Chapter 751 An emergency signal (1)

Damon looked at his adorably wet and naked mate in the shower, and he would pounce on her if not for her dejected expression that told him she needed comforting.

He gently brushed soaking hair from her cheek that was stuck there.

"If you give in to your impatience, they win," Damon said.

Talia knew that Damon was right. Impatience could lead to failure. "I know. It's just… if not for Lulu, this evening would be a complete flop." She pressed her forehead on his chest. "I'm guilty of pushing Lulu away even though I said she doesn't need to take the blood oath. Lulu is one of our people. She is one of MY people, yet I acted per unfounded prejudice."

Damon wrapped his arms around Talia.

"The fact that she helped tonight doesn't mean she is not…"

"Stop," Talia interrupted him. "Don't say it. If you don't trust her, she wouldn't be my guard."

Damon nodded in agreement. Lulu trained hard and completed flawlessly too many missions for Damon to doubt her. The whole soccer team of the Dark Howlers pack was formed of elite warriors with a pristine track record. They would use the pretense of sports events to move around, gather information, and execute covert tasks.

"She must have her reasons," Talia said. "Instead of asking for an explanation, we assumed that she was hiding something, and I hate it. I hate the idea of an oath where others' lives depend on if they are ready to become my shields. They should watch themselves first. Everyone should."

Damon pressed his lips on Talia's forehead. "That's what makes you a great Luna and an even better Alpha." She didn't see herself as better when compared to others.

"I'm sure that Lulu noticed we were wary of her, and she still came to help us tonight. I don't want to hear that she helped us with an ulterior motive. I will talk to Lulu. Tomorrow." Talia said with resolve. "This will be cleared up, and we can all be friends again."

"If you say so." Damon was not confident that just a talk would fix anything, but it was a start.

Talia looked up at Damon and pouted. "I think that pretending we were not mates was a mistake. I wanted to show up at the party with you, just as Cristian and Michelle came, holding each other. I want people to know we are inseparable."

Damon's eyes fell on the left side of Talia's neck that showed his mark now because she had removed the makeup. He put his index finger there and traced the edges, knowing that the light touch was sending electric currents down her body.

The way her eyes fluttered to close made his cock lurch painfully. His kitten was ready for him.

"We talked about this before, kitten. The less they know, the more advantage we have. But I also want you to keep in mind that we can stop this charade anytime. Just say the word, and I will shout from the rooftops that you are mine."

Talia looked up at him, her eyes were cloudy from desire.

"Make love to me, Damon."

He had no objections.

…

'Piiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!'

A loud high-frequency noise made Damon and Talia jolt out of their sleep.

Talia pressed her hands over her ears, but it didn't help much.

"What is this!?" Talia shouted at Damon.

He was off the bed and grabbing his jeans to put them on.

"It's an emergency signal we use when humans are present. They can't hear it."

Talia was alarmed. "An emergency? What kind of an emergency?"

"I don't know. I'm going to check with Max."

"Wait! I'm coming!"

Urgent knocks were heard on the door, and Meg's voice sounded in Talia's head, 'Are you alright?'

'Yes, yes… there is an emergency. Damon and I are going to see what's going on…'

By the time Talia and Damon got out of the room, they met Keith, Caleb, Lulu, Meg, and Kai in the hallway. They all headed toward the commotion on the main floor. In the lobby, they found Max, Tatiana, Tony, Kalina, Beta Oliver, James, Cornelia, Maya, Caden, and a few other people.

"Stay in your rooms and let us handle this," Maddox said while waving toward the stairs, frustrated that no one listened and that his head was still woozy from all the drinking.

Alpha Edward, Luna Layla, and a few others were coming down the stairs, and Maddox turned to talk to them. "It's an internal thing. We will take care of it. There is no need to cause commotion and alert humans who are staying here." The group on the stairs paused, and then they returned to their rooms.

James pretended not to notice eye signals from Alpha Edward, and he shut down the mind-link so that he couldn't hear whatever his father wanted to say.

"What is going on?" Damon asked when it was just their group left in the hallway.

"Rogues," Beta Oliver responded. "Our patrols in the North-West area were attacked and are asking for reinforcements. The teams that went there are reporting a high number of intruders. We will head there to verify the situation."

"What's in there?" Talia asked Beta Oliver.

"Shelters."

Talia didn't get it. "Why would they attack shelters?"

It was Tatiana who responded. "They are rogues. Our shelters have food, clothes, and other supplies. It's not the first time. We will handle it."

Maddox looked at Tatiana with admiration. She was acting like a real Luna, which she was. But she was pregnant, so Maddox advised, "Stay here and ensure our special guests are not alerted."

Tatiana knew that 'special guests' were humans.

"Don't you think it's strange they are attacking on the night when a major event was organized here?" Talia asked.

"That is exactly why they would attack now," James said from the side. "There are humans here, and even though rogues don't want to risk exposure, they know that we won't risk it either. Humans present are associated with the Blue River pack, and Alpha Maddox won't put them in danger. That means the warriors will split up to defend the shelters, pursue the intruders, and guard the packhouse. And also, with the party just finished, we have a lot of drunk people whose reaction times are messed up."

At this last comment, almost everyone looked at Maddox, whose messy hair didn't help portray a reliable Alpha.

Maddox's eyes lost focus for a moment, and he cursed under his breath. He gave Tatiana a quick kiss. "Our warriors are guarding the packhouse. I need you safe. Stay here, for yourself and for our pup."

Tatiana didn't like Maddox leaving, and she didn't like that he was not sober, but she also got the mind-link that they had casualties, which was NOT acceptable. As an Alpha, he had to go.

"Take care," Tatiana pleaded. There were so many emotions and warnings behind those two words, and she hoped that Maddox got them all.

"I will go with him," Damon volunteered, and then he turned to Talia. "Stay with Tanya."

Talia's eyes were wide as saucers, and her heart thundered wildly. She didn't know the details, but it involved danger, and Damon wanted them to separate?

"I'm also coming," she said sternly. Seeing that Damon was about to object, Talia reminded him, "I am Alpha Natalia Moonrider, and you can't tell me to stay back."

Chapter 752 The ugly future

Damon looked at Talia helplessly. Her stubborn expression told him that this won't be easy.

"You are Alpha Natalia Moonrider," he confirmed. "I am not telling you to stay back on a whim. We can't have all Alphas going on the field and leaving this place unguarded. Tanya is pregnant and shouldn't use her aura. There are only a few Alphas present we can trust. You might think that us being here is more than enough to ensure everyone's safety, but the packhouse is large and full of guests, and some of them might be hostile. If anything happens, you can protect everyone in this packhouse."

"Why can guys go while women stay behind?" Talia protested.

"Maya will come."

"Maya and who else?" Talia asked. "Is any male staying behind?"

Damon made a face. "Tony will join us as a good practice of what he learned with us during training, and Kalina will stay with her pregnant sister and the rest of her family."

"Damon is right," James said. "I will also go. The more of us get out there, the faster the situation will be resolved, and we will minimize casualties."

"You should stay here, young Alpha James," Beta Oliver said. "If anything happens to you, we won't be able to explain it to Alpha Edward." He didn't trust anyone from the Red Moon pack.

Instead of responding to him, James looked at Damon. "I need to go. You know why."

Damon stared at James blankly, and he snapped to his senses when Talia spoke into his mind, 'Marcy is here.'

"Riiiiight," Damon said. He forgot about Marcy. Considering that Alpha Edward and Luna Layla were in the guestroom on the second floor, if this incident exposed Marcy, they would have a whole new shitshow on their hands. And James could prevent it.

