

Repercussions

A FEW DAYS LATER

I led a contingency of warriors from ten separate packs, including my own, as we crossed the border into Dark Moon's territory.

It hadn't been hard to get the other packs to agree to disbanding what was left of Huxley's legacy. Stealing a future luna had been the final straw.

We walked straight into the center of town without seeing a single wolf. But they were there. We could smell them.

"Are they seriously not going to come out?" Oliver questioned through the mind-link.

"I guess not," I replied. "I'll go ahead and deliver the decree anyway. This should be a good enough spot. It's fairly central."

He nodded his big shaggy head as I shifted and retrieved some clothing from a bag strapped to one of the warriors. I dressed and took a few steps forward.

"Wolves of Dark Moon!" I bellowed, my voice booming through the air. "I am Alpha Caelan Kendrick of Harvest Moon. By order of the coalition of alphas, the Dark Moon Pack is hereby disbanded. Alpha Huxley is dead and Beta Hadwin has been deemed unfit to lead. Those of you who wish to surrender peacefully, please do so now!"

The sound of doors being cautiously opened could be heard echoing all around us, and we stood poised for any and all possibilities.

"What will happen to us if we surrender?" called a male wolf as he stepped out from beside one of the buildings.

He was slightly older with dark hair, watching us with suspicious eyes as he stood with his arms outstretched to protect his mate and several pups who huddled behind him.

I held my hands out to show I meant no harm. "Those who cooperate will be given a chance to join one of the nine packs who have agreed to take in refugees, or you're welcome to petition another pack of your choosing for membership."

"You won't banish us and make us rogues?" a she-wolf called, her voice coming from somewhere in the slowly gathering crowd.

"We are offering this one chance to receive our help in integrating into a new pack," I answered. "You can make a better life for yourselves. But trust me, there will be no second chances. Those who don't take this offer now will be deemed a rogue."

They quietly murmured among themselves as I waited with bated breath. As much as I wanted the end of Huxley's rule, I didn't want to cause further harm to any of the innocents that had suffered under his hand.

One brave wolf finally stepped forward. "I don't know what you're all hesitating for," he shouted to his packmates. "Alpha Huxley was a terrible alpha, and Hadwin hasn't been any better. We've been kept in the dark and locked within our own homes with no explanation. I for one won't allow my family to suffer any longer."

He reached into the crowd and beckoned to a she-wolf with fair hair. She stepped forward, clutching a young pup who wasn't even a year old. The boy's hair was even paler than that of his mothers, the downy locks white as snow.

The trio approached us with caution, the male's dark eyes dancing between myself and the warriors around me. I met him, my hand outstretched.

"Thank you for having the courage to come forward," I said.

"Thank you for getting involved. This nonsense has gone on for too long," he replied as we shook. "My name is Ferguson Valen, rank sigma. This is my mate, Ruthi, and our pup, Ethan. We have family with the Tidal Moon Pack."

"It's nice to meet you, Ferguson. Thank you again for your cooperation," I offered, turning to the warriors behind me. "Is there a representative from the Tidal Moon Pack?"

A large black wolf stepped forward.

"These are the Valens," I explained. "They have family in your pack."

The wolf nodded its massive head, leading them off to the side.

As they passed, the young boy watched me over his mother's shoulder, his messy white hair blowing in the wind. He grinned, waving his chubby little hand at me before they disappeared from view.

I smiled, turning back as more wolves stepped forward. *They'll be safe now. Little Ethan can grow up in peace.*

I paused outside my sister's cell, trying to collect myself as I prepared to face her. I had finally come to speak with her, hoping she could at last see reason.

Thunder Moon is gone, and Dark Moon is disbanded. She has no one but me. This is her final chance to see if we can be the family our mother always hoped we'd be.

I nodded to the guards, stepping inside as they unlocked the door. She'd caused nothing but problems, and I had hoped that some time alone in the cells would give her a chance to reflect on the error of her ways. But if anything, it only seemed to have made her angrier.

She glared at me as the door closed, the sound of the bolt sliding into place loud in the tense silence.

"Are you finally happy, Shade?" she spat, her words full of venom. "I have nothing left! That's what you always wanted right? To make me like you?"

"Sunny," I sighed, shaking my head. "You know that's never been what I wanted. I've always looked out for you. Always wanted what was best for you, but you can't seem to get out of your own way."

"You don't deserve to be a luna, Shade! You don't deserve to be happy!" she shrieked. "You destroy everything you touch! Just like you destroyed Thunder Moon! Just like you destroyed Mom! You will be the ruin of Caelan and his pack!"

"Enough, Sunny!" I barked, my voice booming off the concrete walls. "I will not tolerate this any longer! I've tried and tried with you, but you can't seem to see reason. I can't do it anymore."

I let out a disappointed sigh. *I hoped this would go differently. Hoped that maybe she'd realize that all her scheming and hate has been a waste of time and energy, but it doesn't look like she'll ever change. I won't do this with her anymore. There are others I have to protect.*

I placed a hand against my stomach, praying to the Goddess that my future twins would have a very different relationship than the one I had with Sunny.

"You can't speak to me that way!" she screamed. "Who do you think you are?!"

"I am the luna of Harvest Moon," I said, my voice sharp and authoritative. "I was hoping we could have a civilized conversation for once, but I can see that's not going to happen. Sunshine Mallory, you have been stripped of your title and rank. You are now a rogue."

Her face fell as I motioned for the guards to open the cell.

"In the morning, you will be taken to the edge of our territory and banished," I said, turning to leave but pausing. "There was a time I would've given my life for you. I would've done anything it took to keep you safe. Not because I owed you. Not out of duty or guilt. But because I loved you as a sister should."

I glanced down at the ground for a moment before looking back at her thunderstruck expression.

"It didn't have to be this way, Sunny," I reminded her. "You have no one to blame this time but yourself. Once you cross that border tomorrow, I suggest that you never return."

She screamed obscenities as I walked out of the cell, the door slamming shut with ominous finality.

I held my head high as I continued down the hall and up the stairs. Nothing she said mattered to me any longer. She had made her choices, and now she would have to live with them, for better or for worse.