

Chosen 31

Chapter 31:

The director took the weapon out of Katie's hands and took a good look at it, "Let's have the owner of this revealed now, shall we?" he yelled to one of the hunters that stood guard, having them take the dagger of his hands. The hunter timidly ran out of the room to investigate and find out who the dagger belonged to. "That dagger..."

"You suspect that it could be mine, don't you?" Katie asked him, keeping her voice as neutral as she could even though this would be implying that she was to take full responsibility for the death of a werewolf in the school.

"Let's not jump to that conclusion just yet. But if we do, will you come quietly?" tension soared in the room as the two hunters stared at each other. There was no doubt that both of them was remarkably powerful, Katie with raw power and the Director with experience to top it up.

"I do not intend to be detained by the Agency," Katie spoke, her voice clear as a bell and her will of iron coming off her in waves. The Director didn't look like someone who took kindly to insubordination and yet, Katie did nothing to show a chance of her backing down.

"Does that also mean you are aware of the possibility of that dagger being yours and are ready to resist detainment if it comes to it?" he asked her.

"Did I stutter, sir? I will find the culprit behind this murder and Prometheus be with them because it will take everything I have to hold back from killing them, but I can't do that while I'm detained," she spoke.

"We don't let our emotions get the better of us, that's one of the rules we hunters go by. Surely you know by now that a decision made based on emotion rather than fact is nothing more than wishful thinking. The facts are in alignment right now. There have been more werewolf casualties than human ones. Rogues attacked the school and it was found that one of them was a student at the school. Furthermore, that student has been killed.

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You must know what we are facing right now. People are questioning the system. They think there are rogues working undercover in the school and that the hunters are helping them. After what Shaemus pulled that put hundreds of lives at risk, the murder of a werewolf by the school's best hunter might just be the tipping point of society. Resisting detainment would be something you have to rethink," he said.

Katie kept silent for a moment before speaking, "Detainment... will only make this situation worse. This perpetrator would not have done this if I was present at the time. If I'm detained, what stops him from killing another student at the school? If there is another death, the school might just be shut down. I can't even tell if it will even survive after just this one death," Katie said.

"The one who died was a werewolf and not to mention, a former rogue. The school will continue with caution after this. If it was an innocent human, the school would be shut down at once," he said.

"Sir Anthony, the results came back..." the hunter that had been sent called from the door, raising the tension in the room. Katie's heart threatened to leap from her chest. She was getting her Prometheus

gifts ready for the worst-case scenario. If there was a chance that she could avoid detainment, she was ready to do what it would take. This killer was hers to catch and no one else's.

"Who's is it?" Director Anthony asked the man, his hands folded across his chest while he paid attention to the hunter at the door. The hunter looked between Katie and the Director nervously before speaking, "Katie Chase."

The room was plunged into a deep silence while everyone contemplated the news about the owner of the murder weapon. Cole knew Katie was not a fan of using those weapons and that she could have silenced Ash in a less messy manner if she'd wanted to. And for that reason, he believed she was innocent. Nonetheless, this did not help her situation.

The two hunters stared each other down for a brief moment of silence, right before all hell broke loose. The Director rushed forward at threatening speed, his bulky arms spread out so he could grab Katie. Katie, on the other hand, leapt out of reach just a moment before she was caught, avoiding Anthony at the last moment before she vanished.

Anthony was at the doorway in no time barring her way out. "You aren't escaping, Chase. You might come from a prestigious family. You might have scored highest on the Hunter exam for even experienced hunters and you might possess two Prometheus gifts, but you are not above the law."

"I am not above the law indeed, but I am the best chance you've got at catching Ash's killer. Grant me that opportunity. I won't let you down and you know that," Katie said, her body visibly relaxing. This was the opening Anthony must have been looking for as he lunged for her faster some of the eyes in the room could see. His speed was incredible, but alas it was without the enhancement of a Prometheus gift.

Katie grabbed his hand and twisted around him, going through the strokes of a judo flip at a speed the director couldn't match. The action flung the bulky man into an aerial barrel roll that was going to get him down on his back. Katie had virtually won for the few people in the room that could still tell what was happening, Cole included although Jason, Caden and Sandra remained clueless to what was happening in the blur of motion that occurred before them.

The director yanked his arm free in mid-air and twisted so that he landed on his feet, a movement that raised numerous alarms within Katie's mind forcing her to leap back and avoid the kick that came straight for her face. The two warriors glared at each other. The door was now behind Katie and she could leave when she wanted, but that would have only led to a manhunt. If she was to peacefully carry out her investigation, she was going to have to clear her charges here and now or at least get an extension on the time it would take to have her detained.

"What are you waiting for? The door is wide open and none of these hunters has the power to stop you from leaving if you run at your top speed," Director Anthony spoke.

"I am not leaving until you let me lead this investigation. I want the chance to deliver the killer. Running away won't help me achieve that," Katie spoke up.

"I already told you..."

“What’s going on here?” someone’s voice butted into the conversation from behind Katie, “Anthony, a boy is dead and the best thing you can think of is finding someone to blame instead of finding the killer.”

It was a man Katie knew so well as her foster father. “Mr Chase, what brings you here? You’re retired and this has nothing to do with you.”

“That’s not a way to speak to your former superior, Anthony,” he replied, sizing up the hulking man who seemed adamant to let Katie off the hook.

“It is if you are here to defy me. Look me in the eye and tell me you wouldn’t do the exact same thing,” this resistance seemed complicated to solve. It was obvious to Anthony that Katie was to be detained with no further question.

“You and I both know that Katie doesn’t let emotions get the best of her, otherwise that score in the hunter exam would have been impossible to attain. Why do you refuse to hear her out? Is violence the way you have decided to solve things at the Agency now?” he asked him.

“What’s there for me to know? I received evidence that makes her the centre of attention of the crime. It won’t be long before word gets out about this incident and everything points towards her. I am only doing this for her own good. Knowing she has been detained will put the werewolves at ease and won’t cause a panic,” she said.

“The werewolves that should concern themselves with this matter are in this same room with you. You don’t see them attacking Katie. The other werewolves in this school also know of the way she handles things in this school as well as her policies. All you are worried about is the publicity of the Hunter’s Agency.

And while you are worrying about that and detaining her, you are giving the killer free rein to roam about the school and get more chances to kill others. So what happens if the public knows about this? That has never mattered to the Agency, but if you do detain her and another person in the school is killed, that will be a whole different story. No one doubts Katie’s ability to protect this school and that is what matters right now,” Anthony gritted his teeth while the former hunter spelt out the whole situation for him.

Rushed footsteps got Katie’s attention before her mother appeared in the doorway, pushing past the hunters that blocked her to give her daughter a hug, “Oh dear, I heard what happened.”

“I’m okay... You had nothing to worry about,” Katie replied, hugging her back.

“I had everything to worry about... You’ve protected this place since you came here and the first time you leave it didn’t take long for everything to be overturned. That not something I can just brush off,” she said to her.

Katie sighed, not letting her facade falter and hugged her mother back. This did matter to her, but as her hunter, she was not at liberty to let emotions get the best of her and so the emotions of rage, sorrow and grief for the dead werewolf ravaged deep within her where no one could tell they existed. No one except for the half sleepy white wolf within her that stayed locked up by the constraints of the drugs that kept it hidden.

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Anthony took a moment to think about it before he relaxed, pulling his phone out from his pocket and dialling in a number. "Hello, yeah, take down the traps. We'll let her walk for now," he said. Katie's eyes widened in shock at the revelation the Director had just made. She knew she could get away from him, but she hadn't expected him to put up that much of a resistance. There was a great possibility that the traps he spoke of would have got her.

"What happens now? A member of my pack has been killed," Cole spoke up.

"I'll find whoever did this, Cole," Katie spoke up, breaking from her mother's embrace.

"Don't make me wait too long," he grumbled, "This wolfsbane doesn't let me catch even the slightest of the killer's scent."

"Where is the hunter I sent to look at the cameras?" Anthony shouted.

"Right here, sir. I came when you were in the middle of the brawl with Katie and slipped my mind while I was waiting for you two," a female hunter replied timidly. Anthony's commanding presence kept most of those who worked under him to be scared whenever they were in his presence. Well, all of those who weren't well acquainted with him anyway.

"It slipped your mind," this irked the bulky man, but he wasn't in a mood to reprimand the hunter either, "Never mind, proceed with the report of what you found."

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I checked the cameras and found that the room footage had been erased, so I checked through the footage of all the other classrooms looking for a sign of a missing student in the three-hour span of this incident. I was able to discover that the video of the two of the classrooms had been looped, probably to throw us off the trail of the class the culprit was supposed to be in. There is no telling if the killer was in the class of those videos that were looped or not at all.

"In that case, populate a suspect list of all the students in the classes that were looped and those of the students that did not attend those lessons. Check the library cameras and cross out the names of those that you find were instead studying in the library all that time. The rest of the students that remain on the list are to be put under strict surveillance and searched for any sort of motives or malicious intent," Anthony barked his orders.

