

Fated out Chapter 35

35 Shadows and whispers...

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Lyla

At that moment... I would have gladly chosen the shifters but they seemed to shrink back at the sight of Mr Dupree, their cocky expressions fading into apprehension.

The alley fell into an eerie silence as Mr Dupree's imposing figure loomed at the entrance. My eyes darted between him and the shifters, my body growing tense with surprise and wariness.

First of all, what was he doing e? Second, why were the shifters looking scared? He was a human, if anything he should be the one backing away from them. Why did it seem they were shrinking under his gaze, looking at him sheepishly?

"Why is no one answering my question?" Mr Dupree chuckled – even that sounded sinister. "Is there a problem here?"

The leader of the shifters, the one that had tried to flirt with me in the café shook his head. "None, we were just leaving," he muttered.

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I watched as they turned and hurried away. As they disappeared from my line of vision, I found myself alone with Mr D. The relief I felt at the shifter's departure was quickly overshadowed by a new kind of unease. I forced a nonchalant smile as I stepped back, trying to suppress the urge to run.

Swallowing hard, I murmured turning to Mr Dupree whose gaze was on me now. "They're just lowlives, I could have handled them."

His lips curled into a smile that didn't reach his eyes. "It didn't look that way to me, Miss Lyla. Are you alright though? Did they try to attack you?" he asked, as his gaze flickered all over my body.

I felt exposed.

"No!" I shook my head eager to change the subject, I blurted out. "What are you doing here?" I winced internally at how accusatory it sounded.

If he was offended by my question he didn't show it, instead, his expression softened, though it did little to ease my nerves. "I live in the neighbourhood," he replied casually. "Xander and I were just taking an evening stroll. We were in the coffee shop a while ago

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when I overheard those men talking about teaching someone a lesson." His eyes bore into mine. "When I saw you heading towards the back door and those men leaving shortly after, I put two and two together."

I shifted uncomfortably under his intense gaze. There was something about the way he looked at me as if he could see right through me. "I didn't realize I was followed. Thank you for helping me," I said awkwardly, my fingers twitching as I resisted the urge to light another cigarette.

"You shouldn't be in dark alleys at this hour," he continued, his eyes straying to the cigarette pack peeking out of my pocket. "And sn woman. You should know better."

g? You're a

My cheeks burned at the condescending remark. I opened my mouth to retort but I thought better of it. Instead, I managed another tense, uncomfortable smile. "Yeah... I should probably head back inside," I said taking a step towards the café's back door. "Thank you for...intervening and saving me."

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As I moved to go, his voice stopped me. "Those men are panther shifters," he said his tone as cold as ever. "They might come back; cats can be quite vengeful. So,

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I'd advise you not to wander around alone again."

I froze my hand on the door handle. How did he know

about shifters? And why did it sound like he knew more than he was letting on? My brow furrowed slightly as I processed what he was saying. Panther shifters? Panthers are messengers.

In the mythical world, they're always used to track stray were–creatures and since they could mask their scent naturally and take up any form just like

Werefoxes, they had access to almost any realm. What were they doing here?

Mr Dupree's voice cut into my thhts. "Is it common to see shifters in this part of tow

I turned back to face him, shaking my head, my unease growing. "No," I said slowly. "This is my first time running into any."

He nodded as if I had confirmed something for him. "Well, be careful, Miss Lyla. The world can be a dangerous place for a young woman... especially one with your unique qualities.

Before I could ask him what he meant by that, he turned and walked away, disappearing around the

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corner of the building. I stood there for a moment, watching him go, my skin prickling in a way it hadn't done in a long time. w@ℳ.ḡoveℱŴOrm.com

I rubbed my arms, trying to shake off the unsettling feeling. My instincts were screaming that something wasn't right, but I couldn't quite put my finger on it. Taking a deep breath, I turned and went back inside wWw.nOveℓWorm.Co(ḡ)

the café.

