

Fear No Evil

Robin Carroll

Unedited

Prologue

“What’s the word on the street about Heathen’s Gate?” Carlos rolled a pen between his fingers and studied his second in command. “I’ve gotten reports they’re on the move.”

Angel Osorio’s tanned face reddened. “They’re comin’ for war. We’re the targets, of course.” Carlos’s best friend rarely displayed such rage, even back in the day when they were in their late teens and just starting out with the Pantheras. “They’ve been throwing signs everywhere.”

Throwing signs meant only one thing in gangland—their main rival planned a series of attacks against them. A showdown was imminent.

Lots of lives would be lost, on both sides.

Carlos tossed down the pen and peered out his office window into the street. *His* street in his beloved Philly. “And the latest on *Ác cà*m?” He leaned forward, then back again quickly and crossed his arms over his chest

“Comin’ on strong. Full load.”

Great. Just what he didn’t need. Two gangs against the Pantheras, and both ready to fight until one slipped into oblivion. For the first time since becoming president, Carlos didn’t have a clear course of action.

Why hadn’t everything come to a head months ago, when he’d have known exactly what to do? “How so?”

“I hear that Asian *gleeka* is moving fast.” Angel’s legs bounced against the sides of the chair. “Trying to claim a turf. Anxious to stake their claim.”

“Drug operation?” Which would be Panthera territory.

“Nah.” Angel tilted his head from side to side. Pops split the silence.

“From what I understand, they’re more into trafficking people, not narcs.”

Which would only make them more aggressive than the small-time dealers Carlos could have eliminated within hours.

The door creaked open and Javier stuck his head inside the office.

“Honcho, just heard we got hit by the family. Four of ours are down, three more in the ER.”

***Four dead?* “Get me full details.” Carlos swallowed as Javier nodded and snapped shut the door.**

The family—add the Philadelphia mafia into the mix now. They’d demanded a street tax on the Pantheras’ lucrative drug trade. Carlos, of course, refused. But now the family had retaliated. The situation would get worse way before it got better. History had a way of repeating itself, and Carlos knew all too well the history of the Philly Mafia and gangs back in the early 1980s. Kidnapping...murder...torture to not only gang members, but their families as well.

Everyone seemed to have the Pantheras in the crosshairs, and Carlos sat at the helm. What was he supposed to do?

The August calendar on the desk taunted him, with an important date circled in red. The escalating situations couldn't have come at a worse time. He studied Angel. "Should I give the word?"

His best friend since childhood shrugged. "You're the boss. It's your call."

Carlos opened his desk drawer and withdrew a photo, his attention focusing on the dark-haired, dark-eyed girl smiling back at him. If anything happened to her...

"Carlos?" Angel's voice lifted.

He refused to let something happen to her. She deserved only the best, and he'd vowed to always take care of her. That was his job, even above his presidency of the Pantheras.

Carlos never shifted his attention from the photograph when he spoke to Angel. "Send out the word. Tell every Panthera to get their personal affairs in order, get their families to safety, and report to Philly immediately. We're taking back control." And would hopefully do so quickly. Time was of the essence.

Carlos only had two weeks until she came home.