"Yes, sir... Do you want me to suspect the werewolves and junior hunters alone, or humans as well," the lady asked him, unsure whether it was even possible for a human to overpower a werewolf if they had never had any training and were still only in high school.

"Do not leave anyone out even if they happen to be your family or in some way related to the Hunter's association. Work with Katie to solve this as soon as possible and leave no stone unturned. The sooner we catch the killer, the faster we can put an end to this mess and let the one we've lost rest in peace," he said.

His last phrase was all the werewolves needed to know that these heartless machines called Hunters still retained their humanity regardless of the way they worked. This somewhat soothed their rage and allowed them to look at the hunters in a new light... as helpers and not merely as people who were

trying to keep the school's image and bring everything back to normal just because a student died. They also felt the anger and disgust that Cole and his friends did.

"What can we do to help out?" Cole asked.

"I'm glad you're with us again, Alpha Cole. What you can do is... take the day off. We'll handle this. You have nothing to be worried about. Take time off for your fallen comrade," Anthony said, his voice low again for the second time this day, rarity among rarities.

Cole was not as pleased with the answer he received as he might have wanted to be and turned to Katie who stared him right in the eye. Something glinted behind her beautiful deep blue orbs, an unspoken message that they would still have their evening as planned and everything was going to be okay. Regardless, it did not change the fact that an innocent boy of fifteen years had been killed and there was no reversing this. Until the killer was caught, Cole's hunger for his blood was not going to go down.

"Fine then, we'll take three days off and won't interfere with the investigation, but after that, we will find this killer using our own methods," he said before walking out of the room, sending one last glance in Katie's direction as he passed by her to the exit. Caden and Jason followed him quietly, their palms folding into fists and slowly unfolding in an effort to keep their emotions in check.

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Katie was led to the camera room, Sandra in tow, to look at the footage for anything that could help her. She checked the footage of her locker and saw that it was not tampered with. Every hunter was issued a leather sleeveless jacket of a design of their liking but equipped with dagger, knives and darts laced with the poisons that were used to combat werewolves.

This was something that was not to be taken lightly and only two people in the entire school were allowed to touch this jacket without Katie's permission. These were Sandra and Kyle, however, none of them would have any interest in touching this jacket as it meant nothing to them. Katie also did not like using the thing and usually kept it with either Kyle or Sandra. It was unlikely for a werewolf to seek it since the poisons could affect it just by sniffing it.

That meant there was either a human that had committed this atrocity or there was another rogue in the school that was suppressing their wolves in the name of being a spy. The room's whose footage had been looped turned out to be Katie's room and another of the same taking a different subject from the one they were learning at that time. It was impossible to miss the moment of Katie's room being looped because it did not show her leaving the room with the principal.

However, it did show the principal coming to pick her and then vanishing. The killer probably made this obvious so that they would suspect that class to be the one that had the culprit, but then again, another camera had been looked at just as well, its timer restarting after two hours to show the footage of the hallway seamlessly, but for a time that did not match.

Discussions on which room the killer belonged to were pointless since a lot of different opinions could be thought of without knowing what it was that the killer was trying to hide by looping two classes. Maybe they didn't have enough time to tamper with the footage and just tampered with the classes they were from to by some time at least, but it didn't make sense. If that was the case, then they only

needed to question all the students from those two classes and the ones that were absent on that day to verify their whereabouts.

It soon came to light that the cameras had been left unattended for nearly an hour which would have been enough time to have all the footage tampered with. The computer experts were also able to find out the time it took for the footage to be altered and proved that it was done at leisure as the person who altered had been at the computers for twenty whole minutes. More than enough time to deal with everything.

It was even possible that this person had watched them from the cameras as they walked into the room they had left the body in. This was frustrating. The number of students that were in question easily numbered up to seventy, but that was a small group for someone who was trying to be inconspicuous. 'What was your plan this whole time?' Katie thought, puzzled by the killer's boldness.

At the end of the day, after having questioned all seventy students that were being suspected with no one turning up anything suspicious, they called it a day. Katie put her head on the desk and sighed in exasperation as the last suspect walked out of the room. "This is getting us nowhere," she groaned.

"We'll find the culprit soon enough. We just have to keep looking," Sandra tried to comfort her.

"I'm not disobeying my gut ever again," Katie yelled into her palms.

"What do you mean?"

"When the principal called me out to go with him, I felt something was about to go very wrong, but I thought that was because I was not going to like what Shaemus had to say to me. Now I see that was not the issue," she explained.

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The investigation finally came to a disappointing halt and the hunters that aided Katie left at the end of the school day. The two friends had had to eat their lunch from the classroom that had been transformed into an interrogation room. Katie walked with Sandra to the clearing that had now been labelled 'out of bounds' to civilians due to the incident that had occurred the day before.

"That was a total bust. There was no one in those entire classes that acted the least bit like a killer. And yet I was sure we were going to find that person among them," Katie groaned as they left the school grounds.

"We both knew this was not going to be an easy investigation. Just stay patient, we'll find the person responsible for this crown," she said.

"I just don't understand why the surveillance room would be left unattended for an entire hour. Not to mention it was the same hour that I was not present in the school," Katie complained some more. She was feeling the need to rant a bit more at how many holes the school had allowed getting into the system.

"Do you think it was planned that Shaemus would want to see you at that exact moment? Could it have been a coincidence?" Sandra asked.

"I sent a hunter to check on that hunch. Shaemus knew nothing of the sort... Besides, he has some other things to worry about than that. He called me there strictly to ask my assistance," Katie confirmed.

"Have you seen Kyle?" Sandra asked, looking around for the boy who usually found his way to them when he was free.

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"Not really, he said something about diving into more books so that he could pass a test that they were going to be given some time soon. He vanished after that... it was right after we were done interrogating him," she said.

The clearing started coming into view and soon enough the presence of a lone Royal became known to them. Katie stopped to bid Sandra farewell, "I guess this is where I say goodnight," she said.

"Yeah, this is where you do that. Do be careful on your way home. There is no telling if there are more rogues lurking around," Katie said. Sandra gave her friend and master one last hug before jogging away from her and into the woods. A shortcut that would get her home in a straight line rather than the meandering road she loathed to follow.

Cole stood at the edge of the clearing leaning with his back against a tree that bordered the near-circular field that the junior hunters used in their free time. His gaze was fixed to the ground, but his eyes told a different story about where his mind was. "Hey," Katie called when she got close to him.

"I wasn't sure you would make it...."

"Why wouldn't I?" was an odd way to start the conversation.

"Considering you are still a suspect of a murder of my newest pack member," he said.

"That's not something I am worried about. I'll get my name cleared soon enough," Katie said, moving up to him so that she could try to capture his gaze.

"Your confidence is astounding. Sometimes it makes me wonder if at all you take this seriously," his mood was starting to lighten up a bit since she had seen him at the crime scene.

"How are you holding up?" I asked him.

"Not too bad actually... How's your investigation going?"

"It's annoying. Everyone seems to be innocent. I don't understand it. What was the purpose of doing that to the cameras if there is no one in the suspects that is the killer? Was the killer trying to throw us off their trail?" he asked.

"You might be overthinking the situation that you are in... anyway, I do have a question for you. Would you really have been able to catch the culprit if you were still in the building or at least on the premises?" he asked.

"Yes, that is true. I would have caught them without a problem. I probably would have been fast enough to save Ash altogether... they say it's not good to think back on the what-ifs in a situation like this one... they get to you in a bad way," Katie tried.

“Yeah, I know that. I don’t know why, but I trust that you will find who is responsible for this as well. So I am not very worried about this. When you do find them, however, do not hesitate to let me know. It was the life of one of my own that they took, so make sure that I am the first one who gets this information,” he said.

“I will tell you immediately then... I don’t have your number though,” Katie said, smiling at the oblivious royal.

“Oh, sorry, let me just put that in there,” he said, getting her phone from her hands and typing in the number, “So do you know somewhere we can go for a walk that is more scenic than this plot of barren land that does not seem to have a purpose for the time being.”

“That is a monumental insult for the land that the hunters used to train on... I do know a place, however. Just follow me,” with the number in her phone, she got the phone from him and led the somewhat short walk that would find them at the tallest hill in the town.

“So where is it you are taking me?” he asked.

“Well, I’m pretty sure you ran most of the town’s forested area yesterday, but there is a piece of land in no man’s territory that you did not see. A meeting spot, if you may, where hunters and pack leaders meet to discuss issues in private. It’s currently unoccupied, so we can go there and relax for a bit.

“You just said, no man’s land...”

“Yes, I did. Is the big bad alpha scared?” Katie spoke in a childish voice, taunting the Royal.

“No, I said nothing of the sort. How did you even make such an assumption?” narrowing his eyes at the hunter.

