




Chapter 0304

We spent the next two weeks, when I wasn't working, walking around during the day, like a normal person touring the campus, interviewing students and talking to professors. At night we scoured each and every alleyway, doorway, hallway and any other 'way' that struck Nickolas' fancy. He was serious about knowing everything about the buildings that I would be in each day. He also had William tap into all of the security cameras and add a few when he wasn't satisfied with angles or placement or just the overall lack of security in general. He even pulled Alyssa in from whatever else she was working on to cover the campus. Jorge was the only one going back and forth between our team and whatever other part of this operation that was physically searching the forests.

Once he was satisfied he had as much control as possible over the situation, we went through the enrollment process, which I might add is a gigantic pain in the ass. I didn't have to worry about financial aid since 'my parents left me a trust when they died' or at least that was the story. Like Mina, my semester was paid in full by the Alpha King.

We also dove in to do full background checks on all of the professors and TA's that I would be interacting with. We needed to know as much as possible about the main players here on campus. With a program like Forestry and



Agriculture set on a campus that is surrounded by preserved lands and forests as far as the eye could see, there is no way someone here isn't involved in the kidnappings and the strange movements of this Rogue King guy. These forests stretch from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Maine and the more that I look into it, the closer I realize these guys probably are to my pack. This forest surrounds the campus, but runs from the southeast side to the border just north of the Blue Crescent pack island. The drive time is just under two hours and with the water surrounding my pack's island it would be easy to hide vehicles and observe if they had the right equipment. I make a note to talk to Xander and Alpha Reggie and report my findings so Alpha Lucas and the guys can expand their search and put plans in place to protect the pack. There has to be a connection or something we could work with at the very least.

I am kind of excited to see how college classes work, since I haven't been on a normal school track in a really long time. When I hit the 8th grade, the teachers who weren't under the thumb of Mr. Cunningham, or just smart enough to stay off his radar, made sure I was in the classes that I needed to be in. Well, they actually got me the work and credits for the classes I was meant to be in while appearing to be nonexistent and unwanted in the back of the room. By freshman year, as long as I wasn't supposed to be in a class Kaley was in, I let them move and adjust my schedule as they saw fit. I showed up to all the classes her and I were supposed to be in together to keep her from getting me in

more trouble. It did help that I was not the only advanced student so I had a reason to be in advanced classes, along with several other kids, and more importantly away from her. I was just able to keep it quiet in which advanced classes I was in since I didn't talk to anyone ever. ①

I have come to terms with the fact that I am not normal. My history isn't that of a normal teenage girl, my education is definitely not normal, my upbringing was one of neglect and abuse, but here, now, I realize that I wouldn't be on this journey and be able to help the way that I have been without all of that.

I can't say I'm thankful for the experiences, no one could be thankful for that. I am thankful for the few people who did see me and recognize my struggle, but didn't treat me like a victim that was fragile and broken. I was recognized as someone who needed a little help and for someone to give a sh*t.

"Alright, there have been movements in the wildlife refuge just northeast of the campus. William has cameras and motion detectors there and we caught a pattern of movement over the last three days." Nickolas starts talking the minute Mina and I walk into the kitchen wanting to grab a quick bite before heading to a 7am class.

"What do you mean movements?" I ask around a pop-tart hanging from my mouth and leaning out of the pantry.

"It appears that wolves are moving towards this area.

Problem is, like everything else, something is missing. We can't see any kind of gathering, just the literal movement across the screen. We know at least another 50 wolves have moved west through the refuge. They must be aware of our tracking systems."

"Weird. Are we sure they are not just wild wolves moving around and setting off our sensors?" Mina asks. He scoffs at her over his coffee. "What?! It's a legitimate question from someone who had never run an opp with you guys before. What are you looking for to define the difference between a werewolf and a wild wolf just living its best life in the forest?" 1

"The first, and most obvious, is the sheer size. Even female werewolves are significantly bigger than your average wild wolf. That's where we start. William, Alyssa and I will do a sweep of the area to catch any scents and see if there is anything familiar to scents we have found on campus, since we still can use scent to track here."

We both nod. "Then what?" I ask, now really curious since we are actually doing mission related things now and not just various forms of training and research.

"Then we bring in more team members and start tracking. This is where the real work begins. You two are going to have to maintain your school schedule as well as help out with the tracking. You both seem to be naturally gifted in that area and we might as well get you field ready on the


job.”

He seems to have accepted our roles in this whole mission and has stopped treating us like China dolls and more like team members with an actual purpose and job to do.

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Chapter 0305

This class is so boring! Why do they put the most boring class first thing in the morning? I have to take these prerequisite classes even though I have so many credits from High School, not all of them qualify so here I am. Ugh!

The communications professor is droning on and on and I have no idea what he is even saying. I have never not been able to pay attention in class before, and looking around I am not the only person having trouble with focus. The almost full class is mostly freshman here for the same reason as me, it's required. I'm jealous of Mina, she already has a few college credits so she doesn't have to suffer here with me. 1

We decided since she enrolled in the parks, rec and tourism program that I should do the forest ecology track. That way several of our classes will overlap, but we can canvas more people this way. We both lucked out and were able to get into some of our program classes, which puts us in close contact with many of the new wolves that have been coming into the territory recently. And there are a lot of wolves in our classes. I guess it makes sense though. Not all wolves have their jobs decided like the Alphas and other leaders and we always need people in jobs and places that can help protect us from humans and other species.

