

Chapter 83

I was finally given some lunch, just plain oatmeal, and some medicine to help with all the pain. Seth doesn't leave me alone for even one moment, and I don't dare tell him what Sage had pointed out.

I guess it's probably because it's so unusual to shift at such an old age, but it's hard to believe that we all forgot that tiny detail. Sage is right, though. Your first shift isn't a choice at all. It just... happens. I've obviously never experienced it, but I know of many people who would go out under the full-moonlight, waiting, hopeful to shift, and it wouldn't happen. There's no exact age a wolf shifts, but you begin to change just before your 16th birthday, and many wolves shift the first moon after, but not always.

We will be OK, Sage tells me. We were made for this.

What if they're right, though? I don't want to kill Seth if the shift is too much.

You won't. Everyone wants to protect YOU, except Altair. He wants to protect SETH, as well as you. I know you will be alright, and Altair does, too. He wouldn't take a chance if he thought something would happen to him.

Why hasn't he told Seth?

He tried, but he's not willing to listen. He's too worried about you. After he's asleep tonight we will go outside and start to shift.

I really wanted Seth to be with me.

He will be, just not at first.

I don't understand.

You will. Just don't tell him. Altair said they contemplated sedating you until after the full moon. We're not taking any chances that they would do it to keep you from shifting.

I look over at Seth, who is still sitting dutifully in the same chair. He's still barefoot and still unshaven. To be honest, I think I like that part. He's also still on his phone, as he has been all day.

"Is everything alright?" I ask and he looks up at me.

"Of course. Why?" he asks, tilting his head at me.

"You've been on your phone all day," I tell him. "I've never seen you on it so much."

Seth looks sad suddenly and sets his phone down, moving to sit on the side of my bed. "I'm sorry, Love. But this is the palace, and I've had to start working some. I haven't left your side, though."

"Oh, I'm not upset. I just thought something might actually be wrong," I tell him, feeling bad that he thought I was upset with him.

"Unfortunately," he begins, taking my hand in his. "This job isn't as glamorous as many people think it would be. It's highly demanding, even when there's nothing seriously wrong. All Alpha's answer to me, and most of them are just whiny bitches."

His answer makes me giggle. "Robbie's been giving you trouble?"

"Surprisingly, he's not," he tells me with a chuckle. "He's actually been a great help with handling Benjamin's pack-that's-not-a-pack."

I look up at him, surprise evident on my face. "You've still been working with them?"

"Of course," he tells me and leans forward, placing a gentle kiss on my lips. "I know how important they are to you. Rob has sent men in to help with the minor repairs on homes and he's sent warriors in to help patrol since that night. Those wolves haven't been seen again."

"That's why your parents didn't stay, though. Benjamin granted your dad permission to go onto the rogue lands and he's leading the repair group. He thought you'd be mad if they sat around waiting for you to wake up instead of helping them."

"He's right," I say with a small smile. "I'm glad they're helping. "

"I offered to send royal funds but they've refused," he tells me. "Lunar Falls is footing the bill. There's a bit of distrust between the rogues and the royals still, though they all seem to love you."

"That's got to be pretty expensive," I muse aloud.

"It is, but they can afford it," he says with a small smile. "If it gets to be too much we will reimburse them and not tell the rogues. Rob didn't want to do that though. A lot of the families who were previously in Benjamin's pack have volunteered to help and he didn't want it to get back to any of them that royal funds were still involved."

His phone chimes and I can see his shoulders sag as he stands and moves back to the chair, phone in hand. Judging by his face, he's clearly annoyed by something.

"Want to tell me about it?" I ask with a smile.

He chuckles and shakes his head a little. "Two Alphas in the northeast started fighting about a territory line. It's escalated and now one is threatening a match to assume their pack."

"Aren't those a fight to the death?" I ask, shocked.

"Yup," Seth says. "I'm trying to diffuse the situation, but if they don't knock it off, I'm going to have to go out there to watch these two idiots fight to the death. All because one thought the border was 5 feet to the left."

"I can't believe anyone would risk their pack like that," I tell him, completely shocked by this. "How many matches like this have you had to watch before?"

"I think 8 now," he tells me, like that's not a big deal.

"Why is this allowed?" I ask him and he chuckles a little.

"You're so sweet, Molly. And good. And perfect," he begins to tell me. "But you grew up in the house of a top Alpha. No one would dare to even step into his lands, much less challenge him for his pack. But for the smaller packs, especially the ones who haven't evolved into more civilized packs... this is normal for them."

"But, WHY?" I ask, thoroughly confused as to why anyone thinks this is a good way to handle a land dispute.

"Werewolves used to be more wolf than human. Even in human form, we used to allow our wolves to reign. It's only been in the past hundred... hundred-fifty years that we began to live more like humans. For the most part, we're more kind and considerate. But in some packs, they just haven't advanced as quickly," he explains.

This still just doesn't make much sense to me. "So there are wolves in formed packs that live like rogues?"

"Yes, and no," Seth tells me. "I tried to just sit back and observe out there. They're advanced and civilized, living more human than wolf, but they live a more primitive lifestyle. I think that's more due to the lack of resources in the land they're on than choice, though."

"And the killing of an Alpha," I ask, starting to understand. "Just so that they can get a sliver of land."

"Killing is normal for wolves," he tells me, cautiously.

I sigh and look down at my hands in my lap. "Sage said that you've killed before. That my dad has killed. I'm guessing the other night wasn't the first time."

"You're right, it wasn't the first," he tells me flatly. "I have killed, though not sensely, and never a child. I'm sure your dad has. I've even seen your brother. We're wolves. It's in our nature, especially when it comes to protecting what's ours. These Alphas aren't fighting just over a little land. They're fighting for what they feel is right for their pack, the pack that they care for."

"I think that's why you're so sweet," he continues. "You spent all your life in human form, with no contact from your wolf. You're able to think logically and are able to forgive so easily."

I smile a small smile at him. "Maybe you're right." I'm about to continue when my stomach rumbles loudly, causing me to giggle. "Can I have real food for dinner?"

She chuckles at me. "What would you like, Love?"

"A cheeseburger!" I say brightly. "On sourdough, with gouda! And fries! And a beer!"

He laughs. "I'll have them make the food, but there's no chance you're getting a beer."

I pout at him and he just laughs at me as his eyes glass over and he contacts their cook.