

## Chapter15

Rory's Pov

Feeling my paws hit the ground felt normal, it felt like everything was as it should be. The ground rushing beneath me, the scents surrounding me. But it felt good running with those who were just like me. It felt good running without restrictions, without a fence line keeping me in.

Caroline barked out at me gesturing for me to follow her. I really wish we had the mind link. If I had been initiated into the pack I would be able to speak with them.

I sprinted towards her, the ground blurring with the speed I used. Her eyes widened as I cleared the length of a football field in no time. I gave a wolfy smile, my tongue lolling out to the side. I was fast, I knew that. I may be a smaller wolf, and not one built for fighting or even skilled in the tactic for that matter but I was fast. I was cunning. I was good at hunting, camouflaging, tracking and of course, keeping the peace. Omegas were naturally peacekeepers, though we were often feisty, we generally shied away from fights.

Caroline black wolf rubbed up against me, scenting me, marking me as a part of her pack before she did a play bow and we continued our run, nipping at each other as we ran. Her parents trotted along watching us. Kasen's large black wolf looked so similar to Carolines but she had her mother's stature. The twin dark gray wolves were running along with us.

In the lead was Shawn. His wolf, so similar to my own. His white fur gleamed in the moonlight. His honey colored eyes stood out against the snow. The power in each of his moves, the grace his wolf had, the way the earth trembled beneath his paws. He was every bit powerful, and graceful. It was easy to see why he was the king if by size and strength alone. My wolf longed to be with him. Begged to be near him. Did his wolf feel the same? They didn't understand the whims of us humans, and sometimes, I didn't either.

It wasn't long until I realized what we were running after. I scented it immediately. Gamey. Strong. Deer. It was a deer!

Shawn slowed to a walk and naturally, we all followed suit. Caroline nudged me pushing me to the front with her brother. I took a deep breath and slowly stalked next to the large alpha. His wolf looked at me and crouched low, encouraging me to do the same.

Looking out in the clearing I saw her. The lone doe scavenging for some food to eat in the harsh winter.

My mouth salivated and my muscles tensed waiting for the right moment to strike. I had never hunted something this large before. In the pen, we had small rodents and animals getting inside our enclosure but never a deer. That kind of meal was already prepared for us. This was new. This was a test. A test of my wolf and myself. A test to see if I was worthy to be a part of the pack. Perhaps a test to see if I was a worthy mate and omega?

I shook the thought out of my head. I knew for small prey, you needed the element of surprise. They were fast, quick on their feet, and could turn on a dime. Deer was something different. They were naturally skittish, large, and fast. A buck could easily stab a wolf with their antlers. But a doe was just as powerful with her hooves and legs.

I noticed the rest of our pack moving into position, anking the deer. She would be surrounded on all sides so that when she was spooked from our arrival, she would run into the waiting jaws of our hunting mates.

My paws itched to run, my hind legs building the power to launch me forward. I nearly whimpered while waiting on the command. The signal from the alpha to initiate the hunt.

Shawn's wolf licked his lips and inched forward. That's as much as a cue I was willing to wait for. I launched after the doe, startling her. She was fast, but not fast enough. I kept pace with her before latching my jaws around her neck.

The taste of iron ooded my mouth. Red blood soaked my fur and I wanted to roll in it to show off my kill. I hated taking a life but hunting was essential. It was a part of the circle of life. Were born, we live, we mate, we die and pass on to live in the afterlife with the goddess herself.

When the doe ceased all movement, I released her and raised my snout to the sky releasing a howl of victory. The others caught up and looked at me with what I interpreted as pride in their eyes.

Shawn was indecipherable. I couldn't tell what he was thinking. Was it good, was he proud of me, was he disappointed I didn't leave any action for others? Did I pass his test? Did I win his approval? Why did I want his approval anyway?

I sat by my kill, waiting patiently. The red blood soaked the snow, and my fur. I felt proud of myself. I had never taken on a hunt like that and succeeded with a prize so large. The accomplishment rang through my bones.

