Chapter 35

A/N
How did you all like the cliffhanger? Were you all surprised that this defector turned out to be a woman?

Happy reading!

Jonathon Lancaster

I was six when Patrick was born. I remember hearing my mother scream from behind the door, and I had to be held down by my father when I repeatedly tried to get to her. The screams lasted all night, and it seemed the whole of Lightwing was in a standstill as their queen cried out in agony.

Then, suddenly, the screaming stopped.

And, there was crying.

A small, shrill wail from an infant. My father pushed me inside the room, and I saw my mother give him a bundle wrapped in white. My mother beckoned me forward and for the first time, I saw my little brother.

"His name is Patrick." My mother said, sweat and tears all over her face. I tested the name out in my mouth. It felt strange to say.

"He is your little brother. You will protect him, Jon." The sound of my father's voice was faint, I couldn't hear her through the loud beating of my heart that seemed to echo in my ears.

"I promise."

I held the bundle for the first time and saw sleepy, grey eyes looking right at me. I repeated the promise in my head; it was the first promise I had ever made in my short time on Earth.

Over the years it became harder and harder to keep my promise. Patrick was blessed to grow up without shouldering the kinds of responsibilities I had. I saw him grow into a strong, intelligent wolf who did his duties to the best of his abilities. But there was also a gleam of mischief and rebellion in him. He was reckless, sometimes foolish, but I was always by his side.

I feared for the day I would no longer be able to protect him. I never thought it would come.

My little brother, my eighteen year old brother, had claimed a mate. This was no ordinary mate—this was a woman from across the border, a woman who braved the elements, and, fearing death and persecution, decided to aid the enemy.

It wouldn't take long for word to spread about her actions. Wolves were territorial creatures when it came to members of their pack and family. The rogues would see this as an affront and will soon be out for Patrick's blood.

And Patrick...

"How could he be so stupid?" I hissed, putting my arm against the wall.

"Jon, you're going to have to control yourself. You can't blow up on him when he gets here I'm sure..."

"WHY NOT?" I roared, causing Serena to flinch. "Goddess, I always knew Patrick would mess up but this...this is just.."

"Jon, you know that's not true..."

"Isn't it? He should've never gone on that mission! He could've damned us all!" I growled.

"What's done is done. Patrick knows he made a mistake..."

"I doubt he knows the ramifications of his actions!" I punched the wall, causing the lights to shake.

"PRINCE PATRICK IS HERE!" A flustered Darien opened the door and ran away abruptly. Serena sighed and walked past me. I followed, keeping my face schooled in anger. When we arrived at the foyer, my father was also there.

For the past two days, my mother had been too heartbroken to leave their room.

The doors opened and I breathed in Patrick's familiar scent. His hair was a bit longer and his face looked haunted. He was holding someone's hand—a woman. Her scent was unique—a scent that hadn't been smelled for the past quarter century: the scent of a rogue,only intermingled with Patrick's.

She was thin and frail, with pale cheeks and shoulder length blonde hair that looked like it was cut with a blunt knife. I noticed she was wearing his clothes—a black shirt that drowned her small frame and loose sweatpants that were being held up by tightly wound drawstrings.

From the corner of my eye, I saw my father look down in disappointment

"Smell that? Rogue." I said through gritted teeth. Serena narrowed her eyes and looked at me angrily.

"I smell a defector who risked her life for your war so show some damn respect, Jonathon." Serena hissed.

When they were a few feet in front of us, they bowed and my father motioned them to stand up. My eyes shot straight to the girl's pale neck and sure enough, there was Patrick's fresh mark. I looked at Patrick's neck and saw the girl's mark on his neck as well.

Patrick comfortingly put his arm around her and nodded at her encouragingly. Her lip trembled, but she took a deep breath and spoke

"My name is Valeen Vanaheim, I am a princess, the daughter of the Rogue King Vanir Vanaheim, and I am here to offer you help."

Her voice was high and sharp, croaking slightly but strong nonetheless. She had a strange accent with strong R's and shortened vowels.

A princess?

"Vanir Vanaheim? From the Moon Keystone pack?" My father growled.

"You knew my father?" Valeen asked, her eyes widening.

"He was a Beta, banished for murdering his Luna." My father bluntly said. "You are his daughter?" Valeen nervously looked down.

"She is my mate." Patrick growled. I snarled at him.

"Vanir Vanaheim won't look to kindly on his daughter defecting South of the border." I growled, keeping eye contact with Patrick. "He's going to take this as a declaration of war. Do you realize what you've done?"

"Yes. I've marked my mate."

"Your mate? You hardly know her!"

"And you knew Serena how long before you claimed her?"

"She's not a rogue."

"Don't call my mate that!"

"Stop it, both of you!" Serena cried, standing between us.

