

# War of Threes

## Chapter 2 - Zak

The next morning, we are all downstairs to greet Alpha Gael of the Diana Pack and his mate. The elders of the pack are also there, along with Xander and Devin. It is obvious that Xander and Devin haven't slept much. Their eyes are red rimmed, their faces pale, and dark bags bruise their under eyes. They are holding hands, their knuckles almost white from their grips on each other.

Their pain is evident in the very air that surrounds them. Though they know that Arya will return tomorrow, it is of little comfort when they know that their mate is being beaten and abused. Any attempt to console them is met with blank stares, almost as if they have retreated so far into themselves that they cannot understand what is being said to them. We told them they didn't need to come, but they just got out of bed and followed us. We figured that at the very least we could all keep an eye on them this way.

A single car pulls into the drive and parks in front of the packhouse. Inside are two men. Apparently, Gael didn't want to draw attention to the fact that they had left his territory. They wanted to travel quickly, so it was just him and his mate.

After our last visit from an outside pack, my wolves are understandably anxious about another alpha entering our territory. I have reassured them as best I can, but they feel the need to protect what is ours.

When Mathias left last night, we held a pack meeting in the dining hall. Between Lucille, Charlie, and I, we relayed to the pack all that the Goddess told us. They were shocked to say the least. There were questions, grumbles of disgust and anger, and cries of outrage. For a few moments, I had thought that I had misjudged my wolves. That many would leave. That they would refuse to help us.

I have been filled with shame from my doubt in my pack since then.

The grumbles and yelling during that time had mixed together. I couldn't hear individual words. I had to use my alpha tone to quiet them, something I am loathe to do.

I allowed them to voice their concerns, individually. They wanted to know of our

plans, our allies. Our chances. But none of them wanted to leave. They were angered by Mathias' outright blasphemy, by his treatment of their Delta/Gamma mate, and by the coming war. But they held fierce pride in our response, in the fact that I had shown my supremacy and forced Mathias to submit.

The pack would follow us into war. They would protect what was ours.

We obviously could not tell them everything. They understood. But we told them enough so that they felt comfortable. They knew the risks. They were prepared.

So here we are, standing in front of the packhouse, welcoming the alpha of a second pack in as many days.

Two men climb out of an inconspicuous looking gray Nissan Altima, obviously picked for it's forgetability. One is a rather tall hispanic man. He has long, shoulder-length, black, wavy hair and a small, neat goatee and moustache. His skin is a bronzed, honey color and he is leanly muscled. His coffee-colored eyes are set under thick eyebrows and they sparkle in the lights around the packhouse. He flashes us a wide smile when he gets out of the driver's seat. This is presumably Alpha Gael.

The other man is a dark-skinned black man and he must be the alpha's mate, Hakeem. Hakeem is about a head shorter than his alpha mate, but has broad, well-developed shoulders and chest muscles pressing against his white t-shirt. He has stubble lining his face, but it suits him. His eyes are so dark that they appear black in the evening light and he looks pensive in his assessment of us.

I step forward, extending my hand to both men in turn. "Alpha Gael. Alpha-Mate Hakeem. It is a pleasure to meet you both. I am Alpha Zak. Welcome to the Artemis Pack."

Alpha Gael clasps my hand in his, his smile still wide and his eyes bright. "Please, call me Gael. Surely, we do not need to stand on formalities. We are friends, are we not?" Gael's voice is low and welcoming, his speech heavily accentuated by a Spanish accent.

"Of course," I say, smiling.

"And this is my wonderful mate and the top warrior of our pack, Hakeem." Gael holds his hand out to Hakeem, tucking his mate in under his arm. Though Gael is outwardly jovial and smiling, his mate is much more reserved. Hakeem gives me a head nod and a tight, closed-lipped smile, his eyes never leaving my face.

"A pleasure to meet you, Hakeem. This is my luna, Charlie," I motioned her forward on one side of me, "and our beta and my second mate, Brandon." I also motion him forward, though he seems reluctant. He is still somewhat anxious about other's response to our trio. But if anyone is going to understand, it will be Hakeem and Gael. They are searching for their own third member of their trio.

"*Encantado* (Pleased to meet you)," Gael says, bowing his head to Brandon and Charlie.

Both Charlie and Brandon incline their heads to Gael and Hakeem.

"Pleased to meet you all," Hakeem says, his voice a rich baritone.

“Why don’t we head to the conference room? Our Oracle will be joining us with her apprentice. She is still recovering from the Goddess’s possession. It is easier for her to meet us on the first floor of the packhouse than climbing to the top floor to my office.”

“Of course,” Hakeem says, a small smile playing on his lips.

We lead them to the conference room, Hakeem and Gael holding hands while they walk through the halls.

Once in the conference room, omegas flit through the room giving us food and drinks. We are just settling in when Gael and Hakeem both straighten, their nostrils flaring.

Brows furrowed, Charlie asks, “Everything ok?”

“*Compañera*, (mate)” Gael whispers.

Brandon and I share a confused glance. “What?” I ask.

Just then, Lucille and Meredith walk through the door. Meredith’s face is flushed, her nostrils flared, her breathing fast.

“Mate,” Hakeem says.

“Mates,” Meredith confirms.