

Chapter 0148

A single tear escaped. Deep down I know they all care and this is punishing everyone, but I can't back down, I need to get out of here and the sooner the better. I know I am not weak or useless, but that little voice in the back of my head that sounds suspiciously like Kaley likes to tell me otherwise. I just feel the absolute need to prove myself and my worth. No amount of words from them will make me believe I am good enough until I do.

I finally conceded and went to the door and grabbed the food he brought up after I was completely sure he and everyone else was out of my house. I eat slowly, not hungry, but I am tired of hearing how small I am from too much training and not eating enough. I leave the empty dishes outside my door, to show him I took the offering and appreciate the gesture.

After the most fitful sleep, I got up groggily and dressed half asleep. I was so tired I forgot to use the window and headed to my patrol spot out the front door. It shocked me for a minute when I bumped into a solid mass as I was walking down the sidewalk lost in my thoughts.

“Whoa there Smalls, I mean Skylar.” Cam cleared his throat and let go of me as quickly as he grabbed me. He tried for a smile, but it didn’t reach his eyes. “You headed for patrol.” I just nodded my head and looked away. I couldn’t take the look in his sad green eyes. “Do you want me to walk...” He gestured back over his shoulder. “Uh, nevermind. Okay, I’ll see you at school later. Training isn’t going to be the same without you, you know.” ①

“I agree.” I gave him a small smile, but couldn’t look him in the eye. “I’ll see you later.” I move around him and do my best to hold it together, I miss them. I knew I would, but this sucks so much more than I thought. I hurry faster to meet up with Gamma Brett, I really need a distraction now.

Breaking out into a run I took in the different shades of greens and browns of the forest and the earthy smell that always calms my nerves. I arrived too quickly at the patrol cabin, where everyone checks in before their patrol starts, a full ten minutes before Gamma Brett did, which gave me time to school my emotions.

“I should have known you’d get here before us.” He smiles at me and I return it before it hits me.

“Who’s us?” I look at him confused.

“We came across an issue yesterday and had to reorganize some of the groups. We figured with your background and level of training it wouldn’t be a problem to double up.” He shifts and Marnie is behind him looking worse for wear. Her hair is in a tangled mess on top of her head, her eye make-up is smeared and her well chosen outfit looks like she put it on in a hurry and maybe in the dark. The bright colors clash with the muted tones of the forest and aren’t something you want to wear out in the woods like this, unless you want to be spotted...by the enemy.

What the f*ck? I say to my wolf

You’re asking me? I was going to say the same thing. Watch your back, we don’t know why she was put with you. It could be an honest pairing and Gamma Brett thinks you won’t need as much or any help so he can focus on her. Or it’s a set up to spy on you for Kaley. She’s not supposed to be here, she doesn’t have her wolf yet.

I thought that’s what the Alpha said the other day. She must be here to spy, or cause problems. I close my eyes and take a deep breath.


“So what do you want us to do first?” I ask Gamma

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Brett, completely ignoring Marnie's presence.

“We are going to run the perimeter, in human form since Marnie can't shift yet, and that will give me a chance to show you ladies the things we are looking for while we are on patrol. The pattern we run is similar to what you were talking about with the Alpha King the other night, Skylar...”

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Marnie lets out a little squeak interrupting him. “You got to talk to the Alpha King?” Eyes wide at the thought.

“Uh, yeah. He stayed at the pack house so we had a couple interactions.” I kept my information brief and Gamma Brett looked at me with an eyebrow raised. I usually like to talk about strategy, what he doesn’t understand is I like talking with people who understand what I’m talking about. Marnie is not one of those people. I can at least say she shows up to training and does parts of the workouts, mostly stretching to get attention from the guys when she’s bent over suggestively, but there is no reason for her to be out here with us, she doesn’t like training, she doesn’t like to get dirty and she can’t shift yet. Maybe that’s why she is with Gamma Brett and I. If something happens we can protect her and defend together, rather than her being a liability that would get everyone killed.

“Like I was saying, we will run one of seven different patterns that surround and cross the territory. It keeps the patrol schedules less predictable and we focus on the pack territory as a whole, not just the

perimeter.”

We start jogging our portion of the perimeter, passing other teams on the way. Gamma Brett is keeping up a hushed commentary of what to look for without stopping our movement, giving us insights to basic tracking. Things I’ve studied in strategy and battle classes, but it is nice to put it to practical use.

“We are accomplishing a few things by patrolling. One is to scent the area so outside wolves know where the territory begins. Our situation is unique because we are surrounded by water on three sides. Land based packs define their territory by scenting. There are several small islands between us and the mainland and the mountains that run through the center of our area give us a good vantage point, but you can never be too careful. The mainland is only about a thirty to forty minute boat ride away on this side of our territory and not all the islands from here to there are inhabited, several are considered part of the National park our territory is on and can’t be built on. That doesn’t stop people from using them as pit stops on the way to us. The second reason is having teams overlap doesn’t give intruders much opportunity to pass through our patrol lines undetected. We are also looking for any disturbance in the foliage. There aren’t many small animals that stay here since wolves


are predators and they naturally steer clear, so broken branches and leaves could mean a wolf passed through. Pups also can smell the stronger scent here and know that this is the end of the territory and their boundary, it helps keep them safe if they wander off.”

We made it a whole 45 minutes before Marnie started asking when we are done and whining about leg cramps and being hungry and thirsty. It’s not even five in the morning yet and we all run a five hour shift. We have four hours to go. I will strangle her myself if she whines the rest of the time.

“I didn’t think we would be running the whole time or I would never have signed up to do this. And when I was told the Gamma would be my partner, I thought they meant Oliver.” She pouted with her lip out, not looking at Gamma Brett, knowing she probably offended him.

“What exactly did you think ‘patrol’ was? What did you think you were going to be doing out here with Oliver? We’re here to protect our pack from unwanted intruders, what did you expect?” I couldn’t help asking. Gamma Brett had to stifle a laugh.


“For sure not this. I thought we would be cuddled up monitoring some screens attached to security cameras or something. Kaley’s dad said Jeanie and I

 +15 BONUS

would be safer with Mateo or Oliver and he would make sure we were all paired up with the best and the men would do the real work, we were just here to observe.”

Then I turned to Gamma Brett, “I didn’t realize we signed up for this, I thought everyone had to run patrols. And since when can we make requests on assignments?” I look back at Marnie. “And what is this crap about the men doing the real work? You just weren’t planning to be helpful at all?” She winced a little and I looked back at Gamma Brett.

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