“I was only looking out for one of the werewolves under my protection,” she said boastfully, as though it were obvious.

“You’re really full of it, Chase,” Cole laughed at her.

“Don’t call me Chase... Call me Katie,” the sudden change in mood got Cole to stop laughing immediately.

“Does it bother you when I do so?” he asked her.

“It’s too formal. I’d prefer it if you would just call me Katie,” she explained keeping her eyes down to the floor. ‘What am I thinking? Since when did I start caring about what name was being used to address me?’ thoughts ran through Katie’s mind trying to make sense of the odd behaviour that seemed to be taking over her.

“Then Katie it is. From now on, I shall call you so...” something about what he said set her heart at ease along with the weakened wolf within her. This was not to be interpreted by her lest she risked losing time mulling over something that she was not bound to find an answer to. The presence of her wolf had become one she was now good at noticing, no matter how faint the drugs made it, it was now clear as daylight to her that something did in fact live within her and longed to be free.

She looked back at Cole and saw that something had distracted him. The hill had finally come into view. Trees surrounded the summit ending halfway and leaving a clearing of scanty grass that was kept short at the top. At the very top of the hill was a stone table that was capable of housing ten people. Chairs surrounded the table as well. This hill was known as a meeting spot whenever the packs in the surrounding areas wanted to discuss something with the hunters. It was therefore respected by many that knew it.

As far as hills go, this one was not all that big and what made it even more peculiar was that it stood solely alone in the vast forest instead of standing in a group of ranges of hills. This made it a great spot to look down at everything that existed in the forest. The town of Brigadia was located far from where all the action took place on the outskirts of the continent. Forests thrived in the wonderful tropical climate.

It never snowed in this place and was always either rainy or sunny. The place screamed green more than any other city that Cole had ever visited. Werewolves were fond of living in places such as this one and it was indeed what was the case even where the palace of Lycaon was situated, but the one difference was that this place was almost a part of the forest just as the forest was a part of them.

Life here was slow and caused no need for attention to be focused this way. That was until the Brigade High School rose to the rank of safest high school in the world. This was what caused the place to become more recognized and evidently, the coming of the Royals.

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Cole told Katie more about his home, illustrating clearly how the hierarchy of the Royals in the Lycaon family worked. Katie was able to find out that it was only when a Royal found their mate that they would then be able to take over the throne. Something about the Luna being part of the ruling body as well, being able to make decisions that the alpha was unable to make and completing him in ways that he was not able to achieve on his own.

The more he spoke of the concept, the more a longing sense of belonging etched its way into Katie before she blocked it out so that she could listen more to the voice of the Royal before her. "I just don't get it. I know the intensity of a mate is much more than this, but then why do I feel like I'm in the right place when I'm with you?" Cole finally asked mid-story.

"Am I ever going to know how your Dad managed to solve that issue?" Katie asked, her mind being ruthlessly plunged out of the tales of the Lycaon family. The two were seated; their eyes pinned on the town below them. Lights illuminated the entire town reminding them of the time that they were spending in this place. They were in no man's land and it was getting dark when there was a chance that rogues were roaming this place at night.

"Yes, you will, once you have cleared all this," he said.

Sighing, the intensity in the Royal's eyes finally defeating her attempt to dodge the question that he had just thrown his way, "I don't know the answer to that, Cole. I know, however, that it's the same for me. I have no explanation to why I am not troubled or why my guts do not get any malice from you," she said, laying on her back on the short grass, "I do have a question of my own, however."

"What might that one be?"

“Why do you insist on seeking my attention? I know how werewolves value the presence of their mates above every other female. Why then do you seek my attention?” she asked him.

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Cole stayed silent for a while considering his options. This was a question he had asked himself as well, but no matter what he had tried, his wolf still spurred him in her direction. Despite him knowing the bitter truth about his true mate’s untimely death as an infant. He’d done a good job of distancing himself from females this whole time and yet, here he was, talking to one that could as well have been his enemy.

“It’s your name... and your eyes,” he said reluctantly.

“Oh,” this seemed to connect a lot of dots for the hunter, but some did not match. She could tell he was probably viewing her as something that reminded him of the infant of the Sirius family that was murdered those many years ago. Having blue eyes was rare, which made this something that could have drawn his attention, but the fact that she was called Katie, the same name as that of the dead infant, was just what made her situation all the more convenient, “I did read recently about a Royal that was attacked with the same name as mine. An infant eighteen years ago... would that happen to be what you are remembering?”

“Yes, that is what you remind me of, but there is something else about her that you probably don’t know,” he said.

“What might that be?”

“She...” tension built in the air making the intake of this information scarier. For Katie, what he was about to say was actually a fact that he was unknowingly mentioning about her, “was my mate...”

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Sandra walked back to the school with the intention of securing Katie’s jacket in case there was a chance the killer would want to get another blade for the sake of pinning the blame on Katie. It still bothered her why Katie did not get rid of the weapons if she did not need them. It was true that they made hunting werewolves a much easier job, but it did not affect her.

She reached the locker and started turning the combination of her master’s locker to get to the bag. Her senses suddenly went on high alert. The school was supposed to be empty at this point of the day and yet, she was sure there was a set of eyes watching her, more than one actually. Sandra’s heartbeat picked up, sending adrenaline through her system, heightening her senses as far as human senses could go.

She was never afraid of the dark or cramped spaces and therefore, when she was this shaken, she knew it was not a coincidence. She kept still and looked at both sides of the hallway, getting nothing in her line of sight. She continued turning the lock to the desired number in the combination. A low growl reached her ears this time. Someone was watching her.

Sandra had no Prometheus gifts like Katie did. This meant she was literally a human who was still going through training. This was the predicament all junior hunters faced during their training. By the time

someone was granted one of the gifts, they would have attained enough skill and sheer power to hold their own against an ordinary werewolf.

She was frozen at the sound of the wolf that had cut through the eerie silence of the school. This wolf was one that was not to be messed with. The double doors at the entrance of the school creaked open. Sandra's face snapped in that direction, coming face to face with a large black wolf. Its eyes were a searing intense burning red that cut through to her very core.

Something inside told her she knew exactly who this was... it was Jason. How she knew this was beyond her knowledge as she had never had the time to observe what his wolf looked like, even when they had fought together in the clearing. This, however, was not going to help her in this situation. She could tell that Jason was out for blood at this moment. Something was wrong with the look that the wolf was giving him.

At the moment that the wolf let out a loud growl, she knew that there was no reason left within him. 'There is nothing I can do against an alpha,' she thought, her legs immediately turning on their own accord. She turned the dial on her master's padlock to through the half-finished sequence into disarray and reset it all while she started to run in the opposite direction.

The sound of paws striking the smooth floor, claws doing their best to find grip on the smooth floor reached her ears spurring her to run faster. This wolf was going to catch up with her in no time. She was going to have to find some way to get away from the wolf. A race of speed was not going to help her with that.

Her mind worked fast as she rounded a corner and began running upstairs. Werewolves were built to run in the wilderness so the more she exposed the wolf to the terrain it was not meant for, the harder it would be for it to catch up. Unfortunately, what she was doing now was only going to tire her before it did the werewolf.

Nonetheless, she went up two more flights of stairs, her heart pounding up a beat that resonated within her ears at louder than she'd ever heard it before. If the wolf that was chasing her was Dexter or an ordinary one with yellow eyes, she would not have been afraid of it and ran. This, however, was an alpha. There was no chance she stood against it and the wiser choice was to survive. Once she was on the third floor, the wolf getting ever so close to her, she went for the first classroom and slammed the door shut sliding the latch that locked it almost immediately the door fit into its threshold.

The loud sound of the wolf colliding with the door made her jump back in fear. It was only a matter of time before the wolf would break down the door. She needed to find another way to survive. In this one room, she was a sitting duck that was seconds away from its demise. Jason's bloodlust rolled off him in waves as he continued to knock down the door. The alphas had been told to leave the investigation to the hunters for three days and this proved that they had merely been putting on a show and were instead planning to carry out the investigation from the start.

Sandra cast away her suspicions, an idea of survival finally coming to her. She climbed up to the window and opened it. Three floors up were high for even a wolf to get to from the ground which made her plan perfect. She crouched and stepped onto the outside of the window, holding onto an upper ledge for support. Using this she started to proceed sideways away from the window and out of sight. Ledges that

could fit only the front of her foot lined the building, somewhat of a design that had been thought of by the founders of the school, this was coming in handy for her at this moment.

When she was about a metre from the window hanging onto the side of the building for dear life, the sound of the door bursting open reached her ears. The wolf had broken into the room and was frantically looking for her. She looked back at the window, her heartbeat reaching a steady heavy rhythm as it pounded. Covered in pitch-black fur with white glistening canines, the head of the werewolf came through the window as it sniffed the air for her before turning to meet her frightened gaze. It was obvious that the wolf could smell her fear for they stared at each other at the moment, locked in a stalemate.

