

The Alpha's Forbidden Bite #Chapter 6: The Vampire's Arrival - Read The Alpha's Forbidden Bite

Chapter 6: The Vampire's Arrival

She arrived the following morning.

Not through the corridor. That was the first thing, the thing that changed the geometry of every assumption Axel had been constructing through the night. She came through the main road, in a vehicle, in daylight, which meant she was either bold beyond reason or deliberate beyond patience, and either answer required his full attention.

The call came from the eastern gate guard at ten past eight. Axel was in the training yard when the radio signal reached Daren, and he saw his Beta's expression shift in the particular way it shifted when information arrived that didn't fit the current model of events.

"Vehicle at the eastern gate," Daren said, moving to him. "Single occupant. She's asked for the Alpha by name."

Axel held the weight bar he'd been spotting and set it down with deliberate care. "Alone?"

"As far as Joss can tell. The vehicle is clean, no scent signatures through the window, which means either she's alone or traveling with others who are very good at containment." Daren paused. "She gave a name. Reyna Voss."

The training yard went briefly, completely silent.

Not because Axel reacted visibly, he didn't. He looked at Daren with the same calm he brought to everything, and he nodded once, and said, "Bring her to the west reception room. Full protocol." He looked around at the warriors who had gone still around him. "Everyone else, back to work."

They went back to work.

The west reception room was designed for it, high-ceilinged, minimal furniture, no weapons visible but three concealed positions for armed wolves positioned in the structure above. A neutral space built around the principle that formal meetings with potential adversaries required a room that communicated composure without communicating weakness.

Axel was there when she was brought in.

He had chosen to be standing rather than seated. He stood at the far end of the room, angled slightly, which was a deliberate choice, close enough to communicate willingness to engage, positioned enough to communicate that his space was his. He had changed from training clothes into something cleaner. He had not done anything else to prepare, which was itself a statement.

She came in without the guard touching her, which meant she had walked the packhouse corridors under escort with the ease of someone who moved through spaces that weren't hers as a matter of routine.

He watched her.

Reyna Voss was not what he had constructed in his mind during the hours since he'd seen the shape at the treeline, though he hadn't consciously constructed anything. She was tall, not dramatically, but enough that the room's proportions didn't diminish her. Dark hair that fell straight past her shoulders, pale skin that was not unhealthy but simply the particular pallor of something that lived differently than warmth-based things. She was dressed practically dark clothes, nothing ornate, nothing designed to intimidate through visible wealth, which immediately said something about her calculation. She carried nothing visible.

Her eyes were the color that was hard to name, somewhere between grey and a dark, deep blue, the color of winter water at depth. They moved around the room once, quickly, cataloguing everything with the efficiency of someone who had been in unfamiliar rooms before and knew the value of the first sweep. Then they settled on him.

She looked at him the way he looked at her. Directly. Without the performance of either deference or aggression. Measuringly, the way that two things that might be dangerous to each other looked across a room and tried to determine the calculus.

He let the silence run for a moment. Long enough to communicate that he was not going to rush this.

"Reyna Voss," he said. It wasn't a question.

"Axel Bessario." Her voice was low and even. A slight accent he couldn't immediately place, something old in it, the kind of accent that accumulated over time rather than region. "Alpha of Ashveil Pack."

"You're a long way from the corridor."

A fractional pause. "I am." No apology in it. No performance of apology, either, which he noted.

"You asked for me by name."

"It seemed the appropriate way to request a conversation with someone who holds authority." She shifted slightly not nervously, but with the deliberate ease of someone redistributing their weight in order to hold it better. "I prefer directness when the alternative is games that cost more time than they're worth."

"Then be direct."

She looked at him for a moment longer. He had the sense of being assessed beyond the physical, something that moved in the depth of her eyes like current.

"There's a faction inside the Voss Clan that doesn't honor the truce," she said. "There hasn't been for some time. The incidents at your border, the body, the scent projections, the memory-stripping of your two young wolves, those aren't sanctioned by the clan leadership." She paused. "They're sanctioned by something else."

"And you've come to tell me this because..."

"Because the faction is growing," she said. "And because what they're building toward

isn't limited to harassment of your border. What they're building toward is the kind of thing that ends the truce permanently and starts something neither side can stop once it begins."

Axel studied her. He was very good at reading people, it was one of the functional requirements of being what he was. He read the physical signals, the microexpressions, the subtle tells of breath and posture and eye movement. He had been doing it since he was old enough to understand what power dynamics were.

What he read in Reyna Voss was not straightforward.

He read truth. The kind of truth that came without performance, delivered with the flat clarity of something that didn't need to sell itself. He also read calculation, she had prepared this, had chosen her words and her approach and her timing. And beneath both of those things, something else. Something that was harder to name, that ran in the deep water below the surface information.

He filed it without labeling it. There would be time.

"You're taking a significant risk coming here," he said.

"Yes."

"The faction you're describing. They know where you are?"

The smallest change moved through her expression. "They will."

He said nothing for a moment. The room held its silence around them, the particular silence of a space between a decision and its consequences, when the option to go back still technically existed but both people in the room understood it didn't.

"Sit down," he said. He moved to the table and pulled out a chair at the near end, which placed him across a shorter distance from where she would sit than the room's default geometry suggested. Another calculation. Proximity communicated things that words couldn't efficiently carry.

Reyna Voss looked at the chair.

Then she sat down.

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