




Chapter 8: Ultimatum

Benedict

I have no idea what possessed me to kiss Sloane, especially when her uncle was right there. But now that I have, I want to do it again.

The look on her face was priceless. I think making Sloane Hartwell speechless is my new favorite pastime.

I lick my lips on my way to my car. Honey. She tastes like honey. It's a perfect taste for her. It's sticky and messy but fucking delicious. 

I grin as I get in the car. "What are you smiling about?" Bethany asks.

"Nothing."

"I heard Sloane Hartwell went off the deep end today," she says as I pull out of the parking lot.

"Don't listen to rumors, Beth. They're usually full of inflammatory statements meant to get a rise out of people."

"So she didn't put four she-wolves on their knees, two of whom were from our pack?" she asks.

"She absolutely did, or rather her wolf did. But she had cause."

"I figured," she says, sitting back and looking out the window. "Those she-wolves are going to cause problems though."

"That would be a big mistake on their part. I will not tolerate bullying in my pack."

She turns and looks at me. "It's not your pack yet though, is it?"



"One month, little sister."

"A lot can happen in one month, Bene. Don't be surprised if they run to mom. Everyone knows that she's not a fan of Sloane and Slade." 1

"Why are you a fan?" I ask, honestly curious.

"Slade is nice. He's not pompous like most Alpha heirs. Maybe it's because others torment him, but honestly, I think it's just who he is. I like him."

"Compassionate is the word I used for Sloane today," I say thoughtfully.

"Yeah. Maybe that's a better word. They have more compassion than most."

I think about what Sloane said to me earlier, that she shouldn't need my help because we, as wolves, should treat each other as equals. Her words struck me because as wolves, our packs are based on a hierarchical structure. But I understand it in terms of not bullying others just because you think you are better than someone.

As soon as we walk in the door of the packhouse, my mother pounces.

"Benedict, a word!" my mother says.

"Told ya," Bethany mouths at me before ducking out of the room.

"Benedict, what is this I hear about you punishing our young she wolves? Eight hours of patrols for a month? That is excessive. It is unacceptable. You will revise that to two hours of patrols for the next three days," she says.

"No, I will not," I say, setting my bags on the dining room table before turning to face my mother.



"Excuse me? You are not Alpha yet, son."

I lean over, tired of my mother's hypocrisy. "And you have never been Alpha, Luna," I say, stressing her title. 2

"How dare you speak to me like that. I will be speaking to your father."

"Good. Have that conversation with him. And if he decides to overrule my decision, then he can explain to Alpha Roman why the two members of our pack, who were bullying his niece, only got six hours of patrols. Are YOU ready to have that conversation with him and Luna Samara? Because I'm not. I gave a suitable punishment for behavior that will not be tolerated in this pack, by anyone," I say, holding her gaze.

"Benedict, do you hear this?" my mother says. It takes me a moment to realize she's talking to my father, not me.

I turn and look at him. My father is tired. He's ready to retire and my mother harping like she does only makes him more tired.

"It would be our two she-wolves' word against the word of Sloane Hartwell," my father says, sighing.

"See?" my mother says, glaring at me.

"Except, I gave them the Alpha command to tell me what really happened AFTER they lied to me so they wouldn't get in trouble. And the entire student body heard them say that they were bullying Sloane. Honestly, mother, I am inclined to double their punishment because they came crying to you. How utterly inappropriate. Since they had no problem lying to me, I'm guessing they lied to you as well," I say, turning to my father. "Is this the kind of pack that the Winslows are breeding these days? Because if it is, I want no part of it. Override my decision or not. That's your prerogative as the Alpha. But I will NOT answer to



Roman and Samara Hartwell if you override my decision. Don't forget they will be here tomorrow night. I would consider that before you make your decision." 1

"The Hartwells aren't as powerful as everyone believes. They have very few allies. If they were to go against us, we could call on our allies and take them out," my mother says.

"Do you hear the words coming out of your mouth, mother? You're willing to go to war rather than punish a couple of she-wolves for their misbehavior? And I will remind you that Alpha Roman may not be allied with many packs, but he owns three packs that are managed by his people. He is allied to Alpha Waylon, our neighbor, whose pack strategically straddles the north and south and he's allied with Alpha Will in the south. Alpha Will's father may not have been the most powerful Alpha in his time, but the alliance with Alpha Roman has made Will much more powerful. You'd both be wise to remember that before you go starting a war that we can't possibly hope to win."

I turn, done with this conversation. I take three steps before my father's voice stops me.

"Benedict!"

I don't turn around.

"Your decision stands," he says.

I turn and look at him over my shoulder. "Thank you, father."

I walk out, hearing my mother's blustering complaints until my father's anger gets the better of him and he booms at her to stop.

When I get to the Alpha floor, my sister practically tackles me.



"Well? What happened?"

"Dad sided with me."

"Well thank the Moon Goddess that one of them still has some sense. I swear mother is getting worse."

"I don't know what her problem is with the Hartwells, but it's time for her to retire. She's definitely not acting like the Luna she's supposed to be."

The next day is chaos. Everyone is preparing for the party that will have every important person in the werewolf world here at our pack.


By four o'clock, I'm in my perfectly pressed suit, ready to be the perfect host. Personally, I hate these events, but they are necessary and my mother *LOVES* hosting them.

On my way downstairs, I stop by Bethany's room. She's standing in front of her floor-length mirror tugging on the elegant dress that makes her look older than she is.

"Ugh! Why do I have to go to this?" she grumbles.

"Because you are the daughter of Benedict and Beatrice Winslow and because you, my sister, are going to be a hot commodity when you come of age in a few years."

"Great. I'm like a fucking cow at auction," she growls, yanking on the offending dress again, before turning away from the mirror.

"You're much prettier than a cow," I grin. 

"You're lucky I love you," she grumbles.



I stop her as she steps out of her room, stepping back and looking her over.

"You look lovely," I say seriously.

"Thanks, Bene. I'm sure you already know that you look panty-droppingly hot." She rolls her eyes. "I'm sure that's ALL I'll hear about all night tonight."

"Ahh, the agony of being a fourteen-year-old she-wolf," I say dramatically, pulling her hand into the crook of my arm. As feisty as my sister is, I know she's nervous and I know it will help her to walk into a room full of people with me beside her.

"If anyone bothers you tonight, you let me know," I say quietly as we walk down the stairs. Everyone in the great room below us looks up to watch our descent.

"Thanks, Bene. You're the best!" she whispers back.

"Let the chaos commence," I say as we step into the fray of people who all want to speak to me, convince me to support them in something, or fuck me.

What a fun night this will be.



Cooper author

Well, Beatrice is a piece of work!



192