Chapter 35:

There was no way that the wolf could follow her to the spot she now hang on to. It could neither jump there if it chose to go to the outside of the building first. This was the only place that Sandra could think of that the wolf couldn't get to her. Locking herself in a room wouldn't have been enough since it would have broken down the door. In her fear, she had also forgotten that the locker she was trying to open contained weapons that could have helped her stand her ground, however, against an alpha, it was doubtful that they would have been any good use to her.

Thoughts ran through her head in an effort to calm her nerves over the decision she had made to evade the werewolf. Had she really made the right choice? Where she currently stood risked her life as well, for if she had fallen from that height, there was no telling just how much she would break in her body. However, thinking this way was only bound to stir up those fears and so she blocked the thoughts of falling to her doom from her mind as she had been trained by Katie to do so.

"You don't look like the Jason I know," she spoke up, her voice shaky as she tried to reach out to the human part of the creature that pursued her. The wolf stared back at her intensely, its eyes showing signs of thought running through its mind. It was no longer barring its teeth at her which she took to be a good sign, however, there was no telling if that would be the same case given the chance to take her down.

A second growl came from the room catching the wolf's attention. The head of the alpha retreated into the room for a showdown with a new arrival. There was a sound of breaking bones which Sandra recognized to be shifting sounds before the first voice was heard, "Jason, what do you think you are doing?" Sandra recognized the voice as none other than Caden.

"I was checking to see if someone was going to come for the weapons. The killer would want to use them to kill his next victim or could I say her in this case," he said.

"We were in the same classroom as Sandra when all this went down... or did that slip your mind somehow?" there was silence for a while, a sigh of relief escaping her when she realized she was in the clear, "Sandra, it's okay to come back into the classroom now."

Sandra retraced her steps to get back into the classroom, resting on a desk when she was finally on solid ground again with no risk of falling to her doom. Her breath came out in short gasps as she tried to calm her nerves. "I'm sorry for scaring you, Sandra. My wolf just lost it when I noticed you tampering with Katie's locker and I lost control..."

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"I don't fully understand what that means... Are you saying that your wolf gained the upper hand and took control of your body or something? I haven't heard of such a thing..."

"It's a rare occurrence which doesn't usually happen in this era since the hunters have managed to keep the peace, but when someone is suspected of killing a pack member, it is next to impossible for that person to avoid being ripped to shreds by the members of the dead pack member. Our wolves are constantly in search of vengeance for their dead comrade. When I saw you tampering with the lock on Katie's locker, I did not get the chance to reason with my wolf and lost control of him. For that, I am truly sorry..." he bowed his head slightly. His body was covered with sweat evident of a mental fight he'd gone through with his wolf.

Regardless of the near-death incident that Sandra had found herself in, she couldn't find any malice within her towards Jason. "Never mind... I'm just glad to be alive after being chased down by an alpha," she said, sighing in relief. Facing a normal werewolf was one thing, Sandra knew that she always had the upper hand or was at least evenly matched in skill, but for the first time, she knew she was in deep trouble and Katie was not around to get her out of it.

"I can't believe you almost killed Katie's best friend... Do you have any idea what trouble you were about to put us through?" Caden yelled at Jason when he realized just how much of a mistake his comrade had just made.

"I'm sorry... I tried to stop myself, but I was seeing red before I could do anything about it," Jason tried from the receiving end of his reprimand.

"This is probably how Ash felt when he realized Katie wasn't around to save him the second time. Could he then have tried sending her a last message when he was trying to write with his blood?" Sandra said half to herself plunging the room into silence.

"Let's escort you to your house. Once again, I'm sorry for Jason's behaviour towards you. You can feel free to think of a punishment that you can give him any time you feel like it. What he's done is virtually unforgivable," Caden tried. It was true that they couldn't wipe clean what had just been done, so he was choosing the path of redemption in order to reduce the scar this was going to leave.

"What were you doing at the locker if it wasn't to take the weapons from it?" Jason asked her.

"Are you nuts? After attacking her..." Caden began, disbelief in his voice as he turned to his friend for another round of reprimand.

"I was opening it to get the weapons..." this got them to keep quiet once more, "Katie doesn't need them to fight werewolves so she ends up neglecting them a lot. This must have provided an opening for the killer to use them for their own purposes, so I wanted to take them out of her locker and keep them somewhere safer. I also wanted to make sure there wasn't another blade missing except for the one that was used and the one that I have with me from yesterday's attack," she said.

After a short moment of thinking, Jason lowered his head once more, "I'm really sorry. I don't know what I can do to earn your trust again and I know I don't really deserve it, so I'll do everything I can to earn it back."

There it was, the feeling of butterflies she had for the werewolf. Something she was not used to at the moment. Spending time with Katie and learning how to suppress emotions did not allow a hunter the ability to learn how to interpret some of those emotions. The end result was her not being able to decipher what made this particular werewolf interesting to her.

For the first time since she'd climbed back in from the window, she noticed the two werewolves before her were shirtless. "What happened to your clothes?"

The two of them looked themselves over before answering, "That's kind of a long story. Caden and I were sparring in the woods. We do that every evening so that we can try and catch up to Cole. So we decided to take a rest. Caden stayed behind while I took a run and that's how I found you in the school about to open Katie's locker. I didn't mind where I ended up in my run so I think I unconsciously wound up here, though I am not sure why," Jason voiced his part of the story.

"I felt Jason's bloodlust through the mind link and came running here," he said.

"Oh, I see... So we are similar in a way. I'm also trying to catch up to Katie, although she is a bit too far from me... and I'm pretty sure she's about to leave an even bigger gap between the two of us. It feels pathetic actually. I can't help her while I'm this weak," she groaned.

"Might I make a proposal, then?" Jason asked, a smirk forming on his face while he said so.

"What are you thinking?"

"Well, we could help you train to catch up with Katie. Well, of course, there is the fact that we are weaker than her and..."

"That would be a good idea actually..." Sandra cut him off.

"How come..." Jason was taken aback by her quick and almost immediate acceptance.

"It would be easier for me to improve that way rather than training with Katie..." she said.

"I still don't follow..." Caden was the one to ask this time.

Sandra sighed, "When I'm training with her, she pulls her punches and fights at a speed much lower than her current abilities so that I can get some practice in. This doesn't allow me to improve. Her defence is tight and her offence is also something that she shows me from time to time to be clearly a threat. Whenever I'm facing off with her, she shows me numerous times that she would be able to kill me without much effort. It's frustrating... I need to train with someone who isn't as skilled so that I can improve probably along with them rather having to be constantly shadowed by Katie."

The logic behind her explanation was one way to look at the situation, "In other words, you want to see if by training with us, you can catch up to her faster?" Caden tried to simplify.

"Yes, that's it. You get it at least..."

"But you were just fleeing from Jason here, what makes you confident that we are as weak as you think?"

"I know you aren't weak, but you are definitely weaker than the monster of a master that I have training me, so I'm asking you for help. The next werewolf I see below you is Dexter and he is definitely below me in skill, so I really have only you," she spoke up.

"What about other hunters that are not as skilled as Katie though?"

"All the other hunters are busy with something. The junior hunters have mentors while the professional hunters are all stationed doing something else. Katie is the only one that I can train with and her expertise is intimidating to follow. Besides, this was your idea, why are you coming up with all these alternatives?"

"I just wanted to make sure we weren't intruding," Caden explained.

"You know... this is the most I've ever seen you say in one conversation," Sandra said, noticing Jason's silence.

Jason smirked at the observation, "Caden only speaks freely to people he's used to or approves of as friends."

"Aww, I'm glad to know I'm friends with you then," she smiled wildly at the now severely embarrassed alpha. This was the start of a wonderful collaboration. It was agreed among the three of them that this incident was not to be revealed to either Katie or Cole, but that the training sessions were to be planned out. After all, this was going to allow Katie and Cole to spend more time with each other, an occurrence the three of them agreed was necessary as it was clear those two wanted to get to know each other some more.

Chapter 36:

Cole and Katie talked until it was midnight. A large fight on who would get to escort the other home ensued when they finally decided to see each other off. Having an alpha face off with an overpowered hunter compete on who would be better off going home with on their own seemed to be a completely pointless argument. In the end, Katie conceded to the alphas overprotective instincts grumpily mumbling something about him being an unreasonable bag of testosterone.

The remark reached the werewolf's sharp ears sparking the biggest laughing fit that she'd ever seen him get into. The alpha was amused by the string of words that he couldn't help himself. Katie groaned and let the werewolf fall back. They walked on taking the route through the forest rather than through town that would have attracted more attention. "So do you think you'll have a second chance mate?" Katie asked him once he was done with his outburst.

After what he'd revealed, she had done her best to conceal any of the roaring reactions that threatened to break through her facade. To her, this was just a revelation that had been set in stone. He was going to find out exactly who she was on the day that she turned eighteen. He'd informed her of every question that she'd asked him about mates and was able to confirm that their unnatural attraction was being by their suppressed mate bond. This she did not reveal to him, however.

