

## Chapter 77

We walk back to everyone and notice that Alex has returned. “Boss! We need to talk,” he says, jogging up to us. “Alone.”

“We’ll be discussing it with Molly and Seth. Prince Seth,” he corrects and it makes me smile. I know he doesn’t like it, but he is trying.

We need you.

I’ll be right there.

Seth walks up and I release Benjamin’s arm, taking Seth’s hand.

There have been some developments about the missing she-wolves. A teenage girl was taken from her home a few days ago. They were part of this group. I’ll fill you in, but they’re going to work with us.

Seth nods once and we turn to look at Alex. “Someone tried to get into the Turner’s home last night. They were home and scared them off, but they’re pretty shaken up.”

“How old are the she-wolves there?” Seth asks.

Alex’s face is concerned. “Mom’s in her late 20’s. They’ve got 3 girls- 2, 4 and 7.”

“They’re so young,” I whisper, squeezing Seth’s hand.

“Benjamin, perhaps you should join the patrols,” Alex says. “You were always such a force. The people need to see your wolf, to know you’re still protecting them.”

Huh? Does Alex, his Beta, not know that he can’t shift? “You have the Prince here. You should have Seth join you,” I offer, trying to distract Alex from wanting Benjamin to join them.

“It would look good to have both of them,” he says, looking between them.

Benjamin shakes his head. “Molly hasn’t shifted yet. One of us needs to stay with her at all times.”

“She can stay here. There’s enough people that she’ll be safe,” Alex says, almost pleading.

“No,” Seth says firmly, clearly picking up on what I was trying to do. “Benjamin will stay with Molly. I will join you for patrols tonight. Perhaps it will bring some comfort knowing that Molly and I are here and helping.”

“That is fair,” Alex says, seemingly placated for now. “We want to keep Molly safe, for sure.”

“Do you think they were trying to get to the mom last night?” I ask, trying to change the subject from Benjamin.

Benjamin shakes his head, sadly. “A marked wolf would be no use to them, and they’ve never taken one- that we know of.”

“Perhaps we should try to group families together for a while, until things calm down some. Safety in numbers and all that,” I tell them and Benjamin seems to consider it, but Alex is quick to decline the idea.

“They wouldn’t agree to it,” he says. “They want to feel safe in their own homes, not have to move around.”

“Even temporarily?” I ask, hopeful that it would buy us some more time to figure out what to do.

“No,” he says, a frown on his face. “Rogues don’t trust anyone, even other rogues.”

“Let’s be honest though,” Seth speaks up. “This isn’t a group of rogues. This is a full pack.”

Benjamin looks at us, and I can’t identify the look on his face. “You have to understand, everyone out here has been forgotten. No one has cared for anyone on this land in a long time, if ever.”

“There’s nothing much we can do about the past,” I say with a sigh. “We’ll just have to get them to trust us, and work to make the future better.”

“Why don’t we start by meeting the Turners today,” Seth says, turning to ask Alex. “The home repairs are important, but I think this usurps them for today.”

Alex nods at him. “Agreed. Let me tell Della and we’ll head there shortly.”

Alex walks off and once he’s far enough away, Benjamin turns to me. “I’ll leave you to explain to him. Please, no one else, though.”

I nod once and as he walks away, I turn and look at my mate.

Benjamin is unable to shift. He told me he wanted to keep it between us, but I didn’t realize that even Alex didn’t know.

Did he tell you why he can’t?

He said it started when they sent me away, but he hasn’t shifted at all since the adoption. He’s been regaining some strength, but not all, and he said he still can’t shift.

Is he upset with you? Because he lost his strength?

No. He knew it would happen.

And he didn’t stop the adoption?

He said it would have been more unsafe for me if he tried.

Seth takes my hand and pulls me to him, holding me tightly. “I hate how often I’m reminded that I could have never known you.”

“The goddess would have given you another mate, I’m sure,” I tell him, wrapping my arms around his waist.

Seth shrugs a little. “Even if she had, it wouldn’t have been you.”

