

Chapter 32

Zander's POV

I really screwed up.

As I try to rehearse my apology in my head, Kane mind-links me.

"You need to see this."

I curse but make my way to the pack house and slowly walk into Kane's office. Today feels never ending but it's just getting started.

Kane glances up at me, frowning while he gives me a once over, but doesn't say anything as he gestures for me to look at his screen. My bets are on him receiving the same email I did earlier, but I realize that isn't what this is as I narrow my eyes at the picture.

"What the hell is that?"

"You know Jack from IT?" He asks and I nod. "An alert came up on his computer from that the drone he sent out a few weeks ago."

Jack is crazy good with technology and hacking into software programs. Even though it's extremely risky, I asked him do some recon over the Fae kingdom to see if we could figure out what they might be planning. They hardly use technology since they have so much magic at their fingertips and hacking into their computers seemed pointless. Instead, he flew a drone over their land, but I wasn't sure if it would turn up anything useful seeing as the the pictures taken would be from a high elevation to prevent being seen. This doesn't look like a normal picture though.

"What are those red spots?"

"We don't know. Couldn't get a clear images since we were so far away so he switched over to infrared mode and captured these. This was from a few ago and this is now." He clicks a few times to bring up different images.

It looks like hot spots are popping up all over the place, spreading and growing as time goes on.

"We need to figure out what's happening. Send some men out to investigate."

"I did last week. They haven't come back."

"Dammit." I bite out.

For the first time ever, Kane looks nervous as glances at the pictures on his computer.

"What is it?"

"Jack thinks they might have made some sort of nuclear bombs, probably out of magic, and they seem to be growing stronger. If we wait till the blood moon, I'm not sure we'll have chance, Zander. No matter how great our armor is."

The blood moon isn't that far away.

"I'll leave tonight." I say even though it's the last thing I want to do. It will take me nearly a week of travel between getting there and back and we need all the time I can get.

As I pack my bag, Nicola is passed out on the bed and my heart clenches when I notice her swollen eyes. I desperately want to talk to her and sort things out, but I'm afraid I won't have the strength to leave her once we make up.

"I love you sweetheart." I whisper as I press a kiss to her cheek and leave.

It took me a few days of travel on foot till I reached the Mountains of Karnikey, where the Fae kingdom lies, and it's been a little over a week since I crossed over the borders of the ECHO pack. I've been setting up a temporary camp each day, making sure never to stay in the same place for more than 6 hours and my keen eyesight and hearing has allowed me to catch bits and pieces of daily activities that go on inside the kingdom. I've been following Rand's movements for the last 5

days, but have yet to learn anything new about the cold ruthless bastard. He's a fearful ruler, as most scatter and scramble to get out of his way when he walks by, and his punishments for simple mistakes are cruel and unforgiving.

I've tried to search for signs of a mate, or a weakness, but have come to the conclusion that no one could love the cold hearted monster and he probably doesn't have one. His hard face carries a permanent scowl that only ever changes to pure rage when someone angers him, which is often.

My feet move carefully across the rocky, cold ground as I crouch low behind a large boulder. I've masked my scent as I move through the kingdom to ensure no one can sense a wolf lurking around. It's been hard to pick up on any details about the upcoming war or to listen in on conversations between Rand and his men, and I've yet to see any of the bombs, figuring they're probably hidden somewhere underground. His castle is heavily guarded and most of his talks and meetings are secretive and held inside.

I've slowly made my way to the far eastern side of the land and started to notice how the scenery and mood has begun to change. Greenery and small cottages are scattered throughout the area and it looks like this is the one place in the kingdom where life thrives. Small voices are heard up ahead and I look to see a large 10 acre clearing with children scattered all the way up to the age 16. Some are playing games, while others wrestle and are rolling around on the ground. My eyes fall on a boy with jet black hair who seems to be around the age of 7.

He helps a smaller boy, who looks a few years younger, off the ground and proceeds to walk behind him. His hands grab each of the boy's wrists as he shows him where to place his fists. Continuing his way around to the front of the kid, he moves his stance so he's more balanced, with slightly more weight shifted to his back leg. I realize that he is trying to teach the child self defense as they both go after each other again. Watching the older boy take down the other quickly was no surprise to me since he was already much larger. However, I was surprised when another, nearly twice his age, stepped up to take his shot.

The fluidness and efficiency of the young kid's movements were incredible for someone so young. At first he toyed with the older one, letting him think he had a chance, but after a few minutes he quickly made his takedown. I stared in awe as the child continued to teach the others how to improve their technique and fight properly.

Shifting deeper into the trees that lined the clearing, I watched as the child walks over to a small stream to grab a drink. Looking around, I noticed there wasn't anyone within 75 yards of him. The little one intrigued me so much, there was no way I could stay away from him any longer. I had to talk to him and started to walk over as he cupped water in his hands to bring to his mouth.

"Hello" I said trying to keep my voice soft so I wouldn't startle him but he still jumped.

"You scared me." He says giving me a wide smile that showed his sweet innocence.

"I'm sorry buddy, I didn't mean to. I was just watching you fight out there and noticed that you're quite good." I smile back at him.

"Thanks you!" He beams proudly.

"What's your name?" I ask him.

"Locke." He gives me a suspicious look. "You're not a Faerie are you?"

"No I'm not."

He begins to shift uncomfortably as if I might harm him.

"But I promise I'm not here to hurt you. I was just passing through when I saw you and wanted to tell you that I was very impressed. It shows a lot about ones character to be patient and teach others with less skill. You're going to make a great leader someday."

The smile he gives me doesn't quite reach his eyes. "Who are you?"

I smile down at him before my focus is quickly adverted to the clearing. The mood seems to have shifted as kids stop playing and have gathered nervously in groups along the tree line, heads turned towards the

ground.

"I gotta go," Locke says quickly as he runs out to the clearing.

I move back further into the surrounding trees and squat behind a bush as I watch the boy stop in the middle of the field. Kids have started to whisper to each other as their eyes shift to a man walking out. His gaze is hard and searching and I suck in a breath as I realize who it is. Rand.

The air is thick with fear and tension from the others as he scans the area looking for something. Or someone. His eyes finally catch sight of what he's been searching for and I see his features soften.

I haven't seen that kind of emotion from the man since I've been here and I follow his line of sight to see Locke. The boy waits for him to approach until they both stand within just few inches of each other. He looks up to him with an oddly calm expression as Rand reaches out to ruffle his hair.

"Why do you keep insisting on coming out here son?" His voice uncharacteristically soft.

Son?! It feels like the air has been knocked out of my lungs. Never in a million years would I have guessed that he had a child, especially one like him. The charming kid not only had me captivated, but also seemed to have the only piece of the Fae King's heart that wasn't dead and cold.

"Because they need me dad." His voice is slightly sad as Rand tugs him away.

I know my sole goal for this trip was to find the King's weakness, but I can't do this. There's no way I'd be able to harm the child and live with myself at night.

I continue to watch the two as they walk away, waiting so I can scope out the rest of the kingdom. Rand lifts his head to gaze over the small bodies who have all frozen to watch him. His eyes continue to scan and once they reach my direction, they stop and narrow in suspicion. After a few seconds he places a hand on his son's back, turns, and leads him away.

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 +30 Vouchers

I watch as they start to fade away and chills prick my skin when I see him shoot one final right at me.

Chapter Comments



 Watch Ads to Get 8 Vouchers

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