The occurrences when she would sniff out an alluring scent that she wanted to go to with every fibre in her being. It all made sense to her now. This was the person that caused her wolf to stir even when it was heavily dosed with the drugs that suppressed that side of her. Even as they walked in silence to her

house, she felt it purr in contentment just because the two of them had been in close proximity for a long time.

Cole, on the other hand, did not understand this reaction and was oblivious to the fact that the hunter he was starting to see in a different light was indeed the long lost mate that he'd long given up on finding. However, each time that he looked at her, he couldn't avoid thinking about it. Even when he was about to call out to her, a feeling of guilt that he referred to her in the same first name that his mate should have had gripped him. His wolf, however, would nurse that guilt away. There was something his wolf knew that he didn't.

"I don't know about that. The thought of it, however, does not rub my wolf in the wrong way," he said.

"Oh, I was meaning to ask. How does it feel to have a wolf? Can you like talk to your wolf in your mind like it's some other person or are the two of you the same person?" Katie asked. The lights of the town were starting to come through the trees signalling the close proximity of the town.

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"That varies really. Wolves have personalities. Some learn how to speak with time while others stay quiet their entire lives. What's true, however, is the fact that they still pose as different entities from their humans and have independent emotions from those of the human. While the human can judge everything that from what they know and see, the wolf sometimes knows something else other than that. The ability of a wolf to communicate to their human counterparts in that regard becomes an important thing. The further the connection between the two, the more erratic a werewolf will act.

Sometimes, you will find that a werewolf will act completely different when they've shifted simply because they don't know what it is that the wolf is planning to do. It's not unheard of for a werewolf to fail to find their mates simply because they did not know how to communicate with their wolves. Although it is becoming rare since we try our best to educate werewolves before they are allowed to interact with the human society," he said.

"Oh right, you mentioned something about not allowing werewolves that haven't mastered control anywhere near humans in order to protect them," Katie said, worry seeping into her voice.

"Yeah, why does that bother you? When you asked the question back then, it seemed random, but now I'm noticing there is a reason you asked that for a reason..." Cole tried.

"Never mind that," the two of them were currently milling through an alleyway that led them to the street that led to Katie's front door.

"You can trust me, you know?" Cole tried.

Katie thought for a bit before answering, "I think you have an entire werewolf empire whose trust you need to keep. Hold on to that... It was nothing," no matter how much she tried, this was the one expression she just couldn't mask. "I'm sorry, I just can't tell you this one..."

"Okay then... I guess the amount of trust you have in me has a limit..." Cole replied.

Katie froze on hearing that, stopping in her tracks, "I'll tell you, but not today... I'm still trying to wrap my head around something. Does that put your werewolf heart to rest?"

“Oh, does someone care about it?” he asked.

Katie was silent for a bit trying to decipher the meaning of the answer she was about to give. Nonetheless, her underdeveloped emotions that she’d spent her life blocking did not yield her any reasonable answers, “Yes, I do care.”

Cole was taken aback by the answer. ‘Would you look at that?’ “Fine then... That’s enough for me. Now can we get you to your front door?”

“It’s actually the next house,” she said, beckoning to the average home that she lived in with her retired hunter guardians.

“I did not expect the famous Chase family to live in an ordinary neighbourhood,” Cole exclaimed, looking the house up and down and taking note of the group of houses that lined the street in an identical fashion.

“What did you expect? Are you disappointed?” she asked.

“No, I’m actually surprised. The part of your family that lives close to the Lycaon family lives a life of luxury in a penthouse. This was the last place I would have expected Chase hunters to be,” he said, “almost like they are here incognito.”

“No, more like they are retired and are taking a stab at having a normal life,” Katie for the save, she mentally panicked when she noticed the way the alpha narrowed his eyes at the house. “Get home safely, Cole. Good night.”

His voice rang out when she was at her front porch, “Are you still not going to the dance on Sunday night?”

“No, I can’t go on that night,” she replied allowing sadness to seep into her voice.

“What a shame... Goodnight.”

“Good night, Cole,” she said, waiting for him to walk away before she moved on to her next mission... ‘Getting into this goddamn house without being detected... Chances of success- Next to none.’

Katie turned the knob of the front door ever so quietly trying her best not to wake her parents while she got in. If at all they had not woken up from the sound of her talking to Cole at the street, ‘Damn their sharp ears.’

“So that was the famous Cole Lycaon?” a voice came whilst she tried to silently lock the door. Giving up her charade, she slammed the door the rest of the door and slumped her shoulders, whimpering in defeat.

“Don’t you guys ever sleep deeply like trolls or something?” she whined childishly, turning around to meet Aunt Marie’s sleepy face.

The woman was in her late forties but still had all her sharp senses. She sipped her coffee mug, a drink she usually had heated at all times for times just like this. Her blond hair fell out of her messy bun as though she had been in a hurricane and her eyes were half-open in a permanent indication of her rushed wake up. Uncle Tom, however, was nowhere to be seen.

"I wouldn't miss that display for anything. And here I thought you were up investigating a murder..." she sipped yet another sip of her coffee. Katie walked into the kitchen and poured herself a cup as well. "The investigation is not going well. I intended to take my mind off it talking to Cole."

"Well, did you have fun talking to him?" Aunt Marie asked, sitting on a chair by the kitchen counter to talk to her daughter.

"I'm not sure what to think. He told me of his 'allegedly' dead mate who I've found out could be me," she said.

"What makes you think that?"

"Wasn't so hard to connect the dots once I found out about the attack on the Sirius family eighteen years ago," I said to her.

"We tried our best to keep that information from you while at the same time training you to handle your emotions. It will be crucial once your wolf is out... Humans aren't so different from werewolves... When we are angry, we lash out at anything that's around us. That's what the moon goddess was trying to exploit to end the human race back then when she gave rise to the first two werewolves. As long as you know how to keep your emotions in check, you will pose less of a threat to others when your wolf awakens on your eighteenth birthday. And now that you know who your mate is, you know who will be able to bring you back once you've shifted," she said, finishing the entirety of the plan that had been set into motion since the day she'd been born.

Chapter 37:

"Can I ask you something?" Katie asked once she was done interpreting the information she'd just been fed.

"What was your original plan if Cole hadn't shown up and I was to shift without my mate around to bring me back?" she asked.

"That was quite simple really... we were simply going to take you to the Lycaon home for a visit during that time, but then we got news of them coming here instead and cancelled those plans. It was going to be a bit more hectic than this, but it would get the job done," they said.

"I don't quite understand... once I shifted, Cole was then supposed to sniff me out and come and instinctively bring me back to my human form, was it supposed to be that simple?" I asked.

"Yes, it was supposed to be that simple. Is there something you know that we don't know?" they asked.

"I would be leaving the school unprotected in the name of going to see the Lycaons. What were you going to say to convince me to..."

"Oh, don't sweat the details. You know how we've raised you. The truth was also an option," she said to Katie. This was the one thing Katie could see would work in their plan. If she had known all this, she would not have objected to being taken with them to see Cole if he had not come to them instead, but within her, that sounded like a better way.

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"I wish it had happened that way then," she mumbled.

"Why do you wish that?"

"On Sunday, my life won't be the same anymore... How will I step into that school as a werewolf hunter who is also a werewolf? It just doesn't make sense for me to make it seem like I knew nothing of the sort," Katie spoke up.

Aunt Marie burst into laughter on hearing her complaint, "How on earth is that what you're worried about?"

"What do you mean? Is there anything else I should be worried about?" she asked.

"Of course there is something else you should be worried about... Once your identity is revealed, it will only be a matter of time before your real parents claim you back from us, not to mention the anger that will be stirred up in the rogues that do not know of your existence. Cole will find out about you and will be very protective of you and so will the Lycaon family. A lot more will happen and you're worried about what you will look like when you step into the school," she continued laughing hysterically, her amusement slowly inching towards embarrassment for the young hunter, "not to mention, it will also mean that you will be the most dangerous werewolf in history and one that will cause fear from many across the entire globe, not just the rogues."

This next revelation registered differently. Katie had never taken into consideration what her power would eventually mean for the rest of the world, "How is that supposed to be very important? I just plan on hunting down the Rogue King and ending his life. That shouldn't worry anyone."

"And that will be a relief to the rest of humanity, but humans are also not the noblest of creatures. You will be seen by many states as a force to be reckoned with and you will be watched by many to make sure your power is kept in check. It will become commonplace for you to discover a spy or more than one watching your every move," Aunt Marie tried to explain.

"That is nagging in all ways imaginable," she stated.

"Yes, it is, but now you need your sleep... something tells me tomorrow is going to be an even longer day for you. There is no school, but there is an investigation that you still have to get through before your birthday on Sunday," she said, getting up from her chair to push Katie up to her room.

