

Tereshan

Last night spending time with Claire and Damara was better than I had expected. Magnor was the happiest he's been in, well, since before I rejected Claire over a year ago.

It was strange seeing Magnor and Damara interact together. When Magnor had wanted to spend time with Damara, she had been present at first, but over time, her presence had gotten weaker, so most of his interactions had been with Claire. Then, with everything happening, we hadn't been able to spend time with her at all. However, both Magnor and Damara had been clear that I was not welcome in their time together. And, I have to admit, the difference between Magnor before spending time with Damara and after was significant.

So, I wake up this morning, not only I warmer than I was yesterday since the heat was fixed, but I'm also feeling stronger because Magnor is stronger. I can't wait to get to warrior training. This I know how to do. This I will excel in and hopefully then, they will see that I'm not an omega. Then I can confront Claire and tell everyone that she's a fake.

Magnor snorts in my mind. 'They might not care. She's

already making positive changes in our pack that everyone can see.'

'Big deal. She fixed a couple of appliances and demoted a Gamma. So what?' I ask him, heading out to the field.

'It's more than you ever did.'" He says when both of our attention is drawn to Dane and Claire, leaving the gym. Claire is panting noticeably. Great, it won't take long for others to begin questioning her strength. Which gives me an idea.

She follows Dane over to the warriors and Roman comes walking up, looking sleepy but he's here. Did he always come to warrior training in the morning?

'No, he usually slept in like you.'

'So, what's he doing here?'

'Trying to make sure his lazy ass doesn't get demoted like Ivy?' Magnor asks snarkily.

Dane steps up to address the warriors. "I'm sure everyone knows what happened yesterday with our Gamma rejecting his mate. It will take him a few days to recover. Until then, I'll be running morning training sessions. Beta Roman, thanks for joining us." He says acknowledging Roman.

"Yep." He says and I can tell he's still half asleep. Roman's a strong Beta though, that's why he's my Beta. Even half asleep he'd be able to take on any of these warriors, with the possible exception of Dane.

"Alright, let's break into groups of two. I'd like a warrior matched up to an omega." He says.

Now's my chance, and I step up. 'Tereshan...' Magnor's warning growl is low and I have a second to recognize that it's stronger than it was yesterday. Don't worry buddy, it'll be much stronger soon enough.

"Excuse me, Warrior Dane. I'd like to be matched with our Alpha." I say, looking at Claire and giving her a smug smile.

Instead of fear, I see arrogance and I narrow my eyes.

"You think you can defeat me, omega?" She asks me, her voice full of condescension. I hear the snickers of the warriors around me.

"Claire, what are you doing?" Vivienne asks from beside me. I hadn't even noticed her approach me.

I step away from her. "I'd like to try." I say, drawing on all my confidence. Her confidence is throwing me. I know she doesn't know how to spar. She's never trained a day in her life before today.

"Wouldn't you prefer to start with a warrior and see how you do?" She asks.

"No." I say arrogantly.

Suddenly, I feel a body behind me. "Alpha, would you allow me to show this omega the error of her ways?" Roman asks.

Claire nods and I turn to face Roman. I've sparred with him hundreds, maybe thousands of times over the years. I know exactly how to defeat him. This will be a piece of cake.

Everyone steps back, giving us room. I take a defensive stance and so does Roman. "When you're ready, omega." He says and I leap at him.

I swing my arm in a move I know he'll counter before I make my real move to punch him in the stomach. However, I didn't account for the difference in my body size. My feint doesn't draw him off like it should, and he easily counters the real move, blocking my punch to his stomach, before landing a backhand to my face, sending me to the ground. What the fuck. That fucking hurt.

I stay down for a moment, catching my breath. "Learned your lesson, omega?" He taunts me.

I push myself up. I need to account for the

considerable difference in our sizes. However, I'm not used to fighting larger opponents. I'm used to being the larger opponent.

This time, I take a defensive stance and reassess my moves. I'm a smart fighter, I just need to rethink how to get to Roman. I know his weaknesses. He doesn't have many, but I know what they are.

"Whenever you're ready, omega." He says again. I ignore the swelling on my cheek that I know will be an amazing bruise later today.

I leap, working to get closer to him this time before making my move. He swings his arm around to knock me in the head again, but I duck, landing a hard punch in his inner thigh. The move should have brought him to his knees, bringing his face closer to mine so I could punch him, but it doesn't. My punch doesn't even appear to have phased him.

Instead, a moment too late, I see his fist heading for my gut. The punch sends me flying and I land, unable to breathe. It takes a moment, he knocked the wind out of me, but finally my diaphragm relaxes, and I suck in much needed air.

Roman's arrogant face leans over me. "Did you want to try again, omega, or are you done?"

"Done." I cough out, rolling to my side, feeling like I'm

going to throw up. Roman's fist was so large that his punch not only hit the bottom of my chest, but also most of my stomach. I slowly get up, having trouble standing up straight because of the bruise that I'm sure is forming on my stomach.