"James will come with us," Damon confirmed.

Beta Oliver couldn't believe this. Since where was Damon friendly with anyone from the Red Moon pack?

James kissed Cornelia's cheek, and he spoke softly into her ear, "Cora, you stay here with Alpha Natalia, and don't use your powers."

Cornelia nodded obediently and gave him a quick kiss.

James knew that she agreed too quickly, but he didn't have time to convince her further.

James removed his shirt and gave it to Cornelia with, "Keep it for me when I return." As soon as they reach the cover of the forest, they will shift into wolf forms, and he didn't want to tear that shirt.

Talia was still processing Damon's words about how she should stay in the packhouse while he was out there fighting rogues. She knew that Damon's words made sense, but she couldn't agree with him either.

Talia stared at Damon, who discussed details with Beta Oliver, Caden, Maya, Tony, James, Kai, and Maddox.

Other than confirming where they would be heading, Damon was coordinating to ensure that things were calm in the Dark Howlers pack and the Spring Leaf pack. Those two packs combined borders with the Blue River pack, and a breach in security in any of them could cause trouble for the others.

Talia could feel the darkness gripping her heart. Somehow, every time they parted, she feared it might be their last one, and now there was danger, rogues... and she could see him in the forest with wolfsbane laced knife in his abdomen as the past replayed in her mind.

Talia turned to Keith. "Keith, you and guys stay close to Damon."

"They will stay here to protect you," Damon said right away.

Talia shook her head. "The trouble is where you are going. Isn't that why you are telling me to stay here where it's safe?" She continued through their mind-link, 'I know you fear I will use my abilities and get exposed, and I can accept that. But if you want me to stay where it's safe, I want them to go with you and watch your back.'

Damon puffed his cheeks. 'They are your guards!'

'No, they are not. Alpha Natalia came with Cornelia, Meg, and Kai. Keith, Caleb, and Lulu are part of your party. Besides, didn't you hear that the more people go there, the faster the situation will be resolved? They are capable warriors. Take them with you.'

After a moment of deliberation, Damon decided. 'Keith will stay here. The rest...'

'No, Damon,' Talia pleaded. 'Keith will go with you. It will make me feel better. Please. If one of them must stay, give me Lulu.'

With some people already walking out, Damon realized they were running out of time.

'Fine,' Damon agreed.

This time, they didn't care if anyone was watching. They hugged each other and kissed, and Talia released him with difficulty.

'Kitten,' Damon's voice sounded in Talia's head as she watched him run into the darkness after Maddox, Tony, and Oliver, together with Caden, Kai, Keith, Caleb, and a few more figures. 'Stay close to Lulu. Don't leave the packhouse. Don't use your powers. Don't expose yourself. Someone is always watching, and I don't need to remind you that Alpha Edward is on the second floor...'

Talia would complain about all those restrictions if she didn't know that Damon only meant well.

"Alright," Tatiana said. "Since everyone is awake, how about some herbal tea to help us relax while we wait for this situation to be resolved?"

"How are casualties?" Meg asked. She needed to do something. Meg was a Beta and a capable warrior with the ability perfect for obliterating enemies, but she was pregnant, and she couldn't go there. She had never felt so useless.

Tatiana shook her head, indicating that it was not good. One life lost was too many. "The pack hospital is on alert, ready to treat injured, and... we will know more soon."

They all moved to the living room.

Tatiana sat between Kalina and Varya on the sofa. Cornelia, Meg, Talia, and Lulu were also there, and a few more people would occasionally come, including Omegas who were bringing snacks and drinks that no one touched.

Tatiana's eyes would lose focus every minute as she was getting updates, but the time was dragging as they all were tense while waiting to hear what was going on.

'You need to decide, girl,' Liseli's voice sounded in Talia's mind.

Talia could sense Liseli was on edge, but her wolf didn't speak so far.

'Decide on what?' Talia asked.

'Will you keep your abilities a secret and watch your loved ones get hurt, or will you jump into the fray and remove the dangers.'

Talia exhaled dejectedly. It's not like she was not wondering the same thing many times before, but it was always as something distant, in the future she was hoping will never come. Yet now the ugly future was here, staring her in the face, mocking her for sitting on that comfy sofa chair and doing nothing other than worrying about Damon and Maddox and Tony and James and many others who were out there risking their lives.

If she knew about the dangers lurking in the shadows, it would be an easy decision, but Damon warned her that without knowing who all was after them, she would only be stepping into the spotlight.

'So, what!?', Liseli growled. She was listening to Talia's thoughts. 'Step into the spotlight and obliterate them with sheer power. That's what we do. That's why we have this power!'

'Calm down, Liseli. I know you are worried about Sapa. I am worried about Damon also and this time… let's trust them.'

Chapter 753 An emergency signal (2)

"Mmm… what?" Marcy mumbled as someone shook her out of her sleep.

They were up late to watch the live stream of the event where Alpha Maddox and Luna Tatiana tied the knot, and then they watched the ceremony again before calling it a night.

Marcy was not sure how much she slept, but she knew that it was not long enough.

She opened her eyes to see a girl tugging on her hand vigorously. It was Jane.

"What's going on, Jane? You can't sleep? Did you have a bad dream?" Marcy asked.

Jane's expression showed panic, and she was pressing on her hears and then pointing at the door.

Marcy noticed that her two roommates were not there, and the messy beds showed they had left in a hurry. Something was wrong.

"You want me to go out?" Marcy asked, and when Jane nodded, Marcy scrambled off her bed.

Marcy put on jeans and shoes and followed after Jane. The hallway was empty, but Marcy could hear muffled noise from outside.

"Come on!" An irritated male voice shouted from the end of the hallway. "Why are you still here? Get in the shelter! Didn't you hear the emergency signal?"

Marcy rushed with Jane toward the stairs, and she asked, "What signal?"

The man frowned at Marcy when he recognized her as Kim Dorsey, a female without her wolf. "No wonder you didn't hear the signal." Without her wolf, Marcy was like a human, which meant that she didn't hear the high-frequency signal.

He looked at Jane sternly. He saw her outside before, but the girl was looking around, and then she rushed back inside. He was the one assigned to come and get her, thinking that the crazy girl went to get something or maybe hide under a bed. If rogues come here, they can smell her within a second! When he saw Marcy with Jane, he realized that Jane had returned to get Marcy, and he couldn't scold her for that.

He moved to walk downstairs and shouted, "We are under attack. Get into the shelter! You should know the procedure! Why are you lingering here? Do you expect us to carry you?"

His eyes lost focus for a moment, and he cursed under his breath as his brisk walk turned into a full run, and he disappeared through the main door.

Marcy's adrenaline shot up as she realized that this was real. There was danger, they were under attack, and she needed to hide. Where was the shelter? Right… there was one underground shelter with several entry points, and the closest one was less than a minute away in the forest.

Marcy looked at Jane, who was clutching her hand nervously.

"It will be OK," Marcy was unsure if she was comforting the child or herself. Probably both. "It's not safe here. We need to head to safety. Can you do it?"

Jane nodded in small choppy movements, and then the two of them descended swiftly down the stairs.

They walked outside, and Marcy stared into the darkness while trying to determine from where the noise of fighting could be heard. The darkness was filled with growling, whimpering, kicking, punching, and crunching noises that made Marcy's hair stand on ends, and the only thing preventing Marcy from collapsing was Jane, who was sticking to her closely.

Marcy's sight was just like human's, and everything looked pitch black because they emerged from an illuminated hallway. Marcy would need a minute to adjust to the darkness, a minute they didn't have.