"You don't have to push me to my room... I have legs, you know," the young hunter tried while she was pushed all the way up the stairs and to her room. She pulled out her key and unlocked her bedroom door only to get pushed further in until she was shoved into the bed.

"Now get all the sleep you can before tomorrow," her aunt said out loud.

"I haven't even bathed yet... and my shoes are still on..."

"Are you sincerely not tired at all?"

"I am, but not on the verge of collapsing..."

Aunt Marie sighed before retreating to the door, stopping at its threshold, "You really do have a long day tomorrow. I received some rather disturbing news that you will have to look at in the morning to

start your day, so get as much sleep as you can, because tomorrow will be another day for the ages,” this came as a cautionary warning that was laced with all the care in the world. Her aunt was relaying a message- a plea, if you may, that Katie took to heart.

It was probably something that would have prevented sleep for an ordinary person, but this family was trained to prioritise and as of right now, sleep was the most important thing to her. She took a quick bath and slipped into the warm covers of her bed. Taking off the bandaids that she’d placed on her knuckles. The memory of knocking Ash against a tree came to her almost immediately, the last thing that occupied her mind while she slept. Something was odd about the boy while she stopped his head from hitting the tree itself.

His hair was smooth and silky as though he took extra care of it, but she’d brushed the observation away as mere coincidence. Why then was she remembering that insignificant detail at a moment such as this one? She thought to herself as she drifted deeper into the dark empty abyss and went unconscious.

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Jason served himself his serving of supper and joined his friend in the living room. Caden had his eyes pinned to the very spot that Ash had fallen asleep in the previous night. The feeling of loss clawed at him once more while the memories of the young boy came flooding back to him. “We’ll find the killer, that we will, my friend.”

“I can’t help, but wonder that there is something we didn’t know about Ash that was very important. I’ve been trying to wipe the feeling out of my mind, but nothing has worked. Something keeps irking the back of my skull,” Caden said.

“It’s probably nothing and you are obsessing over nothing. Maybe you could try contacting your wolf to see if he noticed something out of the ordinary,” Jason said, providing the needed assistance.

“I tried, but all he could say was that there were some irregularities that he noticed in the boy’s build, but nothing much to go on. It’s probably nothing as well,” he said.

“Yeah, like I said. How long are those two lovebirds going to stay out? It’s already ten o’clock,” Jason groaned.

“I think they are having way too much fun to be bothered about the time,” Caden replied.

“Yeah, you’re probably right about that...” he said, his mind wandering back to the incident where he’d lost control of his wolf and attacked the one person in that school that he was starting to find interesting.

“What’s with you and Sandra? She seems to have an effect on you,” Caden asked.

Jason shrugged him off almost as fast as he brought up the conversation, “Let’s stick to the one power couple that has much clearer sparks and keep the rumours to a minimum.”

“Doesn’t matter which way you spin it. I know how much you value having a mate over dating any random girl that you meet. This is not something you will be able to ignore for long. Could it be why you lost control? Would getting rid of her save you from the confusion of having her in your life to constantly distract you from your mission of finding your true mate?”

“That’s enough, Caden,” it was rare for Jason to get worked up over something as he viewed his world through a joker’s eyes. Nothing was usually serious when it came to him, except if it concerned his comrades or his mate whom he was still bound to meet.

“Looks like I hit a nerve. So I’m right, aren’t I? You have your eyes on Sandra... and it pisses you off because you know she’s not your mate...”

“What makes you so sure that she’s not mine?” Jason snapped, yelling at his friend.

“Well, has your wolf confirmed it? Would your wolf have wanted her dead if she was the one for?” Caden had his face right in front of Jason’s at this point staring down his comrade, their red eyes flashing in response to each other’s intense emotions.

“She’s not eighteen yet... I won’t be able to tell until then...” Jason said, his voice low, “What my wolf did was just in response to the loss of Ash, not because it was Sandra who was in that situation.

“If you say so...” Caden backed down, walking past Jason to go to the kitchen. The heat of the moment finally passed, leaving Jason to his thoughts. ‘Caden, what are you not telling me?’ he could only ask himself as in that moment he had noticed Caden’s untapped rage boiling within him, threatening to come out at the slightest provocation.

Chapter 38:

Katie woke up after seven hours of sleep, an extended time of two hours compared to her usual five. This she did every weekend since there was no school and also in an attempt to remedy any excess exhaustion her body might have been going through. The things one learns after years of training. They would live and breathe under a system. A warm bath, brushing of her teeth and dressing up later found her taking a warm cup of the ever-coffee in the kitchen.

She sipped her coffee whilst trying to decipher who might have been putting on an act in the students that had been interrogated the day before. Each interrogation played in her mind clear as day as though it was happening in that exact moment. Futile as this attempt at going through the useless information was, she still found herself going through it to find any clues of who the killer might have been.

Aunt Marie walked into the kitchen a few minutes later heading straight for the coffee machine, her hair still a mess and dressed in a bathrobe, “Good morning, sweetie.”

“Good morning, Auntie,” Katie replied.

Aunt Marie yawned while she poured herself a cup of the hot beverage, “Based on how prepared you look and the thoughtful expression on your face, I can tell you are eager to hear what it is that I have to say to you.”

“Yes, that would be correct. You read me quite clearly that it feels scary sometimes...”

“I raised you, Katie. There’s almost nothing you can do to surprise me,” Aunt Marie said, taking a sip of coffee and savouring the taste as it rolled down her tongue. This was the true definition of a coffee addict and it was known by the entire household that getting between her and her coffee was a mistake of a lifetime.

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Katie waited patiently as her aunt took her time to savour the flavours on her palate, "How can someone love a taste that long? Doesn't it get monotonous for you to slurp coffee every morning?" she said.

"How is it that mankind never gets tired of procreation through sex?"

"I rest my case... No need to get too graphic," Katie said, dodging the loose tongue her auntie was about to take advantage of.

"Okay then, let's get to the point now, shall we? Yesterday, we received various strings of information that were meant for you, but you didn't receive them because you were unreachable. The first one was about the autopsy report from the werewolf that died yesterday. There was nothing out of the ordinary from what they could already deduce from the crime scene. There were no signs of a struggle and the throat of the victim was skillfully slit before they realized they were in danger. This means that the person who committed this crime was someone who would not arouse any suspicion of such a heinous crime.

They did, however, find something that was peculiar considering everyone's method of addressing the victim. How well did you know Ash Myster?" she asked.

"Not that well... Just that he was someone he..."

"That pronoun... I guess they were right..." she stopped me mid-sentence.

"What do you mean by that?" Katie asked, her attention peaking.

"Ash... was not a boy..." Aunt Marie said, "It's been rare for female rogues to appear. Every single rogue that's been killed or captured was a male. Those that were female were found to be either infertile because of lack of a uterus or suffering from traumas of **** and sexual harassment. The rogues have a... how do I put this bluntly... disgusting practice of treating the females among them as nothing more than breeders," she explained.

"Disgusting is an understatement for that kind of thing, but then..."

"This does bring up a lot of questions indeed... It was found that in the uterus of fifteen-year-old Ash Myster was an immature foetus that had died not long after her own demise," she said.

"Ash was... pregnant?" the news kept getting more and more shocking. At the age of fifteen, what she was hearing felt like needles in her spine.

"Yes, she was pregnant and not to mention the signs of **** that were found on her. This girl had just escaped what must have been hell by simply pretending to be a boy," Aunt Marie said.

"Ash was still a newcomer in the school which probably meant she was raped before she got into the spy program the rogues are running. I already considered the rogues unforgivable for sending children to spy on hunters, but this is far worse..." Katie's wolf spurred from within her.

"Is there anything else they could tell about the condition of Ash's body and health by the time of his... I mean, her death?" it was difficult to switch between the two prepositions. Ash must have perfected her cover before she went into the mission, making it impossible to identify her gender.

"I wasn't so inclined to how this investigation was going by the time I heard of it and was thinking more of your safety at the point, but... now that I know what Ash went through, I would like you to put more effort into finding the killer and make sure you capture him alive. I have no doubt that once this information reaches the ears of the werewolves, they will be even more vicious than they already were, so be careful when you proceed with this case," Aunt Marie said.

"I will be careful... You mentioned having received a string of messages that were meant for me... Is that all that you were told?" Katie asked, her mind storing the information on the deceased werewolf.

"Oh yeah, there is one more. I was hoping it would help you find out some clues on who the killer might be," she said, "The werewolf that you captured finally woke up. His limbs were rendered useless and he was put through some interrogation to try and get information out of him. He was also a student from the school although he was seventeen and was more experienced than Ash. Interrogating him seemed impossible at first until he said something..."

'I won't say much, but I do have a message that I'd like to personally deliver to the pride and Joy of the Hunter Agency, Katie Chase. The look on her face when I tell her... Makes my mouth water just trying to imagine what it would be like...' after that he was laughing hysterically with a maniacal look on his face. Further interrogation and torture methods proved to be useless against him."

