

Chapter 8

Rory's Pov

Hands. I had hands. I had skin without fur! I had hair. Long hair! I held my hands up and turned them over repeatedly admiring my ngers. I looked down at my legs and hesitantly touched them before running my ngers down my skin.

I didn't remember being this pale when I was younger but it's been so long, perhaps I was.

I ran my ngers over my ankles, gazing at the human limbs that I hadn't seen in over a decade. I felt my feet squeezing my toes and giggling a bit when it tickled. Was giggling considered too childish? I remember what that Alpha had said about me being illiterate, an abomination.

My brows drew together in concentration trying to remember everything that happened before the pain of the shift hit me. I remembered the first strike of pain. It felt worse than the ght I had with a younger wolf at the zoo when I was a pup.

I clutched the robe that was draped on my shoulders as I propped my weight on my free hand and tried to stand. My limbs felt wobbly and I fell back to the oor the minute I tried to stand.

"Here... Let me help." a soft voice said and I looked into the eyes of the older man who tried to help me shift earlier. He had kind eyes, sad but kind. I wondered what brought that sadness to him. He had his mate, which it was obvious that she was his mate.

He extended his hand to me and I gratefully grabbed it and he hoisted me up supporting my weight with his arm around my waist. It was more of a familial touch and I was grateful for it. My legs were shaky under me and I was nervous when he let go that I would collapse back to the oor.

I looked around and everyone was staring at me. I felt the embarrassment ll me and felt the heat of a blush rising up my neck, cheeks and my ears. Why were they staring at me? What was wrong with me? Was I hideous to look at? Was it vain to ask? I was a gangly kid. I was always told I was beautiful and cute but I always thought I was an odd looking child with my coppery red hair, pale skin and freckles. Was it because I was naked in a room full of strangers? No, we were werewolves. Nudity was a part of our life.

Julianna was looking at me with tears in her eyes though. What was making her sad?

"You look just like your mom." she whispered wiping a stray tear that had fallen past her lashes.

The words felt like a shot to the stomach. I know she didn't mean to hurt me but I missed my mother. I missed my dad. I missed my pack.

I looked at all of the faces, all of them still watching me intently. The man who had taken me from the zoo, the one who looked like his twin. One studying me without an ounce of an expression on his face, the other looked at me like I may be a juicy steak served up on a platter. The older couple were looking at me like I was a conundrum, like I was a rarity that they wanted to treasure. The other woman, the pack doctor, was watching me closely. Assessing me to make sure I was okay. I remember her kindness, the way her wolf comforted me and made me feel safe. Safe. She was safe.

The memory of my mother's words ooded my brain. Not all wolves were good. Especially to females and even more so to omegas. Was this pack truly as safe as I thought it was earlier? Maybe they only helped me shift so they could lock me away, breed me, sell me.

My sts clenched and I felt my heart beat start to rise and pound in my chest. I was sending myself down the rabbit hole but times were hard and nding a safe place was even more difficult.

I tested the scents in the air. No signs of ill-intent. No hints of malice radiating off anyone. It was more so curiosity, dominance, and resolve. Alphas were protective, as were most males. Perhaps they were feeling protective? I had not uttered a single word yet. I was afraid to ask. I haven't used my voice in so long. Did it still work? Would I recognize my own voice?

"W-whats h-hap...happening?" I stuttered out feeling the scratchiness of my vocal cords shaking off their dormant slumber.

"Great..." the alpha muttered, stepping back and sitting on the edge of his desk. I remember the way he purred for me. I liked the sound and I liked the way it made me feel. I felt nothing but peace and serenity. It felt like a praise, and a reward all wrapped up into one. He was so hot and cold and I had only just met the man. He radiated authority and aggression. His scent poured his power and dominance into the air. It also had hints of irritation. What did he have to be irritated with?

"I was right to assume earlier. She can't even speak!" the Alpha grunted out and I clenched my jaw and felt my chest rumble as I glared at him.

Did I just seriously growl at an alpha? One who I wasn't sure was safe and wouldn't hurt me? I have a death wish. I would be dead by morning, I was sure of it.

Seeing my challenge and me being an i****t and forgetting social interaction he rose to his full height and his body grew hard. He went from making himself appear smaller so as to not spook me, or I guess keep me calm to being the largest being in the room. The biggest man I had ever seen. He growled as his eyes darkened showing his wolf at the forefront.

Dumb. I was so dumb.

He growled again as he stepped forward and I bowed my head and my shoulders hunched. My body shivered giving over to the submission. Scared. I was scared. My eyes landed on the oor focusing on the pattern of the rugs around us. His shoes came into view

"I'll give you the same chance I give everyone else. You get three strikes, little one. After that, I take your disrespect as an ocial challenge and we either duel or you're banished. Don't disrespect me again." he said slowly, enunciating every word and syllable. When I didn't answer he growled again and I whimpered as my legs shook even more, my body and my wolf begging me to fall to my knees in submission.

"Shawn!" one of the women in the room yelled and I felt the relief of his glare being pointed at someone else.

"First of all, How dare you! And secondly, did I f**k up somewhere along the line of raising you? From our conversation earlier to right now, and calling this omega all of the derogatory things you have tonight makes me think I have. I am so disappointed in you. She wasn't stuttering. She wasn't showing her lack of intelligence, not that there is anything lacking but Goddess son, she spent 15 years as a wolf! She hasn't spoken a single word in 15 years! Have you even offered her food or water? Don't bother answering, that was rhetorical. Come on sweetheart. Let's get you something to eat and settle for the night. The rest can wait for the morning, well, the little bit of time we have left before morning."

I wanted to chuckle at the tongue lashing the Alpha just received from his mom. He didn't look like either of his parents but It made me smile thinking of him being chastised like a child. His mom was right though. His words did hurt me. I don't know why they did affect me so much. He was no one to me. Just an alpha who was in control of my fate. He held my life and future in his hands. So why did I want him to approve of me? Why did I want him to nd value in me? Why did his blatant rejection of me earlier feel like a knife to my heart? Why did his critical words and his failure to nd anything good about me hurt so bad?

I looked away from the beautiful alpha and followed his mother out of the room and as soon as the door was shut I heard the sound of glass shattering and loud thumping and growls. I didn't want to know so I kept moving forward.