

## Chapter 7

AURORA

Trajan pulled me into the crowd, temporarily hiding us. I tore my eyes from Dane.

"Do we need to leave?" he growled low in my ear.

My heart was fluttering, but I forced my spine straight. "No. Let him come to me."

There was a crowd of wolves around him, gorgeous and dangerous and glittering and whispering about what he'd done. He was on his feet, striding my way. But every wolf here wanted to speak to the powerful Alpha of Blue Ridge, and that slowed him down.

I pressed a hand to my chest. Would he kill me in front of all these people? Trajan wouldn't make it easy.

Curse my grandmother for making this the only way I could become Luna.

"Oh, my goddess. Isn't that Ann Reed?" someone whispered.

I'd caught their attention, now. One muttered, "Is she crawling back to Dane? During the gala?"

"Gold digger," came another whisper.

Despite the way my heart was beating against my ribs, a smile

quirked one corner of my mouth.

Once, that kind of accusation would've hurt. Now, the thought that I might need Dane for his money was ridiculous. I had more money than most of these wolves could dream of.

A young woman in a frilly white dress flounced up to me. In a grating voice, she said, "Is it true, *wolfless*?" The crowd gasped at her insult, but that just egged her on. "Dane threw your ass out all those years ago and now you're coming crawling back to him?"

I raised an eyebrow, unaffected by her insult. Constantly aware that Dane was drawing closer. "Trajan?"

He leaned down near my ear and whispered, "Amy Miller, Ms. DeVere. A lesser member of the Hundred Lakes Pack."

"Excuse me! I'll show you lesser!" Amy Miller shrieked. "You're a rogue!"

"Aurora DeVere is no rogue." Trajan growled. "Should I remove her, Luna-heir?"

The girl blanched.

"No." I said. Waiting for Dane's approach was like standing on a train track waiting for the train to hit me. "She's not worth it."

"How dare you?" the woman snapped, her face going red, standing out against her white dress, "I'm—!"

A warm body pressed against me from behind. Dane's scent

surrounded me. It was so familiar, yet so strange after five years, my knees felt weak.

His deep, authoritative growl sounded in my ear, and he gripped my wrist hard in one big, rough hand. "Ann Reed. If you came back here for a public execution, you're about to get your desire."

\*\*\*\*\*

DANE

For a moment, I thought she would melt back against me. For a moment, I wanted her to. I wanted to wrap one hand around her throat and tangle the other in her hair and burn us both to the ground with a searing, claiming kiss.

Since I'd had her, no other woman was able to satisfy me.

She should have flinched. Grabbed my arm and whispered she was sorry and begged for my forgiveness.

That was what she would have done five years ago.

Instead, she turned her head gracefully and gave me a long, cool look.

"Alpha Montague. How nice to see you again."

*Alpha Montague.* After all this time. After she'd run and the Council had miraculously spared us, even though we'd gone against their decree to stay together.

After she had run from me. It was *nice* to see me again.

My wolf howled.

Just because I'm a bastard who likes to torture himself, I slid closer, until her back was pressed to my front. A burly, bearded wolf lurked nearby. Who was he to her? Mate? Lover?

I'd kill him if he moved. But at a look from her, he stilled and seemed content to watch.

"What are you doing here?" The words rumbled from my chest. Goddess, the scent of lilacs was everywhere.

Today had started normally.

Who knew that this evening, I'd have my hands back on Ann Reed? The one person who had ever escaped me. The woman who dominated my dreams.

"The gala is open to all wolves," she said, still in that cool voice. "Isn't it?"

She'd always been beautiful, but it used to be a frail kind of beauty, like a gossamer flower that only bloomed at night. Now her beauty was full and sensual with an edge of danger—a rose with thorns.

Why did I want to wrap my hand around the stem and bleed?

"You know it is," I growled. As my mate, she'd been its hostess for three years.

"And is it now customary to greet your guests...like this?"

Her voice dropped low and breathy, and for a moment, she let her body lean into mine. The shock of it was enough to remind me where we were. I let her go, and she turned to face me with that polite little smile still on her face.

She held out one elegant hand. "Alpha Montague, allow me to reintroduce myself. My name, as it turns out, is Aurora DeVere."

DeVere? That was the name of the High Alpine family. I sneered, not interested in her games. "Did the Reeds send you here? Is that where you've been all these years? Crouching in a cave in the woods?"

Wolves eavesdropping in the crowd tittered. I didn't care. Everyone knew how I'd brought the Broken Forest Pack to its knees.

She tilted her head at me and blinked smokey eyes. "I haven't spoken to my foster family in longer than I've spoken to you, Alpha Montague."

"Foster family?"

Her lips pressed together. "Yes. As it turns out, I belong to another pack. One who accepts me...as I am."

Unlikely. But that also sent whispers through the crowd.

"The DeVeres won't take kindly to you pretending to be one of them."

"I'm not pretending."

I grabbed her wrist in a crushing grip. Still, she didn't flinch.

"Come with me," I growled. "Reed or DeVere, I have things to say to you that are no one else's business."

"Aurora," the big man said. There was warning in his tone.

She gave a small shake of her head. "The Alpha wants to speak to me, Trajan. It's why we came." She turned a look on me that was as frigid as an arctic lake. "Besides, I have something he needs."

If she really was from High Alpine, she was right. But in this moment, I didn't care.

I pulled Ann behind me to a door that led into a dark hall.

I shut it behind us, locked it.

Then I shoved her against a wall and leaned close...



Write your comment



Gifts