

The Alpha King\'s Huntress: Hunt The Red Lycan

Chapter 48: CHAPTER 46 Why Do You Smell Like A Lycan?

CHAPTER 46 Why Do You Smell Like A Lycan?

"Come on, let's try this store," Lily suggested, her eyes sparkling with excitement as she pulled Kasia into a boutique overflowing with colorful garments.

Kasia couldn't help but smile as she browsed the racks, selecting pieces she'd never dreamed of wearing before. The normalcy of the moment brought a sense of comfort, something that had been sorely lacking in her life since her parents' deaths.

"I've never really had the chance to do normal things like this, you know?" Kasia confided in Lily as they sat down on a plush bench, laden with clothes to try on. "Ever since my parents died, it's just been... surviving, and then I joined them, but I still felt like I was struggling. I don't know why I am talking about this now."

Lily's face softened, her gaze full of understanding. "I'm so sorry, Kasia. What happened to your parents?"

Kasia took a deep breath, feeling the familiar ache in her chest. "We were foragers, living off the land. One day, Lana and I went out to gather supplies, and we got lost. It took us hours to find our way back home. But when we did..." Her voice trembled, and she blinked back tears.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have asked. It's okay. We don't have to talk about this," Lily apologized.

"No, it's fine," Kasia reassured Lily, wiping the tears from her face. She wanted to tell her. Maybe if she finally told someone about it, she would feel better. "Our livestock were spooked, running amok. The door to our house was ripped off its hinges. I went in first. There was blood everywhere. Arm on the counter... I covered Lana's eyes so she wouldn't see what had become of our parents."

Lily reached out, pulling Kasia into a tight embrace. "I'm so, so sorry, Kasia. No one should have to go through that."

"Thank you," she whispered, taking solace in Lily's warmth. "It's just—I can't help but feel responsible."

"Kasia, listen to me," Lily said firmly, holding the younger woman by her shoulders. "None of this is your fault. If you were there, you would have died alongside your parents, and you would not have been there to take care of Lana."

"I lost my parents too," Lily shared quietly, her voice thick with emotion. "My stepparents murdered them. It took time, but eventually, the pain does fade. Not entirely, but enough to keep going."

Kasia sniffled, feeling a rush of gratitude for Lily's empathy and understanding. "I'm sorry for ruining the mood," she said, attempting a weak smile.

"Hey, you didn't ruin anything," Lily assured her, giving Kasia's hand a reassuring squeeze. "Now, let's do something to cheer both of us up. I think it's time we got your nails and hair done. When Ethan sees you with your new wardrobe and hair, he won't be able to keep his hands off you."

Kasia blushed at the mention of Ethan but nodded in agreement. The two women left the boutique with bags in hand, finding themselves at an upscale nail salon. As they settled into the plush chairs, Kasia felt a sense of normalcy that had been missing from her life for so long.

As the manicurist began working on Kasia's nails, she couldn't help but overhear a conversation between two women nearby. They spoke excitedly about the upcoming summer solstice, gossiping about how they were planning to pursue Ethan.

"I heard he prefers brunettes," one whispered eagerly.

"Well, I just dyed my hair last week," the other replied with a sly grin.

"Can you believe they're already planning to pursue the Alpha King?" The manicurist muttered to Kasia as she worked on her nails.

"It's all anyone can talk about nowadays," Kasia replied, rolling her eyes as she played along.

"Well, I, for one, am determined to catch his eye at the summer solstice celebration." Another woman chimed in from a nearby chair.

Anger flared within Kasia, her hands clenching into fists as she struggled to maintain her composure. She was aware that many women desired Ethan, but hearing these women openly discuss their intentions toward him ignited a possessive fury within her.

"Hey, it's okay," Deva whispered soothingly, sensing Kasia's distress. "You know where Ethan's heart lies. Don't let them get to you."

