

Chapter 7

I walked down the street of the small town. The plan had been to stop at the diner to have lunch on the road back from a meeting to arrange a new alliance. That was almost four days ago, and I was still here. The reason was waiting for me as I turned towards the lake. She stood waiting where she told me we would meet. There was a paper bag on the table that smelled delicious.

"You're here," I said as I stopped in front of her, just a little too close. Just to see how she reacted.

"Said I would be," she told me and looked up at me. Whoever this woman was, she had a good upbringing. She had mastered the art of looking up at me without meeting my eyes. Locking eyes with an Alpha was seen as a challenge if you weren't his mate or a close friend.

"So you did. I thought I might need to eat a couple more meals in the diner to persuade you. You seem to have a stubborn streak," I pointed out. Point in question, she hadn't moved back despite me being in her space. Most wolves would have backed up the second an Alpha moved into their space. Unless they themselves were one. And if it was one thing I knew about this intriguing little wolf, she was no Alpha. I had scented her as a wolf the moment I stepped into the diner. That had been a surprise. I kept a close eye on any rogues and migrating wolves close to my pack. Yet this woman had never pinged on our radar.

"Getting tired of Rich's cooking?" she asked. I chuckled. She was funny.

"Not at all. I'm considering staying until I have tried everything on the menu. That would take me a week or two, I think," I said. She huffed.

"Well, no need as I'm here. So why am I here?" she asked.

"I want to get to know you," I said, deciding to go with the truth. She looked surprised, then her wall came back up and I couldn't read her. It was part of what made her frustrating, and a curiosity.

"Well, I could refuse. But you would just use your Alpha sniffer and find me and keep dropping by my work. So let's do this," she said. For the first time since I had walked up to her, she averted her gaze and looked at the paper bag. She took it and climbed up and sat down on the table, resting her feet on the seat. "Coffee, black," she told me as she fished a travel cup out of the bag. I sat down next to her, offering her the comfort of adding as much space between us as possible.

"You remembered," I told her and smiled.

"It's hardly the most complicated way to have your coffee." She fished out another cup and placed it next to her. Next thing that came out of the magical bag was pecan buns and I had to swallow a couple of extra times not to drool. It's important to keep a small amount of dignity when you are an Alpha. "Here, my landlady made them this morning. I need breakfast to get me through this conversation."

"Thank you," I told her and took one of the mouth watering pastries from her.

"What do you want to know?" she asked and took a sip of her coffee.

"You're not a rogue?" I asked, and just as soon as the words left me, I could have kicked myself. The raised eyebrow on her face showed she thought it was an idiotic question. She didn't have the slightly sweet, sickening scent that all rogues had to them. The smell of decay.

"No, I'm not, I'm a lone wolf," she confirmed and took a bite of her breakfast. I hummed, feeling a little foolish after the question.

"Were you born one?" I asked. Most werewolves stayed in packs. It was an ingrained need in us. But there were those that ventured outside the system. Either from being dissatisfied with the system, from a need to be alone, or feeling it was the only way. Sometimes wolves like that had mates and reproduced, their pups then didn't get an automatic membership into a pack and ended up being lone wolves as well. There were even the odd occurrences of rogues having pups. The pups didn't become rogues like their mother, they became lone wolves.

"No, I left my pack..." There was a pause as she seemed to count. "Four years back," she said. It surprised me. She looked so young.

"You left when you were around fifteen?" I asked. She laughed.

"Eighteen," she corrected me, and I got another surprise. I had not expected her to be twenty-two years old. Only two years younger than me. She had been raised in a pack, she had lived in one most of her life. I wanted to know why she chose a life isolated, surrounded by humans instead of by her own kind.

"Why did you leave?" I asked. She glanced up at me.

"You are asking a lot of personal questions, Alpha, offering no information in return," she pointed out. Her accusation was fair. She had been more than gracious with answering my questions. But now she didn't want to expose herself further without getting something back. I had to respect that.

"What do you want to know?" I asked.

"Why are you here?" she asked.

"I was on my way home from a meeting with two Alphas from other packs. I just stopped to get some lunch," I said.

"And your pack is close by?" she asked. It showed she had been raised in a pack that took pride in teaching their young the right manners. She knew not to outright ask where my pack's territory was. That was considered a challenge.

"Yes, it's about half a day's drive from here," I said.

"There shouldn't be any packs out here," she told me. I smiled. She had done her research.

"If you would have told me that two years ago, I would have said you were right. We are a new pack. We established ourselves out here just because the packs are far enough apart that we didn't feel squashed and they didn't feel threatened by us," I told her. She nodded, then took a deep breath and looked at me, as if to find an answer to a question she had. I couldn't help

but to study her. She was a beautiful wolf. The way her deep green eyes shifted with her emotions was fascinating.

"I'm latent," she said and took a deep drink from her coffee. It appeared every word out of her would surprise me, I thought.

"As in you don't have a wolf?" I asked.

"Yeah, like I don't have a wolf," she said. There was an undertone I couldn't pinpoint. Bitterness? Hurt? Both would be understandable.

"You smell of wolf," I said. She smiled a sad smile.

"That may be the case. But I'm twenty-two and I haven't shifted." I wanted to tell her that there was still time. It wouldn't be a lie. But shifting this late would be highly unlikely, and I didn't want to give her false hope when she clearly had accepted her faith.

"Is that why you left your pack?" I asked.

"It was the root of all the reasons I left," she answered.

"I'm sorry to hear that." I didn't know what else to say.

"Are you going to tell me why we are doing this?"

"I told you, I want to get to know you," I told her.

"Yes, you did. You just didn't tell me why," I hadn't, and I wondered if now was the right time to tell her. She was skittish, and I had a feeling she would bolt if I moved too quickly. But she had asked a straight to the point question.

She deserved an answer.

"I want to invite you to join my pack," I told her. She looked at me like I was insane.

"You did hear the part about me being latent, right?" she asked.

"I did. There is no issue with my hearing," I said.

"Maybe not your hearing, but you obviously have some issues," she said, then her eyes grew bigger when she realized she had said it out loud. I threw my head back and laughed.

"You are not the first one to tell me this," I admitted.

"Listen, I don't know why you want me in your pack. But I'm doing fine on my own. I have made myself a new life that I like."

"Don't you miss the pack life? Being around your own, not having to hide who and what you are? Don't you miss the full moon celebrations?" I asked her, and I saw longing in her eyes before she looked away. She stared out over the lake.

"Maybe, but that life is not for me," she said. There was something deeply sad in the way she said it. The Alpha in me wanted to pull her into my pack, to give her the comfort I knew only a pack could offer. I instinctively knew she needed it.

"Before you turn me down, why don't you come for a visit? Take a couple of days off work and come to the pack. It's a new pack, but it's a good one.

If you give it a chance, I promise I will never step foot in this town if you turn my offer down. I will even make it out of bounds for the rest of the pack," I offered.

"I don't know," she hesitated.

"The moon will be full in three days. Come and celebrate it with us." She looked at me with those deep green eyes and I knew she stood on the very edge of accepting my offer.

Lynn Becker

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I like her thinking process.

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