

## Chapter 0012

None of us knew what to say. There was every chance what she was saying could be a lie, yet I felt the truth of her words deep within my bones.

Now that she had revealed herself, I realized I recognized her name. Many years ago, before our father was killed in battle, he had sat me and my brother's down to go over the list of eligible she-wolves we might someday wish to breed with.

Anastasia Lasko of the Eclipse Pack had been at the top of the list.

Things were finally beginning to make sense. The pieces of the puzzle were clicking into place, painting the picture of Ms. Lasko's privileged life.

"You're running from your father." Knight and Damon looked my way, as did Ghost. A scowl flitted across Anastasia's face, a sign I was correct. "Why else would you be strapped for cash? What did he do, take away your credit card? Did he yell at his princess and send her running?"

Her pouty upper lip curled in a sneer, but she quickly schooled her features, burrowing the anger deep down and replacing it with a dark smirk.

"You don't know the first thing about me, Caius." The sound of her speaking my name, uttering it without using my title first sent a blistering wave of anger over me. "I ran because I had no choice, but I think there's something we can do to help one another. You get what you want, and I get what I want. Sounds nice, doesn't it?"

I ran my thumb along my lower lip, "How about this? I'm going to contact your father and offer to ship you back to him at a cost. I'll get what I want, and watch you face the consequences of your own actions."

A flicker of emotion heated her eyes, turning those baby blue into a deep sapphire. "My father will give you nothing, that I can promise you. He will take me without a second thought, and you won't see a lick of whatever it is you're in desperate need of. My way is better."

I didn't trust her words, nor the stunning package they came in. Women like her were rare, once in a lifetime things, so painfully beautiful that men tripped over themselves for a chance to merely speak to them.

I was smarter than that.

"And what exactly is your way, Anastasia?"

Her pupils grew as I growled her name, dilating with the same emotion she'd felt back in the clearing. She cleared her throat, the delicate column of her neck working as she swallowed.

"As I said, my father won't give you shit for returning me. I, on the other hand, will give you everything at my disposal. My lands, my money, my warriors." Knight's eyes flicked over to me, as did Damons. "So long as you don't intentionally harm them, my people are yours."

It was for my people, for the wolves going missing across the country, that I asked, "What are your conditions?"

Her brows quickly clashed, dropping into a scowl. "Therein lies the

problem. There's a law in place in my pack. I can't take my position as Luna unless I'm married."

Well, I certainly hadn't expected that.

"Marry me, Caius." She purred, her eyes dancing with cunning. "Or have one of your brothers do it. It doesn't particularly matter to me. We'll act as husband and wife for six months, and during that time you'll have access to my pack, people, and assets."

The thought of marriage in general, tying myself to someone after things ended so miserably with Marjorie, made me recoil. As I thought on it, I realized that this situation could be twisted to my benefit.

It wasn't a love match, and never would be. That made it safe, familiar. I could easily handle this, and at the end of it all, we'd simply go our separate ways.

She would get what she wanted, the position of Luna without the strings of whatever marriage she'd been forced into prior to her running, and I would locate the missing wolves, returning them to their families at long last.

However, there was one thing I needed to change.

"A year. Six months isn't worth the price of the car you stole from me."

I'd need more time to track down the missing wolves and identify who had been taking them in the first place.

She thought it over, tapping her chin with the tip of her nail. "Fine, a year."



"I'll have a contract drawn up," I nodded at Ghost, who swept from the room to call up our lawyer. "We will have to go about this the old-fashioned way. I'm not sure how long you've been on the run, but I'm sure you remember the ways of our kind."



Anastasia rolled her eyes, "Yes, yes, I know. You'll have to court me, and I'll have to titter and preen like the good little she-wolf I am. Trust me, I know how to smile pretty for the cameras."

Whistling low under his breath, Knight clapped his hands together. "Well, this just got fucking interesting."

"This is going to end horribly, I hope you both know." Damon sighed, "We're going to get slaughtered in the crossfire, I can already feel it."

A smug little smile crossed Anastasia's face. With the confidence of a lioness, she looked me dead in the eye and purred, "How's that for an empty-headed car thief?"

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