Silence followed.

"Besides, even if I hadn't marked her, it wouldn't make a difference." Patrick grumbled.

Are you kidding?

"You don't understand, do you? No! You never think about the consequences of your actions! You've made yourself into a target! Rogues will take one look at that mark on your neck and think you've taken their princess! It's gonna be hard enough trying to hide her, now I have to hide you too?" I shouted.

"I'm not asking you to hide me! I will fight them! I will go north and fight them all!"

I chuckled humorlessly at his statement

"There is no way I'm letting you go North, not when you're the biggest target. They will try to take her back, and their king will demand your wolf's head on a spike!"

"I will not allow them to take my mate! I love her!"

"LOVE? What do you know about love? How about your love for your people? And my love for you, brother? You threw it away the moment you claimed her!"

At my words, Patrick's eyes narrowed and he stepped back in disbelief.

"Jon, just stop! You're not making things any better!" Serena cried, putting her hands on my shoulders and pushing me back. I stilled, startled

Father was still silent.

Of course. It's always up to me, isn't it?

Silence followed. Valeen began to tremble, wringing her hands nervously. She looked like she was about to faint.

"If you're worried they'll come after us, then I'll fight this king myself." Patrick solemnly said. I scoffed

"Patrick, you can't..." Valeen started, but my growl silenced her. Patrick held her protectively.

"What do you know about fighting? You've never killed—the scent of blood isn't on your hands." I spat.

"Patrick, you will not be fighting anyone." My father suddenly said. We all quieted, looking at him. "Jon, you have prepared for war your whole life. Nothing has changed."

Fuck that.

"You're wrong, father. They will think we've given them just cause to attack. They will use this..." I motioned to Patrick and Valeen. "To rally together stronger. We're no longer on the offensive, they are. Everything has changed." I growled.

"Then we will fight. I did not bat an eye when you killed an Alpha to claim your mate, and I will show your brother the same courtesy." My father stoically said. I laughed in disbelief.

"And the tribunal? We have just started getting their trust back from the Alpha Theodore fiasco! This will divide us all even more!" I roared.

"We will fight the tribunal as well, and any other who seek to destroy our family."

I chuckled in disbelief, running my hand frustratedly through my hair.

"Forgive me, father, but you won't be the one fighting. The only thing you're good at is pushing your problems to me. You did that with the rogues, and now you're doing it with Patrick and his mate."

"DO NOT BE DISRESPECTFUL! I AM YOUR KING!"

A tense silence followed.

"Then lead the damn war because I'm sick and tired of it." I hissed, my tone emotionless. I turned to walk away.

"Jon, come on let's talk about this..." Patrick tried to go after me but Serena cut between us.

"Patrick, you need to let him cool off." Serena said. She gulped and glanced at my father, then Patrick. "We all need to cool off. Get your mate rested."

Serena stepped towards Valeen. Valeen was an inch taller than Serena, yet her head hung down shamefully, hidden by her hair.

"I'll go over to your room later and bring you some clothes...until you can get your own." Serena said, putting her hands on Valeen's shoulders. Valeen looked up at her, confused.

"It's good to meet you, sister." Serena gently said, giving Valeen a kiss on both cheeks. I growled under my breath and looked at Serena, who in turn gave me a withering look. She said nothing, walking past me towards our rooms. I hung my head and grumbled, following her.

When the door shut behind us, I opened my mouth to explain but she put a hand up to silence me.

"You did enough talking out there earlier. Sit." She said, pointing at the bed. I sighed and sat down, putting my head in my hand.

"Mind telling me what that was all about?" Serena asked. "You gave...quite a performance."

I glared at her. Wasn't she supposed to be on my side?

"None of them. None of them know how much responsibility is on my shoulders. They think it's so simple—yeah, we should just go and fight like nothing ever happened! Good idea!" I scoffed.

"Jon..." She sighed, sitting down next to me and taking my hand. "First of all, you're not alone in this. I'm here, ready to share your burdens. Second, I need you to wrap your head around the fact that there's no turning back now. Patrick has a mate, and if he's anything like you, he's not gonna give her up."

"I know that! It's just..." I groaned in frustration. "Why did he have to go about it like this? If he really wanted to mate with Valeen, he could have waited until the ceremony—it's only weeks from now! We could've added her to the roster!"

"The same could be asked of you." Serena said. I growled. "Look, I'm not saying what he did was okay. That girl's probably grown up traumatized and I don't think she was even in the right state of mind to consent. But...but I need you to think about Patrick."

"Probably all I ever do is think about Patrick." I grumbled.

"When I first got here, who was the one person who didn't give you flak about Alpha Theodore and mating me? Who managed to stop you from killing Clayton? Patrick! Patrick's the only person who has been on our side this whole time—the only other person I trust in Lightwing aside from you. Right now, he doesn't need the war general Jonathon Lancaster. He needs his big brother Jon." Serena said, putting her hands on my face and looking me in the eye. I looked at her helplessly.

