

The Alpha's Forbidden Bite #Chapter 1: The Alpha's Rerurn - Read The Alpha's Forbidden Bite Chapter 1: The Alpha's Rerurn

The forest knew before anyone else did.

It always did.

The trees along the northern border of Ashveil Pack territory seemed to exhale that evening, their branches shifting without wind, their roots trembling beneath the soil like old bones recognizing a familiar footstep. Animals that had wandered too close to the tree line retreated without explanation. Birds abandoned their branches in scattered, anxious flocks. The river that cut through the eastern edge of the territory ran faster, as if it too was in a hurry to get somewhere safer.

Axel Bessario had been gone for fourteen months.

He came back the way he had left — alone, without announcement, without ceremony. His truck rolled through the main gate of Ashveil just past ten in the evening, headlights cutting through the dark like twin blades. He had driven the last six hours straight from the northern territories, his jaw set, his hands loose but steady on the wheel, his grey eyes fixed ahead on the road that climbed toward the packhouse like it owed him something.

He looked different.

Those who had stayed up late enough to see him step out of the truck would speak about it the next morning in low voices. Axel had always been big, tall and broad the way Alpha wolves tended to be, built by genetics and a lifetime of dominance into something that didn't quite belong beside ordinary men. But the version of him that returned that night carried an extra weight to it. Not fat, not bulk, something less visible. A heaviness that lived behind the eyes. The kind that showed up in men who had spent too much time alone with difficult things.

He was twenty-nine years old and looked every year of it.

Daren Kolt was waiting for him on the steps of the packhouse. Daren was Axel's Beta — had been since they were seventeen, when Axel had fought for his position and Daren had stood at his back without being asked. He was a lean, dark-eyed man with a habit of watching rooms rather than participating in them, and he had a face that gave almost nothing away. He gave something away now, though. Relief, mostly. Maybe a thread of something more complicated underneath.

"Alpha," Daren said.

"Beta." Axel came up the steps and stopped beside him. He looked out at the packhouse grounds — the lights in distant windows, the faint sounds of the pack settling in for the night. "How bad is it?"

Daren was quiet for a beat. "Bad enough that I'm glad you're back."

That was, from Daren Kolt, a significant statement.

They went inside.

The packhouse was a sprawling structure built into the hillside, part stone and part timber, expanded three times over the last century as the pack grew. It smelled the way it always had wood smoke and pine resin and the layered scent of dozens of wolves living close together. Axel had grown up in these halls. He knew every creak in the floorboards, every draft that came through the third-floor windows in autumn, every shadow in the basement corridor where the elders held their private meetings.

He had missed none of it.

That wasn't entirely true. He had missed the people. Some of them.

Daren led him to the war room — a ground-floor chamber with a long table, a topographic map of the territory pinned to one wall, and a second map beside it that showed the surrounding regions, dotted with markers in three different colors. Red for threats confirmed. Yellow for threats suspected. Black for territories officially declared hostile.

There was significantly more black on the map than there had been fourteen months ago.

"The Halvern Pack pushed our southern border twice in the last three months," Daren said, moving to the map. "Both times we pushed back. No fatalities, but we lost two warriors to injuries in the second confrontation. Milo Fenn is still recovering." He paused. "Halvern has a new Alpha. Younger than we expected. Aggressive."

"His name?"

"Castor Vale."

Axel studied the southern markers. "Who else?"

Daren's finger moved east. "There's been movement in the Dead Corridor."

The Dead Corridor was a stretch of forest between Ashveil's eastern border and the Voss Clan's outer perimeter. It had been neutral ground for decades — not because anyone had agreed to it formally, but because both sides had enough sense to leave a buffer between themselves. Nothing good had ever come from the wolves and the vampires pressing too close together. History had made that clear enough.

"What kind of movement?" Axel asked.

"Scouts. Ours, mostly — checking what's on the other side. But three nights ago, two of our younger wolves crossed the corridor boundary." Daren's voice was even. "They didn't come back."

Axel turned from the map.

"They're alive," Daren said quickly. "We found them at the border the following morning. Unharméd. But they had no memory of the night. Three hours, completely gone." He met Axel's eyes. "Whatever is in that corridor, it's not animal."

Axel was quiet for a long moment. The room felt smaller suddenly. The light from the overhead fixture seemed less steady than it had a moment ago, though nothing had changed. He pulled out a chair and sat down heavily, forearms on the table, eyes on the

map.

"The pack," he said. "The people. Are they holding?"

"They're unsettled. Fourteen months is a long time to be without their Alpha. The elders have been keeping order, and I've handled what I could, but there's a different kind of tension now. The kind that builds when people don't feel anchored." Daren sat down across from him. "They need to see you, Axel. They need to know you're here and you're not leaving again."

Axel said nothing to that.

Outside, the wind moved through the trees along the northern ridge. Somewhere in the distance, a wolf howled — a long, mournful sound that rose and then fell into silence. Not a distress call. Something else. An announcement, maybe. Or an acknowledgment. The forest telling the pack what it had already known.

The Alpha was home.

Whether that was a comfort or the beginning of something that would eventually cost all of them more than they could yet imagine was a question that the night did not bother to answer.

Axel looked at the black markers on the map for a long time.

Then he stood up, rolled his shoulders, and said, "Get me a full briefing by six tomorrow morning. Every incident, every patrol report, everything that happened while I was gone. I want names, dates, and details." He moved toward the door. "And Daren."

"Yes."

"The two wolves who lost their memory. I want to speak with them personally."

Daren nodded.

Axel walked out into the corridor and climbed the stairs toward the Alpha's quarters at the top of the house. He didn't rush. He moved the way he always moved with the slow, deliberate certainty of a man who had decided long ago that panic was a luxury he couldn't afford.

But his jaw was tight.

And somewhere in the back of his mind, beneath the fatigue and the responsibilities already stacking themselves against the walls of his thoughts, something else stirred. Something older than strategy. Older than caution.

An instinct that told him the Dead Corridor was only the beginning.

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.