

# Chapter Eleven - The First Snow, The Good Tidings

Siobhan

Mishayev woke me up late in the evening.

“Put on your coat,” she said. “It’s going to be freezing tonight.”

“As if it isn’t already,” I replied, shivering in my skin.

When I stepped out, I saw the snow falling softly, slowly, mixing with the dark mud. It complimented it, made it look nicer, somehow serene. The sun was setting in the distance, and although we couldn’t see it from there, the snowflakes gathered on the ground were bathed in a soft orange light.

“It’s a good omen,” Misha said.

“Snowfall? People hate snow where I come from, but then it never looks this beautiful.”

“We have a saying among our pack, passed down the generations. It says visitors bring the weather with them, and if they bring snow, it means they bring good luck. You have brought us glad tidings.”

“What tidings?” I asked, as we stepped outside. A gentle gust of wind hit me, getting under my fur coat through the sleeves, freezing me to the bone. I removed my hands from the sleeves and wrapped it around me like a shawl, blocking the wind as best as I could.

“It is not always known right away,” she said. “But they come out soon. Here, at least.”

“What do you mean?”

“Keeping good news to yourself is considered a sacrilege here. There is a lot of misery out there in the world, and when the Almighty sends his blessings, they should be shared and spread. *What’s his to share is not yours to conceal.*”

“Do you believe in God?” I asked, hoping she says no.

I didn't want to get tangled with this sort of thing. What if Harrod asked me to convert to his religion or something? I would never be up for that. I made a mental note to get these issues out of the way before telling him I'm pregnant. That is, if I were to tell him I was pregnant. I was having second thoughts. In the safety of his arms, under his warmth and scent, I felt safe. I wasn't shocked by what I saw. Maybe it was because I was too tired to react, too hormonal to give a hoot. But reality was sinking in now and I was starting to feel creeped out.

"No," she said. "We don't worship beings like that."

"Then what do you mean by Almighty?"

"You can use whichever word you want for it. It's just a word, at the end of the day. We believe in a higher power, but we don't know how or what that power is. The teachings have been handed down from generation to generation to spread goodness and tolerance. Our focus is not on the being but on the teachings. What harm does that do? We don't differentiate or label people or treat them differently for what they are."

"As in?"

"In the other packs, Harrod and Harrison would be half-bloods. They wouldn't be allowed to become Alpha, ever. You wouldn't be allowed to marry or breed with Harrod; it would be an abomination. The other packs are harsh, divided. We aren't. It's the teachings that keep us grounded and strong. We don't treat you as different, even though you are an anomaly in our world. To us, you are a person. If it were some other pack, you'd have been killed."

"Misha," I said, inspired by her motherly tone, or perhaps guilt-trapped. "I do bring tidings, but I am not sure if they are good or bad. I wanted to talk to Harrod first before I told anyone."

"Shh," she said, one finger on her dark lips. "Don't speak of it until you are ready. The wind does not keep secrets." She put a cigarette in her mouth and lit it. "I'd offer you one, but..." She paused mid-sentence and gave me a knowing smile.

"It's fine, I don't smoke anyway."

"He'll be happy," she said. "I won't force you to tell him, but don't hold it in for too long."

# Chapter Twelve - When the Reality Sinks In

Harrod

When I returned from my training with Harrod and Grandpa, I found Siobhan sauntering in the woods with Mishayev, away from the cabins, her expression serious.

“Is she bothering you?” I asked, pointing towards Misha with my finger.

“No, she has been educating me,” Siobhan said.

“What if I am bothering her?” Mishayev said. “I could rip your throat before you could bat an eye.”

“Try me,” I said.

“Don’t do anything, please, stop,” Siobhan pleaded in a panic.

“We’re joking,” I said. “Misha and I banter a lot.”

“I’ll leave you two alone,” Mishayev said, nodding. As she walked back to the cabins, she flicked out her cigarette and put it out with her foot.

“Finally I have you to myself,” I said, reaching for her hand.

“Finally,” she said, with mock excitement.

“You look worried,” I said. “What’s wrong?”

“Harrod, I don’t know. I think I’m confused. So much has happened so fast, so much is happening.”

“I know, believe me, I do. I found this out when I came here, and trust me, I was freaked out way more than you are. But living with them, it’s not too different. They are just people. The shifting can be terrifying, though.”

“No, I am just worried about the other thing,” she said.

“What thing?”

“Oh, nothing. Don’t mind me, I’m just rambling.”

“Siobhan, what are you not telling me?”

“Nothing, let it go.”

“Tell me, come on.”

“I am just...”

“What?”

“I am just a little freaked out.”

“About what?”

“About us, about the future, about everything.”

“We’ll take it in a stride, don’t you worry about it.”

We walked to the lake. I brushed off the fresh snow from a boulder and we sat on it. The wind rustled her hair and I pushed a stray strand away from her face.

“Harrod,” she said.

“Yeah?”

“Don’t freak out if this sounds weird, but I have to let it out.”

“What is it?”

“I don’t know how to do this. I’ve never dated anyone before.”

“I think I could tell that you hadn’t. Ask away.”

“Do you think you want to get married? Not right now, but in the future, maybe?”

“I never thought about it seriously until I met you. And if it is you, then I think yeah, I would want to marry. I want to spend the rest of my life with you, making you happy.”

“What about having kids?”

“Never thought about it. It would be cool, I suppose. Dad would be very happy, though,” I said. “Would you be okay with marrying a werewolf? What do you think about marriage?”

“I think I am past all that. I always knew I would marry, so yeah. But don’t feel any pressure.”

“I’ll be the Alpha soon. I don’t feel any pressure other than having to fight against my own brother.”

“Don’t fight your own brother,” she said.

“I have no choice. I’m a half-breed here. I have to prove that I have what it takes.”