Kasia took a deep breath, forcing herself to relax. She focused on the rhythmic sensation of the manicurist filing her nails, allowing the sound to drown out the voices around her.

After finishing her nail and hair appointments, Kasia felt refreshed and rejuvenated. Lily noticed her lighter mood and smiled. "You look stunning, Kasia! Ethan is going to be speechless when he sees you."

"Thank you," Kasia replied, blushing slightly at the compliment.

"Let's grab something to eat before we head back, okay?" Lily suggested, and Kasia nodded in agreement.

As they stepped out of the salon, laughter and chatter from the city filled their ears. The sun began to dip towards the horizon, casting a warm glow over the streets. They had just started discussing where to eat when a black car abruptly pulled up in front of them.

Before either woman could react, strong hands reached out and yanked them into the vehicle. Kasia's heart raced as adrenaline surged through her veins. She instinctively moved into a defensive position, preparing to fight off their attacker.

"Whoa there!" A familiar voice rang out, followed by hearty laughter. Relief washed over Kasia as she recognized Milo's mischievous grin. "Luna Lily, it seems you need to work on your defense. You're a little rusty."

"Milo, what the hell? That was not funny!" Lily snapped, her pulse still racing from the sudden ambush.

"Aw, come on. I couldn't resist," Milo chuckled, his golden eyes gleaming with amusement. "Besides, you both reacted pretty well, considering." He playfully nudged Lily, who rolled her eyes but couldn't help smirking.

However, Kasia remained tense and alert. This unexpected meeting brought back unpleasant memories of her last encounter with Milo. As Milo continued laughing, he

suddenly froze, catching Kasia's scent. His expression changed from playful to serious in an instant as he turned to face her.

"Kasia?!" He exclaimed. "Why do you smell like a Lycan?"

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Milo frowned, confusion etched on his features. "How is that possible? You don't smell like a human anymore."

"Long story," Kasia replied, glancing away from him and out the window at the blurred city lights. She felt exposed and vulnerable under his scrutiny.

"Hey, I've got time," Milo said, leaning back in his seat with a casual air. He studied Kasia intently for a moment before asking, "Where are you headed?"

Lily chimed in, her voice soft and hesitant. "We were going to grab dinner. You're welcome to join us if you'd like."

Kasia shook her head, dismissing the suggestion. "That would compromise your cover, Milo. We can't risk it."

"About that," Milo began with a smirk. He reached up and removed his contacts, revealing striking gold eyes that burned with intensity. Next, he pulled off his blond wig, displaying

his true hair color—black, cropped short, and messy. Kasia blinked in surprise at the transformation.

Finally, Milo took a cloth and wiped his face clean of makeup, unveiling claw marks running diagonally across his cheek. Kasia felt her breath catch in her throat as she took in his real appearance, so different from the man she had known before.

"We all have our secrets," Milo said, locking his gaze on Kasia's shocked expression. "I hope revealing what I really look like will motivate you to be honest with me. "Your secret's safe with me. I work for the Alpha King, not the Hunters."

"Fine," she said, her voice barely more than a whisper. "But not here. Somewhere private."

Nestled between the towering skyscrapers, the small mom-and-pop restaurant felt like an oasis of warmth and comfort in the heart of the bustling city. As they stepped inside, the rich aroma of home-cooked meals enveloped them, a stark contrast to the cold, impersonal atmosphere of the limousine they had just left.

Milo led the way to a booth near the back, his golden eyes scanning the dimly lit interior as if searching for potential threats. Kasia slid into the seat across from him, her mind still reeling from his unexpected transformation. Lily hesitated for a moment before joining them, her dark gaze flickering between Milo and Kasia with apprehension.

"You two have a very personal relationship," Lily assumed.

"Yes, I trained Kasia and Lana. I would say one of the best hunters I've trained," Milo explained. The waiter walked over. "Whiskey, neat for me. Ladies?"

"Cranberry vodka," Kasia ordered.

"Strawberry lemonade," Lily chimed in.

