

Chapter 6: Black Lie

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I look away. Closing my eyes as I took deep and steady breaths.

It may be what I've always wanted, but I won't take a life for it. Besides, I was not like her. I don't hurt people no matter how shitty they are. I will never be like her.

This was my fate and I'm starting to come to terms with it.

Before the villainous woman could say anything else, I shifted back into my wolf form, not bothering to take my clothes off as I just wanted to get out of there. I saw the shock in her eyes and the way her body had stiffened before I turned around and ran away. 1

I let the cool wind brushing against my fur bring with it the things I heard from Ivy.

Hurt her. Make her disappear. Have River all to myself.

It was a crazy plan. A plan only a psychotic woman would think of.

I should let River know. I should, shouldn't I? He deserves to know that his supposed perfect and

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innocent mate was fake and was just putting up an act.

But then again, would he even believe me?

Remembering the way he looked at her so smitten shoots an arrow straight to my heart and I begin to doubt my plan.

She was his Luna, our Luna, and anything bad I say or do relating to her would be treason. It could quite literally almost cost me my life.

But he would believe me, right? Why would I lie to him? In all our years together, even as kids, I never lied to him. We promised never to. 2

For the past hour as I continued to run with no specific route in mind, I debated the whole thing.

Eventually, after what seemed like almost two hours and Fuyu starting to feel fatigued as we ran much faster than usual, we stopped.

My heart dropped to my stomach when I realized where I had ended up.

The hot springs we spent a whole day together a week ago.

Fuck.

Even in my subconscious, he's all I think about. I

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fucking hate this, but at the same time I also can't help but reminisce.

The place was still quiet. There was nobody else as it was likely too early and I walked around, scanning the place, taking it in and trying my best not to feel sad about it. 1

Nature-formed rocks gathered around the area and just a few steps and it would lead you to the hidden springs. Faintly covered by trees that had turned into a shade of white due to snow, you could see water being drawn up from the artesian and right below it is a crystal clear blue paradise.

At your front, jagged mountains with snowy peaks stare back at you alongside a green and white landscape enough to take your breath away.

"We should head back..." Fuyu tells me and I realized that it was getting later than I was supposed to be out.

I may be feeling shitty, but I still had Pack duties to attend to. One of which was to help train the younger ones. Though it wouldn't be until after lunch, I was hoping to get in some solo training before too. Sometimes the White Warriors also come to me for advice on staying incognito as I was tasked to be the usual night patrol because of my wolf color.

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I took a deep and long inhale as I filled my nose with the refreshing aroma of the water and its surroundings one last time before pushing myself back to reality.

We can do this, K. Just like Zane said, I can turn this into something good one day. It's going to happen. I will make it happen.

"Let's go home, Fuyu."

The run back home was even more tiring. I pushed myself more than usual as I've been running continuously for more than four hours. I could feel Fuyu pushing herself the best she could as we were nearing the entrance to the Castle.

When I spotted the first tree stop (it's what we call trees specifically used for extra clothing after shifting), I quickly grabbed a change of clothes which were some sweatpants and a white sweater

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and drank the two bottles of water in seconds.

“Where are you?”

“Keira, where are you?”

“Keira!”

My head began to hurt from the sudden burst of mindlinks left and right. They were all from the Alpha crew and something about it seemed urgent. They must have been confused as to why they couldn't reach me because my mindlink only works when I am in a specific range with them.

“I'm here, just resting. I'm walking back. What's up?”

Silence. My brows furrowed and my heart beat nervously. What the hell was going on?

Last night, Wynter and Elura had only sent me messages (three hearts and hugs emoji) and that was it. Aspen sent me a gif of some guy screaming ‘just do it’ (until now I don't get what he means), while Nas sent me a picture of a book called ‘How To Not Give A Fuck’ (I haven't read it nor will I ever ... Maybe).

And though I appreciated their very in character

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gestures, none of us have really talked or linked to each other directly. They probably knew I needed some time for myself to think and process things, but now why are they so... pushy?

“Please just get here and fix this misunderstanding.” Zane was the only one that linked me back.

Misunderstanding, he said. During the two minute walk to the front of the Castle, all I could think about was what this misunderstanding was.

It turns out I would find out the moment I arrived.

The White Howlers stood around the front of the White Castle. The place has been in their Pack for more than a century and in time, it just gets more beautiful. Whether in the winter or in any other season, the gorgeous grand architecture just looks even more elegant and welcoming.

Right now though, with almost half of the Pack standing hauntingly around the area all staring at me with unpaintable expressions, nothing about the whole place seemed welcoming.

