

8. Leon

"Goddamit!!!"

My anger boiled over, and my stomach exploded, smashing the brick wall next to me.

I was in the alley next to the cafe, and the bright white sign that read "Lee's Cafe" shined at me mockingly.

The skin on my palms was broken and raw, and chunks of the wall were stuck in the gashes on my hands.

I lowered my gaze to the floor and leaned against the wall with my arm supporting my head.

Staring at my feet, I felt an intense rage surging through me, making my body hum violently.

If I wanted to, I could command Cora to come with me. Who's to stop me? But then, I wouldn't be any better than any other asshole off the street.

And even though I knew it wouldn't be easy, it irked me to no end how indifferently Cora treated me.

The same blasé look in her eyes was quickly taken over by annoyance anytime she saw me.

The look was so loud on her face that it was becoming harder to ignore it.

It seemed as though she had completely forgotten what had happened that night, and I had to start anew in my attempts to make her stay by my side.

All so that I could finally get her to agree to take the job offer so we'd be near each other.

Does this mean she will eventually let down the icy wall she had put up if she was around me more often? Who knows?

But it didn't hurt to try.

~::~~

I made my way back to the pack house and headed straight for my office.

The other pack members inside tracked me with their eyes as I stalked past them.

I could feel their gaze lingering on the caked-on blood covering my knuckles, slowly drying in the air.

I wasn't in the mood to talk to anyone, and I tried to make that obvious, yet as soon as I entered my office, I saw Raquel Lopez waiting for me.

She kept her back to me and never shifted an inch.

Even when I opened and slammed the door shut, she stayed rooted in place.

Raquel was an ample-bodied woman in her mid-forties, with a rich beige complexion and hair tumbling down her back in dark curls, accentuated by her navy-blue blazer.

The hue of her dress seemed to make her dark almond-brown eyes appear duller than usual.

She was seated with her right leg resting on top of her left ankle, looking graceful and poised.

As one of our council leaders, she was rarely a welcomed sight when she arrived at our door.

I slumped in my chair and leaned on my desk, trying my hardest to maintain the appropriate politeness despite being in a shitty mood.

"Mrs. Lopez," I said, "To what do I owe the pleasure of this unannounced visit?"

Raquel's red lips pursed together as she studied my bloodied knuckles.

A sigh escaped her as she turned away, deciding not to comment on it.

"Alpha Leon, I'm sure you knew this meeting would happen," she said, her body shifting slightly in her seat.

"The council and I are worried about why you have added roles to the pack without getting our approval first." She smiled slightly, the wrinkles around her mouth softening out a bit.

"As Alpha of this pack, I wasn't aware I had to run every little detail by the council. In fact, it was my understanding that when I took over the Alpha position from my father, I would have full authority over how I run my pack."

The look in her eyes hardened as I spoke to her; I could tell she wasn't accustomed to that kind of tone. But the rules have changed.

New leader, new rules.

"While you do have the authority over the pack, we as a council work together to ensure you don't overstep that authority and abuse it."

That was laughable, especially with how their track record of keeping Alphas in line has been disastrous.

I would have laughed in her face if I wasn't so irritated right now.

"And how exactly am I abusing my authority?"

Raquel set her mouth into a tight line and said, "You're not. We merely have questions regarding why you created an assistant for the Alpha position when, as far as I'm aware, there has never been a need to have one before."

I met her gaze, which was calm and unreadable.

Though she attempted to conceal it, I could tell she was having fun trying to get information out of me.

She seemed to take pleasure in analyzing my every move.

She was only a Beta council member, and I could have easily used my pheromones to make her kneel before me.

Make her surrender to my authority, but I chose not to take such an aggressive route.

I took a more diplomatic approach when it came to ruling my pack.

Glancing at her watch, she heaved a long sigh and continued. "There isn't much point in going back and forth with you over this. It's obvious that you're trying to get something going through nepotism. What we want from you is something more." She waved her hand in the air, searching for the correct word "-concrete; that can back up this new position of yours without raising any eyebrows."

A smirk crossed my face. It was obvious they were trying to steer clear of any unwanted questions.

Ignoring her advice, I firmly said, "If anyone has a problem with my decisions, they can come talk to me directly. I will gladly remind them who is in charge here."

A small huff escaped her lips as she stood tall.

Cora and she were the same height, at 5'8.

She smoothed out the wrinkles in her skirt and surveyed my office.

I remained in my seat. There was no need for me to stand and open the door for her.

She had shown up unannounced, so she could just as easily leave without asking for assistance.

Her gaze shifted back to me, and I caught a glimpse of the irritation she was attempting to hide.

"Well then, thank you so much for your time, Alpha Leon. I'm sure we'll have another pleasant visit very soon."

I countered her sarcasm with a polite smile and said, "Yes, it was good seeing you, Mrs. Lopez. Next time, be sure to call ahead, and I'll see if I can help you in."

The wrinkles around her eyes grew more pronounced as she glared at me, yet she still bowed her head before making her way towards the door.

She opened the door just a bit before glancing over her shoulder at me.

"I suppose this whole mess has nothing to do with any particular young woman, am I right?" She asked suspiciously.

I maintained my smile and made sure my eyes showed a feigned look of confusion as I answered, "Whatever do you mean, Mrs. Lopez?"

Although the confusion was fake, my question was not.

How did she know about Cora?

She shook her head, done with me, and walked out. Good.

The last thing I wanted was to thrust Cora into the spotlight, yet I had done just that.

I sighed, letting my frustration out.

Though I still intended to find Cora a place in the aide spot within the month, I was now facing resistance from the council.

A dull throb was developing in my head as a migraine grew.

I really thought we had something between us the other night, but was it all in my head? Was I just used? Was I nothing more than a fucking dildo?

A groan escaped my lips as I shook my head.

Standing up from my chair, I went to the window to try and clear the air of the strong scent Raquel left behind.

Hoping this would help restore the atmosphere in my office back to its original state.

I looked out the window and saw all the warriors in formation on the training grounds.

They were preparing for defensive battle tactics today.

Griff was surveying the area like a reliable second-in-command, ensuring everything was in order.

As I studied the trainees, my attention was drawn back to Griff, who was no longer looking at any of them.

Instead, his face was pinched, and his arms were crossed tightly against his chest.

I followed his gaze towards the fence where Gabriella stood very close to that Benjamin guy from the other night.

He wore an eye patch where his left eye should have been; I was sure the rest of his body would heal, but the eye was gone for good.

I exhale angrily, remembering the moment he tried to touch Cora.

He's lucky that's all he lost.

I should have chopped his dick off. Keep it as a souvenir, or maybe send it back to him when it's too late to reattach it.

Gabriella angled her body toward him, wrapping a lock of her auburn hair around her finger.

She gazed up at him with a beaming smile as if whatever he was saying was pure gold.

Like the goddess herself came down and personally presented her with a gift.

I looked back at Griff, who was stroking his chin thoughtfully as he looked them over.

I couldn't understand why Benjamin and Gabriella were suddenly so chummy with each other, but he should have been out practicing, and she had no actual reason to be out there.

Benjamin moved closer to Gabriella and touched the strand of hair she was winding around her finger.

He whispered something in her ear, which made her giggle in response.

I'm not gonna lie; seeing them together was kind of weird, especially since they were such an odd couple and had never spoken before.

Still, it wasn't my place to decide who someone else could or couldn't be friends with.

Although Griff's reaction left me anxious, this was lookin' more and more like a tomorrow problem.

Yeah.

Let's just leave it for tomorrow.