

Chapter 70-1

My head snaps quickly to look at Seth, whose eyes were already fixed on me. He must have already requested a pardon from him before they went outside, as there's not an ounce of surprise on his face.

What the f**k? I ask him, just between us.

I don't know, Love. Technically, only the current King can grant a pardon, and I'm not sure anything could convince him to pardon him. There's so much history between them that we don't even know.

"No," I state plainly, looking Benjamin straight in his eyes, the eyes that match mine. He looks absolutely shocked. We stare at each other for a few moments, waiting for the other to speak, but he does not. I can feel the anger coming from him in waves.

"Both Prince Seth and I are unable to grant you a pardon. The best we can do is speak to the King on your behalf," I tell him and he laughs out loud.

"He'd be only too happy to kill me," he says, his voice laced with venom. "Forget having us cooperate with anything. Let all the she-wolves of the kingdom disappear for all I care."

For all the anger that is coming from him, I'm certainly meeting it with my own. "Fine," I spit at him. "You're forgetting that I am the Princess of this kingdom, and I do outrank you." I stand up and turn to the poor man who I know just wants to help his pack.

"Alex," I state, trying my best to issue a royal command, knowing he will not be physically able decline me. "You will take us to your home, immediately."

Poor Alex looks upset, but my order seems to have worked, as he nods his head and heads to the door to lead us there.

I turn to Benjamin and see the look of fury on his face. "Will you be joining us?" I ask him and he makes no move to answer. "Stevie told us about the Rogue community- accidentally. I don't think he even knew that it was technically forbidden."

I start to walk to the door, Seth taking a few quick steps to get in front of me and open the door for me. "I truly just want to help them. This," I say, turning to Benjamin, who is still seated at the table, "Isn't the best that the kingdom can do for its wolves. But taking care of them will not come from your demands. It will come because it is the right thing to do. If you want a pardon, you'll be negotiating that with the King yourself, I will not be pulled into it. The she-wolves in this territory deserve better from you."

We all make our way outside, following Alex. When we've made it a few hundred yards, he rubs the back of his neck with his hand, and smiles a lopsided grin at me. "You didn't have to order me. You could have just asked."

"I'm sorry," I whisper, the guilt making me feel even worse than it did just a few seconds ago. "Truly, I am. I wasn't sure you would go against him. I know how strong the Beta oath can be."

"Someday, Kid," he says, stopping and turning to look me squarely in the eyes. "Someday you'll have pups and you'll have to make hard decisions. I'd do anything to keep mine safe, just like Benjamin had to with you. We moved out here because of the oath, and Benjamin has been the best bet to keep my family safe, but Molly... I'd break a thousand oaths to keep my daughters safe and right now, they just aren't.

"I'm sorry, Alex," I say to him, feeling even worse. "Will you, please, show me your home? I really would like to meet your mate."

"I thought you'd never ask, Kid," he says and turns to walk, holding his arm out for me to take. I can feel Seth's slight irritation through our bond, but he's not angry, and that's the best to hope for with this mess of a situation that my anger has created. We walk what feels like a few miles and come upon a small, very poorly built cabin, though I'm pretty sure it is actually what you would call a shack. Thankfully, we continue past.

"Does anyone live there?" I hear my dad ask and Alex nods. "An old rogue. His mate died years ago and he decided to leave his pack and live out here."

Geez. It looks like one strong storm could blow the place down, but it's clearly been there a while. Maybe the foundation is good and we can help him out.

We walk past a few more run-down houses. I notice that there's no landscaping, no decorations at all, just houses that could all use some work. I note one house has a tarp on its roof, and another has boarded up windows- only one I could see still had glass in it.

Dad, can you make note of all the major repairs that you see as we pass?

Already doing that, kiddo. If they'll accept the help, we can get people out here in a week or two.

We approach an old white house with rusted railing holding up a crooked roof over a front porch. "It isn't much," Alex says, indicating that it's his, "but it's home."

Seth, he has 7... 8 kids? How can they all live there?

I don't know, Love.

How could the kingdom let this happen?

The rogue lands were supposed to be a punishment.

I know. But there are kids here.

I know. We'll fix it. Somehow.

Alex leads us up to the porch, but when he walks into the home through the door that's already propped open, everyone else stays behind, leaving just the two of us to enter. The home is dark. Clearly, there's no electricity, but I note that he doesn't have oil lamps like Benjamin does. There are two couches, both dark in color, and I note that there are some pillows and blankets in the corner, indicating that people sleep in here.