



Chapter 0320

"Do I make you nervous?" Tyler moves close behind me and I am frozen. He is way too close to me for this to be considered anything less than flirting or maybe even marking territory.

"Nope. The whole 'naked guy' thing is still just not a norm for me. We don't have to change to shift." I'm sure my slow controlled breaths make him think I'm lying.

"Mina, why is he so close to me? It's weird."

"He thinks you're playing hard to get, so keep your face straight ahead and don't make that disgusted look you do all the time."

"What look? I don't have a look."

"You do. I told you, your face says a lot more than your mouth does. Just keep it neutral though, he's eating this innocent girl thing up." She giggles at me, then out loud says, "Let's just show them so they are less confused."

I nod and I give control over to my wolf to shift while concentrating on all the things Gentry taught us about maintaining our physical appearances while human. The popping and cracking sounds come and go so quickly, I don't even feel it anymore. My wolf shoes out her beautiful black fur.

"Damn! Solid black, that's pretty rare." Tyler sounds impressed, but I can't be the only black wolf out there. "Can I touch you?" he asks, lifting a hand up.

My wolf walks over to him, still keeping a foot of space between, she's just as uncomfortable being touched as I am. I don't know if that is a brand thing or an us thing, but I'm glad I can hide my facial features like this.

"Alright Sky, show them how we do this." Mina goads me and it feels like she's showing off a bit too.

My shift back is faster. I'm not as nervous and I can feel Osiston and Nickolas' presence nearby, their auras radiating into me to help me stay calm and do this mission.

I stood up right, fully clothed a split second later.

"Oh sh*t!" Mike blurts out. "How do you do that so fast? And keep your clothes?"

"Practice." I shrug and look over at Janice, who is standing with Robbie and just staring. "We're ready when you are." I smile a sweet smile at her. I'm in my element now, she can't make me feel inferior. 1

She goes to shift and the other twenty or so people follow suit. Tyler and Mike shift and both look over their shoulders at us. We smile at each other and take off in a jog, shifting as we run. I hear a huff behind me and "Show off" in my ear from Nickolas.



Mina and I both just giggle and run like we have not run in forever. The wind in my fur, the dirt under my paws. I can feel my claws break into the earth the imprint my paws are making in the freshly tilled ground. The even cadence of my feet as we dart through the trees, up and down hills, over fallen logs and creeks.

At one point someone nipped at one of the girls in front of me and a game of chase began. It was clear some of us could talk to each other, but not all of us, so the game was interesting. It became a battle of boys versus girls. Mina and I met up with Janice and a few of her friends at the front of the pack. Her wolf didn't seem to mind us even if she did. We all started sprinting faster and faster, eventually outstripping the rest of the group, leaving Mina, Janice and I to get to the bonfire grounds ahead of everyone else.

Janice walked over to a bag and shifted back to her human form and started to get dressed without even looking our way. We shifted and just stood there looking around waiting for the rest of the group to join us.

The bonfire pit was at least ten feet in diameter, rimmed in large stones and preset with large dry branches ready to be lit. The clearing wasn't any different from any other clearing in a forest I have seen, but it still left me with a feeling of peace. The woods have always been my safe haven and everything just feels right when I am surrounded by the trees and all other sounds are dampened by the debris on the

forest floor.




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