The waiter nodded and hurried away, leaving the trio to their tense silence.

"Three years ago," Kasia began, her voice barely audible over the hum of conversation around them, "the Hunter scientists distributed experimental pills to some of us. Do you remember?"

Milo's brow furrowed as he considered her question, his fingers tapping rhythmically on the table. "Yeah, I remember. They were supposed to help hunters recover faster from injuries. But there were complications. They stopped giving them out," he confirmed, his expression clouding with concern. "What about it?"

"Those pills...they never stopped giving them out. I think they're what turned me into a lycan." Kasia's admission hung heavy in the air.

Milo's face paled, his tapping fingers falling still. "I've heard rumors about that," he admitted quietly. "It was why Lana never wanted to take them."

"Wait. They offered them to Lana too?" Kasia questioned.

Milo nodded. "Yes, she never took them. She thought something was off. I received an order to locate the few individuals who took those pills, as they vanished during their missions. You're the only one I know who's survived the transformation."

Lily frowned and pressed her lips into a thin line. "That's not good, Kasia," she murmured. "If the Hunters find out, they'll come after you."

"Maybe not," Milo interjected, his gaze flicking between Kasia and Lily. "There's more to this story than you know."

"Of course there is," Lily shot back, her frustration evident in the sharpness of her tone. "You don't just show up out of nowhere without a reason, Milo. What aren't you telling us?"

Milo sighed, running a hand through his short black hair. "The Hunters still have Kasia on the K.O.S. list," he said quietly, his golden eyes filled with regret.

Kasia's heart clenched painfully in her chest. "Why are they so upset about me?" she demanded, her voice trembling with emotion.

Milo replied solemnly, "Because you defied orders, Kasia. You inspired people to question the Hunters' authority, and they want to make an example out of you."

"Then we'll just have to make sure they don't find out," Lily said fiercely. "We'll fake Kasia's death."

"That won't work," Milo answered.

"And why not?" Lily questioned.

"They want her head, literally," Milo explained, "to put on display for anyone who thinks to betray the organization."

Lily looked at Milo in horror, then back at Kasia. Kasia felt her heart skip a beat, blood pounding in her ears. She swallowed hard. "That's a little excessive."

"There's something else you should know," he said, his golden eyes searching Kasia's face for any hint of recognition. "The Hunters have been tracking a red lycan."

Kasia fought to keep her expression neutral, but it was clear from Milo's gaze that he had already picked up on her distress. Beside her, Lily clenched her fists in her lap, her knuckles turning white.

"Yes, we know about her." Her voice wavered slightly, but she held Milo's gaze steadily.

"Her?" Milo echoed, surprise flickering across his features as he took a huge gulp of his drink. "Nadia gave me the order to find and kill the red lycan."

Kasia stared down at her hands, struggling to contain the whirlwind of fear and uncertainty. Nadia, the woman who had mentored her and taught her everything she knew about being a hunter, was now hunting her. The knowledge weighed heavily on her, filling her with a sense of betrayal and loss that left her breathless.

Milo studied them both carefully, his brow furrowing in concern. "I can try to buy some time and gather more intel," he offered quietly, the sincerity in his voice leaving no doubt as to his loyalty. "But I won't be able to play both sides forever. And I won't kill Kasia—or the red lycan."

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CHAPTER 48 Someone Got Here Before Us

The moon cast an eerie glow on the ground as Deanna, Janet, Lana, and a few warriors made their way through the dense forest. The air was thick with tension, and Lana led them with quiet determination. Sweat beaded on her brow, but she focused on the task at hand. "Remember," she whispered to the others, "the closer we get to the hunters' base, the more traps there'll be. Stay alert."

An impatient warrior, his face contorted in frustration, grumbled under his breath. He'd grown tired of following Lana's slow pace, and he decided to speed forward. Lana's hazel eyes flashed a warning, and she called out to him. "Don't! You don't know where the traps are." But her words fell on deaf ears.