"Alright, show's over. Find your pair."

"Warrior Turner." I hear Claire call out. Turner is the asshole from the cells.

"Yes, Alpha."

"Switch with Warrior Jesiah." I look up, realizing that Jesiah was set to spar with me. Warrior Turner was set to spar with Vivienne. I can only imagine that Jesiah will go easy on Vivienne, while Turner was already clear that he's planning to hurt me.

I watch as a nasty smile spreads across his face.

"Warrior Turner?" She calls out again.

"Yes, Alpha?"

"If she ends up in the hospital, I'm holding you personally responsible. You're the expert here. Use your knowledge to ensure that you don't break any bones or kill her."

The smile drops from his face. "Yes, Alpha." He

grumbles.

Dane starts with basic defensive moves. Turner makes sure to tag me every time it's his turn and by the time training is done, I feel like my entire body is bruised mess.

'What was that about excelling in warrior training and letting everyone know you aren't an omega?' Magnor says.

'I don't understand, Magnor. Why is this happening?'

'You're an omega, Tereshan. The sooner you realize that the easier this will be for you.'

Fuck that shit. I'm not a damn omega.

Claire

Training with Dane was enlightening. He started me on the same defensive moves that he did with the group of omegas that just happened to include Tereshan. The difference is, in this body, my reflexes are faster, I'm stronger and my body has muscle memory.

He trains me for two hours before we head out to the training grounds. Dane had warned me that Tereshan would probably challenge me. He had also told me that Roman, being my Beta, would stand up for me and I should let him. So, I did.

Part of me struggled to watch my little body get battered so horribly. But Tereshan's arrogance had to be knocked down. He seems to think he's an Alpha in an omega's body. He's not.

After training, I head up to my room to shower. Feena will be meeting me for breakfast in 30 minutes, giving me plenty of time.

I jump in the shower, my mind on the multiple things that I want to accomplish today. I need to remember to tell Feena that the blankets are arriving today. They will need to be washed so every omega can have a

new, large blanket tonight. I also need an inventory of the furniture needs, sheets, and I need to find out if the warriors are also lacking in supplies. I need to find out if Ivy was responsible for.....

I stop. I hadn't been paying attention, washing Tereshan's large body as I was thinking. But the minute that my hand moved to his penis, it hardened in my hand. I look down and see it pointing straight up at me.

'Damara?'

She begins snickering at me. 'What are you going to do with that?'

'I don't know.'

'Stroke it again.' She says and I do, almost unable to stifle the moan of pleasure. Goddess above, that feels good.

'Keep stroking it, see what happens.' She encourages me.

The soap on my hand makes the motion easy, my hand sliding easily up and down the shaft.

'What's that coming out of the tip?' I ask her.

'Sperm, I think. But what do I know, we've only ever

had that one experience with Tereshan and it didn't feel like this. Wipe it off and see if it comes back.'

I swipe my thumb over the tip of his penis and nearly drop to my knees it feels so good. I slap my hand against the shower wall and begin stroking faster, making sure to slide over the tip.

'Damara, something's happening.'

'Don't stop, this feels really good.' She says.

I continue until I feel like a rocket shoots off in my body, a cry of pleasure leaving my mouth, sounding like deep guttural growl. I look down and see a creamy white liquid shooting out of the tip of the penis. I continue stroking until it's done, feeling the contractions throughout my entire body.

'Is that what an orgasm is supposed to feel like?' I ask Damara.

'I don't know, but we're definitely doing that again. Soon.'

'Good thing we're in the shower. That made a mess.' I say, using the shower head to wash it off the wall and down the drain.

'Do you think it's because he's a man, or because he's an Alpha that it was so easy?' She asks.

'No idea, but I'm with you, we're definitely doing that again. Soon.' I tell her before finishing my shower and getting dressed for the day. I notice almost immediately that I feel much more relaxed than I did when I entered the shower. Bonus!

I have breakfast with Feena, letting her know about the blankets for the omegas, asking her to take inventory of the rooms and let me know what we need to order. When I ask, she doesn't know any more about the warrior's rooms than she did about ordering supplies. I make a note to ask Dane and possibly Roman. If they don't know, I'll have to dig around in Bryson's office.

"Has anyone seen or spoken to Bryson?" I ask her.

"I took a tray of food to him last night, Alpha, but it was untouched this morning when I went in to give him a breakfast tray. He was in bed and barely acknowledged my presence."

"I'll visit him later today and check on him."

"That would be good, Alpha. We all do better when our Alpha is near us, supporting us. Which reminds me, that was very kind of you to take Vivienne on as your personal omega."

"She's very good, I'm just sorry I never recognized it before."

She looks down at her food.

I give her a minute to collect her thoughts. When she looks up, I see her resolve. "The omega, Claire, she's in a lot of pain after training today."

"Yes, she challenged me then thought she could best Roman. He showed her the error of her ways and then she actually had to train."

