

Chapter 78

"Hell, I nearly forgot. Right. Liam has everything under control for the most part. Ranaïld and Elise showed up at the den this morning. Ranaïld is apparently his own jailer and Elise spent the morning telling Liam what happened to her and trying to convince him to advocate for Ranaïld when you get back. Apparently, when Elise was being held there were a significant number of others being held as well. I'm gonna guess that there's a scary correspondence between the guys you dungeoned before we left and the women who Elise has reported as being held."

Cullen nodded gravely. "Maybe I can talk to Jenna. Who knows. We might be able to reach an amiable solution and get Jenna to let them all go. It appears as though the Tairneach have allowed her to step in as alpha without too much complaint. With Gregor dead that gets her main opponent out of the way. She may be willing to back off and just be happy about being able to follow in Brennus' footsteps. As far as Ranaïld goes," Cullen growled. "I better spend some time with Aislinn before dealing with him. He's lucky things worked out. If she had been permanently hurt or had left me, I don't know if I'd be able to reason my way around a very painful death for him. As it is..." Cullen had to stop what he was saying. His wolf was pacing in his mind like a caged beast and wanting to go charging back to the den.

Keith nodded. "Who all is going back to Madadh-Allaidh Saobhaidh now?"

Cullen leaned against the wall. He was watching for the omega to return with clothes for Aislinn. "If we're going to have to go on a rescue mission then we'll need all the betas. But I'm still thinking I may be able to talk Jenna out of having another fight right now. Let's leave it as me and Aislinn and I'll take Sarah along. You stay here and get things ready for if we have to go charging in to get the rest of ours out of there. But I want to try talking first. If we leave within the next half hour we can be back at the den by dinner. Taigh-Oèsdà," Cullen said with a nod. He was in the mood for steak. Keith shook his head and laughed. "If you want to get the satphone out and call the den around 10 tonight I'll make sure that either myself or Sarah is able to answer."

"Yeah, I'll call Sarah."

With that the omega came back carrying jeans and a t-shirt similar to the ones Cullen had shredded earlier. The omega bowed her head and disappeared down the hall. Keith watched the girl walk down the hall. "I wonder how Jay's doing. I hate not being there but she's been getting so bitchy the closer she gets to having the liter. I swear she's gonna kill me for nothing. And," he stared at the omega's butt as she headed down the stairs. "I'm so damn deprived right now it's not funny." He looked back at Cullen who was grinning and laughing to himself as he headed for the door. "Yuck it up now alpha boy. Just wait til Ais is pregnant and you're not getting any. We may have to clear the den if you're behavior now is any indication."

Sarah was waiting in the great room as Cullen and Aislinn came down the stairwell. Keith had let her know that she'd be leaving with them to head back to the den. She would have to deal with the reorganization of room assignments depending on what Cullen decided to do with the traitors. He still wasn't sure. Every time he thought about it a pain hit him in the stomach and he thought about grabbing Aislinn and taking off and not dealing with it at all.

As Cullen walked up to Sarah to see if she was ready to go Gaven and Hagan approached them. The two men looked cowed and miserable. They were both bowing more than usual and Cullen instantly got a bad feeling about it. How many of my men did he get to!

"We were hoping that we'd be able to go back to the den with you. We'll accept whatever punishment you intended for the others. We're the last of the men in the pack that you've been looking for." Cullen's jaw tightened. The gaze he leveled on the men was pure death. "We just want to be there when you bring the others home." There was a tear in Gaven's eye that overflowed and ran down his cheek. [www.W.nOvrê@w@rm.com](#)

Aislinn could almost feel the man's misery. She was the only one present who knew how hurt Cullen was by what was happening in his pack. Between how unhappy the traitors were about failing their leader and how unhappy Cullen was about believing the pack didn't trust or want to follow him, Aislinn was feeling inundated by miserable emotion from all angles. Considering she had her own lot to carry the last thing she needed was additional outside baggage. She sighed. Cullen, this isn't your fault. Rafe did this. It doesn't mean-

Don't, Cullen violently thought back at her. You said that he couldn't do things to them that they weren't inclined to do. Cullen's eyes never left Gaven and everyone in the room was holding their collective breath to see what would happen. The alpha's eyes flashed with fury.

Aislinn butted her head into his shoulder and reached for his arm. Her actions in the face of Cullen's stance caused a murmur of amazement through the room. The consensus being that she was either incredibly brave or stupid.

Aislinn tried to send comfort to Cullen. Rafe had their mates and loved ones. Everyone in this pack is very close. They're all inclined to save their lovers. You came after me. It doesn't mean that they were inclined to turn against you. It means they were inclined to do anything they needed to in order to save their mates. You've made this pack to be close and caring of each other as well as loyal. Are you really going to hold that against them and berate yourself for it?

You're not going to turn this around, came a growling thought. Aislinn knew which half of Cullen was talking.

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She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Do you really expect your men to behave differently than you do? You set quite the example Lord Arnauk. Drag your entire pack out here, knowing you were outnumbered, no plan, and all because Rafe had someone you loved. How many bodies are on the pyre?

Cullen growled and ripped his arm away from her. She could feel how deep her comment had stung him. His glare shifted from Gaven to Aislinn and there was more than one elder in the room that took note of the far too meaningful eye contact between the two.

Aislinn didn't even flinch. She released him. I wasn't trying to hurt you. Just make a point. I love you Cullen. I may well have done the same thing. And each of the so-called traitors were doing exactly what you did. You're hurt because you were left out of the secret and they are all your friends. But who do you expect them to love more? You or their mates?

You don't know how a lycan pack works, Cullen growled.

Maybe not. But we're dealing with hearts here. Not packs or logic.

Cullen was pacing back and forth. There was a strong part of him that agreed with her. But that left them where? He couldn't just let it go. And the wolf would never be able to let Ranaïld go. He had to do something. He was just so pissed.

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Sarah came over to Aislinn. She spoke very softly. "You two are being watched."

Aislinn looked over at Sarah and then around the room. "He was going to tear them apart where they stand," she whispered.

"That may be so. But as it is, all anyone saw was you both sharing an intense gaze and Cullen acting strangely. With all the mind control stuff going on with Rafe and you being an unknown around here. Do you know what that looked like?" Sarah was speaking cautiously. She didn't want anyone standing by to overhear. If they weren't already thinking it she didn't want to give them ideas. [Ww.W.NoveℓW@rm.cm](#)