This information gave Katie chills as she heard it. "Well then, I guess my first stop will be the Hunter's Agency."

"You're still going even when you know that the information might be useless," she said.

"It might be useless, but as you said, there might be a clue that could lead me to find out who the killer is," she said, grabbing a denim jacket from the rack by the door and slipping it on. "I'll get going. Are the werewolves going to be informed about this?"

"Yes, they have been briefed as well. Don't be surprised when you find them waiting by the Hunter's Agency," Aunt Marie said, "Godspeed, Katie." A reassuring smile in reply to the blessing was the last thing the two shared before Katie left the house. 'I'll find your killer, Ash. You can count on that,' her resolve burned bright as the thought ran through her mind spurring her to get moving faster and find the killer before they had the chance to make a clean getaway.

Aunt Marie was starting to feel sad as she felt the time she'd been living in come to an end. She watched Katie run out of the house, oblivious to what was happening. She hadn't even asked where her husband had been the whole time. It wasn't surprising for Katie to think that Tom was simply sleeping. The truth was... her husband hadn't stepped into their house since the morning the day before. 'Oh, Katie, you never asked why we never let you refer to us as mother and father... It was simply because... we didn't want you to anger your true parents, on the day when they came for you.

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"Cole, did you wash your face as I asked you to?" Jason's voice cut through Cole's sharp hearing stirring him awake as he dozed at the dinner table in the dining room. He'd been rudely awoken at six in the morning by his subordinate for something that was supposedly important. The lack of clues to what it was was still unknown to him which made it hard to take the guy seriously. After having struggled to find

sleep the night before trying to figure out what Katie couldn't tell her, he had fallen asleep quite late and was currently sleep-deprived.

He'd washed his face to try and wipe the sleep from it, but the moment the last drop of water dried, sleep was back to haunt him. "We received information yesterday that you might want to listen to. The Hunter's Association reported what it is that they found out from the autopsy," this was enough to chase all the last remnants of sleep from the Royal's eyes.

"Is there something we didn't know about the way Ash was killed?" Cole asked.

"No, not really," Caden said, taking a seat opposite from him, placing a cup of tea in front of him, "but there were some other disturbing bits of information that they were able to discover that we did not know about Ash."

"Oh, and what would that be?"

"The starting point of all that commotion would be that Ash was not a boy and rather was a girl..." the information resounded in Cole's mind after hearing it. Ash must have trained hard to be able to conceal her gender all that well, but the reasons for going to such great lengths were the ones that he now wanted to know. His wolf growled at the number of possibilities that one would have had to conceal their gender.

It was known that finding a female rogue was next to impossible and that if they were ever found, they were either infertile or on the brink of death from ****. On very rare occasions, sterile female rogues were found, but their bodies would be toned and littered with battle scars all over from the intense training they no doubt had to go through to pull their weight. There was no doubt in Cole's mind that he was about to hear the news that would rank among the most disturbing bits of information that his mind could fathom.

Chapter 39:

Katie made it to the Hunter's Agency in a matter of minutes after taking the long route, a run through the forest. The twelve-mile run that was made longer by taking the long route through the forest proved refreshing for her. The tall metallic grey gates that led to the large compound that was Hunter's Agency soon came into view, but so did the three werewolves that she'd been warned about along with her best friend that she'd called before starting her run.

The werewolves had been held back by the guards and were causing quite the commotion at the entrance. Sandra stood back and watched the chaos before her as there was no reasoning with this trio. They all held high ranks and weren't used to taking orders from anyone. At the same time, the guards at the gates were simply following orders and barring their entrance. This didn't bode well with any of them, however, considering how important they took themselves to be. A simple acceptance to enter the Hunter's Association should not have been a problem, but orders were orders and these three could not get in unless they had a professional hunter with them.

Katie sneaked up on Sandra, "What seems to be the problem?" she asked her friend.

“Well, these guys won’t be let in unless they have a pro hunter with them. I’ve tried getting them to calm down, but they choose to throw a tantrum at the poor guards,” she flinched on hearing one of the insults Jason threw at the guards, “They really have enough energy to spare.”

“Yeah, there is no doubt about that,” Katie replied right before the boys noticed her and stopped their noise all at once except for Jason who was still wrapped up in his antics. ‘Foolish clowns who don’t ask questions before getting answers... Mindless peasants that would jump on a spike with their butts first if they were ordered to... Rancid monkeys that...’

“Jason, Jason...” Cole tapped his comrade in a rush to shut him up, a look of horror on his face in reaction to the words that were being uttered.

“What is it, Cole?” he asked, following Cole’s signs to meet Katie’s face.

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“Someone’s got a rotten tongue...” she commented, her face still stuck in the shocked expression. Cole’s face went red with embarrassment as he face-palmed. Caden couldn’t contain his laughter even though the two had been involved in this ritual ceremony of roasting the guards. Jason, however, had not held back on the insults and had said a lot of unspeakable words while he got creative with his insults.

“My image is forever tarnished by one of my best friends,” Cole groaned.

“Hey, don’t act like I’m that much of a disappointment. You were with me the entire time and even encouraged me,” Jason complained.

“That was before I heard the drivel that was coming out of that loose tongue of yours...” turning to the guards, “I’m sorry for anything excessive that he might have said. I do not deny, however, how frustrating it is for you to hold us here when we should be interrogating the scoundrel that could lead us to find the killer of our comrade.”

“So that’s how this all began...” Katie said, cutting Cole off before he spiralled into a fit that would start the whole cussing charade all over again. The more Cole was made to think about this, the more he would spiral out of control.

“Is your presence a sign that we are finally going to be let in?” Caden asked.

“Yeah, that might be the case if you promise to behave yourselves. You can’t go in there cussing hunters as well,” Katie told them folding her hands across her chest.

“Fine then, you have our word that we won’t cause any trouble in there. Well, I can vouch for Caden... Jason will have to give you his personally...”

“Seriously, dude, that’s rich coming from you...”

“It is what it is, brother. You need help,” Cole replied, his eyes flashing back on the words he heard Jason say.

“Jason, will you behave yourself?” Katie asked, breaking up the childish bickering.

“Behave? That’s not exactly my forte,” this was true, although it wasn’t going to be a reason for him to pass through with a mere slap on the wrist. The questioning look on Katie’s face had him rethinking his words, “Fine, I’ll also behave.”

The guards opened the gates almost instantly allowing them into the Hunter’s Agency. Footsteps on the other side of the gate caught their attention as someone from the inside came to greet them. Dressed in black fitting leather from top to bottom with a white undershirt beneath his unbuttoned leather jacket, Anthony, the Director of the Hunter’s Agency came to receive them. “You certainly took your time getting here.”

The werewolves covered their ears once more, having forgotten the man’s tendency to speak in the normally required volume of speech. “Why was I stopped at the gates?”

“We wanted all of you to come in at the same time. Besides, the werewolf asked for Katie, so we want that to be the face of the next person that they meet,” he said, turning to lead them to the prison.

This was the first time that Cole and his friends were actually getting to walk through the place. Most of the buildings were kept to a plain white, a colour that would have been boring, but its maintenance was outstanding. There wasn’t a sign of dust or dirt on any of the walls as though they were scrubbed clean on a daily basis. Green compounds and decorative plants decorated the wide compound, surrounding the pathways and clearly demarcating them.

At the centre of the entire compound stood a statue of a man holding a sword facing off against a werewolf thrice his size. The detail of the statue was astounding as it even captured the sheer determination that showed in the man’s face as he faced off against an enemy that was clearly stronger than him.

Just by seeing this statue, one could already tell who the victor of the story behind it was meant to be. “That would be Damien, the first hunter to ever be granted a Prometheus gift,” the director said as they walked past the statue.

“From the size of that wolf, I would say he was facing an alpha. Did he have his Prometheus gift by the time he went through that fight?” Cole asked.

“No, he didn’t have one. He was the most skilled fighter of his generation of trained hunters. This was back when victory against the werewolves was only but a dream. A test of the hope that Prometheus is so proud of,” he explained, leading them past the statue without sparing it a second glance. For someone who was the director of the facility, he probably had each curving in it to the last detail committed to memory.

“That’s quite a feat for someone to pull off,” Cole mused, keeping up with the group.

“Anthony...” Katie called, jogging up to him till she was side by side.

“Do you not care about the hierarchy anymore?” he asked her, his voice low for the first time, “I know what you want to talk to me about. I have nothing to say about it except offer you my thanks. I know his heart was in the right place, but he put the lives of many civilians at risk. That is something even I cannot overlook,” he said.

“But still, would you rather he hadn’t done it then. What about?”

“She knows the cost of becoming a hunter... as do you. Now drop the subject,” Anthony yelled this time, not allowing room for Katie to try and reason with him. Cole noticed Sandra look away from the two as though she had already deciphered what the conversation was about.