The sounds were coming from every direction, and Marcy decided to head toward the entry into the shelter. If she can punch in the code, get in, and close the door behind them, they will be safe. Hopefully.

"Let's go," Marcy said, her voice barely above a whisper.

They needed to cross a small clearing until they reached the trees and bushes. That clearing was ominous because there was no one in sight, yet the noise was a giveaway that they were surrounded.

"Ahh!" Jane screamed when two big wolves dashed toward them from a bush. The first one almost reached them when the second one tackled him, and Marcy couldn't believe they were this close. She

had never seen anything so fierce in her life, and this time she thanked the darkness for concealing the gruesome parts.

Marcy tugged Jane to move.

They didn't have the time to linger or to check if the one on the top was a friend or a foe. They needed to get out.

Marcy's insides tightened when they entered the cover the first bushes provided. Yes, they were out of the clearing, but they were also surrounded, and as much as this provided cover, it could be walking into a trap also.

Marcy gritted her teeth and forced her legs to move. There was no point in thinking about what-ifs. They needed to reach that entrance into the shelter, and she prayed silently that they don't bump into anyone on their way there.

…

The group of werewolves was almost at the warehouse when Maddox stopped at one clearing to shift into his human form. He waved at others to do the same, and soon several wolves changed shapes. Beta Oliver, Damon, Caden, Maya, Keith, Caleb, Tony, Kai, and James.

Maddox rubbed his face. The adrenaline helped dispel most of the numbness caused by his excessive drinking, but he still didn't feel right.

Maddox didn't want to shift into his human form and waste time, but they needed to communicate, and outsiders didn't have the mind-link. He was getting information while they were running, but now that they were there, it was necessary for others to know what was going on.

"Why did we stop?" Damon asked impatiently. There was a lingering scent of blood in the air, but there was no sign of an active fight. Did the rogues leave? That would be for the best, but that would also mean they came out of bed for nothing.

"Rogues are at the shelters, not at the warehouse. I want you to double-check their scent before attacking. It is not uncommon for people we have here not to have a pack link. They can be easily mistaken for rogues.", Maddox responded.

James didn't like this. "Didn't you say they came for supplies?"

Beta Oliver responded. "That's usually the case. After they were found here, our warriors confronted them. They thought that rogues were retreating, but only a handful of them went toward the border while others headed toward the shelters."

Maya felt her skin crawling. Why did this sound like a diversion? But… a diversion from what? Unless… "Did they come here to kidnap females?"

"It wouldn't be the first time," Maddox said. "However, they would usually grab the isolated ones that wandered close to the border and not attack head-on."

"There is no point in discussing their motives," James said. "They are here. Let's get rid of them and try to catch a few alive and question them. As long as we can prevent them from committing suicide, they will talk."

Everyone felt uneasy at the iciness in James' tone; there was no fear, no compassion, and if not for bloodlust, they would assume he was a machine. He didn't sound like a teenager but like a mercenary who killed and tortured many, but then… under Alpha Edward's tutelage, no one could guess how James grew up.

James was looking at Maddox now. "Which way?"

Maddox gestured to his right, and then they all shifted back into their wolves and rushed into the darkness.

Chapter 754 Dangers in the darkness (1)

Talia was growing increasingly restless, her anxiety was amplified by Liseli's impatience.

The ancient wolf disapproved that they were sitting in the cozy living room while their mates were out there, risking their lives. And for whom? For a bunch of strangers?

Based on Liseli's rage, it was obvious that the old gal had only Sapa in her heart and mind.

Talia wondered if Liseli would care about her or Damon, if Talia was not necessary as a vessel for Liseli's spirit and if Sapa didn't have the same dependency on Damon. Talia brushed those thoughts to the side. This was not the time to allow dark thoughts to creep in. Besides, Liseli had every right to be on the edge as Talia was the same.

Talia glanced at Meg and Cornelia to see that they were not fairing much better. They both had their powers, yet due to the circumstances, they were left behind to worry about their mates.

At this point, they gave up on random chatter because it didn't help to distract them from the current crisis.

Talia walked to the open window and stared into the darkness.

"Do you see something?", Varya's question startled Talia, who was too focused on her thoughts to notice the only unmated Wilkow sister approaching.

"No, I don't," Talia said dejectedly. "It's funny."

"What is?"

"How peaceful things are."

Varya listened intently and agreed. "It is peaceful. Too peaceful. Why are the forest animals quiet?"

Talia realized that Varya was right. Dawn was cracking in the East, and not a peep could be heard from the forest that was all around them. Shouldn't birds chirp to announce the new day? Maybe they could also sense that things were not right.

Talia turned to see females in the room, and she realized that someone was missing. "Where is Mindy?" And she didn't see Gideon either.

Tatiana responded, "Mindy and Gideon headed to the underground bunker when the alarm sounded to comfort the refugees we have there. Max's and my parents also went with them."

Talia nodded in understanding. Mindy told her how most of the people they accept in shelters are traumatized, and Talia guessed that they will need assurance that things will be alright. And who is better to comfort them than members of the Alpha family and a Shaman?

Talia stared into the darkness while tightening her hands into fists to the point of hurting. Should she mind-link Mindy? Talia rejected that idea. Mindy was somewhere underground, with no relevant news available, and Talia would probably just distract her from whatever Mindy was doing.

Talia was dejected. Even Mindy had something to do, yet Talia was here… waiting. What was the point of being an Alpha if she needed to hide? How was this different from her pitiful self that was hiding in the attic of the Red Moon pack?

"Don't worry about Alpha and the guys," Lulu spoke from Talia's right, and Talia turned to look at her.

"You seem confident," Talia noticed. Everyone was tense, yet Lulu was relaxed, munching on grapes like this was a social occasion.

Lulu shrugged. "I believe in them. They are some of the finest warriors I've ever seen. Besides, worrying won't achieve anything other than making others think they are weak."

"I wish I had a switch to turn off worrying," Talia admitted.

"Even if you worry, burry that deep, so it doesn't show," Lulu said. "If people see you down, they will assume you are reluctant, and that can weaken your mind. Sometimes, the difference between winning and losing is confidence; even the fake one can help. We were taught to jump into the fight instead of waiting for the fight to come to us. That boldness will make our enemies step back because it will be their turn to worry if we have a skill or a weapon they don't know about."

Talia knew that Lulu had a point. Everything Lulu said was right, yet Talia was unable to relax. Only when Damon gets back, safe and sound, will she be at ease.

Talia wanted to mind-link Damon or Kai and ask about the situation, but she held back because she knew that if they were in the middle of a fight, she might distract them and cause them to get injured. Or worse.

Damon said he would contact her when he got a chance, and the fact that he closed off his emotions she could usually sense through their mate bond told her he was busy and probably in danger.

Talia regretted not going there with Damon. Why did she give in? What charms did he use to swindle her into staying in the packhouse? She would fight by his side and ensure his safety, and now… it was too late for that.

…

Marcy held Jane's little hand and led the way through the foliage that was getting denser to the point of them needing to squeeze between it.

With every passing moment, Marcy's heart was thundering stronger as she feared that they had been walking for too long. Weren't they supposed to be there already? Her eyes were used to the darkness now, so she could see the outlines, and she was confident they were on the right path. However, with those deep shadows hugging the landscape, everything looked different. Should they return? No, no… it was just her anxiousness that made every second feel like an hour because there was no way she could miss the path.

The noises around them were super-loud, and Marcy didn't know if the two of them were walking toward the fight, or if the fight was coming to them, or maybe all this was a bad dream, and she will wake up and find herself in bed, preferably in the Red Moon pack. She would call Ana and ask for a double serving of sandwiches. Or, if she could wake up in her apartment in Paris, Marcy would make her own sandwiches and pretend that none of this ever happened.