Just as the warrior was about to step into a well-hidden pit filled with sharp spikes, Lana lunged at him, pushing him aside. In doing so, her arm grazed one of the silver-tipped spikes, and she winced, silver oozing from the wound.

"Idiot!" Lana hissed as she clutched her injured arm. "You could've been impaled!"

The warrior gazed wide-eyed at her, realizing how close he'd come to death. His bravado had vanished, replaced by a healthy dose of fear. "I'm sorry," he mumbled. "I just... I didn't think it would be this slow."

"Slow is better than dead," Lana snapped, cradling her arm. She knew that even a small amount of silver could kill one of their kind within seconds. And she was all too aware that their position may have been compromised. "Your recklessness could've cost us everything."

Deanna nodded approvingly at Lana's stern tone. "She's right. Let's not make any more mistakes." The group quickly formed a defensive formation, ready to face any threats that might come their way.

But when no attack came, they collectively breathed a sigh of relief. Deanna and one of the warriors promptly bandaged Lana's arm, taking care to remove the silver from the wound. Once they were satisfied with the treatment, they resumed their cautious advance towards the hunters' base.

As they crept through the dense foliage, the air grew heavy with the smell of gunpowder and blood. Everyone's senses were on high alert as they moved forward in silence. It was clear that whatever awaited them at the base would not be pleasant.

When they reached the perimeter of the base, the group paused, taking in the gruesome scene before them. Bodies littered the ground, lifeless and mangled in various states of disarray. Debris scattered everywhere, the base itself decimated, its walls crumbling.

"It looks like someone got here before us," Janet observed quietly, her voice tinged with both shock and curiosity.

Lana furrowed her brow, surprised by the revelation. "Did they have plans to kill them all?" she asked, trying to piece together the puzzle of who could have executed such a brutal attack.

Janet remained silent, her gaze sweeping over the grisly scene but offering no answer. It was clear that whoever had been responsible for this carnage had left little behind for them to work with.

"Alright, everyone, listen up," Lana called out, her voice authoritative despite the pain she felt in her arm. "We need to split into three teams: one to search the labs—I'll lead that one since I know where it is; one to investigate the corpses; and one to get and clear the camera footage."

"Time's not on our side," she continued, her hazel eyes scanning the group of warriors. They probably sent out a distress signal prior to the attack. That gives us only a few minutes to complete these tasks before reinforcements arrive."

The group nodded in understanding, and with urgency, they divided themselves among the three tasks. Lana noticed the way Deanna and Janet exchanged a silent, knowing glance before joining separate teams—Deanna went to get the footage, Lana to the labs, and Janet to examine the corpses.

"Let's move," Lana urged, leading her team towards the remnants of the lab. As they picked their way through the wreckage, she couldn't help but feel a pang of guilt for the secrets she was keeping from her sister, Kasia. She knew that if those truths came to light, their relationship might be irreparably damaged. But there was no time to dwell on that now; she had to focus on the mission at hand.

Meanwhile, Janet's team began the grim task of examining the fallen hunters, searching for any clues as to who or what had annihilated them with such ruthless efficiency. Their faces were twisted in disgust and horror at the carnage, every new discovery more chilling than the last.

In the distance, the sound of an approaching helicopter cut through the air, signaling that their window of opportunity was rapidly closing. Realizing the urgency of their situation, Lana's heart pounded in her chest, knowing they had to act quickly to avoid the hunters' allies catching them.

"Come on, we're almost there!" Lana shouted, pushing herself and her team onward. With each passing second, the stakes grew, and she knew they couldn't afford any mistakes. Their lives—and the lives of those they cared about—hang in the balance.

Hurrying against the clock, Lana's team finally reached the entrance to the hidden underground bunker. The air was thick and musty, filled with the stench of mold and decay. Shelves lined the walls, stacked high with dusty books and strange, unknown artifacts. In the distance, the sound of the helicopter drawing closer sent a shiver down Lana's spine.