I have noticed that the wolves tend to corral together in my

classes and tend to look like your average muscle bound athlete, even the women. The humans, for the most part, give us a wide berth. It appears like your usual high school separation of groups, but I know it's the humans' natural nature to stay as far away from a major predator. Although I have never heard of a pack member harming a human for sport or more disgustingly, food. I don't know about rogue wolves. It's possible they would do anything to survive and based on what I've seen from this Rogue King, some of them don't have any problem harming what or whoever is in their way.

My afternoon ecology class goes straight outside for our first lesson. By the smell and look of my professor this is where he spends most of his time and would rather be. He handed out the syllabus and basically said if we couldn't figure that out on our own, we should find another program to be a part of and then brought us for a tour of the area we would be using for our projects and research this year.

"Nickolas, we're headed outside to tour part of the facility. Is there anything you want to know? I'll try to work it into the conversation."

"We want to know about the wildlife. Does it come onto the property regularly, how often will you come into contact, things like that. Let's see if the school has noticed a change in the wolf population. And keep an eye on the rogues while you ask, find the most fidgety one so we can keep an eye on them."

"On it."

This class was my favorite so far. The professor talks to us like we are peers not just students and his no nonsense approach to teaching is near and dear to my heart. The area we have for research is on about twenty five acres. Some of it is forested and some is a prairie that has been allowed to grow wild with tall grasses that are yellow now, but still standing strong after the harsh portion of winter. There are longer stalks that are probably the remnants of wild flowers. I bet this place is beautiful in full bloom. There are trails beaten into the grass where people walk to maintain the integrity of the land. I can feel my whole body relax just being out here. It's amazing.

"Professor Chance?" I call walking up to him as he leads us around a fenced area marked for another class. "Does the school restrict the wild life that comes through here or should we be prepared to come into contact with some animals?"

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Chapter 0306

"Are you afraid, Miss ... ?" He looks over his shoulder at me with the question.

"Makain. Skylar Makain, sir. And, no I'm not, sir, just curious."

"Sir? That makes me sound old, you a military kid or something?" He is definitely not old. Maybe Alpha Lucas' age. Old enough that he could have teenage or older kids, but aged well and in shape from the outdoor work he does. His sandy blonde hair is short on the top and sides, a simple cut to fit his outdoor lifestyle. He's not quite six feet tall, but still significantly taller than me, like everyone else.

"Something like that." I smile at the idea.

"Well, Miss Makain, we will more than likely come into contact with our wild friends, but this area is so heavily used that most stay away, just based on scent." He gives me a serious look, like he is communicating more with his eyes than his words. "Out of self preservation, most animals will stay away from areas that smell like humans or larger predators unless they are diseased or starving and have no other choice of survival."

"What types of animals will we see here? Big ones, I mean. I figure we will see little critters all the time."

“There are moose and black bear. Some mountain lions and lynx, but they stay away from the campus for the most part. Our largest population is wolves, and they have been here long enough that some have become curious about the humans on campus. Especially after a winter like the one we just had, their food supply is low and they are hungry, but we haven’t had a recorded attack in years.”

“Yeah, not having a recorded attack is very different from not having an attack at all.” I think to myself and my wolf. “And why does he look so pleased with himself?”

“Because he’s hiding something, I can feel it.”

“But he’s human, do you think he’s one of the ones that knows about shifters?”

“Maybe. I mean working in this field, he’s bound to come across us. I can’t put my finger on it, I don’t trust him, but I have a feeling we need to get close to him, like he has information even if he doesn’t realize it.”

“I trust your instincts, something is weird about him.”

None of the rogue wolves reacted to any of my questions, but I wasn’t sure they would. It was pretty harmless to begin with. I’ll just have to come up with things that are going to make them more uncomfortable as the semester goes on.

I keep asking mundane questions, to make it look like I am just overly curious and excited. I throw more wildlife

questions in too, not focusing on just wolves, but all of them. I don't know if I am doing a good job of asking for information and sounding nonchalant, but Professor Chance has answered everything without hesitation. I make a mental note of everything he said, not really sure what could be useful to the team or not.

We finish the tour and head back to the 'shed' to grab our things. I say shed loosely. That's what Professor Chance called it and there is a beautifully made sign over the door, but this place is anything but a shed. It is a massive 5,000 square foot barn with all the tools and equipment necessary to work these forests. It has gutters and rain barrels to collect rainwater and the roof is covered in solar panels, there is even a wind turbine to collect energy. Professor Chance says that it is not one hundred percent off the grid, but could be if needed.

"Hey! New girl, wait up." Someone shouts behind me as I start to walk away from the shed.

I stand up with my bag and look around before making eye contact with a very beautiful looking guy jogging straight at me, flanked by two friends. It reminds me of the guys and for a brief second I am homesick.

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