

## Chapter 70-2

“There’s a bedroom over there,” he tells me, nodding to a door off the living room, “that’s where my wife and I and our 2 youngest sleep. Down that hall is the in-laws room and then the kids' room. The middle kids sleep in there. The older boys prefer to sleep on the couches.”

“Is there not a fireplace?” I ask him, looking around.

“Nah,” he tells me. “We just couldn’t afford it when we built out here. We do OK though. We’ve got plenty of blankets.”

“I’m going to help you all,” I tell him, meeting his eyes. “I don’t know exactly how, but it’s going to get better.”

“You’re more like your father than you realize, Kid,” he tells me with a small smile. “Some of the houses we passed need some serious repairs. They need a lot of help.”

“Consider it done,” I tell him. “My dad took note of the repairs that were visible from the outside. We’ll get their roofs and windows repaired in a few weeks.”

Alex shakes his head at me. “They can’t afford that.”

“They won’t owe a thing,” I tell him firmly. “They deserve, at the very least, to have a safe place to sleep.”

“They won’t accept the King’s help,” he tells me, shaking his head. “They all knew the boys, and YOU.”

I look at him and smile. “They’ll accept MY help though, won’t they?”

“Maybe,” he says, thinking. “Can you come back tomorrow? I can introduce you to some of the people who live here. They’d love to see you, all grown up.”

“Absolutely,” I tell him with a giant smile, excited to meet the people who knew me as a child.

Can you run back to the pack house and get some things for me? I ask, linking my brother.

Yeah. What do you need?

I begin to list the items I’d like, and I can feel his confusion through the bond, and then his shock.

Does he know that you want this?

Do you think he’d be standing in front of you calmly if he did?

He’s going to kill me.

Fine. Take Albert with you and stay there. Just send him back with it. He won’t do anything to Albert- everyone loves him.

Fine.

“Everything alright?” Alex asks me and I nod.

“Sorry,” I tell him. “I was asking my brother to go get some things for me”.

“No problem,” he says. “The wife should be home soon. When we started the patrols last week, we had to start keeping all the kids together so we’d have enough people out there.”

“No worries,” I tell him. I note that there’s not much to personalize their home like there is at Benjamins. There are no lamps, no photos, not even a bookshelf.

“Let’s step back outside so we can talk. I’d like Seth to hear what you have to say,” I tell him and he turns to lead me outside.

“Whatever you say, Princess,” he says dramatically.

Seth and my dad are still standing outside, Albert and Robbie must have already left. Alex motions to a large picnic table sitting under a giant tree and we all sit around the table. It reminds me of an old, rustic campground that you’d go to for fun for a week, but for them, this is every day.

“Do you regret moving out here with him?” I ask him, not even bothering to gently ease my way into the tough conversation.

He sighs and rubs the back of his neck. “I didn’t at first. It was just Della and me, and her parents came with us. We built this little house and added a room for a couple kids. But, well, now we’ve got a lot of kids. I regret it now. It's hard trying to keep my girls safe.”

“I think we need to talk about why Benjamin’s living conditions are better than yours,” I tell him. “You don’t have running water. Why does he?”

“He’s the Alpha, Molly,” he tells me plainly, like that explains it.

“You have kids, Alex!” I tell him, completely outraged. My dad and Seth just sit there, taking in the conversation, neither of them offering their opinion at all.

“Molly, you got out of here. You lived a life full of luxury,” He tells me, confused. “Why are you so upset?”

Why am I upset? Honestly, that’s a pretty fair question. “I never knew that there was an entire community of people living out here. You all deserve to live a decent life.”

Alex shakes his head at me. “Kid, you don’t understand. It isn’t like that. We don’t have much, but we have enough. We’ve all been happy out here, until the she-wolves went missing. They come out here because they know no one cares about the rogues.”

“I care,” I tell him quietly.

“Did you care,” he asks, “before you knew you were supposed to grow up out here?”

I look at him, frustration evident on my face. “If I had known you were out here, with people missing roofs to their homes and kids sleeping on couches, I absolutely would have.”

“We heard the stories about you, you know?” Alex says with a smile. “About how you’d been adopted by the Alpha, but you went to school with the omegas. About how you became the cook for the pack, and how you made sure the omegas in your pack were always paid fairly. I knew one day you’d come back here to help us. I just knew it in my bones.”

“Would it be OK if Seth and I stay in a tent in your yard for a few days?” I ask him, completely avoiding looking at my poor mate who is being drug into this, though I can feel his complete shock through the bond. “Albert will be back in a while with a tent and our things. I want to get to know you all. I want to know what it’s like every day here.”