But it happened. It was happening, and the only thing Marcy could do was struggle to survive.

If only she could see her surroundings clearly, she would confirm where they were.

If only she ventured here more often instead of staying indoors, she would have more confidence about which path to take.

If only she didn't reject George, her wolf would still be present, and she wouldn't be a dead weight.

Marcy would feel better if Jane was not with her. Jane was sticking to her and wouldn't let go of Marcy's hand. Marcy was confident that she couldn't take care of herself; how can she be responsible for a child?

But she couldn't leave Jane behind, not when Jane came to get her back, not when Jane silently followed her from the day Jane came to the shelter, and somehow… that little mute girl made Marcy's life a bit more bearable.

Jane's gasp got Marcy's attention. Now what? Did Jane hurt her foot or something?

Jane quickly tugged Marcy's hand and pulled her to the side and then down. Marcy crouched next to Jane and tried to see something, but she couldn't see anything other than the darkness. Listening didn't help much either because the noise was coming from everywhere.

"Jan…" The last sound was muffled when Jane put her little hand over Marcy's lips.

The girl didn't say anything, but her panicked expression directed slightly to the right told Marcy that there was something… or someone.

Marcy bit her lower lip while wondering if they should stay there and hide, find a better hiding spot, or proceed to search for that stupid entrance to the shelter.

Chapter 755 Dangers in the darkness (2)

Damon's fangs were deep into the rogue's neck as he shook his opponent like a ragdoll. With one last jerk of his head, Damon opened his maw, and the body of a dark brown wolf fell to the ground. The

rogue was not dead yet, but he was unable to move, and if no one tended to his wounds, he would bleed out within minutes.

Damon glanced to confirm that they were still maintaining the formation. Caden and Maya were on his right, and Keith and Caleb were on his left.

The group from the Dark Howlers pack was moving as one unit, while others went with Maddox and Oliver to avoid people from the Blue River pack attacking them accidentally. In the heat of a battle, it was easy to mistake allies for rogues, because neither of those belonged to their pack.

With a ferocious growl, Damon pounced on his next target.

The rogues were attacking and retreating, and every time they attacked, their numbers were not reducing. Almost like reinforcements were waiting for them to replace their fallen comrades.

'How many of them are here?' Damon asked through the pack mind-link while pressing his opponent to the ground with his big body and kicking the second rogue away. He was about to bite the wolf below him and end his life, but when the second one attacked Damon, Damon had to improvise.

'I stopped counting at fifty,' Keith responded. 'I don't remember reports that Blue River pack had this big problem with rogues.'

Rogues usually sneak in between border patrols, steal things, and run away. This was bigger than usual. There was also a possibility that Maddox was not reporting correctly about his confrontations with rogues, but why would he lie? In any case, rogues would usually stay in small groups, no bigger than twenty, in order to avoid detection, and this was almost like three groups came together. In addition that that, Maddox and his units had their hands full on the other side.

Considering that rogues were loners, used to fending for themselves, collaboration implied a big reward for successful whatever they were planning.

'I can barely pick up their scent,' Caden voiced his observation while sniffing his last opponent, that was sprawled on the ground in his own pool of blood.

'Do you think they've got our mixture for concealing scent?' Caleb asked.

Damon's insides churned at this possibility. Talia was the one who shared that mixture with them, and if rogues have it, it meant someone from the Dark Howlers pack leaked the recipe. Only a handful of people had the information on how to prepare it, and they knew how dangerous it could be in the wrong hands. It would enable rogues and all kinds of enemies to move about undetected, which was NOT a good thing.

'It feels like they are leading us somewhere,' Maya said while dodging a rogue that lunged at her. She moved gracefully right on time for Caden to intercept the rogue. Maya and Caden were an amazing team.

'Where are they leading us? What is in that direction?' Caden asked while scratching the exposed abdomen of his opponent. Caden's sharp claws were reinforced with his Beta pressure, easily cutting the flesh and spilling blood.

'One of us would need to shift into human form, and ask Maddox or someone from his pack,' Caleb said, 'And that ain't be me.'

'They are either leading us to a trap or are stalling on purpose,' Maya said. From early on, she had a feeling that this was a diversion, but without proof, she didn't want to raise an alarm. However, this unusual attack pattern of rogues definitely hinted they had a plan.

…

Marcy's scream was stuck in her throat as a naked man gripped her neck. It was with enough force to cause pain, yet not enough to obstruct her airflow.

His vicious grin was directed at Marcy as he observed her face, obviously enjoying the view of her struggle.

What kind of an animal was he? Marcy wondered. But she knew that he was a werewolf because he was naked; he even shifted into his human form so that he could torture her slowly.

And then it hit Marcy… where was Jane?

Marcy's eyes moved to the left to see that there was another guy, holding Jane by her golden hair that looked nearly black in the darkness. Everything looked dark in this place.

'SLAP!'

A harsh slap landed on Jane's face. "Scream for me, baby," the rogue growled. He was irritated that Jane didn't make a peep.

"Leave her alone," Marcy struggled to speak. "She is just a child."

"We were all just children," the guy who was holding Marcy said mockingly. "Now, what will you..."

His words stopped abruptly when Marcy kicked him between his legs.

Werewolf or not, that was a weak spot, and he was careless.

The guy fell to the ground while clutching his family's jewels and Marcy lunged at the guy who was holding Jane.

Marcy's fingers latched onto rogue's face, and she dug her thumbs into his eyes.

The rogue squealed in pain and punched Marcy into her stomach, but she had no intention of letting go of him. Her fingers dug deeper into his eye sockets as she squeezed through her teeth, "Run, Jane…"

Another punch landed on Marcy's abdomen, and another, each carried such force that her internal organs shifted.

She lost her strength when her shoulder was dislocated, and then she felt a hit in her back as the second rogue kicked her there.

Jane heard Kim telling her to run, but her legs refused to move. She was staring at the horrid scene of two rogues brutally hitting Kim, and Jane fell to her knees when a spurt of blood splashed on her face. Was that blood Kim's? Jane opened her mouth in a silent scream for them to stop. Why were they doing

this? What was the point of this violence? Only a year ago, she saw her mother and five siblings being murdered by their abusive father, and Jane survived by accident because she hid under the bed, and he was too drunk to count them all, and Jane slipped through the window when he set their house on fire.

Jane was not her name, but it sounded nice when Kim said it, so Jane thought of keeping it.

Jane's vision blurred with tears, and she cursed at her helplessness as Kim's words echoed in her mind, 'You are just a child. It's OK to do nothing and let the grownups handle it…'

How can this be OK? Kim was friendly and kind, and why were they bullying her?

"St… St…" Jane struggled to speak. "Stop it!"

This scream earned her a punch in the face, and she recoiled in a bush.

Marcy was not sure if she had heard Jane's voice or if she had imagined it.

The two rogues were cursing and punching, and Marcy was losing her consciousness, and she welcomed it because it was numbing her pain away.

Did she see a brown wolf? Somehow, even without her wolf and blood filling her nostrils, Marcy thought of his scent as familiar. Or was it his presence that she noticed?

The sound of growling and flesh ripping was heard, and then things turned silent.

Marcy heard someone sobbing. Was that Jane? Marcy opened her mouth to speak, to tell the silly girl that this was not the time to cry; she needed to go to safety. But Marcy's mouth was full of sticky liquid that had a metallic taste, and she couldn't say a word.