“Very well,” Katie spoke, falling back behind with the other as they left the main premises. They left the neat and tended path straight through all the white buildings and further into what seemed like part of the forest. The only difference was that someone could know that this part was still fenced in within the Hunter’s Agency. Walking through the forestlike part of the premises, they came upon what seemed to be an entrance to an underground bunker.

A large mound of earth that looked more like a tiny hill, camouflaged well with just one side cut clean to make an entrance. The guards stood well hidden on that side. Someone from the outside would have no idea what it was. On the flat side of the small structure was a heavy stone door that looked practically immovable. Cole was familiar with these kinds of structures, dungeons that were used to detain rogues like this were used by hunters all over the world.

Two guards dressed in leather jackets that contained weapons stood at the door, each of them brandishing a dagger casually. They casually bowed in respect to the Director and opened the large stone door. Their strength suggested they were using the Prometheus gift of strength. Both of them heaved as the door slowly slid open revealing a dark staircase that started to light up.

Bulbs lit up the staircase heading down, the walls also a stainless white. They followed the director into the dungeon. This was the first time Cole was entering one and had no idea what to expect when he did. For once he saw bulbs in a dungeon, it became clear that this wasn’t one of the dungeons he’d read about in medieval-set novels.

The corridor at the bottom was fully lit and bordered with cells built of concrete. “Try not to linger with what you see,” Anthony said.

The walk began normally for the first few seconds before the scent of wolfsbane mixed with blood hit their noses. Katie fell back and ran back to the corridor, palming a wall on the side and waiting as it slid open unexpectedly. She walked into the room and came out with three gas masks, palming the side of the new door once more and watching it close seamlessly like it never existed. She jogged up to the three werewolves and offered them the masks. “Doors like that exist all over the place for a variety of reasons... I hope this helps with tolerance with the scent.”

Chapter 40:

During the walk to their destination, Cole couldn’t help but look through the glass panes that offered a view into the cells. Some of the rogues in the cells were dead, others were in a state of permanent shift, unable to shift back into human. Some had severed limbs and were strapped to a table that stood at a forty-five-degree angle to allow them to sleep and wake up with no need to move. “Do you not like what you see here?”

“It’s inhumane...” Cole said.

“This is the cost of being a hunter. Hunters trade their humanity for the right to keep the peace between the two races. We will go to any lengths if it means finally defeating the Rogue King. Once he is dead, we merely need to kill every other rogue that avoids a Prometheus evaluation,” the Director explained.

“When you speak of giving them a chance to go through a Prometheus evaluation, you sound human just for an instant,” Cole replied, drawing a smile from the middle-aged man.

“You might just make a fine King, Lycaon,” he said, “Protect the peace that your forefathers have worked so hard to create within this war. Maybe then the moon goddess can finally atone for wronging Prometheus the way she did.”

“I don’t like the way you speak of our goddess... but I can’t argue with what you’re saying,” the two seemed to be getting along in Katie’s point of view.

“Is he in ‘that’ room?” Katie asked, her voice once again cold in the way it normally was when she masked her emotions completely.

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“Yes, he is... You are the only one who will be allowed to see him. No one else is allowed to see the prisoner, is that understood,” Anthony spoke, turning to the rest for answers. They arrived at a dead-end; something Cole was now sure was a common illusion here. Anthony placed his hand upon the wall. The sound of locks and gears could be heard rocking the wall before them before one loud click that had the stone walls sliding open, splitting in two like double sliding doors and letting them into a room that trumped everything Cole had seen with ease.

Right before them were hunters in lab coats standing at monitors, watching someone through a glass pane. They turned to see the director and the people he’d come with, “Oh, Director Anthony, welcome back. You brought her...” one of them spoke up hurriedly, a hint of shivers running through him.

A large control panel attached to the wall right before the glass panel caught Cole’s attention. Words such as adrenaline, wolfsbane intake, anaesthetic, voltage and many more in relation to torture occupied the panel. Through the glass pane, a boy whose was strapped to a chair with needles poking and tubes poking into him at numerous vessels. Wires were attached to the chair and connected to a power supply.

The boy in the seat barely looked seventeen. His knees and elbows were purple with deep cuts that leaked all manner of disgusting fluids. If it wasn’t for the gas masks, Cole was sure he wouldn’t be able to stand the stench that might have been in the room. Furthermore, the boy sat with his head limp, cuts riddled his body even appearing on his bloodstained rags of clothes. “He still hasn’t said anything, sir. He insists that no manner of torture can bring him to speak and that all he’ll say is what he wants to ‘smite’ Katie with.”

“What bothers me is how confident he is that whatever he has to say will hurt her and that we will just hand her over to her,” Anthony said, his voice low once again, “Katie...”

“I’ll be fine. I don’t think there is anything he can say that can...”

“Think about what you are saying first. Do you mean to tell me that you weren’t hurt by Ash’s death?” the question drew a sharp breath out of Katie. Anthony was right... despite all the training she’d had that hadn’t let her develop strong enough emotional vulnerabilities, there were still things that could hurt her. She was strong, very strong, but she could be hurt in different ways indirectly... and that was what Anthony was trying to warn her about.

"In that case, might I ask a question then?" she asked.

"What might that one be?"

"Am I allowed to torture him as well?" the question was met with silence. This was something that would have been perceived as a normal question, but something was amiss when Katie asked it. Something turned within Cole's stomach when she asked for permission to torture the prisoner. The expression on the Director's face suggested that he too was thinking, maybe trying to decipher what she meant by that. Or maybe he already knew something Cole didn't, for he wouldn't have hesitated this long over a question to continue the torture they'd already been doing.

"Very well, do as you see fit." With that, Katie walked to the side of the panel and placed her palm there, another door sliding open once again. The design of most of the door was getting on Cole's nerves. It would be impossible for someone to escape a prison-like this one without knowledge of where the doors were and without the access that everyone seemed to have in their palms.

This would probably explain why Cole could not go through the Agency without a pro hunter to escort him. They all looked into the room while Katie appeared on the other side of the glass pane. In front of the chair was a small pedestal with controls on it that Cole could not make out. Katie put her hand to the pedestal and began scrolling through the touchscreen designed piece of hardware.

She reached what she was looking for and tapped it. A green liquid began to move through one of the needles that were attached to the wolf. On the main panel, one of the many screens began to react showing what had been activated to be 'adrenaline.'

The seemingly asleep captive's head shot back as the contents of the syringe hit his system to rob him of any last ounce of sleep he was probably hunting for. The boy looked around until his eyes landed on Katie. A smirk occupied his face, an evil glint in his eyes that made Cole clench his fist immediately.

"I almost felt sympathy for him because he looked young," Cole spoke up.

"Do not be deceived.... These rogue spies are rotten to the core. You should know that already from the way the rogues fail the Prometheus evaluation. It is meant to save werewolves that still have some humanity left within them. That thing you are seeing in that room doesn't have any humanity left. He finds pleasure in watching the world burn at his feet and everyone die away," Anthony spoke, his voice vile. The hatred that the hunters held for rogues didn't come as a surprise and it was the one emotion that they were fine with expressing freely for all to see.

"Yeah, his current expression says it all," Cole said. The eyes that stared at Katie weren't those of an innocent seventeen-year-old. This was a cold-blooded killer who didn't give a damn about anything. It made sense that they had not been able to draw information from him by simply staring at him.

"I like your game face, Katie," the boy said, smiling while he watched her.

"Did you get our little present? That traitor never did have what it took to be a true rogue... To carry out the mission that our goddess bestowed upon us centuries ago... The extermination of all mankind to every last man, woman and child," he said laughing hysterically.

Katie stared at him all the while he spoke, "It's hard to think rogues are born like that, Chandler."

The hysterical laughter died down at the mention of his name, "So you know my name, huh... Nothing truly escapes you, does it? It's possible by now that you've realized that all the missing students are wolves that you killed yourself. You see this as the death of one wolf in the prestigious Brigade High School. No, there have been seven deaths in the school and they have all been registered as absent students. It's only a matter of time before everyone finds out that the missing students are either students that were undercover rogues..." a smirk appeared on his face while he finished the statement, "or students the rogues killed and no one ever noticed until weeks later, their carcasses will be found in the forest damped to be eaten by vultures in..."

The rogue found himself unable to speak as Katie darted forward with a knife in hand placing it to his throat. One more word and his larynx would impale itself on the sharp blade. A red bead of blood leaked from the knife wound as the blade dug into the skin of the boy's neck. "Katie, calm yourself," Anthony yelled out.

"Oh, but Director Anthony... I am calm..." her voice came out with so much venom it tore sent chills down everyone's spine. She retracted the blade and walked back to the panel... scrolling through the controls before tapping the same configuration she had earlier.

The same green fluid began to flow into him through the syringe in his right arm, "Katie, you already... It's no use... That boy is going to die," Anthony said, lowering his voice as he watched Katie pump more unnecessary adrenaline into the boy.