

Alpha Benedict Is Dead

I looked out at my people and took a deep breath, letting the power of my alpha flow through me. "Crescent Moon Pack," I began, my voice calm and firm, "Alpha Benedict is dead."

A rush of gasps ran through the crowd, and I paused to give them a moment. "Let's not pretend he was a kind, benevolent leader. My father was cruel and abusive. He put our people at risk to follow his own selfish designs, and because of him, many of our own have died today."

I nodded toward Emma, and she stepped up on the porch and took her place beside me. "As of today, I am the alpha of Crescent Moon Pack." The pack burst into whispers as I turned to Emma. "My mate, Emma, and I will bring our people back to their former glory and rebuild it into what it once was—a pack full of safety and support. If you wish to leave, so be it. Each council member will be subjected to rigorous interviews to determine who, if any, have betrayed our pack the way my father did."

Emma stepped forward. "And we are very grateful to Green Ridge Pack for their support in freeing your people from the tyranny Alpha Benedict brought upon you. We are happy to have such a strong friendship and will be glad to enjoy a future alliance with them."

I met Alpha Zane's eyes in the crowd and gave him a nod. "Return to your homes," I said firmly. "Care for the wounded, bury your dead, and tomorrow we will begin our work."

Emma stood on the front porch talking with her father and brother, smiling brightly as she animatedly told them about the last few weeks. "Alpha?" I turned to Leo and realized I hadn't heard a word he said. "Hmm?"

"What do you want us to do with the captains?" I sighed as I scrubbed a hand down my face. "Gather them up and put them down in the holding cells. We'll interrogate them first. I know a few who will most likely be firmly loyal to my father because he lined their pockets. They won't be happy their cash cow is gone." I turned to him with worry. "What about Eli?"

"Eli is... well... we found a body that we believe is Eli..." "You can't tell?" I asked, turning back to him fully, my mind filled with curiosity. "The body is hardly recognizable. But based on the scent, we think it's him."

"Any other scents?" Leo rubbed his neck uncomfortably. "The luna."

I spun back to glance at Emma. "She killed him?" Leo chuckled. "I think out of everyone, she deserved to be the one to do it. She showed him no mercy. He wasn't even able to shift before she took him down."

I grinned darkly. "That's my luna." Leo nodded and put his hands on his hips. "Speaking of Eli, you'll also have to start thinking about who you want as pack leadership."

I patted his shoulder. "Tomorrow, Leo. Tomorrow." Not that I really needed to think about it. I already knew who I would make my beta. Ashton had always been a voice of reason in my life, and I knew the position would drive Leo crazy.

But Leo, he would be promoted to my general, my head warrior. I knew I could trust him to protect our people with his very last breath if necessary. "Yes, alpha," he said with a wink, nodding toward Emma. "She did great today. You might want to think about having her help train the warriors."

"Who would have thought such a small woman could pack such a big punch? She has barely a scratch on her," I chuckled, thinking back to the day she had laid me flat in the woods. "Ashton said she's the youngest captain in Green Ridge. I'm not often impressed, alpha, but she's impressive. She'll be an amazing luna."

I smiled as I glanced back to Emma, her eyes filled with light and joy as she spoke with her family. "Yes, she will be." I gave Leo a dismissive nod and walked toward her, smiling when she turned to me with a beaming grin. I put my arm around her shoulder and gave it a squeeze. "How are you doing?"

"Oh, I'm fine." She looked up at me with an inquisitive stare. "You? Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," I said quietly. She stared at me a moment longer, deciding whether she would believe me or not before turning back to her father.

I offered my hand to him and was relieved when he took it and shook it firmly. "Thank you, Alpha Zane, for helping us today." "Didn't really give us much of a choice, did you?" he chuckled.

I could feel my face turn red at his words. "Sorry. I was... I was desperate." He shrugged. "I understand desperation, and I'm glad we were able to help." He glanced down at his watch before looking at Emma again. "Well, we should be heading home. We'll come back in a week or so after you all have settled in and get that alliance in writing."

I nodded and released Emma so that she could hug her father and brother. "Bye," she said quietly, and I knew she was trying her hardest not to cry. "See you soon, sweet pea," Zane said softly, holding her tightly before releasing her and giving me a firm stare. "Take care of my girl."

