

Forever in the Past and Forever in the Future

Chapter 160



Chapter 28

Tessa's POV

I sit quietly at a counter seat near the front of the 24-hour cafe, sipping the disgusting coffee and barely edible omelette while I scroll through the burner phone to catch up on the news. I watch out of the corners of my eyes as people queue up in a line to enter the store across the street. They all seem very excited and happy to be there. The window of the store has the silhouette of a wolf wearing a pointy witch's hat. Above the image, in curly purple and white lettering, are the words 'Patisseries de' and below it are 'Loup Magique' meaning 'Magic Wolf Pastries'. I roll my eyes at blatant call out to the owners of the little bakery. The lights in the front of the store turn on, and a petite woman in a purple and white apron opens the door.

A security guard dressed in a purple shirt and black pants stands guard next to the front door, while another shoos away photographers from getting too close.

"Excuse me," I call to the waitress behind the counter.

"Yes, Miss? Would you like some more coffee?" she asks in her powdery voice that reminds me of a grandmother.

"Oh Goddess no...I mean...No thank you. I was just wondering, what is that place over there? Where all the people are standing," I point to the little bakery, "Is it that good that people stand in line for it and why are there photographers?"

"Oh yes, Loup Magique is the best bakery in town. We get our pies and cakes from there. The owner is Bronx Mason's wife," she wiggles her eyebrows at me as if that is supposed to be impressive news.

"Ohhhh, how...uhh cool," I make my eyes a little bigger and emphasize the word cool, for effect. When in reality, I don't give a shit that the owner is Bronx's wife.

"You're staying at Mrs. Kirby's, right?" she asks with a tinge of sympathy in her voice.

"Uhh, yeah, temporarily, until I can find something else," I responded without looking at her.

"Well, Kas and Delilah, those are the girls that own the place. They are both sweethearts. They are always looking for people to work in the back. Baking, decorating, cleaning, things like that. I can put in a friendly word for you if you'd like," I feel her touch my wrist of the hand holding the coffee cup.

I stiffen, fighting the urge to snap her fingers for touching me. I clear my throat and gently slide my hand away from hers, looking at her out of the side of my eye.

"Sorry, dear. Edna and I are friends. Anything I can do to help get her girls back on their feet, you know," her voice lowers as she thinks she made me uncomfortable. I look around the cafe. I'm the only customer.

"Oh, no no. It's alright. I-I just get a little nervous about people knowing my business," I give her a little nervous smile.

"I understand. How about this? I will cover the cost of your breakfast. Keep your money and pay it back once you have a steady job. Unfortunately, I'm fully staffed, but why don't you go stand in the line across the street. The little lady with sparkly hair, that's Kas. You can speak to her about a job. I also recommend the cookies

with the caramel chips in them, even if you do chicken out on asking for a job," she gives me a little wink as she finishes speaking.

"I really appreciate it. Thank you," I give a relieved sigh and a small smile, "Can I use the restroom before I go?"

"Of course, child. Take your time," she picks up my plate and cups and walks away.

I pick up my bag, head to the bathroom, and lock the door behind me. I put blue contacts in my eyes, then French braid my hair, pinning it up, before putting on a blonde wig. After I adjust the wig so it looks more natural, and decide to put a baseball cap and sunglasses over just to be safe. 1

I peek out of the bathroom and don't see the overly friendly waitress. I quickly make my way out of the restaurant, conveniently dropping a couple of one hundred-dollar bills on the floor, where she can easily see them as I make my way out.

I look one last time at the line of people in front of the store and make my way to the end. The girls in front of me go on and on about which cupcakes they want to try. I try to ignore them as I assess security and escape routes. I calculate the distance between the door and various cameras around the shop. The guards are all carrying semi-automatic handguns, clearly visible for people to see. The one controlling the photographers seems to handle them with kid gloves. Interesting tactic, keeping good relations with the paparazzi. I look at my watch, nine-thirty in the morning.

The line moves quickly and before I know it; I'm at the register, looking at the smiling young woman with sparkly silver hair and violet irises. I take off the dark sunglasses and look at her with a smile. Her nose twitches slightly as she recognizes I have a wolf scent. She looks at me for a moment and blinks hard.

For a split second, I worry she remembers my scent. Then I remember that isn't possible. She wouldn't be able to remember anything from the Waiting Room. Especially for how many times she touched the door, resetting her memory while she was in there. I breathe an internal sigh of relief.

"Welcome to Patisseries de Loup Magique," she says with a smile, " Can I interest you in our wolf spirit special? It's a coffee with two cookies or a cupcake. I highly recommend the cupcake option. They really transform in your mouth."

I turn my attention from the board with flavors listed to the woman. She is stunning, with a sly smile on her face. I feel my breath catch in my throat, standing this close to her.

"I...uh...", I falter before I speak, "Yeah, I'll take that, please." 1

"You look familiar. Have we met before? At a business meeting maybe?" She asks with a tilt of her head while she counts my change.

"Oh, no, I'm not from around here," I say shyly, avoiding eye contact with her. As I say it, I realize my tone is genuine, causing me to blush slightly. Does she recognize me even with the blonde hair and blue eyes? That's impossible. Do I still look too much like her Beta Female?

"Well, I don't know where you're staying, but I am happy to recommend a couple places, if you are interested," she hands me a business card, "Call this number, my relations manager, Ashley Slater, can give you the information."

"Thank you. This really means a lot to me," I look at the card. What is happening right now? Did she just covertly give me an invitation to the Blood River packhouse? I thought when I saw the extra security, it was going to make things more difficult, but now I see this was going to be a piece of cake. Parden the pun.

"I will be sure to call later," I grin at the card.

Before I can take the paper bag and coffee cup from her, the guard approaches her, "Mrs. Mason, we need to go. Right now."

I see a quick mind link between them before she sucks in a quick breath, looking slightly flustered before she collects herself and turns back to me.

"I-I'm sorry Miss..."

"Oh, you can just call me Tessa," I nod as I take the bag and coffee from her.

"Well, it was a pleasure to meet you, Tessa, and I hope to see you again soon, but something's come up and I need to leave now," she points over her shoulder with her thumb with a big grin.

"Thank you so much," I say, holding up the card while I back up toward the door, watching her guards whisk her away for whatever emergency they were alerted to.