

Chapter 5

I paced for what felt like hours, moving across the living room floor, staring out the bay window for an eternity. Back and forth. Back and forth. Back and forth.

My mother never had the patience for such habits. But this time she didn't dare scold me. She could pretend that she was handling the situation better than I, but as soon as I had told her that Hades had attacked Caleb her demeanor changed. She sent Tabitha upstairs to go play with her toys. That gave my mother all the time to pretend that she was organizing the fridge or tidying up the kitchen, but every few seconds she would appear beside me, staring out the window.

But there was nothing to see from here. If I hadn't known what was going on, I would've guessed it was just a huddle. It looked like my pack was simply standing around, maybe discussing new routes to defend against rogues or talking about different training methods. No one was moving, or shouting, or thrashing about. They weren't acting like some stranger had sauntered onto our land and was fighting with out next alpha.

Several times I thought I was going to be sick. This couldn't be happening. This kind of thing didn't just occur and it would never happen to my pack. We were all good people. And Caleb was the best of us, kind and smart and always so helpful. If he had to pay for his sins like this then God only knows what would happen to the rest of us. But maybe this was just the beginning. Maybe he was here to come a er all of us and it was only a matter of time before he got to my father, my mother, and Tabitha. No, not Tabitha. He would have to get through me before he even touched a hair on her head. But, for an animal like him, that might not be much of a threat at all.

Then, the very still group broke lose. I expected war. I expected all of our best warriors lunging in to fight, to defend. I didn't understand why no one was helping Caleb, but surely they would have to fight at some point. They wouldn't let this wolf kill their next alpha, that was anarchy.

But the crowd just fell apart. Everyone moved away, stepping back and walking towards their homes. Some of them were so dazed they stumbled and staggered.

And as the group dispersed I was able to see one massive black wolf standing, panting and heaving.

A brown wolf lay at his feet. Unmoving.

"Oh God," my mother gasped from beside me.

"Caleb," I whimpered, a hand covering my mouth.

No, this couldn't be happening. I couldn't be seeing things right. People wouldn't just be walking away if he were...dead. My feet carried me out the front door of my home. I think my mother called a er me, but I couldn't hear her over the ringing in my ears. Once my bare feet hit the grass I was running. I didn't feel the grass under my feet, didn't feel the air in my lungs. I was just running.

I could only remember screaming my best friend's name as I sprinted.

By the time I reached the clearing where the fight had been the black wolf was gone. I didn't know where he went and I didn't care. All I cared about was Caleb. I slowed as I got closer to the wolf that I knew so well. Why wasn't anyone helping him? Why was everyone abandoning him? He could be barely clinging to life and they were all going back to their homes, pale and shaken.

"Charlotte," someone gasped. I felt a hand grab at the sleeve of my shirt, yanking me around.

"Let me go!" I shrieked, slapping at their hand. "Caleb needs me! He needs help! Get help!"

"Charlotte, he's gone," my pack member murmured.

"You're lying!" I wailed, still jerking away.

But my gaze landed on the body of my best friend. And I saw all of the blood. There was so much blood. It was pooled around him, soaking the earth and his fur. It was on his paws, on his stomach, and drenching his neck.

I just stared for a minute, counting in my head. When I hit one hundred and his chest still hadn't risen to suck in a breath and his eyes hadn't blinked, I vomited. I sobbed and threw up. I gagged until there was nothing le in my stomach. The hands that had been trying to restrain me were now rubbing my back, trying to soothe away the pain that was tearing through my heart.

But I felt like nothing could ever soothe me. I had lost my best friend, my soul mate. I had lost everything.

"Please don't lose your temper," a so , steady voice murmured. "I've had too many battles on my hands over things like this and I would prefer not to have another."

At just the sound my heart rate increased. My head rose, but my eyes were too blurry to see who was before me.

"Lose my temper? Are you mad? You just slaughtered the son of the alpha and you o er no explanation!" my father shouted. "I should kill you right here, for everyone to see!"

My filled eyes widened with horror and my body jerked, trying to force me to vomit again, but I could only dry heave now. This was impossible, I must've heard wrong. There was no way.

"I'm sure you've heard stories of packs who have tried to kill me. Trust me, if it were easy it would've been done already," the unknown man continued.

My heart clenched so hard in my chest that it was painful. My fingers dug into the dirt like claws.

"Dear God, Charlotte! I told you to get her away from here," my father said, suddenly noticing me. I could hear his footsteps coming towards me rapidly and another, slower pair of steps nearing.

"No," I choked out. I needed him to get away from me. I needed my father to take that monstrosity away.

"Charlotte, come now, let's get you inside," my father said. Strong hands were on my upper arms. With one tug he pulled me to my feet.

And as he moved me the tears that had pooled in my eyes trickled down my cheeks. When I blinked again I could see the man my father had been conversing with.

He was tall, well over six feet. The jeans he had on his legs hung o his hips awkwardly, they must've been borrowed from someone else. But that couldn't hide his muscular thighs and certain gait. He moved with grace and precision, like a predator. His chest was bare, revealing hard muscles and a thin layer of sweat. The sweat had made his dark hair stick to his forehead as well. And with each feature I took in my heart seemed to tighten, making me want to be sick all over again.

But when I finally drew up the courage to look at his eyes I felt weak, like I was about to faint.

They weren't fire red anymore. Now they had a kiss of brown in them, making them seem more natural. But even that wasn't enough to hide behind.

He was the man who had murdered my best friend.

"Mate," he breathed, those hard eyes locked onto me.

~~~Question of the Day~~~

What is your favorite way to relax?

Writing used to be my favorite. Now, I write so o en and worry about it so much it has almost become a stressor. Now I like building puzzles and I recently tried to do a paint-by-number. I know, I'm secretly a old lady in a young body but it makes me feel super zen. Also reading is a fantastic distraction. I'm currently reading all of my old favorites!