"Keep your eyes peeled," Lana whispered, her breath visible in the cold air. "This could be our only chance to find out what happened here and who did it."

The team split up again, each member searching frantically through the labyrinthine underground tunnels, hoping to find any clues left behind. Deanna's team had already managed to extract a few CCTV recordings, but their information was limited—the attack was executed too quickly for them to capture the culprits on camera.

Meanwhile, Lana and her team had uncovered a small hidden chamber, the walls adorned with ancient symbols and runes. They knew this place was significant, but they had no time to decipher its meaning.

"We need to get this information and leave before the chopper gets here," Lana said, her voice hard. "Once we know who we're dealing with, we can better prepare ourselves for whatever comes next."

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CHAPTER 49 I'll Be Careful

"Are you sure about telling him now before finding out anything else?" As they neared the door, Lana asked nervously. "We haven't even done any research on the paperwork."

"Positive," Janet replied, her voice steady. "We need to tell Alpha Ethan what we found immediately, so we can figure out our next moves."

Deanna nodded in agreement as they stopped in front of the heavy wooden door. With a deep breath, Lana knocked firmly, and after a moment, the door creaked open, revealing Ethan seated behind his desk and the pack doctor, Brian, with him.

"Come in," Ethan said calmly. "I am happy to see that we didn't have casualties."

"Thanks to Lana. She was right about those traps," Deanna said as she entered the room, followed by Janet and Lana. "We have a report on the base we found."

"Go on," Ethan prompted. "What did you find out?"

"Not much. The base was pretty much destroyed," Deanna answered.

"What do you mean?" Ethan asked.

"It's not just us that have a problem with the hunters. When we got there, all the hunters were dead and dismembered," Deanna explained. "We couldn't decipher anything from the security footage. Movements were too quick. I am guessing an elite task force. They didn't even leave a scent trail. With the Summer Solstice only a few days away, I don't think it's a coincidence. It felt like we were set up, and if we weren't, whoever did was truly stirring the pot."

Ethan frowned in thought, his brow furrowing. "I agree, but we can't cancel the festival. It would attract unwanted attention. We have to act like nothing has happened."

"I don't think it would be wise to have it this year," Deanna countered. "This feels a lot like it could be a repeat of the Moonlight Sanctum. I don't think we can handle another attack on our people before we fall apart."

"Then, we won't hold it on pack grounds this year. We'll move it to the city," Ethan declared.

"Are you sure that's a good idea?" Janet asked skeptically, her eyes wide with concern. Ethan had been making a lot of rash decisions lately, and it was beginning to stress her out as the constant voice of reason. "The city is not as secure. We don't have enough people to secure a whole city. What if something goes wrong?"

"Actually," Lana chimed in, her voice strong and confident, "I think it's a perfect idea. The city is neutral ground. If the hunters dared to attack, all the supernaturals within the city would band together."

"Very well," Ethan said, making up his mind. "We'll hold the festival in the city."

"We will prepare the pack for the changes and keep an eye out for any signs of trouble," Janet reluctantly says.

Ethan continued, turning his attention back to the investigation: "Did you find anything about the pills? Did you find any of our missing people?"

"No, we only found corpses. All of them were humans," Lana stated. "We're still investigating the statues and markings we found at the base, but it's clear that dark magic has been used." The mention of dark magic raised the hair on the back of Ethan's neck, sending a shiver down his spine. He involuntarily snarled at the mention.

"Dark magic? Are you sure?" He growled, his voice low and dangerous. Lana pulled photos from the folder she was holding. She offered it to Ethan and Brian. Brian looked at the picture and frowned. It was indeed dark magic. He had seen those symbols before.

"Is it fae magic?" Ethan asked.

"I'm not sure. It has been a long time since I've seen symbols like these. I will have to go through my records," Brian replied.