She looks down again. "I would like your permission to give her some pain medication, Alpha."

I raise my eyebrow at that. Feena has never discussed pain meds with Tereshan to my knowledge.

"Don't you and Dane usually take care of that, Feena?" I ask her and her head whips up.

"You know about that?"

"You both take your role as caretaker in this pack very seriously. It stands to reason. But I appreciate you trusting me enough to finally bring this to me. Do I need to speak to the doctor at the pack hospital to ensure we have enough pain meds to help the omegas in warrior training?"

She sighs in relief. "That would be wonderful, Alpha. Without those meds, I'm not sure how we could continue to get all the work done. Even Vivienne is

hurting after her workout and she said she was paired with Jesiah, who I know went easy on her.”

“Some of this will be helped with a good diet, Feena. But I leave it to you and Dane to decide when and how much pain meds our omegas need. Just be careful that we don’t end up with any dependency issues.”

“Yes, Alpha. If it’s okay with you, I could go to the pack hospital and speak to the doctor to make sure that we don’t overdose anyone.”

“A great idea.” I go to the phone and dial the hospital, letting the doctor know that I’m sending Feena over and they are to discuss medication management for the omegas while they are training.

I sit back down, finishing my food and coffee. “Have you and Dane worked out the training and food schedules for all of the omegas?”

“Yes, Alpha.”

“And how does that impact your ability to get the work done?”

“We’ll get it done, Alpha.”

“Feena, I don’t want to add to your workload, but without a Gamma female, I have no one to manage the packhouse.”

"I know, Alpha. I'll figure it out. I may just have to ask you for things as they come up."

"You wouldn't have to if I made you acting Gamma, Feena."

"Acting Gamma, Alpha?"

"Yes. You would manage all aspects of the packhouse. You would be in charge of ordering food, making sure the rooms have sufficient furniture and bedding and letting me know if there are any problems. I would put you in charge of all of it, Feena, if you want the job."

Her eyes go wide. "Yes, Alpha. It would be my privilege."

"Don't get too excited, Feena. It's a lot of work if it's done right."

"I won't let you down, Alpha."

"I know you won't. Your first act as Gamma is to make sure our rooms are stocked properly. Your second act will be to attend my meeting with Alpha Keegan in two days."

Feena's smile could brighten a cloudy day. "Yes, Alpha!"

****Trigger Warning: sexual abuse**

Tereshan

After warrior training, I somehow managed to still do the work assigned to me. I was ready to hear the omegas complaining about being sore, and it was obvious that they were. But more than feeling sore, they were excited. The ones that had yet to participate wanted to know what it was like, if we felt like we'd learned anything.

"It was so exciting." Vivienne says. "We learned defensive moves. I'm not good at it yet, but Jesiah said I was better at the end of training." She says.

Funny, Turner told me I was lucky that Claire had threatened him otherwise, I'd be in the hospital.

Vivienne begins showing off her defensive moves to the others. It takes everything in me not to correct her form. As Claire, I wouldn't know any more than she does. But I also realize that even this little bit of involvement with the pack, this inclusion is changing the way the omegas are interacting. There's a light-heartedness that wasn't here before, even a couple of days ago.

'Our mate is making the pack members happy.' Magnor says. 'A happy pack follows their Alpha easily.'

I have to admit, I'm surprised at how quickly the attitude of the pack is changing, but it is. Not for everyone, but for most of them.

When Feena comes back from her breakfast with Claire, she's practically dancing. Dane is in the kitchen waiting for her.

"What did he say about the pain meds?" He asks her, smiling at her excitement. So, Feena asked about them, finally. She and Dane have been giving them out without my knowledge for who knows how long.

"Not only did he say yes, but I'm going to the pack hospital to meet with the doctor to make sure we don't over prescribe. Alpha was clear that he doesn't want any dependency issues, but Dane? He already knew. I don't know how he knew, but he did, and he wasn't angry."

Well, I would have been. I didn't know about it.

'If it were still you in charge, she wouldn't have trusted you enough to ask you about it, would she asshole?' Magnor says.

'Whatever, Magnor.'

'No, Tereshan, you're missing the point. You were the Alpha. It was your job to know what was going on in the pack. It was your job to establish trust with the pack members so they felt comfortable coming to you if something was wrong. You didn't and in just a couple of days, Claire has already done that.'

I want to deny it, tell him he's wrong, but I can't. The evidence of what he's said is right in front of my face.

"And guess what?" Feena continues, and the bouncing on her toes intensifies.

Dane takes her hands in his. "What?" He asks her, his eyes intent on hers.

Damn, I know that look. It's the look of a man in love. I wonder how long he's been in love with Feena. Which makes me wonder, how he survived seeing the abuse that Claire said Feena suffered daily at Roman's hands.

'He did, because she did.' Magnor says quietly.

I guess. It makes me angry that Roman disregarded my command to leave the omegas alone and that Feena, who is a good worker and omega, suffered at his hands.