Inside, the familiar warmth of the place did little to soothe my frayed nerves. My eyes scanned the room, and they immediately landed on Xander. He was sitting at one of the tables, casually scring through his phone while sipping coffee and plain cake. He looked completely at ease as if he hadn't a care in the world. They must have come in when I was having those mysterious calls.

oling on a slice of

My eyes lingered on Xander for a moment. Something about him and his father felt... off. Earlier, Mr Dupree had talked about those shifters as if he knew I would understand what he meant. He didn't treat me like I was human. Was he a werewolf or any

were–creature?

other

I watched as he entered the café and made his way to WwW.NôveℱŴôrM.co(ḡ)

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Xander's table. He leaned down, whispering something in Xander's ears before taking the seat opposite him. A casual observer might have seen nothing wrong in the interaction but to me, it felt strange.

Despite Mr Dupree's imposing presence and a strange aura that commanded the respect he seemed to carry, the way he bowed his head as he spoke to Xander struck me as odd. It was almost as if, despite

appearance, Mr Dupree was the servant and Xander

the master.

As this thought crossed my mind, Xander suddenly lifted his eyes and our gaze met.

his face and he raised his hand w

mile spread across

ng at me in a friendly manner. The moment our eyes locked, that

prickle of apprehension returned in full force, sending a shiver down my spine.

My breath caught in my throat as I managed a weak smile, feeling my heart beat a little too fast as I awkwardly waved back. Quickly, I looked away, hoping to avoid further interaction. I needed to focus, get back to work and ignore the growing sense of dread curling in my stomach. But before I could fully retreat, the front door of the café swung open again.

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Three newcomers entered two women and a man.

Their scents hit me... they were werewolves.

They moved immediately to Xander and Mr Dupree's table that was when everything dawned on me. They were all werewolves. There was no way they could associate with those two and not be wolves. My mood soured instantly and my mind whirled with questions.

Were they from my pack? Were they here to find me?

Then I remembered that my parents had been glad to let me go and it couldn't possibly be my ex–mate. Nathan! My mind wandered to my friend as I slipped out my phone to check if there v

any messages.

There was none.

"Do you mind attending to the newcomers?" I asked Sarah who didn't seem busy.

"Sure!" she flashed me a smile and took the menus to

their table.

Another realization struck me. I hadn't picked up any werewolf scent from Xander or his dad..., now that I thought about it, I couldn't detect any scent from them at all. My mind raced as I glanced at them again. Sarah

was done taking their orders and the

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newcomers seemed to be whispering something to

Xander who continued drinking his coffee and nibbling

on his cake.

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Who or what were Xander and his father? They

clearly knew about the mythic al world but they weren't werewolves or shifters. And why were they associating with these werewolves?

"Everything okay?" Nanny's voice startled me out of my thoughts.

I nearly jumped but caught myself at the dying minute as I turned to her with a forced smile.

"I'm fine!" I said "Just that, a grou

werewolves

entered a while ago and I'm pissing myself with worry that my dad might have sent them but that's impossible right? He doesn't like me that way?"

Nanny's eyes immediately narrowed – not with fear, she was never afraid of anything, just caution.

"The ones sitting at two tables near the window facing the streets?" she asked me, arranging stuffs on the

counter.

"Exactly," I nodded. "Although the handsome kid with amber eves is my classmate. A transfer student and

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that's his father, the one sitting opposite him."

"Are they werewolves too?" Nanny asked, cleaning the counter now, giving them another casual glance.

"I can't tell!" I responded. "I didn't pick up any scent and earlier, I..." I trailed off.

I was going to tell Nanny about the Panthers but, I would have to tell her why I had gone to the back of the shop, she'd be hurt if she knew I had gone to

smoke.R

Before I could decide on what to tell her, Sarah www.novelWôrM.coḡ

returned to the asking with a weird smile on her face.

"Lyla, they're asking for you?"

"A–Asking for me?" I jabbed my index finger at my

chest, knowing what she was talking about even before she said it. "Who?"

"The people on that table," she pointed at Xander's table "Not just you, but also Mrs Grayson."