"Is there anything else?" Ethan questioned.

Lana reached into her pocket and pulled out a small vial filled with a glowing blue liquid. "It seems the scientists have progressed from pills to an injection," she explained, holding the vial up for everyone to see.

"Wait, what are we talking about here? What pills?" Deanna demands. She felt as if she was missing vital information. Janet looked to Ethan for approval, and Ethan nodded.

"Hunters have been creating pills that could turn a human into a lycan," Janet clarifies, and Deanna's eyes widen. "That was one of the reasons why we raided the base."

Brian interjected, not giving Deanna an opportunity to ask any questions. "We should research the liquid as soon as possible. If it does have the ability to turn humans, I need to work on creating an antidote."

"I agree," Lana said, her eyes locked onto the vial in her hand. "But I think I should be the one to test it."

Ethan's head snapped up, his eyes narrowing in concern. "Absolutely not, Lana. You have no idea what that is or what it could do to you."

"You can research this all you want to, but you won't truly know what it does until you test it. I'm the only one who can take it and find out what it does," Lana argued.

Deanna stepped forward, placing a protective hand on Lana's shoulder. "You've already proven yourself a loyal pack member, Lana. You don't need to put your life in danger for our sake."

Lana gently removed Deanna's hand and stepped away from her. "Do you think I'm that shallow?"

"No, I was just saying..." Deanna started, and Lana raised her hand to stop her from speaking.

"I'm not doing it for recognition or to prove anything. I'm doing it to stop the Hunters from harming more people."

Ethan didn't like the idea, but he had to admit that Lana made good points. As he hesitated, Janet's voice filled his mind,

speaking telepathically.

"Alpha, you have to forbid her from doing this. It's too dangerous. Think about your relationship with Kasia. If anything happened to her, Kasia would never forgive you," Janet pleaded.

"Alright, Lana," Ethan said finally, ignoring Janet's insistence. "You can test it out, but not until after the Summer Solstice."

Lana nodded, grateful for his trust in her abilities. "I understand, Alpha. I promise I'll be careful."

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Chapter 52: CHAPTER 50 Dance With Me

CHAPTER 50 Dance With Me

The sun blazed high in the sky, casting a golden hue over the city as the Summer Solstice festival commenced. Colorful banners and streamers adorned the buildings, while stalls lined the bustling streets, offering food, games, and trinkets to the celebrating crowd. Laughter and lively music filled the air, setting a jovial atmosphere that reached every corner of the city. At the heart of it all, Ethan scanned the festive scene before him.

"Relax, Ethan," Garrett encouraged with a knowing smile. "This isn't something you haven't hosted before."

Ethan let out a strained chuckle, doing his best to maintain a calm facade. "Easier said than done," he admitted, rubbing the back of his neck. His mind was preoccupied with thoughts of Kasia, who had been avoiding him for days. The uncertainty gnawed at him.

"You're still worrying about Kasia, aren't you? Lily says she has been super busy with Kasia to get her prepared for today. She's not avoiding you on purpose," Garrett stated.

"She has never not talked to me, though," Ethan responded.

"She's your mate. If she was through with you, she would've rejected you," Garrett confirmed. "After the festival, you get to claim her as your Luna, and you can be done with hiding."

As if summoned, Kasia and her sister Lana, accompanied by their friends Lily and Janet, stepped into view. They were a stunning sight, each clad in their own unique summer ensemble. Kasia wore a flowing skirt reminiscent of a sunlit meadow, while Lana exuded ethereal charm in a maxi skirt adorned with delicate floral patterns. Lily and Janet, in their breezy shorts and tank tops, embodied the playful spirit of the season.

"Wow, they look amazing," someone murmured nearby, echoing the sentiments of the gathered crowd. Heads turned as they strolled by, and whispers of admiration followed. "Did you see their outfits?" one person exclaimed softly. "So stylish," another agreed, their eyes following the quartet with admiration and awe.