"Wouldn't dream of doing anything else." "Good," he muttered before jogging down the steps and shifting into his wolf. We watched as Zane and Connor led their warriors back through the trees and disappeared back over the border.

I turned back to her and gripped her shoulders gently. "You okay?" "Yeah," she sniffed. "I'm going to miss them."

"They're our neighbors," I shrugged. "You can visit them whenever you like." "I know." Suddenly I felt incredibly anxious. "You... you don't want to leave with them, do you?"

She spun around to me, "No!" "Are you sure? Because if you don't want to be here, I—" "Xaden," she said calmly, placing her hands on my chest. "I want to be here with you. Forever."

I relaxed beneath her touch and pressed my hand to her cheek. "Good." I searched her face for a moment, memorizing every beautiful line. "Tired?" I asked as I took her hand and slowly dragged her up the stairs.

"I'm exhausted," she huffed. As soon as we closed the door to our suite, I pulled her into my arms. "I'm glad you're safe. I was worried you wouldn't be, but it was very clear you had everything under control."

She winked up at me as she wrapped her arms around my neck. "Oh ye of little faith," she laughed before pressing her lips to mine. I growled into her kiss, savoring the last of her lips on mine. I frowned when she pulled away a moment later. I looked down to find her staring up at me curiously.

"Are you okay? Really?" I shrugged. "Yeah, I'm fine." "You had to kill your own father, Xaden." She spoke bluntly, as if killing my father was meant to have been traumatizing for me.

"I didn't have a relationship with my father like you do with yours," I said quietly. "I lost all respect and affection for my father when I was young. It was as if I was killing an enemy—a stranger. He did so much wrong..."

"I know," she said softly. "But he was still your father." "I won't miss him." She stared at me for a moment, searching my face in silence before leaning forward and kissing my cheek. "Let's get cleaned off."

"I don't think I can do it by myself," I whispered against her ear. She laughed as she pushed me away. "Need me to sponge bathe you, alpha?" "Most definitely."

She shook her head at me with amusement and walked toward the bathroom. "Maybe if you're lucky I'll let you help me shower off." The growl that escaped my throat was involuntary as my exhaustion was quickly replaced by desire. I followed her in just as she turned on the shower, the bathroom slowly filling with steam from the hot water.

She slipped out of her clothes before taking a step toward me. She peeled off my shirt, her hands running slowly down my chest and igniting my skin. She leaned forward and pressed a soft, sultry kiss to my lips. "Get in, you're disgusting," she whispered against my mouth.

"As you wish, Luna," I whispered back. I watched as she stepped into the shower, the water flowing down her bare skin. I removed the rest of my clothes and followed her in. I stood behind her and wrapped my arms around her waist, letting her lean back against me, her eyes flitting closed as she relaxed into my touch.

I kissed her neck, my mouth slowly traveling down her shoulder. "I told you this spot is mine," I said softly as I pressed a kiss to the spot that should hold my mark. She hummed beneath my touch as my hands traveled across her body. She turned in my arms and faced me, her arms wrapping around my neck as we stood in the water, letting it rinse off the dirt and blood that had stuck to our bodies. "All of me is yours," she said, her lips pressing to mine.

I kissed her back, taking in the taste of her as I deepened our kiss. "And I am yours," I growled back, barely able to keep my mind clear from the haze of desire she had built inside me.

I moved forward, pressing her against the cool tile of the wall. She let out a gasp at the sensation and kissed me fiercely as I pressed myself against hers.

I gripped her hips and wrapped her leg around my waist as I pushed inside her, eliciting a groan from both of us. I moved slowly, building the pressure inside both of us.

She gripped my shoulders tightly, and I could feel how close she was as I pushed into her over and over. I was barely hanging on, her body slowly unraveling me piece by piece as I thrust into her again.

We both fell over the edge together, and the moment pleasure surged through me, I leaned down and left my mark, biting down hard on her shoulder. She let out a happy moan before leaving her own mark on me.

I released her slowly and pressed my lips gently to hers. "I love you, my Luna."

"And I love you," she whispered back breathlessly.

I grabbed the soap and lathered it in my hands before slowly rubbing it down her body, taking my time to touch every inch of her skin, worshipping her the way she should be—worshipping her the way I would for the rest of my life.