But it was River who was standing at the front of everyone while his parents stood at the side a few

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feet from him that caught my eye and worried me the most.

He looked different. His eyes that were usually full of light and excitement when they looked at me now just seemed daunting and angry.

Was he... angry at me?

“Where have you been, Keira?”

I swallowed nervously. He called me by my full name and to make it even worse, he said it as if he hated every letter.

I closed my hands into a fist so tight I could already feel my nails digging into my skin.

“I went for a run,” I told him honestly. “What is this all about? Why is everyone here and why are you looking at me as if I’ve done something wrong?” I look around, friends and those I’ve considered as family staring back at me as if they didn’t know who I was anymore, like the little girl they saw growing up had become an outsider.

River looked away as his jaw ticked. That only happened when he was mad about something, but he’s trying his best not to blow up. He’s

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suppressing his anger, but the question is why?

When he looks back at me, his eyes have gotten even scarier and he takes a few steps towards me, making my heart beat like crazy.

“Why are you lying, Keira? If you tell me the truth then I’ll lessen the severity of the punishment.”

Punishment? Why the hell is he talking about punishments?

I shake my head confused. “What? What are you talking about? I’m telling you, I only went for a run.” I lower my voice at my next words so others wouldn’t hear. “I went to the hot springs. Our hot springs,” I pointed out to him and I saw him visibly feel uncomfortable.

As quickly as it was, it still hurt me, but I pushed it aside.

River sighs. “Fine, if you won’t tell the truth then I’ll just tell you that we already know.”

I blinked at him, waiting for him to continue.

He shakes his head before pushing his hair back, seemingly frustrated. “I know you hurt her, Keira. Why would you do that? I know you’re pissed about

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the whole situation, but hurting my mate and your Luna? That's out of line."

That's when it happened. I thought it already did when I realized my first and first love has left me, but it turns out something else was going to happen. Something much worse.

I saw my whole life coming apart in front of my very eyes, all because of something I didn't even do.

"I didn't do that." I told him with conviction.

River should know I would never lie. Hell, that I would never hurt anyone that I didn't consider an enemy (maybe Ivy is sort of my enemy but not that kind). Either way, he should know I'm telling the truth.

"Please believe me," I whispered to him, sincerity in my eyes and words.

For a second I debated if I should tell him what really happened; his crazy mate came up to me and started cursing me out and acting like a total psycho, but then I stopped because I knew the second he looked away, the River I've known all these years is gone.

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He doesn't believe me. He will never believe me from now on.

Then I realized one important thing... maybe he has been gone this whole time and my eyes were only getting opened to see it now.

"You should stay out of the Castle from now on. You can stay at the dugout. It's closer to your patrol area, anyway." He said before turning around like I was just a nobody he was punishing for bad conduct, brushing me off like we didn't have years in our relationship.

I wanted to run after him, tell him that he doesn't know what he's doing and that he was making a big mistake. Hell, beg him to reconsider.

But before I could, she showed up.

Running to River with tears in her eyes and the most believable damsel in distress look. She glares at me but hidingly so nobody else sees her expression except for me. She's good. Way too fucking good that it disgusts me. 4

"River!" She cries out for him, her voice soft and hurt like a baby deer.

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River immediately opens his arms for her, pulling her close like he used to do to me. My heart is hurting, but at the same time all I can think about is the bruises on her face and her arms because they sure as hell weren't there the last time I saw her.

She faked them. I don't know how, self inflicted or if she had help, but it was obviously not from me.

River needs to know that she's a true psycho, that she's controlling him with their mate bond. He deserves better than her. So much better! 1

"River, she's lyi—"

"I want her gone!" She shouts loud enough for everyone around the area to hear. 1

I hear shocked gasps and murmurs, but most of all I hear my heart. It's thumping so loud from nervousness it feels like it's going to jump out of my chest any second now.

She wants me... gone? What does she mean gone? Like more than being kicked out of the Castle? Does she mean—

"Banished, River. She should be banished for hurting me. Look, I'm in pain!" She pouts and a tear

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rolls down her cheeks before sniffing.

I can't take her act. It is physically and emotionally painful to watch someone act so fake and so manipulative.

Wake up, River! Wake up! She's playing you!

But River doesn't do that. All he does is look at her lovingly, touch her and comfort her like she's wrapped in a fragile sticker.

And then, he looks at me.

Anger. Resentment. But worst of all, hatred.

The man I've loved for more than half of my life looked me in the eyes and said...

"Keira Akari, I, Alpha River Colden, banish you from The White Howlers. I never want to see you again." 2