Her vision was blurry, and the darkness didn't help, but she could see an outline of a male leaning over her.

Marcy coughed to clear her mouth, and she rasped, "George?"

Chapter 756 Dangers in the darkness (3) [Bonus chapter]

After ensuring that two rogues were dead, the large brown wolf transformed into his human form and returned to check on the female that was being beaten when he arrived.

She was not moving, and her chest rose and fell in small choppy movements. Those were not good signs.

He stood above Marcy and observed her wretched state.

Her left arm had an open fracture, and her right leg was bent at an unusual angle. Her short black hair was wet from the blood, and her face was swollen to the point where she was unrecognizable, but her scent told him it was her. Marcy. A female he identified as his sister.

Ignoring the young girl crying next to Marcy, James squatted and listened to Marcy's heartbeat, which was getting fainter by the second.

She coughed which caused blood to ooze down her cheeks.

James frowned when he realized that Marcy didn't have a wolf, and without her wolf, those injuries and blood loss were deadly.

"George?" She called weakly.

He wanted to say that he was not George, but the spark in her unfocused eyes told him he shouldn't correct her.

"I knew you will come for me," she said, her busted lips lifted into an ugly smile that revealed her bloodied teeth.

"Don't talk," James said. "Let me find a doctor." Maddox mentioned that pack doctors were somewhere nearby.

"Don't," she said, and her right hand landed on his forearm. "I know I don't have much time…" She could feel her body shutting down. "It's just… I'm glad you are here. If there is a next time, I… won't reject you... I'm cold…"

She exhaled, and her hand that rested on James' forearm fell.

"Waaaah!" Jane cried as her wolf senses told her that the female on the ground was gone.

Jane crawled to reach Marcy. She held Marcy's hand and patted it, hoping that it might bring her Kim back.

James was still for a few long moments, and then he reached to close Marcy's eyes that stared through him.

That was the female who had the identity of his sister, the princess of the Red Moon pack. She was always prideful, with perfect clothes and makeup and not a single hair out of place, yet she wore simple clothes, no makeup, and her body was beaten to the point of being deformed; it didn't match the image Marcy had before.

After she left the Dark Howlers pack, James didn't think he will ever see her again.

When he analyzed the situation, James decided to come here and ensure that Marcy won't be recognized; that Alpha Edward won't find out about her being here. James didn't expect to find her, only to witness her last moments.

She thought he was George. Was Marcy regretting her rejection of George as her mate? It sounded like it. Should he tell George about this? Would it serve any purpose?

James never thought much about mates, he was too young, and it was too early, but now that he found Cornelia, he couldn't imagine what propelled Marcy to reject George. Was it the promise of being Damon's Luna? Or the pressure Alpha Edward put on Marcy? Or was it something else? James will never get answers to those questions.

He stared at Marcy, unsure how he felt about the current situation.

Three wolves emerged from the bushes, and they transformed into Beta Oliver, Kai, and Tony. All three looked at the scene of two dismantled bodies on the side, a battered body of a female, James, and sobbing Jane.

"What's the situation?" James asked.

Oliver responded, "Rogues are pushed back, but some are still hiding. Alpha Maddox is leading our warriors in combing the perimeter." He spoke to Jane. "It is still not safe. You should be in the shelter. Let me take you."

Jane gripped Marcy's hand firmly and raised her gaze to reveal that her left eye was swollen and closed from the punch she received, and her left cheek was also bigger than the right one.

Oliver knew Jane was silently asking about the female who was on the ground. Kim Dorsey. Oliver knew every person they had in the shelter because he was managing their files.

"Kim is gone, Jane." Seeing that Jane didn't move, Oliver urged her, "In this situation, we need to worry about the living. Come. I will notify warriors that no one touches her body, but I want you to be safe. Kim would like it that way."

At these words, Jane stood up in slow motion and followed Oliver. She remembered that Kim told her to run, and she didn't. Would anything change if Jane moved at that time? Jane was not sure, and she will never find out.

Oliver would ask Jane why she was not in the underground shelter. The entrance was only about fifty feet away, and everyone staying here should know the passcode to get in. But he could see that Jane was a mess, and this was not the time for conversation.

…

Damon stood in the small clearing with his eyes closed while sensing the surroundings.

"Should we chase after them?" Maya asked. They were following a group of three rogues that disappeared without a trace.

Damon would go after them, but the rogues knew the terrain, and if it's just the three of them, it would be fine, but what if they were racing toward a bigger group of rogues? A trap?

Damon lost count of how many rogues he fought, and he killed a few, but most of them would just provoke them and run, and Damon was tired of running without understanding what was happening.

At first, he thought that this was rogues' tactic to split up the forces so they could tackle them as small groups, but this was dragging for a while, and they were already separated from the rest, and it didn't make sense to continue this silly chase.

"Three of them are at two o'clock, about a hundred feet away," Damon said while wondering what was off.

The ability to sense surroundings was something that every Alpha had. They would release a small dose of their aura and feel as it enveloped the living and non-living things it reached. The more one would

use, the better he could distinguish the size and type of an object, and some could even identify facial features.

Damon used his aura often, but instead of seeing the details, he could sense three living presences, but it was vague, almost like someone was interfering with his ability.

"Are they running?" Caden asked.

"No. Waiting." Damon responded.

Keith, Maya, Caden, and Caleb exchanged confused glances. This was getting more and more bizarre by the minute, and none of them liked it.

"Are they waiting for us?" Caleb asked with a frown.

"They are definitely leading us somewhere," Caden said.

Maya had another idea. "Or away from somewhere."

Damon grumbled something under his breath. Did Maddox hide some treasure, and rogues came to snatch it? Or is it a secret weapon? A magic scroll?

Even if Maddox had a cave filled with gold, Damon's concern was only about one thing. He mind-linked Talia, 'Kitten? How is the situation there?'

Chapter 757 Dangers in the darkness (4)

'Damon!' Talia screamed into the mind-link, releasing her pent-up anxiousness. Tatiana was getting information through the mind-link, but because Damon and his unit were separate, there was nothing about them. 'I was dying to hear news from you. Are you guys OK? What's going on there? What took you so long? Is it over? Are you coming back?' She was asking questions without giving him a chance to respond.

'We are fine,' Damon said when Talia paused. He had a few scratches here and there, and he desperately needed a shower to wash off blood and gunk; others were in the same situation, but no one was injured seriously, so he didn't want to worry her.

Talia's concern warmed his heart, and for a brief moment, he forgot about the fierce fight and murders, or that he was standing butt naked in the middle of a forest.

'How are things on your end?' Damon asked.

'There is nothing here.'

'Are you sure things are fine?'

'Outside is quiet, and the only news about commotion Tatiana got was from where the shelters are.'

'Can you sense the surroundings to make sure?'

'What's going on, Damon?'

Damon didn't want to raise alarms, but he had to tell her. 'Rogues are not stealthy, but they are not attacking us openly either. Considering their numbers, it would make sense for them to rush to their goal, but this looks like a provocation. Based on what I've seen, it appears that this intrusion into the area with shelters was a diversion. Also, they are concealing their scent. It's similar to the concoction of herbs you gave us, and that's why it was difficult to track them.' Hell, a rogue might be behind the next bush, and Damon wouldn't know unless he made some noise.

Damon could use his aura to suppress the surroundings, but the problem with that approach was that it didn't distinguish between friends and foes, and Damon didn't want to risk injuring an ally.

Talia's worry swelled at the thought that this might be something big, and it would be her fault because if she didn't share that concoction with the Dark Howlers pack, rogues wouldn't have it either.

'Kitten?'

'Yes?'