Samantha came up and bumped her head along mine and the others followed suit. All except Shawn. He just grabbed the Doe in his jaws and ung her onto his back and trotted off back into the direction of the house. Castle. Whatever it was. Home. Was it home?

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We gathered around the bonfire. Most of the pack was here. There was the doe I caught roasting on the open fire, while other members of the pack brought food and their prey as well. I liked the sense of family here. I liked how everyone spent time together. We were a social species and this pack seems to embrace that.

"Good job on the hunt today." Jeremy said, sitting beside me on the bench.

The orange glow of the fire lighting up his face. He was a handsome man, I wondered if he had a mate. This pack did seem to be the typical more male than female population like most others I knew about. Most of the females here were already mated from what I could tell. They had mate marks on their neck and some of the females had at least two mates.

That thought made me blush, how could they keep up with the whims of two males? The fact that I was an omega should have sealed the deal of me having multiple mates, or a harem to breed to. Is that what they were doing here? Assessing me to see my worth then sending me off to the highest bidder? No, that didn't seem right. Samantha said I was safe here and I trusted her.

"Thank you." I whispered, tucking a lock of my copper hair behind my ears.

The fire crackled and embers oated up in the sky. The scent of burning wood, and lean meat was all around me. Everyone was talking, calm, and having fun. I needed to learn how to do that. Have fun with others. I needed to learn how to interact with people again.

I looked around. Everyone was smiling, well almost everyone. Caroline and James seemed to be having a heated discussion but I couldn't quite hear what they were saying.

"I've never hunted a large deer before."

"Did no one teach you to hunt?" he asked and I smiled.

"My dad did. When I was little. They taught me how to hunt small game. But back at the zoo, I wasn't able to hone my abilities, or test my strengths. Most of the food given to us was already killed. The animals I could hunt were the ones small enough to sneak into the enclosure. Mice, rabbits, raccoons, birds. I never really got to hunt deer, bison, or elk with my old pack. My parents didn't let me shift much in front of the others. Generally only them or the alpha. They said it was too dangerous. They were already afraid of the reactions of me being a female omega, but shifting before I was supposed to? It worried them."

"Shawn shifted early too." He said looking at me with a furrow in his brow. He didn't look mad, just looked like he was thinking. Concentrating on something.

"How early? I was 10 I think when I first shifted."

"He was 5 when he shifted but from what I know he had his wolf long before that."

Five years old. That was...I had never heard of that happening before. Why? What happened to bring his wolf that early? I must have voiced all of that out loud because Jeremy looked at me and said, "Not my story to tell."

Great. I would never learn then. Shawn despised me. I could see it in the way he was glaring at me now. I thought we bonded during the hunt but I was wrong. He hasn't spoken to me since. He has avoided me at all costs. Everytime I walk into a room, he leaves. Everytime I look in his direction, he looks away. Perhaps I should just give it up.

Jeremy didn't seem to have a mate mark. Would I be appealing to him?

There was a ruckus though and loud and angered growls. Wolves burst out onto the courtyard where the pack was gathered facing the treeline. Their hackles raised, teeth bared.

Shawn stood at attention. His body was tense, and his fists balled. A group of 5 wolves stalked towards the bonfire. They smelled different. I stood along with everyone else and Jeremy seemed to move closer to me. His body was tense as well, poised and ready for battle. The Gamma looked serious, stern.

These wolves were not guests. They were not welcome. They smelled wrong. They smelled, wild. Rogue. They're rogues.

"Leave. Now." Shawn commanded and the authority in it made my knees shake ready to submit. How did now one else here feel the need to bow? Were they used to it? Perhaps because it wasn't directed at them.

"Now, now. We just came to see for ourselves. We heard you had an omega. An unmated, unbonded omega." one of the males said as he shifted. He was tall with shoulder length brown hair and brown eyes. He smelled malicious, and mean.

"She is a pretty one. What I can't fathom is why you've left her so defenseless. So... ripe for the picking."