

Chapter 7

Abbie

“What a waste of life,” Clarice states. Silence falls over the room, and I am shocked to see so much heartache on the woman’s face. They are Lycans, yet they mourn for those killed by the hunters, despite them only being lowly rogues and werewolves. Growing up, Ivy and I were constantly reminded of what scum we were for being rogue. Werewolves hate rogues. Yet here, everyone considers us as people, not the dirt beneath their toes. It is odd and hard to get used to, and I am sure if I will ever get used to it. But Lycans don’t seem to be prejudiced against our kind.

Everyone turns back to their tasks and Liam returns moments later. Clarice peers up at him. Everyone stops what they are doing, waiting for him to answer the unspoken question from Clarice.

“The king woke up to Ester touching him. He tossed her out and had Damian order her off the castle grounds,” he says, and Clarice lets out a breath. The tension in the room dissipates

significantly at his answer. Clarice nods while Liam climbs up on the counter beside me, helping himself to some fruit salad Clarice is making. She slaps his digging fingers only for him to pout at her, and she clicks her tongue before relenting and giving him the bowl of fruit.

“I didn’t think he would, but with how drunk he was, you can never be certain,” she says, looking relieved as she eyes Liam devouring the freshly cut fruit salad.

He watches eagerly as she retrieves another bowl and starts making more, and I turn my attention back to Clarice. He stole one of her puddings earlier, yet she didn’t seem bothered by Liam. They actually seem quite close and Clarice obviously adores the psycho.

“He’d have copped a beat down if he had by not only me, but I think the entire guard,” Liam chuckles.

“You’d really fight the king?” I ask, shocked. Liam raises an eyebrow at me.

“We’d lay our lives down for our queen. And that is what Ivy is, even if dumbass doesn’t see that at the moment,” he explains.

“You all really care for Ivy, don’t you?” I blurt, shocked at their disgust of their king’s hypothetical infidelity. I certainly didn’t think they would care since he is a king and can technically do as he pleases.

“This castle has been the prison of the king’s depression for far too long. Since he found Ivy, we can all suddenly breathe. No one wants to go back to the way things were,” Clarice tells me.

“Plus, none of us want to hurt him. He is a good king; despite current behavior, he is a good man just troubled by the demons that lurk in him,” Clarice adds before telling the servants to tend to their chores. They all rush off.

“What do you mean none of you want to hurt him?” I ask. Could they really hurt the king?

“Some of us have a blood pact for our future queen. If he were to physically hurt her or try to kill her, we would have no choice,” Liam says behind me, and I peer over my shoulder at him. He shrugs, yet still, I am confused. It is Clarice who answers, causing me to turn around and face her.

“The King’s Guard was originally made of twelve men. After his sister died, we lost a few guards, but those who remained and some of the staff were tied by a pact. The king asked us to swear to protect his future queen no matter the cost, even his over his life,” Clarice explains.

“That was the worst week of my life,” Liam growls, and whatever happened back then, I can see haunts him just as much.

“But I would do it again,” Clarice shrugs.

“You’re part of the guard’s pact?” I asked her.

She nods. “I am one of the few servants here who is.”

“Yeah, a week full of the king forcing his blood down our throats and us breaking his command,” Liam explains.

“Huh?”

“For the pact to work, the king can’t be able to command us to harm his queen. It’s a safety thing. When it comes to the king, she is the only one we can override his command on. He could

tell us to kill her, but we would do the opposite. We would kill the king for her,” Clarice answers.

“But I have seen him command his guard before,” I answer.

“It only works if he asks us to threaten her life. We can’t. The king can still command us, though it is more painful when he does. We can resist it to a degree, but if he pushes us too hard, we would relent.”

“Unless it comes to the queen,” Liam says. “That bond can’t be broken.”

“I still don’t understand,” I admit. Though I didn’t know much about Lycans so maybe that is why.

“The king’s blood is infused by witch magic,” Liam shrugs.

“Witches still exist?” I ask, a little shocked.

“Yes, of course, just not in plain sight,” Liam answers.

“So no matter what, you will keep Ivy safe even from the king?”

“Yes, assuming he doesn’t kill us to get to her,” Clarice answers.

“So you and twelve guards?”

“It was twelve; some have lost their lives since the pact,” Clarice states.

“Who’s left?”

“Myself, Liam, Dustin, Damian, and of course, Gannon. A couple of others, but we are the main ones you will find guarding the queen,” Clarice answers.

Clarice picks up a tray and turns to me. “Now Ivy must be starving, so we better get you on your way to her,” she says, repacking and checking the picnic basket. “Also, Abbie, I need to send you to town a little later, we have guests coming this afternoon.”

“Who?” I ask.

“Alpha Kade, one of the packs with allegiance to the king. He is helping with the rogue children’s deaths.”

I nod, wondering If Gannon can come since I still can’t read. Chewing my lip, I am about to tell her that is why Gannon came with me.

Seeming to understand my pause, she adds, “I have already called ahead. You just need to pick up the order. Though I am a little upset, you didn’t tell me you can’t read,” Clarice says, and I stare at the floor.

“Had to find out from Damian when he told me the queen couldn’t,” she says with a shake of her head. “Now come on, let’s get a wriggle on,” Clarice says moving toward the door.