



220 LOYALTY FOREVER

Xaden looked at Erik. "Jasmine is someone of whom I am afraid. She scares me because even without my heart, my feelings tell me otherwise." 1

"Who said you could not be with her?" Erik asked. "I've fallen in love I would do anything to have her back. I carry the pain of what happened to her but never have I ever said I would rather have my heart taken away. The pain is what makes me alive. It makes me remember her, makes her alive in me. So much that there is barely any pain in here."

And then Erik pointed at his own chest. "I will not give up my memory of the life I lived for any other reason."

"She is a slave," Xaden said. "You know I could never. She is beneath me."

"But you married her, did you not?" Erik asked.

Xaden's face changed. "You know that I had to."

"Perhaps all of this happened for a reason," Erik said. "Every single step and action happened for a reason."

"Why do you even support her the way you do?" Xaden asked with a frown. "Is there something that perhaps I should know?" 1



Erik felt insulted instantly.

Xaden knew that since his wife had died, Erik had been with no one at all and then he regretted his choice of words.

"I apologize for saying such," Xaden said, genuinely sorry.

Erik said nothing, and then he turned to his best friend and Alpha.

"Even if you go, if you insist then we will all do it together." Erik said.

"What is our mortality rate?" Xaden asked with a weak smile. "Do we even know what we are facing?"

"All I can tell you is that tomorrow is going to be a big day ahead of us. But we will do it together. Why do you think we are all here? Because we are loyal to you, even if we die, we will die for you."

Erik raised his fist and held it firmly to show his solidarity.

Xaden was not even sure of what to say.

He was overwhelmed by the acknowledgment of the fact that he had men who would die for him.

He felt that he did not even deserve to have such positive and loyal subjects.



He was their leader. He was the one who was supposed to protect them not the other way round.

Then Erik said. "So you assure me that we go together? As a pack."

Xaden sighed and finally gave in. "Yes, I do."

Then they turned to go back towards where they had made camp.

"Wait Xaden," Erik said, stopping him.

Xaden turned around and saw Erik taking off his shirt.

"What are you doing?" Xaden asked.

Erik pulled it over his head. "The men can not see that you are badly in pain or they will vote against you going after the antidote."

In rare instances, wolf pack members were allowed to vote against their Alpha.

If the vote was over eighty percent of the total hundred, then the Alpha could be usurped or whatever decision regarding the vote would be implemented instantly.

Xaden knew how his men were, and they would most likely vote that he not go because of his injuries.

Erik handed him his own shirt and then Xaden



collected it. 1

"Thanks." Xaden replied as he wore it.

"You welcome." Erik said with a smile and together they both went to where they had made camp.

The men had brought in a creature and were trying to decide if it was similar to an animal or not.

"Good goddess." Someone whined. "That is what you found for us to eat?"

Owen that had been the one to bring in the meat frowned and said. "Come on it is not THAT bad. Just look at it. It looks like a rabbit and.... Uhmm.... Er some sort of bird."

"What is that thing spewing from it?" Lyon said, picking at the dead carcass with a stick.

"It is its blood, I believe," Rowan said, looking at the blue blood spilling from where they had cut it down. 2

Lyon had to suppress the puke that was erupting from within.

"Hey it is not that bad." Rowan said. "And it is what we could find. If you feel you could find something better then why do you not go ahead yourself?" 5

The men began to grumble.



"What is with all the fuss, men?" Erik asked, getting into the middle of their argument.

Xaden went and sat down to watch his men in their drama.

"They asked us to get something to eat," Owen said.

"Which we did." Rowan chipped.

"Bloody, yes, we did. And this was what we found. No one has any idea how terrifying it was to find our way into that Godforsaken wilderness believing anything could kill us at any moment." Owen said.

"And we had to kill it! Imagine how hard that was and now look at the men asking what type of meal we brought in?" Rowan added hyping up his partner.

"You bet we did!" Owen joined.

"You brought us poison," Elyon added.

Then, the men erupted into another huge argument.

"Hey hey," Erik said, coming in between them.

"That is a rawscal. Similar to what I would say is a mix of a rabbit and a very ferocious turkey. Very hideous and the last animal you would want to eat."



Lyon and the other men nodded at Rowan and Owen. "You see now."

"But," Erik said, cutting them short. "Very delicious nonetheless."

Then Rowan and Owen started cheering themselves. "We told you." 2

In the end, they sat down at the fire and ate the meal together.

No one wanted to admitted that meal was actually great.

The men chatted and ate together, trying to forget what lay ahead of them by tomorrow morning.

Erik and Xaden sat down together, and Erik handed him a piece of the meat, and Xaden accepted a sign of him accepting that he would remain with them.