Kasia, in particular, stood out among them, radiating a magnetic presence that pulled Ethan's gaze to her like a moth to a flame. If one didn't know better, they would have assumed she was Luna herself, commanding such admiration and awe with her mere presence.

"Isn't that Kasia?" someone whispered nearby, confirming Ethan's suspicions.

"Indeed," another voice responded, awe dripping from their words. "She looks stunning."

"Like the moon herself has graced us with her presence," a third voice chimed in, and Ethan couldn't help but silently agree.

He watched as Kasia mingled with the crowd, her hazel eyes meeting his for a brief moment before she quickly looked away. The subtle discomfort in her expression sent a pang of regret through him, knowing their unresolved feelings were the cause.

"Go to her, Ethan," Garrett urged gently, noticing his Alpha's longing gaze. "The festival will carry on without you for a while."

Ethan hesitated, torn between his duty as Alpha King and his desire to be near Kasia. But as he saw her laugh with her friends, a radiant smile lighting up her face, he knew he couldn't stay away any longer. Taking a deep breath, he strode towards her, determined to bridge the gap that had grown between them.

When he was close enough, he called out "Kasia," making her turn towards him. Her eyes widened in surprise, but she quickly composed herself.

"Alpha Blackwood," she greeted him politely, her voice betraying none of the turmoil he knew must be present within her.

"When did you become so formal?" Ethan inquired, trying to break down the walls she had built around herself.

"You are the Alpha King, aren't you? I am addressing you properly. I have no claim over you," Kasia responded, causing Ethan to frown.

"The mark on my neck proves otherwise," Ethan retorted.

"The mark that you hide," Kasia counters. Her eyes flicker, and he realizes that her wolf must've taken over for a split second.

"Dance with me," Ethan says.

A flicker of hesitation crossed her face, but she eventually acquiesced, placing her hand in his as they moved onto the dance floor. As they swayed to the music, the world seemed to fade away, leaving only the two of them locked in a delicate waltz of emotions.

"Kasia, I've missed you," Ethan admitted softly. "I've only been doing this to protect you. We won't have to do this anymore. After you go through the trials set forth by the Council, I will claim you as my Luna."

"What about the other women? Don't think I haven't noticed how many came to see you leading up to the festival," Kasia asked.

"They mean nothing to me. No one is going to replace me," Ethan answered. "Look, there is something that I need to tell you."

Just as Ethan was about to confess his feelings, a warrior approached them, urgency etched on his face. "Alpha Blackwood, I apologize for the disruption, but we urgently require your presence."

"Go," Kasia whispered, her eyes understanding. "Duty first. We can talk later."

Ethan nodded reluctantly, hating to leave her side but knowing he had no choice. He released her hand and followed the warrior through the throngs of people.

As they reached Garrett and Deanna, Ethan became annoyed. Why couldn't they reach out through the pack links? "What was so important that it couldn't be said through the pack link?" he asked. Ethan then noticed their serious expressions and felt a knot form in his stomach.

"We have a rat among our ranks," Deanna growled.

"Rogues," Garrett added. "A huge pack of rogues has arrived at the festival."

Ethan frowned, not fully grasping the problem. "What's wrong with that? Everyone is welcome here. In the past, this was how rogues found a pack to join."

"Normally, yes," Deanna agreed, shifting her weight uneasily. "But Kenneth is the leader of this particular pack."

Ethan's eyes darkened at the mention of the name. Memories of past confrontations flashed through his mind.

Kenneth, the traitor to their people. The very wolf that chose power over his own kind. He was dangerous and cunning. His presence at the festival could only imply that he was here for Lily.

"You need to leave and take Lily with you," Ethan ordered.

"No," Garrett stated. "We ran before. We won't make that mistake again. We will stand and fight if it comes to it." He missed the opportunity to snap Kenneth's neck for what he did to Lily. Garrett wouldn't make the same mistake twice.
