

Chapter 18

Rory's Pov

My wolf whimpered within me. She didn't like the intrusion into her territory. When did she start thinking of this place as hers?

Until we knew what those wolves wanted, I wasn't planning on exploring anymore. I was barely comfortable with James and Jeremy. I was surprisingly relaxed around Kasen and even Shawn despite his hatred of me. Kasen reminded me so much of my own father. God, I missed him.

Samantha had sat on the sofa with me and was playing with my hair. I remember my mother doing that often. She would braid it, undo it, and rebraid it over and over again. We bonded so closely over moments like that. It was calming my nerves, and it helped me feel close to her. I had no doubts she did this with her own daughters and I felt important and special to have her attempting to bond with me.

Kasen sat in the large chair next to us with the TV on and a glass of whiskey in his hand. The scent of it reminded me of Shawn, and a pang hit me in my chest.

"How did you two meet?" I asked, and Samantha chuckled. Kasen looked at her like she hung the moon and the stars.

"Surprisingly, our first meeting didn't go so well. I had gotten caught as a rogue fighting near pack borders. I got injured, and James and Jeremy's father brought me to the hospital. God, Doc got so tired of me being brought in." she trailed off and Kasen chuckled.

"Kasen, hearing that a rogue was brought onto his packland, came to investigate. I had run away from home long before that, but it came as a surprise to see he was my mate. I met him and within minutes, he rejected me." she said with a slight frown on her face.

Kasen tucked his chin to his chest for a minute before chiming in. "I was young and dumb."

"And full of c*m?" she joked and I couldn't help but laugh.

"I had been burned, jaded for a while. I thought I was in love. I had it all planned out. I was going to propose to her, and well that all changed when I walked in on her and my brother. I swore off love, mates, I just didn't think I had it in me to be the wolf who could give her what she needed when I met her. I also admit I was afraid to let anyone close to me. But Samantha, she's persistent. She's the strongest wolf I know." he said with a smile and she tucked her hair behind her ears and I noticed a blush.

"How did you overcome all of that? I would never have guessed you both rejected each other with how you are now. I look at you and I see nothing but love. I..." I stopped and folded my hands in my lap. Samantha put her hand on mine.

"Give him time." she said with a soft smile and I nodded though I doubted I would have a happily ever after like she did. Shawn was showing no signs of even being able to stand me. What are the chances of him accepting me as a mate? Slim to none. Perhaps it was time to take fate into my own hands. If my mate didn't want me, maybe it was time to find one who did.

"Who was that...at the re?" I asked changing the subject. I needed to talk about something different.

"That was Carter. He is the Alpha of the rogues. At least in this area he is. He took over from my Uncle."

"Is he...he seemed so mean..almost hateful." I said remembering the scent of him. The anger rolled off of him.

"He's a good kid. My uncle wouldn't have chosen him as his successor if he wasn't. I don't know what's going on, or why they're here, but we'll find out. Give Shawn some time to diffuse the situation and figure out what's happening."

"What if he's here for me? You all said when word got out that I'm here people would come for me. I'm just trying to be realistic. I'm a female. An unmated female omega at that. The fights to come... I don't want anyone getting hurt over me. I wouldn't be able to bear it. I think... If they are here for me, I would go willingly." I said, feeling the anxiety creeping up in my chest.

"No," Kasen practically growled. "You are ours. A part of our pack. A part of my family. We protect our own. You are safe here. No one will hurt you. No one will take you unless that is what you wish. Fighting and challenges are all a part of our world, but don't let the fear of a battle or injury sway your decision. Everyone here has grown to love you and see you as family. Caroline sees you as family. Julianna, Jeremy, and James, they all care for you. Samantha and I see you as one of our own. Even Shawn."

"That's not possible. He hates me." I muttered, but he still heard it. I saw the corners of his mouth pull up.

"He may not be mine biologically, but he's more like me than he realizes. He's hurting, give him time. But I promise you, if he didn't want you here, you wouldn't be here. Shawn's power far surpasses mine and I was the strongest Alpha of my time not to toot my own horn. I see the way he watches you. The way he tenses up when another male is near you. The way he only trusts your protection and care with those of us in his inner circle. He's coming around. You may not see it, he may not even see it, but he doesn't hate you. Far from it in fact. As far as Carter, I agree with Samantha. He's a good kid. Well, figure out what's going on. But for now, just try to relax and know you're safe here. No one is going to hurt you or take you. Not while I'm breathing." he said resolutely.

My mind got stuck on his words trying to see if there were things that I was missing. Signs that I didn't pick up on.

Trying not to spiral or think too much about it, I walked to the kitchenette and made myself a glass of warm tea and added some honey. I felt some sweat form on my brow and hot ashes coat my skin. I felt a cramp in my lower stomach and brought my knees to my chest.

I had been feeling them off and on for a few days, but today was the worst. Well, the last couple of hours were the worst, I should say. It was constant. Painful. This one was enough to make me double over and grip the countertops. My claws extended.

I heard a muttered "f**k" before I noticed Kasen picking up his phone and stepping onto the balcony and cracking the door behind him.

"We have a problem." he stated. I didn't know who he was talking to.

"What's wrong?" I asked and Samantha looked at me with concern.

"Have you ever been through a heat before?" She asked, walking over and placing her hand on my forehead. I shook my head and she frowned.

"Your scent is changing. Rapidly. Are you in pain?" She said, gesturing towards my currently extended claws. I nodded.

"Rory, Do you know what a heat is for an Omega?" she asked and I nodded. My mom had vaguely gone over some information about it with me, but I had never been through one. "I think you're at the start of your heat."