"Every move I make towards the rogues, I open my family up for danger. Now Patrick's just gone and put himself right in the middle of the conflict!"

"I know that, love." Serena sighed. "But you need to hear him out. Patrick isn't stupid. He knows what he did, and I'm sure he knows the consequences. I mean, look on the bright side. At least Alpha Jason didn't figure out that Valeen was a rogue. That could have spelled trouble. You have to give Patrick props for that."

"Alpha Jason didn't smell the rogue scent because Patrick's mark covered it up." Realization dawned on me. "That's why he marked her, isn't it? All that love he claims to have is bullshit!"

Serena gasped and took a few steps away from me, as if she couldn't believe I said those words. She clenched her fists.

"Jonathon Lancaster, don't you dare accuse your brother of marking a female under false pretenses!" Serena cried. "If he claims to love her, then he does."

"*Love?* Serena, he bound that *poor woman* to him for eternity! My order was to get the defector here safe at *all costs* and yes, maybe I should congratulate him because he did just that! Give me a break! Patrick's not in love! What does he know about mating?"

"And you were such an expert when you claimed me!" Serena snorted. "You know, Jon, I'm sorry. We're not all perfect like you. Patrick made a mistake, but I know him. I've seen his heart and it is good and pure. He did this mission so you could be proud of him, and you just broke his heart. Just...if Patrick says he loves Valeen, then he does."

"I'm not going to apologize for being the voice of reason here."

"I'm not asking you to. I just want you to *listen* to your brother. He's not a kid anymore, Jon. He's a man mated and claimed."

"And Valeen?"

"It took you one day to decide that you wanted to claim me. Patrick and Valeen journeyed together for almost a month. Don't look down on their mating because Goddess knows those two have been through a lot as well."

Silence followed. I looked at Serena. She walked to the closet and put a few clothes inside a backpack. She then gathered spare bottles of shampoo and feminine hygiene products. She made her way to the door.

"Where are you going?"

"To give my new sister some clothes." Serena said. She glanced at her watch and bit her lip. "In two hours, the war council will convene to hear what Valeen has to say. You and Patrick need to talk before that. I'll tell him to wait for you in your office. In the meantime, I'll be spending time with that poor girl."

"Damn that war council." I growled. "We should leave, Serena. Leave and join the human world and let them rot."

"Is this about you telling you father off?" Serena rolled her eyes.

"This is all his fault." I shook my head. "I knew it was, I just didn't want to admit it out loud. Captain Desay, Alpha Apollo, and your father...they're all right. He's not fit to lead."

"So why'd you tell him to?"

"I don't know." I sighed. "I was angry, and tired of doing all the work. Why the fuck does it have to be me?"

"Because the people *chose* you, Jon, and that crown is yours. You're our leader now. You're king in all but name and you're going to face that war council and lead us to victory."

King.

"I'll see you later." She said. I watched as she walked outside and closed the door behind her.

I stood up and walked over to the adjoining study. To the corner of my eye, I spotted a small picture frame on the table. It was a picture of Patrick and me back when I was sixteen and had just finished with my Evaluation. I was holding my wrist up, showing off my gold bracelet and he was looking at me with such admiration.

The truth was, my anger for Patrick had already dissipated. The cause of my anguish was frustration. Now that Patrick was right in the heart of danger, the stakes were higher.

I also knew that the war was going to be sooner than expected.

I give it two weeks tops 'til we're all up north.

I began to strategize. If Vanir Vanaheim declared war on us first, then the wolves would demand that Patrick return Valeen. They'd see the trade as a way to avoid the inevitable, but I doubt the rogues would stop attacking if we returned the poor girl. Patrick made it clear that wherever she went, he'd follow. If that happened, I don't know if I would be able to protect my brother.

The solution was simple.

There could only be one possible outcome from the war council this afternoon: a declaration of war.

But...

As per the laws of the Tribunal, only a King had the authority to declare war. If my father declared war, he would be admitting that his edict to banish all the rogues was ineffective. My father wouldn't declare war. His pride as an Alpha male would be wounded. There was only one solution.

There was only one way war could be declared.

I needed to become King. Now.

A/N
Whew. What an intense chapter. It was great seeing the Patrick-Jon dynamic boil over. I took inspiration from the Hector-Paris narrative from the Trojan war.

The title of the sequel will be: **The Alpha's Solterra**. It will be set during the war, and will focus on the relationship between Alpha Adam and Liesl Solterra. Jon and Serena will be featured as well, but merely as supporting characters. More on this later on.

Don't forget to comment and vote!

Continue to next part