

## Chapter 71

Albert returned with the requested items and my dad went back to Lunar Falls with him, leaving Seth and Me here in the rogue territory. Seth helps me move the items over to the area Alex had indicated for us to stay, though moderately disgruntled about us staying in a tent.

“Honestly, Molly,” Alex pleaded with me. “My wife is going to kill me for letting the Prince and Princess sleep in a tent.”

“It’s what I want,” I reassured him again.

“Fine,” he told me, throwing his hands up. “You can deal with her when she gets here.”

I unroll the tent and place the poles to the side and straighten everything out. Seth surprises me and starts hooking the poles together.

“You know how to put a tent up?” I ask him, genuinely shocked.

Seth looks at me, offended. “Of course I do. I’m a wolf. What did you think Rob and I did during our Alpha training?”

“You don’t know how to do your own damn laundry but of course, you know how to assemble a tent. Silly me for not realizing,” I mutter under my breath and roll my eyes. I feel a small twig hit the side of my head, no doubt from Seth throwing it at me, and it makes me smile.

We work surprisingly well together and have the tent set up in no time. I bring the items into the tent that Albert had so kindly brought back to us and place them inside. I note, however, that he also grabbed an air mattress and it makes me smile. It was probably more for me than Seth, but I’m sure he’ll appreciate it more than me.

I use the pump that’s on the mattress and get it set up, laying blankets across it to have it ready for tonight. Seth climbs in the tent with another bag and I can see the relief on his face at the sight of the mattress, causing me to giggle.

“You’re pretty amazing, you know that?” he says, kissing the top of my head.

I look around at the little area that will be our home the next few nights and smile. It’s cozy, but it will be just fine, and I think that maybe that’s what Albert meant about how they live.

“I feel really bad that they’ll have to feed us. I’d offer him money, but I know he won’t take it,” I tell him and he nods.

“He really seemed happy to have you around for a few days,” he tells me, sitting on the mattress. “I’m sure it will be OK, and I’m sure you’ll think of some way to repay them.”

“Are you mad at me?” I ask him, looking in his eyes.

He looks at me, surprised. “Why would I be mad?”

“I didn’t exactly ask you,” I say to him, unsure of how he’s really feeling. “I just kind of forced you into this. I knew you wouldn’t leave me.”

“I’m not mad at all, Molly,” he says, taking my hand and pulling me over to sit next to him. “No one is perfect, and mistakes happen. But my dad has made quite a few rather large ones. It shouldn’t be your responsibility to fix them, and you continually amaze me how you jump right in to do it, anyways.”

“I love you,” I tell him, and he leans forward and kisses me.

“What’s your long game here?” he asks and I look at him, confused. “Come on. I know you’re already working on a plan. What’s going on in that head of yours?”

“I want to figure out a way that they can be an actual pack. No more hiding out here. They’ll just be an actual, recognized pack,” he nods, but he doesn’t say anything. “but they’ll need a new Alpha.”

“I’m glad you recognize that,” he says and I nod at him.

“Mistakes were made everywhere, but he broke the rules to start with, and he just can’t be their Alpha. I’m also mad that he has water while everyone else doesn’t.”

Seth chuckles at me. “Molly, it’s the hierarchy, but you came from a wealthy pack so you don’t fully understand it. You’re a princess now, and we’re going to move to a PALACE. We have the nicest things in the kingdom, while some omegas live in a state that’s just above poverty.”

“I don’t like that,” I tell him and he tilts his head to look at me.

“Do you ever feel bad, eating gourmet food in the palace, knowing that there are other wolves out there starving?” I ask him. I don’t think I ever realized this was truly a problem, even in civilized packs.

“Honestly, I don’t,” he tells me and my eyes begin to bulge out of my head. “Molly, each pack has an Alpha, and that man runs his pack as he sees fit. Lunar Falls is a wealthy pack, run by a good Alpha who cares for all in the pack. Everyone lives a decent life there, even the lowest omega. Slavery was outlawed by my father early in his reign, but some Alphas still treat their Omegas poorly, paying them the smallest wages.”

“That’s terrible!” I say to him, shocked that this happens.

“It is. But they’re within the law,” he says to me. “It keeps their wolves dependent upon them, so they’re less likely to revolt. I’m not saying I agree with it, but they’re functioning within the law, so our hands are tied.”

“So kids just go without having all their basic needs met?” I ask him, heartbroken to learn this. “I never knew other packs could be so horrible.”

“It’s something that I hope you decide to resolve when we take the throne,” he says, laying down and pulling me with him. “It will be a big undertaking, but you’re right, we need to, at the very least, ensure that all children have their basic needs met.”

We lay there for a moment, just enjoying being with each other. It’s been a hectic day, and slowing down to just be in each other’s presence is really nice.