"Alpha is making me an acting Gamma." Feena says and begins jumping up and down. Dane scoops her

up, spinning her around the room. When he sets her on her feet, she is blushing brightly.

"Well deserved, Feena. You'll be great at it. Much better than Ivy ever was."

"Oh, I hope so, I don't want to let him down."

"You won't, I'm sure of it." He says, but he's looking past Feena at me.

Yeah, yeah, I know. Claire won't be disappointed.

"Oh, Claire, dear. You can head up to Alpha's office now. Thank you." She says, having followed Dane's line of sight.

She turns back to him, beginning to tell him everything that she needs to do. I grab my cleaning bucket and begin to head upstairs to my office.

'You mean Claire's office, don't you?' Magnor says.

I just ignore him. My mind is spinning with all of the changes that Claire is implementing so quickly, and how all of those changes are causing an avalanche of positive things to happen in the pack. I guess that's why I'm taken by surprise when someone grabs my arm and pulls me into an empty room.

I yip, but a hand comes down to cover my mouth. I

know instantly that this is Roman. Why is he pulling me into this room?

"Hello, Claire. No need to scream. I'm going to remove my hand from your mouth now."

I nod and he pulls his hand away from my mouth slowly.

"I wanted to check your bruises. I know today was hard for you."

"I'm okay, Beta." I say.

"And yet, I am Beta of this pack, and it is my responsibility to make sure all of our pack members are happy and healthy." He takes the cleaning bucket from me, setting it on the floor before taking my hand and pulling me further into the room.

"Take off your shirt, let me see your stomach where I punched you."

"What?" I ask him. Why would he be checking my bruises? Normally, he'd send me to the pack hospital if he thought I was seriously injured.

"Shirt, omega!" This time, it comes out as a command.

I pull my shirt over my head, standing bare chested in front of him. Claire has bras, but they are really

uncomfortable and she's small enough that she doesn't need them, so I haven't been wearing them.

He clicks his tongue as if it's a shame that I'm so bruised, but I don't miss the way his eyes darken with lust.

'Remember how he was always trying to get you to agree that it was okay to use the omegas any way he wanted?' Magnor warns me.

"There, you can see I'm bruised, but I'll be fine." I say, pulling the shirt over my head to put it back on. Before I get it all the way down, Roman has grabbed it, using it as a restraint on my arms, and tucking it behind my head, pinning my arms and hands place.

He holds the shirt with one hand, and with the other, he begins touching me down my front. At first, I think he's only going to touch my stomach, but then his hands are on Claire's breasts, my breasts, and his palms are rubbing over her nipples. I feel helpless and knowing my Beta like I do, this is not a good position to be in.

"Alpha is waiting for me." I say, but it comes out as a fearful squeak. I've never been in a position where I'm powerless, but at this moment, I truly am.

"Alpha will understand if you're a few minutes late. I wanted to make sure your pretty little tits didn't get

bruised. And thankfully, they didn't, or not much. Turner must have tagged you here." He says putting pressure on the bruise that has formed on the side of my right breast where Turner did punch me.

I hiss in pain, jerking my arms, trying to get away from him.

"Ah, ah, ah...not yet, pretty little omega. I'm not done checking you over yet."

Still holding my arms behind my head, he steps back, looking down at my body. I've never been ashamed of my body before, but this feels very different, especially since I don't have a choice. Unlike the women who usually look at my body appreciatively, Roman's look is lascivious. This is purely for his enjoyment. This is about power, control and he's letting me know that he has all of it and I have none.

His finger slides down the center of my stomach, his eyes watching me. "You like that don't you?" He asks.

I shake my head no.

"You don't have to lie to me. I can tell by your breathing that you like it." He says.

"I need to get to work, Beta." I try again.

"In a moment. I can't see all of your bruises." He says

before ripping my shorts down to my ankles, leaving me completely bare and at his mercy.

His fingers move over my hips to my thighs. I refuse to close my eyes, but I can't stop the tears prickling in them. However, it's easy now to not make eye contact with Roman. I'm embarrassed in a way I've never been embarrassed before, my body flushed with color due to the strong, unfamiliar emotion.

"Look at how you respond to me. Such a good little omega." He kicks my legs apart as far as they will go, and I begin to fall off balance, tripping over my shorts. Before I fall, he grabs my hair, yanking me up by my head, holding me up. My scalp stings as I feel his hand continue its perusal of my body.

"Look at these pretty pink lips. I bet, since Alpha rejected you, that no one has ever been here before." He says, sliding his fingers over my pussy. A whimper leaves my mouth before I can stop it.

"That's it, little omega. Beg for more." He says, just before he slams two fingers inside me. The intrusion is foreign and painful given that I'm not at all aroused and in this body, Claire is still a virgin. I cry out, but Roman quickly pulls his fingers out of me and slaps his hand over my face.