He kisses the top of my head and releases me, taking my hand and leading me back to everyone else. Lily smiles at us as we approach but doesn’t say anything, as she often does. I feel like I’m slowly becoming more comfortable around her, and that makes me smile.

Della looks concerned as she speaks with Alex. No doubt he’s telling her what happened. I can’t imagine what it’s like to live knowing that your kids are in danger, though I guess Benjamin and Lily know exactly how they feel. Alex walks over to us, Benjamin following and motions us to follow him towards the north.

We begin to walk, following close behind Alex. Benjamin seems to be walking far better than when I first met him, but I can tell that he’s struggling to keep up, though he’s hiding it well.

“What are these trees?” I ask Alex, trying to distract him enough to slow him down.

“They’re maple, why?” he tells me, not slowing down.

I stop and pick up a fallen leaf, causing everyone to stop. “That’s what I thought. I’ve been wanting to learn how to make syrup. Benjamin told me previously that there are some people out here who may be willing to teach me.”

“There are,” he says, trying to hide his irritation, waiting for me to begin walking again.

I take a few steps, slowly, as I look around and take it all in. I catch Benjamin’s eyes and I can see the thanks in them. We all continue walking, but with me setting a slower pace now as I point out different things that I see- some cool leaves, some mushrooms, moss.

We come upon a small wooden cabin, a bit smaller than Benjamin and Lily’s, and in about the same condition. There’s a rope swing hanging from a branch on a tree by the front of the house and scrap wood around, clearly being used as blocks. As we approach, I can see damage to the front door and new wood over it where it has already been repaired.

Alex reaches up and knocks on the door. “It’s just me.”

I hear the sound of something scooting across a wooden floor and a lock being undone as the door cracks open and a dark bearded, face appears. He looks at all of us, and I see him relax when his eyes fall on Benjamin. He steps back and opens the door to us, motioning for us to come in. Once we’re in, he locks the door back and struggles to scoot a large wooden cabinet in front of the door. Seth steps forward and helps him move it.

“Thanks, son,” he says, holding his hand out to him. “We haven’t met but if you’re with Benjamin, you’re alright. I’m Rich.”

“Prince Seth,” he says and Rich immediately bows. Seth releases his hand and steps back, placing his arm around me. “This is my mate, Princess Molly.”

I can see Rich is terrified, probably because the royals don’t usually come out here. “We’re here to help, Rich. Is everyone alright?”

He stands straight and looks at me, tilting his head a bit. “Everyone is OK physically. My wife and daughters are pretty terrified, though.” He looks up and I turn, seeing a dark-haired woman enter the room. She visibly relaxes as her eyes fall on Benjamin.

“This is my mate, Mary,” he says in introduction. “Mary, this is Prince Seth and Princess Molly.”

Immediately, she bows and stays there.

“Thank you for having us,” I tell her, attempting to put her at ease. “Alex told us what happened. I’m so sorry you had to go through that. I see that you’ve fixed the door already. Are there any other repairs needed?”

“No, Your Majesty,” Mary says, standing upright again. “Alex helped us with the door this morning.”

“Did you recognize any scents at all?” Benjamin asks and Rich shakes his head. “Was anything familiar at all?”

“No, Alpha. Umm... err...” Rich says, catching himself and looking at us, knowing he’d said too much.

“It’s alright,” Seth tells him. “We’ll deal with that later. We just want to help stop the kidnappings right now.”

A little girl enters the room, holding out, what appears to be, a wooden sword. “Daddy, are these nice people?”

Seth chuckles when he sees her and kneels down next to her, extending his hand to her. “Hello, I’m Prince Seth and that’s my mate, Princess Molly.”

“A real princess?!” She asks me, completely ignoring Seth and his offered hand. I can’t help but smile as I nod to her. “You have eyes like Alpha Benjamin’s.”

“That’s because he’s my dad,” I tell her and she looks at me, clearly thinking about that.

Whatever thoughts she has though, she keeps to herself. “Are you here to catch the bad men?”

“We’re here to help. Hopefully we can find them, or at least scare them away,” I tell her.

She nods once, accepting that and lowers her sword. “Do you want to play with us?”