“So…” Seth says, rolling onto his side and pulling me up against him, placing his hand on my stomach, grinning widely. “What was Lily saying about lots of grandkids?”

I can’t help but giggle at the excitement on his face. “Benjamin’s wife, the boy’s mom. She came from a family of herbalists. There’s something that helps with pregnancy. Lily said she could get it for me when we need it.”

“Clearly it works,” Seth says with a chuckle. “I’m not sure I’ve ever seen a family with more kids than Alex.”

“I think we can aim for a few less than him,” I say and he kisses my temple.

“How was your talk with Benjamin? I could feel your emotions all over the place”

“I… I don’t know.” I say and take a deep breath. “He’s upset that I’ve forgiven your dad. He’s upset that it took me so long to come back to see them. He’s just upset in general.”

“It’s only been a few days,” he says, looking bothered.

“I think he sees it as being his side, and your dad’s side. It’s like he’s forgetting that I have my own side. I HAVE to have your dad in my life, and it’s weird to be in that position. It really hurts that he hasn’t considered that.”

“What did he want you to do? You can’t just refuse the throne.”

“I don’t know. I didn’t ask him. He told me today that he had considered before sending me away that we would be mates.”

“He what?!”

“Yup,” I say dryly, trying my best to hold back my tears. “It’s like I’m two different people. Like I was the Molly that was a little girl here, and the Molly who woke up in the woods, scared and alone. The Molly I am now finally knows the girl I was, but it’s like I just watched her life. I don’t know how to explain it.”

“It’s OK, Love. I think I understand what you’re saying.”

“I spent so much of my life thinking that I was unwanted and it’s hard to just let those feelings go suddenly. I felt so alone for so, so long.”

Seth pulls me completely into his arms, pulling my face against his chest. “You’re not alone now, though. You’re mine.”

“I know,” I sniffle into his chest. “I used to have dreams that I was just a little girl, back in the woods, all alone. I tried so hard, for so long after Dad found me to not get into trouble because I thought they would send me back into the woods.”

“Molly,” he says, and kisses my forehead.

“It’s just easier to forgive your dad, because it didn’t leave the lasting trauma that abandoning me did.”

“Molly, we’re going to find a therapist when we get home, someone you can talk to. You never should have had to deal with being abandoned, or watching your brothers die, or having to be mated to the son of the man who murdered them.” he says, kissing the top of my head and gently playing with my hair. “None of that was ok, and I’m so sorry that it’s not something I can fix for you.”

I’m not sure how long we lay there, with Seth just holding me close. He’s right, none of it was OK, and I probably do need to talk to someone. Forgiving Peter was easy, because it was the only choice to move forward. Seth had marked me, there was no backing out. Forgiving Benjamin and Lily though, that’s harder, because I don’t have to. I could walk away and not look back, but I don’t think that’s what I want, I just don’t know how to process how I’m feeling. I give up trying to work out my feelings and snuggle into Seth.

I wake up in the meadow, Sage sitting next to me. I note that it’s still night time here, but I’m sure I just fell asleep during the day.

“Is it always night now?” I ask her.

“It is here, now that I’m free.”

“Is that why it was always sunny before? When I would see you in my dreams?” I ask her, finally understanding something.

“Yes. Wolves need the moon, and we couldn’t have it then,” she tells me. “You should shift in the meadow. It’s where he marked us. It may help with the pain.”

“I was hoping to see my parents,” I tell her, sadly. “I’ve never gotten to spend a full moon with them.”

“I know, but this will not be a fun shift,” she says, and I can feel my heart break. “You need to be with our mate, in the meadow. Don’t you feel stronger when you’re outside?”

I think about that for a moment. “I feel happier,” I admit to her. “I’ve never thought about if I felt stronger, but maybe.” Sage just nods and sits next to me.

“You were harsh with Benjamin,” she says simply.

“I know,” I say, my voice barely a whisper. “It just made me so angry that he asked for a pardon. It felt like he was trying to use me. It sounded like he has more information about the wolves disappearing, but won’t help unless I give him his pack back.”

“You need to control your temper when it comes to him.”

“I know,” I tell her, thinking about why I can’t control my anger with him, and only him. I’ve never been one to have outbursts of anger. If you had told me yesterday that I’d issue a royal command I’d have told you it’s something I would never do, but I did, because I was so angry.

“He hurt you, Molly. He sent you away and didn’t want you around. You now know why, but you didn’t for so long, that it’s hard to let go of how that made you feel.”

I know she’s right. “I think I always thought that they were bad people, that if they really had just left me for someone else to find, they couldn’t be good.”

“Not everyone is good or bad, especially with wolves. You are viewing things as black and white, when they are not. Our mate has killed. Your dad has.”

“You don’t know that,” I tell her, shocked she would even suggest it.

“Their job is to protect, and I’m sure that both of them have killed. No one is completely bad, just like no one is completely good.”