'Can you sense the area around the packhouse to confirm everything is fine?' Damon asked again.

'Sure. I will need a minute.'

Damon shifted from one leg to another while waiting for Talia to respond. What was taking her so long?

He counted seconds silently. Five, six… ten, eleven… twenty. Shouldn't that be enough?

It felt like forever until Talia responded, 'You are right, Damon. Something is wrong.'

Damon felt his insides tightening in a painful knot. 'What is it?'

'I'm not sure. Give me a minute to check something.'

'Kitten? Kitten!? Talia!' Damon was in full panic now. Why did she shut down the mind-link? Did she really think that he can just stay still while she was doing who-knows-what?

Damon tried mind-linking Lulu, but she was unreachable as well.

Even if Talia shut down her mind-link, Lulu wouldn't dare. Or would she?

Who else was in there? Damon remembered Pierce, but he was inaccessible as well.

Damon told himself not to panic. Maybe Pierce shut down his mind-link because he was enjoying his mate, but that didn't explain Lulu. And why would Talia shut him out?

"FUCK!" Damon shouted and started running toward the packhouse. It took him less than a second to become a massive black wolf and disappear among the bushes. Four wolves were right behind him.

In the packhouse…

"Tanya," Talia called. "You have guards around the packhouse, right? Where are they?"

"In the nearby trees so that humans not to see them. Why?"

Instead of answering Tatiana's question, Talia asked her next one. "How many of them are there?"

Tatiana frowned at Talia. "It should be about a dozen. More probably. What's going on?"

"Can you reach them via mind-link?"

Tatiana's face fell. She couldn't.

"What is going on?" Varya asked.

"I don't sense the guards nearby. There is no one." Talia said.

Tatiana thought for a moment before voicing her thoughts. "Maybe they saw someone and went into pursuit."

"All of them?" It was Lulu who asked. "Even if they are in the middle of a chase, they should respond to the call of their Luna."

Tatiana had to agree that Lulu made a valid point. If Maddox was here, he would be able to force a mind-link connection, but Tatiana didn't know how to do that.

Tatiana remembered another thing. "We have security cameras and motion sensors around the packhouse. The alarm didn't sound."

Kalina shook her head in disapproval. "That's not reliable. What if they hacked into your security? Or bribed someone to shut it down? They could also know about blind spots."

Meg agreed. And there was also one more possibility. "They could be outside of the perimeter covered by cameras and sensors. Just the fact you can't reach your guards should be a reason for alarm."

Tatiana exhaled helplessly. She was stressed and tired of all this. "What do you suggest?"

Talia looked around the room. Tatiana, Meg, Varya, Kalina, Cornelia, Lulu, Ivy, and Lily. And there was Talia. Out of nine females, two were pregnant, and out of other non-pregnant females, one was a witch, and two were Alphas. The lineup was not bad, but they were low in numbers.

"We can either sit here and wait for something to happen, or we can go out and investigate," Talia said. "Tanya, tell Max what's going on here, and ask for some other units to come and replace existing ones. Cornelia, Tatiana, and Meg, the three of you stay here, others…"

Cornelia bolted to her feet. "I'm coming out also."

Talia refused. "No. What can you do without using your abilities? Or do you want people from the second floor to enjoy a light show?"

"What about you?" Cornelia asked.

"I still have my wolf, my Alpha aura, and I trained to fight."

Cornelia frowned at Talia. "You want me to sit here and watch you walk into danger?"

"No," Talia said. "I expect you to sit here and be the final line of defense for two pregnant females who can't shapeshift or use their powers. Meg, mind-link me if anything happens, and I will keep you up to date. Varya, Kalina, Lulu, Ivy, and Lily, come with me."

"We will join you also," a female voice came from the side, and Talia was glad to see four familiar faces. It was two newly mated Wilkow sisters, Daria and Lidia, and their mates, Pierce and Jordan.

Kalina looked at her sisters, both with fresh marks on their necks. It was a breath of fresh air to see four of them grinning, two pairs connected at their hips.

"I thought we won't see you for days," Kalina said.

Lidia smirked. "You wouldn't, but…" She glanced at Tatiana. "With the last food delivery, we received notes explaining that the alarm was because rogues attacked. Wilkows are not the ones who will sit out a commotion. As soon as this shit is over, we will return to our rooms."

Daria spoke to Tatiana, "While we are out, can you send someone to replace the bedsheets? More food in the room would be nice also."

Tatiana shook her head helplessly. Her sister was actually bragging about the carnal pleasures that happened in there. "Alright. I will take care of it."

Chapter 758 Dangers in the darkness (5)

Jordan was an experienced General of the Spring Leaf pack. Normally, he would be in charge of strategizing, but this was a room full of high-ranked members, females outnumbered him heavily, and he didn't dare to act presumptuously.

No one told Jordan about the situation, but even with Luna Tatiana sitting at the center, everyone was looking at Talia, so he knew who was the boss here.

"What's the plan?" Jordan asked while looking at Talia.

Talia glanced at the people present, and she could see that Lulu and Pierce were communicating via mind-link. Talia approved. The more Pierce knows, the more useful he will be, and talking through mind-link was much more efficient compared to using words.

Talia summarized for the newcomers, "The guards who were stationed around the packhouse are not in their places and can't be contacted. We want to check the area and see what happened. Stay alert, as there might be enemies hiding. Since we have four additional people, let's form two groups. We will all exit through the main door. Jordan, Daria, Pierce, Lidia, Kalina, and Varya will take right. I will go with Ivy, Lily, and Lulu to the left."

Pierce objected. "I can't leave your side. I am your guard."

Talia disagreed. "Take care of your mate, Pierce. This is an order."

Pierce lowered his head, unsure if he should give in. He realized that he was in a tight spot. On one side was obeying Talia's command, and on the other was leaving her side, which meant that he won't be able to protect her. Can he come in the same group as Talia and bring Daria along? What if both Talia and Daria were in trouble? Will he be able to choose? Daria was his life, but if anything happened to Talia, Damon will skin him alive. And there was the blood oath that would force him to choose Talia.

'Don't worry, Pierce,' Lulu's voice sounded in his mind. 'I will take care of Luna. You stay with your mate. Finish your round quickly and then you can return to protecting our Luna.'

With this push, Pierce nodded in agreement.

Talia thought that this was a good division. Like this, every group will have an Alpha, and if four Wilkow sisters were together, they won't worry about each other.

In Talia's group, Ivy and Lily were not much of fighters, but Talia knew that if they encounter trouble, she will end up using her powers. At that point, it won't matter if she was on her own, or with an army backing her. Liseli was itchy for a fight, and Talia had no intention of preventing her wolf from releasing some steam.

Talia turned to look at Lulu. "You won't stop me from going out?"

Lulu blinked at Talia. "My orders are to ensure your safety. Not to keep you inside."

Talia liked this response.

"We will circle around the packhouse while checking the nearby forest for any signs of foul play. Let's hope we meet on the other side without any issues." Talia wished that the guards were drugged and left alone, and that it was all just a big prank by a drunk guest.

"Wait!", Tatiana exclaimed. "You can't go like that. I need to know what's going on. Talia and Meg can mind-link, but the second group will be in the dark."

"What do you suggest?" Talia asked.

Tatiana's eyes lost focus for a moment. "One Omega will accompany each of your groups. They will trail in the back so they are not in danger, and their task will be to communicate with each other and with me." By the time Tatiana ended talking, two females in their late twenties were standing at the door of the living room.

With this, they were ready to go.

Talia wondered if she should contact Damon, but she decided against it.

She didn't want to lie, and if she told him that she was going out, he would blow a fuse.