"Quiet now, little omega. I think that's good for today.

"You're not going to tell anyone about this, now, are you?" I shake my head no. He still has my head bent back painfully and his hand is over my mouth.

"Look at me." He snarls and when I do, I see his menacing face a hair's breath away from mine.

"Not. One. Word. Or you will regret it." He says, punching his fist into my bruised stomach as he releases me.

The tears begin to fall then, and I fall to the floor in a heap of pain, embarrassment, and shame.

"Get dressed and get to work, omega. And remember what I said."

Claire

When Tereshan comes in, I expect him to give me his usual sarcasm and condescension. Instead, he walks in with his head down. His shirt is wrinkled which is unusual.

"I'll start in the bathroom, if that's okay." He says quietly.

'Something is wrong.' Damara says.

"Tereshan, come here." I say to him. Is this about the warrior training?

When he gets close, I reach out to him, but he jerks away. I narrow my eyes at him. Is this some sort of trick?

"Tereshan, look at me."

When he does, I see a look I know well, but one I've never seen from him before. Defeat. "What happened?"

He just shakes his head, looking down again.

I reach out gently and touch his shoulder, feeling him jerk at the touch.

'That's new.' Damará says.

"Are you in pain? Did you not get any pain meds from Dane?"

"I did."

"If you're hurting that much, Tereshan, I can send you back to your room. I know what it is to be in pain and have to work. If you can't handle it..."

He looks up and this time, I swear there's fear in his eyes. "I don't want to go to my room. I want to stay here."

I search his face for a moment, not sure what's going on with him. "Okay. Go ahead and get started in the bathroom."

As I review my documents, I hear him actually working today, which is unusual. There's a knock at the door.

"Come in."

Roman comes in and looks around. "Where's your ex-mate?" He asks.

"Bathroom." I say, watching him closely. Roman always made the hair on the back on my neck go up.

"Why?"

He shrugs. "Just wondering if she would have time to

clean my office today too.”

The bathroom has gone deathly quiet. “No, she won’t have time for that. She had warrior training today as you know, and I expect it to take her a little longer to clean today.”

“You still think it’s a good idea to let omegas train? I mean, look at how she challenged you today. She acted all high and mighty.”

“I doubt she will again.” I say, looking back down at the information I’ve had Feena pull on our food products. I have some ideas of possible ways to save money that I want to discuss with Alpha Keegan when he’s here.

“So...what do you have for me today?” Roman asks.

“What do you normally do?” I ask him, because I truly have no idea.

“Whatever you tell me, of course.” He smirks at me. Just what I thought, he basically does nothing.

“Well, I need to know who orders supplies for our warriors. Do you know if that was Ivy, Bryson or is it you?”

“Not me.”

Why am I not surprised.

"Have you checked on Ivy today?"

"Yep, did that right after warrior training. She begged to give me a blow job if I'd get her more water."

"And did you?"

"Give her more water? Or let her give me a blow job?" He asks, looking smug. I'm guessing he got the blow job either way.

I stare him down. "Damn, Alpha. She offered. So, yeah, I gave her a bottle of water."

"If I find out that you do it again, Roman, you'll end up in the cell right next to her. She's receiving a punishment. You don't get to take that as an opportunity to receive sexual favors."

"Fuck, what's gotten into you? Things were fine before you started making all these changes. Now, everything is going to shit."

Damara pushes forward and I stand. "Going to shit? Because omegas are learning how to fight, and I won't let you get a blow job from someone in a cell? Or is it because you knew that Ivy was stealing from me? Were the two of you working together, Roman?" I ask and although the thought has just come to me, it

makes perfect sense.

"What? No!"

"Because I'll be checking to see if she betrayed me and this pack to Alpha Franco, and if I find out that she was and that someone else was working with her, they will be executed alongside her for their part in the betrayal."

He leans over the desk, getting as close to me as Damara's aura allows. "I am not a traitor."

"Good, then you have nothing to worry about." I hold his gaze until he looks away, turning to leave.

"Oh, and I also made Feena acting Gamma. She's now in charge of running the packhouse. So, if you need anything, let her know."

He nods once before leaving, slamming the door on his way out.

I sit back down, putting my head in my hands.

"Are you alright?" Tereshan's soft voice comes from the doorway to the bathroom.

"Fine. Can I trust you in here by yourself for a bit? I want to go check on Bryson."

He nods.

"Seriously, Tereshan. I don't want any more shit. If I can't..."

"I won't do anything except clean. Please don't send me away."

It's the 'please' that makes up my mind. "Fine. Don't disappoint me."

"I won't." He says.

He walks me to the door. "What are you doing?" I ask him.

"I'm going to lock the door behind you so no one comes in."

"You realize if anything happens, I'll know it was you, right?"

"I told you, I'm not going to do anything."

I shake my head. "Okay, I'll be back shortly."

I head to Bryson's room. I knock on the door and when I get no response, I quietly open the door.

