking paper trail. Otherwise, the Council won't care if no one can trace Bennett's wrongdoings back to their negligence."

"Then let's go to Eclipse," she said.

"Excuse me?" Xavier paused as if he were considering her idea before discarding it, "Ava, that's not an option. Least of all, because Rhys Bennett will never allow us on the premises."

"First of all, Rhys Bennett should never have been made Alpha in the first place, so he won't have a leg on when we confront him," Ava said, her mind wandering to the hidden nook in Noah's bookshelf. "And second...I have a way in."