

Enslaved

“So you live here, then?”

I manage one more drag on the cigarette before the stench of it forces me to stub it out. It’s either that or throw up in my mouth. I reach for my vodka to rinse away some of the foulness. “Used to.”

Why didn’t you just move when he first sat down?

I don’t have to think long about why. Most people would get the message that you weren’t interested in conversation long before this Bodie has. And this guy still isn’t even there yet. Trust me to get stuck with a talker who wants to be best friends.

A flash of memory reminds me of the shifter who cornered me with a laundry list of questions about who I was and what the fuck I was doing in New Mexico. My jaw throbs with remembered pain from the encounter with a guy who had a lot more friends than I’d expected him to have.

Three months later, and the bar owner must still be cleaning the mess from that epic brawl. That or he just knocked the place down and rebuilt it.

“Why’d you leave?”

Before I can figure out a way of telling him to fuck off without it turning into a fight the way it has in the past, someone shoves the door open, and a soft tread signals yet another daytime drinker coming into the dimly lit bar.

The steps are nearly silent, but a predatory stare warns me that sitting with my back to the door while I drank my way through a bottle of vodka might not have been one of my smartest decisions.

My nose tells me who it is. If I’d been expecting the Madden Grove alpha, Liam Wolfe, I’d have been disappointed. Not all alphas like to get their hands dirty, which is something I know only too well, given my line of work is clearing up the messes they can’t or don’t want to.

Leather squeaks beside me, and out of the corner of my eye, I catch Bodie shifting in his seat. I'm guessing he feels the laser-focused attention as much as I do. "Dumb question, but the reason you left had nothing to do with the guy back there, did it?"

Catching the bartender's eye, I point at my empty glass. For the first time today, he hesitates. I narrow my eyes, and that gets him moving again. Once he's done his job, I down yet another shot.

"Keane Destin," a gravelly voice cuts into me like razor blades slicing up my back. "You are not welcome here."

Since Madden Grove has always been popular with elderly couples here for the nature, the small-town feel, and the antique shops, it doesn't surprise me when the glances cast my way swiftly turn away. The few human locals in town know to stay out of wolf affairs.

"I won't be here long, so you can run back to the boss and pass on the message." All I need is two days to find the witch who killed my pack, and then I never need to step foot in this fucking town ever again.

Maybe then the nightmares will stop.

"One hour. That's how long I'll give you to get out of town. I find you after that... we both know what will happen."

I reach into my pocket and withdraw a handful of notes that I toss on the bar before standing. On my feet, I turn and meet the black stare of Jonas Wolfe, the beta of the Madden Grove pack and the man who will be doing his best to kill me for the foreseeable future.

Other than the white dusting his dark hair, he hasn't changed one bit. Ten years older than the forty-year-old man I remember, the barely leashed fury in his gaze hasn't dimmed in the slightest.

After what I did to his last boss before I left town, he has every reason in the world to want to see me dead. And he's not the only one.

I stalk toward him. Less than a foot away, I stop. "One hour isn't long enough."

His expression doesn't change. "Then it sounds like we're going to have a problem, Destin."

"If you think calling me by my pack name is going to make me forget myself in a public place, you must not have realized that I'm no longer seventeen."

A spark of amusement lights his eye. "Is that true?"

My wolf makes his presence known. A low snarl and a rumbling growl reverberate in my head, but I ignore it. A less dominant beta wolf staring down an alpha the way Jonas is doing is nothing less than a challenge, and my wolf doesn't like it. Not one bit.

But I'm no longer the seventeen-year-old boy who liked to do nothing more than spend his days fucking pretty tourists, and his nights running in the Madden Grove Wood. A boy who was far too quick to anger, and who, when he last let his wolf out in this town, left a trail of bodies in his wake before he took off in his dad's truck.

I can't let Jonas provoke me into losing my shit.

Not with all I have to do.

Without a word, I brush past him and shove the door open.

"One hour, Destin. I find you, and you know what will happen."