He turns and looks at me over his shoulder. "Hey, Alpha."

He begins to sit up, but I wave him back.

"How are you doing?" I ask him, pulling up a chair.

"I've been better." He says. He looks like he's aged overnight.

"Is there anything that I can do?" I ask him.

"No, but I appreciate the time. I just...." His voice chokes up. He closes his eyes and forces himself to swallow. "I just don't know what I'm going to do, you know. No matter what she did, I loved her. But no matter how much I loved her, it wasn't enough."

"I know. I'm sorry it came to this."

"It's not like you slept with her." His head jerks up at me. "Did you?"

I shake my head. "No."

I'm glad I can say that to him without it being a lie. I have no idea if Tereshan slept with Ivy, but for some reason, I doubt it. He wasn't a great Alpha, but he did think he was doing right by his pack and sleeping with your Gamma's mate isn't something you can reconcile easily if you think you're the good guy.

"You need to eat, Bryson. I'm going to have Feena bring you a lunch tray, and I want to hear that you've eaten."

"Alpha, I don't know..."

"One meal, Bryson. Just one meal a day until you can do more."

"Okay Alpha."

I mind link Feena to take Bryson food as I head back to my office. I expect the worst when I arrive. I don't know what's up with Tereshan, but he's not acting like himself.

I knock, realizing that he has to open the door for me. I guess I could break in, but I'm hoping he'll open the door.

I hear a sound on the other side of the door.

"Claire?" I call out and a moment later I hear the lock turning.

"Alpha. I wasn't sure it was you."

I frown. That's the first time he's called me Alpha without having to be reminded.

I walk in and look around. My office is spotless.

'Something is definitely wrong.' Damara says to me.

"Tereshan? Do you want to have lunch with me?"
Maybe he'll talk to me over lunch.

There it is again. Alpha. Something has happened and I need to figure out what it is.

Tereshan

I've never known what it is to be fearful, powerless. Suddenly, I want nothing more than to be around Claire. Her Alpha aura is strong, and it makes me feel safe, protected. Is this what it's like for all omegas? Or is it just because I've been shown how weak I really am?

I'm afraid to leave this room. It was terrifying enough when Roman came in and asked about me cleaning his office. I'm not sure what I would have done if she had told him yes. Somehow, she seems to know that I don't want to be alone with him. Or maybe she just believes that I'm sore from training.

'You need to tell her what happened.' Magnor says.

'No. How can I? I'm an Alpha. Or I was. And I'm a man. How can I tell her what Roman did to me? She'd never see me as the man I am again. She's only see the weakling who was overpowered by his Beta.'

'That's you talking, not her.' He says. 'Roman may have made us think that he was a good Beta, always having our back, supporting us, but look how he argued with Claire. He supported us when it suited him. If he were to challenge Claire now, he'd defeat her and if he ever

became Alpha..."

I shiver at the thought. I don't even want to think about what it would mean if Roman became Alpha. How had I never realized this about him?

'You did. You just thought he was abiding by his Alpha's rules. Your rules. Claire told us he wasn't. They all knew it. You seem to be the only one that didn't.'

When Claire returns from seeing Bryson, she asks if I want to have lunch with her. Since I'm afraid to leave her presence or this room, I tell her yes.

She has Vivienne bring us two trays and I watch as Vivienne glows under the praise that Claire gives her. Did I ever praise my omegas? I honestly don't remember.

"See you later, Claire." Vivienne says to me before walking out of the room and closing the door.

"Bye Vivienne." I say.

Claire smiles as she watches her leave.

"She's really sweet." I say to her.

Her eyes snap to me. "If you use her to try and hurt me..." Her tone has turned hard, threatening.

"I won't. She's been kind to me, helped me." I say. I

watch as Claire's eyes narrow on me before turning to the food.

"She is sweet. She's my best friend. It's hard acting like her Alpha, but it's also nice seeing that I can make her day just by giving her the praise she deserves."

We sit down and I look at her across the table. I swear, my face looks softer, more kind now with her inside my body.

"Did you know that she makes towel origami?" She asks me.

"What? No. You mean like they do in upscale hotels?" I ask.

She shrugs. "I've never been to a hotel, upscale or otherwise, so I wouldn't know. But she said she found a book near our territory that someone must have lost or tossed out and she's been reading it, learning. Now, every day there's a surprise waiting for me in the bathroom when I get done with my day."

"I should buy her a book. She's really been a good friend to me." He says.

She scoffs. "You don't have any money, Tereshan. I'll buy her the book." She looks at me a moment. "But, if you're serious about being kind to her, I'll let you give it to her."

I don't like the idea of her paying for something and me taking the credit for it. It doesn't sit well. It means I didn't really buy it for her. Then a thought occurs to me, one that will help me pay for a book for Vivienne and also one that will keep me closer to Claire.

"What if I did extra chores to pay for it?" I ask her.

She looks at me a long moment. "What happened today, Tereshan?"