Besides, he was out there for a long time without contacting her. Surely, he can wait a few minutes. The fact that he didn't mind-link her already told her that he was either patient or busy. Probably busy.

Talia was determined to finish this task quickly, and then she will contact Damon and tell him that everything was alright.

…

Talia, Lulu, Ivy, Lily, and Mila (the Omega that Tatiana assigned to their group) were moving along the border where the forest met the clearing which circled the packhouse.

There was no scent of blood, and they didn't see any signs of fighting. Those were good things, but where were the guards? It was mysterious and unsettling.

Every step was unusually loud, and they could even hear their own breathing.

'CRACK!'

Ivy stepped on a dry branch, and everyone jolted.

"Sorry," Ivy said in a whisper. She was also startled.

Talia glanced at Lulu whose narrowed eyes were scanning the dark forest like she could see through it. Lulu was on alert, but not tense, and Talia guessed how that was due to her experience.

Talia admired Damon's warriors. There was a reason why the Dark Howlers pack was an untouchable existence for many.

Talia's head snapped to her right.

"Do you see something?" Lulu asked in a whisper.

"Yes. There are presences there. Two of them. No, three." Talia was confused. How come her sensing ability was off? Damon mentioned that rogues were concealing their scent. Was it possible that they concealed their presence also?

"Let's go and check it out," Lulu said and Talia agreed.

"Shouldn't we alert others?" Ivy asked. She was not a warrior and going into danger sounded reckless.

"Mila will tell them that we found something and where we are," Lulu said.

Talia was not much of a warrior, but it was not difficult to see that Ivy, Lily, and Mila were terrified. Talia couldn't blame them. Without training and without an aura to protect them, they would be foolish to look for trouble.

Talia thought of Omegas as strength in numbers. Five she-wolves were more intimidating than two, and Talia didn't want to split from them, however, they needed to see what was going on there, and if they forced three scaredy females to come, they would probably be a burden.

Talia quickly decided, "I will go with Lulu to check what's going on there. Ivy, Lily, stay with Mila here and wait for others to come."

Lily's eyes were open wide in panic. "Just the two of you?"

Talia didn't feel like explaining. "Just the two of us. Your task is to ensure Mila's safety, and to tell others where we are."

Talia glanced at Lulu who obviously didn't object to this plan.

The only thing Talia regretted was that she couldn't mind-link with Lulu. Like this, they would either need to guess what the other one was thinking or talk aloud and risk being overheard.

"How can you determine their location?" Lulu asked Talia.

"Just like any Alpha, I'm using my aura."

"Not any Alpha can do it," Lulu said. "It means that at least one of your parents was an Alpha."

Talia remembered that Lulu didn't go with them to the Midnight Guardians pack, so she didn't know the story about Valerian Moonrider. But Talia was curious about Lulu's words. "How do you know that?"

Lulu grinned. "My grandma told me. Only the ones born with an Alpha bloodline can they use their aura for more than suppressing others."

Talia thought that this was interesting information. If true, it meant that Tatiana and Kalina don't have that ability. Talia decided to discuss this with Damon later. Now she needed to focus on figuring out if those people there were friends or foes, and why they were just sitting there.

Chapter 759 Dangers in the darkness (6)

Talia and Lulu moved stealthily through the foliage.

Lulu was keeping her eyes on Talia who moved soundlessly without leaving a trace. It confirmed that when Keith praised Talia how she could compare with their top scouts was not just empty talk.

Lulu wondered what other skills Talia had. Surely, as someone who was the Alpha of the Midnight Guardians pack, Talia was not a simple person.

Talia raised her hand to get Lulu's attention. They were only about thirty feet away from their targets and Talia was silently chanting how this was the right thing to do.

Sure, insecurities crept into Talia's mind about Lulu, and Talia was determined to confirm beyond doubt if Lulu was a traitor by putting her guard to the test. It was one of those things, keep your friends close and your enemies closer, and so far, Lulu performed well.

Talia noticed that Lulu was looking at her curiously, and this reinforced Talia's concern that communication will be a problem. Lulu said that she will follow Talia's lead, but Talia wished that they worked out a set of hand signals or animal noises before coming here. Just stop and go were easy to do, but what if she wanted to convey more than that?

The only one Talia could mind-link and not cause panic was Meg, but Meg was in the packhouse and couldn't help here. Talia dismissed those thoughts. She focused on the area from where they came, and she could hazily sense Ivy, Lily, and Mila standing at the edge of the forest.

Talia was confused. What happened with her ability to sense her surroundings? Was something obstructing her? Talia remembered the runes Guardians used to suppress one's aura, but that clearly didn't affect her. What was going on? Did rogues work with witches? Or with Guardians?

Should they return and regroup? Regroup, with whom? There was no point in going back. If things turn worse, Talia will use her aura to suppress everyone, and she will apologize to Lulu later.

Talia waved her hand with her palm facing downward, hoping that Lulu will take that as, "Take it slow and be careful", and then she resumed walking toward their targets.

Murmurs got Talia's attention and she perked up her ears. Her hearing was fantastic, but those people were whispering.

"How long do we need to stay here?", one asked.

"Until we get the signal to move."

Talia pressed her lips into a line. Move, where? Were they planning an attack on the packhouse? Or…?

Talia squatted behind a bush when she saw the outlines. They were only a few steps away from their targets and Talia was pleased that they took a scent-concealing concoction before coming to this event.

Talia saw that Lulu's eyes were trained on the people in front of them, and she was in a crouching position, ready to attack.

'Liseli?' Talia called her wolf. 'Are these rogues?'

'Grown males. Four of them. No pack link.' Liseli responded robotically.

Talia's eyebrows nearly reached her hairline. Did Liseli say there were four of them? What the heck was going on here?

Noise from the back startled Talia, and then she heard rustling from the right.

"Ah, it seems the wait is over," one male from the front said.

Talia swallowed hard when she realized that four shadows on the other side of that bush were standing now and facing Talia and Lulu. Based on the noise from rustling, it was easy to confirm they were surrounded. Movements were happening all around them. It was a trap!

'Liseli?'

'I didn't sense them!' Liseli growled, knowing what Talia was about to ask.

'How can they conceal their presence so well?'

'How about we keep one alive and ask?' Liseli responded irritably.

Knowing they were caught, Talia stood up in slow motion.

Talia turned to see that about a dozen people created a circle with Talia and Lulu in the center. There were a few steps between them, but not enough for Talia to think they can escape this without a fight. Can they take on these twelve people? What if there are more of them hiding in the shadows?

Their scents were so faint that if they were not right there, Talia would assume it was something wind brought from the distance.

"Can we talk about this?" Talia asked. "We are guests at the party and we got lost." Will this story work? Probably not, but she wanted to confirm how many rogues they were facing, and she didn't like that they were surrounded by ghosts.

A male from Talia's left chuckled. "I can't believe she was right to say that you will come to us. The location is a bit off, but the rest matches."

Talia thought that she heard something important. "Someone told you we will come here?" Did they even know who they were?

Talia's eyes subconsciously moved to Lulu who was standing on Talia's right and eyeing the people who surrounded them.

'It couldn't be Lulu, right?', Talia thought. Lulu didn't know they were coming here until they were actually on the move, and Lulu was with Talia all the time. Unless Lulu had some device or another way to alert them without being noticed.

The man chuckled. "Aren't you a curious birdie? Relax. We won't harm you."

Yeah, right. Like Talia will believe that. "What do you want?"

"You need to come with us." He said.

"If you think we will come quietly, you are mistaken."

