

Chapter 37

Zander's POV

"It's time," Kane says as he walks into my office.

I nod to him. "I'll be there soon."

I get up and head to the bedroom where Nicola is. When I walk in, I can see her standing by the window. Her fingers grip the edge of the sill to help her stand and she doesn't turn to look at me when I enter.

"Nicola..." I whisper softly and her body tenses.

Her shoulders start to shake as I walk over and I can tell she's crying once I reach her. I pull her close to me, tucking her head underneath my chin.

"Please don't cry my love," I murmur into her hair.

"I just- I want to be there with you." She sniffs. "I don't want to be stuck in here not knowing what's going on. Not knowing if you're in trouble or if you'll come home again." Tears start to darken my shirt as she cries and it breaks my heart.

"I'll be fine. I need to know that you're safe while I'm out there or I'll be too distracted. Plus, you're not in good position to fight right now." I try to give her a small reassuring smile.

"I can't live without you." She stares up at me, eyes glistening.

"Neither can I." I tuck a piece of hair that's fallen into her face back behind her ear.

We look into each other's eyes for a minute and, as though she's found the answer she was looking for, she gives me a quick squeeze and releases me.

"I love you." She says as she takes a step back, allowing me to leave.

"I love you with all my heart." I say to her and start to walk out of the room.

"Zander." I hear her call out as I go to pull the door closed and I stop to face her. "Come home to me okay?"

"Promise." I say before I finally head down the hall.

I meet Kane and Rivers over on the training field where all the warriors are lined up in formation. Each man is wearing their set of armor, specifically fitted for them and I rake over the large group of about nearly a thousand men.

These aren't just any warriors, these are ECHO warriors. The best of the best. Ancient Lycan blood runs through each male, making them superior to the average werewolf in every way. Not only are they larger, but they're naturally stronger, faster, and able to process high intensity information quicker. When you add in the extensive training that everyone goes through, you realize that each man is a lethal weapon all on his own.

"Warriors!" Everyone turns their focus to me as I yell out across the large area. "Today is the day we've all been training for. Tonight is the blood moon and we will once again face a long time enemy who has continued to threaten and kill our own." I gaze out across them before speaking again. "Enough is enough! It is time to show them that we will not lay down, we will not surrender, but we will fight, and we will win."

They start to cheer with approval and I can't help but let the corner of my mouth go up at the enthusiasm.

"We are marching into uncharted territory and there is a lot of unknowns ahead of us. I don't want anyone shifting until I give the okay. This-" I beat on my chest plate "is the one advantage we have that they are unaware of. We need to take full advantage of it and catch them off guard when the time is right."

I get a booming 'aye Alpha' from each man and I nod as I continue.

"We're all in this together. We have a lot at stake so never forget why we're doing this. A man once said 'A true soldier fights not because he

hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him.' so for you and the one I love, I will fight till the death!"

The warriors start to roar with enough force to shake the ground, sending chills down my arms. We are ready.

"Let's go." I say to Rivers, giving him the okay to lead our men towards Karnikey.

We begin our march with the men staggered in phases. Rivers leads the first phase of about 250 men while I'm a quarter mile back leading the second phase of about 300. Kane leads the largest group coming up the rear a quarter mile behind me. In case something goes wrong, I don't want us all to walk into a blood bath at the same time. The distance gives us enough time to change plans if needed, however we're close enough that I can mind link both of my men since each are the same distance away from me. This formation also gives us the advantage of surprise.

Rand doesn't know what he's dealing with this time. The werewolves were unprepared and unskilled in the last war and once we got our shit together, our numbers lacked greatly. When the first wave of soldiers come in, he'll be expecting that as our entire army. Little does he know, there's more where that came from, way more.

It's mid afternoon when we decide to stop for a break and recharge. There's a large barren clearing about ten miles from here that marks the halfway point between our two kingdom and I'm expecting that to be our battle ground. I plan on letting the guys rest for a few hours and traveling the rest of the way at dawn, even though I know it would be easy for them to make this trip all at once.

Kane and Rivers meet me in the middle so we can discuss the game plan further. I tell each of them to grab one warrior from their group to send up ahead and scout the area before we continue to march forward.

Most are sitting around, talking, and checking gear while we wait for the sun to set. There are still two hours before dusk when I see the scouts come running back to camp, worried looks on their faces. I quickly jump up and jog forward to meet them.

"Alpha, Sir." One bows his head.

"Yes?"

"We ran up ahead to the clearing and scouted the area. There's a large trail of footprints a mile East that looks like an army had already moved through. The footprints can't be more than day old."

I freeze.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes sir." He points the the other two guys. "They can confirm."

I look at them and they both nod in agreement as one steps forward to speak.

"If I had to guess sir, I'd say the footprints are from around 4 hours ago. They must have marched right by us a few miles East on the way here. They purposely took an indirect route so we wouldn't run into them."

My body freezes and my wolf spins around anxiously with the news. They had to of used magic to shield themselves for us to not notice this and if this is what really happened, Rand is marching his army right into our kingdom. Our practically unguarded kingdom. I left less than a hundred warriors behind to watch over things but there's still a couple hundred innocent civilians that live in the ECHO pack. It would be a complete slaughter if they reached the kingdom and not only that, but my mate was there.

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

"If what you're saying is true, we don't have time for me to go verify. I'm trusting that what your telling me is accurate." I give him a pointed look to let him know what we have a lot at stake here.

"I understand sir, I'm confident in what we've said." I can see the pride in his eyes and that's enough for me.

"Alright everyone listen up! I've failed as your leader and have brought us all to a dead end. Our enemy is on the way back to our kingdom and has a head start on us. Fortunately for us, they have taken an indirect

route to avoid being noticed and it will take them much longer to reach their destination than normal. If we turn back now and stay on the path we came, we might have a chance of catching up to them.*

To my surprise there is no anger from anyone. Kane and Rivers relay the same information to their groups and we all quickly pack up before marching back. We double the pace home in an effort to shave off time, but for me it still feels too slow. All my wolf wants to do is shift and sprint as fast as we can back to our mate to ensure she is safe, but I can't leave my men behind.

I send a prayer up to the moon goddess ,hoping that we'll be able to make it back in time.

Chapter Comments



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