I feel those fucking tears pricking my eyes again, so I look down and shake my head, my throat so tight I can't even swallow a bite of food.

Her hand comes over mine, engulfing my much smaller one in hers. "I can't help you unless you talk to me." She says.

I search for a way to make her understand without actually telling her. "I just...I realized what it feels like to be weak, helpless. I don't like that feeling."

"No one does." She says.

"So, I'm just rethinking things, that's all." I say.

"Are you sure that's it? You flinched away from me earlier. That's more than feeling weak."

I look up at her. Her eyes are caring, soft, intent on

me. It makes me feel special, like she really cares about me. I wonder if any of my omegas ever felt that about me when I was in my body. I doubt it. I never really gave them a second thought.

"Can I ask you something, without you taking offense?" I ask her, changing the subject.

"I don't know, can you?"

I snort. Good point. "Do you like being an Alpha?"

She frowns, looking down. "It's harder than I thought. Of course, that's because you have crappy people working for you. Roman doesn't do anything around here except cause problems and Ivy was abusive and stealing from you, not to mention weakening the only ranked member who actually did work for you."

"What would you do differently?" I ask, honestly curious.

"I'd put better people into those positions." She says.

"Why haven't you?" I ask her.

"Partly, because I don't know who I can trust beyond Dane and Feena. Partly because if I make too many changes at once, the pack might get nervous. I can't afford to have anyone challenge me. As you know, I can't fight. So, I'm biding my time and hoping that I

can change things slowly. I need to learn to fight so if I remove Roman and he challenges me, I can defeat him."

"He can't become Alpha." I say to her, and even I hear my voice waver.

She looks at me sharply. "I know. He's dangerous. I don't trust him, but I do know that Feena will let me know if he causes any problems with the omegas. And I know, just from my time with her, that he's leaving her alone.'

'Tell her.' Magnor prompts me.

'No. Maybe he'll leave me alone. I'll find a way to spend more time with Claire or Feena so he can't bother me.'

'That's a bad idea, Tereshan.'

'You heard her. She can't fight him. If he challenged her, she'd lose and then we'd really be in trouble.' I tell him.

"Well, I need to get back to work. You did a great job in here today." She says and something in me swells with pride. My Alpha giving me praise. Even though it's me in this body, the omega is responding to Alpha's praise.

"Thank you. Is there something I can do, something extra to pay for the book for Vivienne. I'd really like to buy it for her."

"I've been thinking that the baseboards in here need a fresh coat of paint." She says, arching an eyebrow at me like she expects me to decline.

I look at them and she's right, they do.

"I'll do it." I tell her. The shock on her face is almost worth it the sore muscles I know I'll have from painting.

"Okay, let's go see Feena and see what we have in the way of paint." She says, getting up and grabbing the food.

"Here, I'm the omega, let me." I say, putting them all on the tray and carrying it to the door.

She opens the door and holds it for me. Just as she is about to follow me through, I look at her.

"Duck."

"What?" She asks.

"Your head. Duck. You forget how tall you are." I say smiling and I turn to head to the kitchen to see Feena.

Claire

Roman wasn't pleased that I was agreeing to an alliance with Alpha Keegan. Once again, he challenged my decisions and then stomped out. Since I hadn't planned on having him sit in anyway, it was fine with me.

When Alpha Keegan arrives, Feena shows him to my office. As they walk in, I see that Feena is already charming him. How is she an omega? She acts more like a ranked member than a lead omega.

"Alpha Keegan." I say, walking up and extending my hand to him.

"Alpha Tereshan, thank you for having me."

I chuckle. "You may not be thanking me at the end of our meeting. My acting Gamma here, Feena, has quite a few ideas and requests of your pack. We'll see if you are still in agreement with this alliance at the end of our meeting. But I hope you are." I tell him.

We sit down and he looks from me to Feena and back again. I see Feena mind linking Claire to bring the food and coffee that were prepared for today's meeting. I had spoken to Feena about Tereshan's strange

behavior, asking her to watch over him for me, but so far, she hasn't seen anything out of the ordinary. However, he still prefers to be close to me during the day.

"I have to say, Alpha, and I don't mean this in the condescending way it's going to sound, but I'm surprised at you." Alpha Keegan says to me.

"How so?" I ask, folding my hands in front of me and giving him my full attention.

Tereshan comes in at that moment carrying a tray of food. Feena jumps up to assist him.

"I had heard that you aren't exactly kind to your omegas. But from what I saw downstairs and even your interactions with your acting Gamma, I have to think the rumors are untrue." He tells me.

"Coffee, Alpha?" Feena asks Keegan and I spare a glance at Tereshan. His head is bowed. He knows Keegan is talking about HIS treatment of the omegas.

Keegan agrees to coffee with cream and sugar as do I.

"I'll admit, Alpha Keegan, the rumors were true. But I've had a change of heart since I turned 18. I'm seeing things differently now, and that includes this alliance. Where I may not have seen the benefit of it in the past, I certainly do now."