He tched in annoyance. "We need only you. The other one is dispensable. How about you come with us, and we won't harm your mate?"

Talia was totally confused. "My mate?" Were they talking about Damon? But if they knew that Damon was her mate, wasn't she exposed as Alpha Natalia and Luna Talia? "Do you know who I am?"

"Of course," he said with confidence. "You are Luna Talia of the Dark Howlers pack. Now stop with these games. We have your picture, so we know we've got the right person. And it's not a lookalike because we confirmed that Alpha Damon left the Dark Howlers pack with his mate, Luna Talia. Unless you want us to harm your mate, you will come with us."

Talia blinked while processing this information. Was it possible that they didn't know she was Alpha Natalia? Or was this a trap? Talia decided to play along.

"My Damon is the most powerful Alpha. Do you think you can harm him?"

The rogue snorted. "The fact we are here means we are confident. Do you want us to kill your guard as proof we are serious?"

Talia had some doubts about Lulu, but she didn't want Lulu to be killed. Besides, Lulu looked ready to fight, not like she had met her comrades.

Talia had confidence in Damon, but the rogue's words made her unsettled.

'Damon? Damon?' Talia called through their private mind-link and her eyes widened when there was no response.

"How can you…?"

"Enough questions!" The guy snapped at Talia. "Stop stalling for time. You either come with us, or we will make you."

"Where are you taking me?"

"You will see when you get there. Now move!" He reached to grab her arm.

Talia twisted her body, avoiding his hold.

There was a moment of eye contact between Talia and Lulu, the rogues shouted while dashing toward Talia and Lulu, and it was like hell broke loose.

Chapter 760 Dangers in the darkness (7)

Lulu's transformation into her wolf form was not complete when her fangs dug into the thigh of one rogue. She jerked her head, ripping the piece of his flesh before dashing to her next opponent.

Talia was not idle either. She was kicking and punching, taking advantage of the fact that rogues were reluctant to harm her, confirming that the guy was not lying. They didn't want to harm her.

But why?

They already confirmed they were aware of her identity as Damon's mate. Why would they kidnap her? And how did they know she was here? Damon and Talia came early, and they were careful to act as Alpha Damon and Alpha Natalia when they were out of their room. Sure, people might think that the two Alphas were chummy, but not to the point of knowing that Talia was Damon's mate.

Actually… the rogues didn't say they knew Talia was here with Damon. Their words were about knowing that she LEFT with Damon. Did that mean someone from the Dark Howlers pack was working with rogues? To make things worse, only a handful of people knew that Luna Talia left with Alpha Damon. Talia's insides churned at the thought that someone from the packhouse betrayed her. Who could it be? She didn't think Damon would be a suspect, but she trusted everyone that came to her mind. Maya? Caden? Zina? Rose? Mindy? Gideon?

This mental instability was enough for one rogue to grab her shoulder. Talia punched him in the nose and shook her hand. That hurt.

'What are you doing?' Liseli growled at Talia. 'Let me take them!'

In the spur of the moment, Talia forgot she had a wolf form that was a killing machine. But she also forgot something else that was more efficient.

Talia dashed through the rogues and shouted, "Lulu! This way!"

"AHHHH!" A rogue screamed as Lulu bit a chunk of his arm. That was the last rogue that didn't shift yet into his wolf form.

Lulu dashed toward Talia, and when Talia confirmed they were separated from the rogues, Talia stepped in front of Lulu. With one thought from Talia, all rogues fell to the ground.

There were nine wolves there, capable of standing.

Talia couldn't control her aura precisely to press on each rogue individually. However, she could direct her aura in a specific direction, and that was enough to freeze them all.

'Liseli, I need them as humans.'

'On it.'

Talia was unsure if Liseli affected Lulu as well, but two seconds later, all rogues and Lulu were in their human forms, naked.

Rogues were sprawled on the ground, unable to get up, and Talia gaped when she realized that the rogues were clothed. What kind of magic was that?

On a closer look, Talia realized that those were not clothes. It was some kind of body paint.

Talia thought how that was convenient. By painting clothes on their bodies, even if they shift between forms, they won't be perceived as naked as long as they don't let others get a good look at them.

The guy who was talking to Talia before raised his head to look at Talia incredulously.

Talia smirked, guessing that he was the leader here. "You know I'm Luna Talia. That should mean Damon marked me." She pointed at her neck, where the mark was visible. "Did you think I'm a pushover?"

"Even with Alpha Damon marking you," the rogue spoke with difficulty. "You shouldn't be this powerful."

Talia sneered. "It seems you don't know everything."

Rogues eyes darted behind Talia. "Your confidence will be the end of you."

Talia felt the hairs on her back rising.

Did she actually make a mistake about Lulu? Was Damon right about…?

Talia whipped her head to see from where the rustling was coming, only to see two guys there. Where did they come from? And they were huge.

Lulu was in her human form, wrestling one guy that was nearly double her size, while the second one was coming for Talia.

"They told us you have an Alpha aura, but a marked female shouldn't be able to suppress the group like this," the guy who was approaching Talia said. "Release them."

Talia's eyes darted to Lulu. The guy was pinning her down, and it didn't look like Lulu could escape him. He was just too big.

Talia was dejected. Why were these guys after her? Why can't they leave her alone?

Talia was angry. How dare they just come and demand that she comes with them? She was not stupid.

Talia was scared. What if they hurt Lulu? How many people did they hurt so far?

Talia's anxiousness skyrocketed. What if they hurt Damon? Why couldn't she reach him through the mind-link? The mate bond was there, so she knew he was alive, and she hoped that if he was in distress, she would be able to feel it, but there was nothing.

Talia balled her hands into fists to conceal that she was trembling.

"What will you do if I don't release them?" Talia asked with all the confidence she could muster.

"Your friend has a nice body. You will get to watch. We might let her live if she serves us well."

Talia's insides tightened. Was he talking about…? She couldn't finish that thought.

Talia stared at the scene where the guy on top of Lulu grabbed her hair and then forced a kiss on her. Lulu bit him back, and he slapped her.

Talia saw a lot of violence in her life, but usually, she was the one at the receiving end.

Was this how other Omegas felt while Anna was beating Talia? Why didn't they help? How could they just watch over and over again and do nothing to stop it?

Talia shook those unpleasant memories away. This was different. Someone else was being bullied because of Talia.

Listening to their demands would be foolish, and letting them bully Lulu further was unacceptable.

Lulu groaned as the guy twisted her arm, and for Talia, that was the last straw.

How could Talia conceal her powers if the price to pay was that people around her needed to suffer?

Talia had enough, and Liseli agreed.

"What makes you think I will allow you to have your way?" Talia asked as her eyes started flickering in silvery light.

The guys behind her still couldn't move a muscle, and two guys in front of her started feeling pain all over. Talia didn't know what Liseli was doing to the two, as she was concentrating on her Alpha aura that held the group in the back pinned to the ground, but it was evident that rogues were suffering.

Lulu got up from under the guy who was bullying her, and Talia could see a big bruise on the left side of Lulu's face. There were more scratches and bruises, and Talia told herself to focus on dealing with rogues. She will heal Lulu later.

Lulu kicked the guy and cursed at him, and then she looked at Talia.

Lulu saw Talia glow and do magic during their pack run when she healed Keith and dispelled black runes from Damon, but this was different.

The energy coming out in waves from Talia was tangible, and the silvery light pulsated around Talia like someone was turning on and off a lightbulb; Talia was the lightbulb.

"It seems you are missing quite a bit of information about me," Talia sneered at the rogues. She gestured to two newcomers to join the others, and they moved with difficulty.