He takes a sip of the coffee and then a bite of the lemon tart that Tereshan brought in.

"Mmm, is this Madagascar sugar?" He asks.

I see Tereshan's head snap up at his question. He asked it in Tereshan's meeting with him as well. It must be how he decides what a potential buyer, or in this case, a potential alliance leader, knows about what he does.

"You know very well that it's YOUR Madagascar sugar, Alpha." Feena says and somehow, it's as if she's scolding him. He looks properly admonished.

"My apologies. I have found that most of the packs, Alphas in particular, don't recognize the value that my pack brings to them."

"We do, Alpha Keegan." I say to him.

"Please, if we're going to have a friendly conversation, call me Keegan."

"Very well, Keegan. Please call me Tereshan. And I meant what I said, I hope you still find it friendly when Feena is done with you." I say to him again.

He looks at Feena more appreciatively. She merely smiles at him.

"So, you're the dangerous one?" He asks and her smile widens.

I'm surprised when he turns to Tereshan. "How about you, young lady. What's your name?"

Tereshan looks at me before turning back to Alpha Keegan. I have a moment where my stomach twists. Is he going to try to betray me?

"Claire, Alpha." I breathe a sigh of relief.

"Claire. What do you think? Is Feena going to rake me over the coals today?"

I watch as Tereshan looks at Feena thoughtfully, probably seeing more in her than he ever has before.

"I think you're going to leave here feeling like you won the lottery when in actuality, Feena will have taken all your money."

Keegan throws his head back and laughs. It's a happy sound, one that I'd guess, he makes often. He turns back to Feena.

"High praise, ma'am. Well, let's get to it."

Feena had put together her plan, her requests and I have to admit, the woman is a genius. She's found a way, through food, to make our pack a premier place

to visit and dine.

"Alpha Keegan, you produce 90% of the produce that is provided to the surrounding packs." It's not a question, but she looks up at him anyway.

He takes a sip of coffee and watches her over the rim. "That is correct."

She looks back down at her papers. "And you are the sole provider of specialty items such as Madagascar sugar, honey which comes in a variety of flavors, jams and jellies." She looks up at him again. "Is that correct?"

He gives her an appreciative smile, looking at me then back at her. "That is correct."

She looks down again, and I watch as Keegan raises his eyebrow at her. He's an Alpha, he would love a challenge and Feena is definitely going to give him one.

"And you grow the berries for your jams and jellies on your farm, is that correct?"

"Yes." Now he sits forward, folding his hands and focusing solely on Feena.

"However, you don't have enough land to grow the number of berries you need to keep all the packs

supplied with the amount of jams and jellies they would like to have, is that correct?"

"How do you know that?" He asks her.

"The shelves at Franco's Supermarket where the jams and jellies are located are frequently empty and when they are full, there is a mad dash of buyers to get as many as possible. Franco's tried to limit each pack to only buying a limited number, but there was anarchy in the stores, and they gave up the idea."

"That is also correct."

She looks back down at her notes then at me. I nod at her.

"Here is what we are proposing, Alpha."

"Keegan. If you're going to negotiate this hard, at least use the name my mother gave me." He says, chuckling.

She smiles at him. "We will receive a discount on general items that are found in Franco's Supermarkets. We will purchase directly from you on a weekly basis. In addition, we would like to be the only pack that you sell certain items to. We will pay a premium for those items, but you will not sell to Franco's, you will sell them directly to us and only us."

"Like what?" He asks frowning.

"First, we would offer you part of our land to grow berries. But we would like you to make a triple berry jam and jelly for our pack. I would recommend strawberries, blueberries and raspberries, but I defer to your expertise."

He snorts. "MY expertise? Sounds like you're the expert. Anything else?"

"Yes. We want our own flavor of honey. I understand that the flavor of honey is based on the flowers where the bees collect their nectar, is that correct?"

"That's correct."

"We would like you to plant local flowers, different from what you currently use in our pack lands so there won't be any cross pollination. Your pack members would still be responsible for managing the hives, they would just be located here in our pack."

He looks thoughtful for a moment. "I'll do you one better. How about I also make you a honey with pure cocoa, a chocolate honey, if you will. I've been testing it out as a new product to sell to Franco's but if you'd like first right of refusal..."

"We'd like first right of refusal for all new products you plan to put out for purchase." I tell him.

He sits back looking between me and Feena.

"So, you will protect my pack lands?"

"Completely. Your lands border ours, we'll just extend our patrols. We have the manpower to do it." I tell him.

"And you'll let us use part of your land to grow berries and create a new beehive so we can make a specialty honey just for you?"

"That's correct." I say.

"You have yourself a deal!" He says.

We shake hands and talk a little more, finishing our coffee and tarts.

When he stands to leave, he turns to Tereshan who has been quietly watching our exchange.

"Young lady, you were exactly right. I do feel like I've won the lottery."