

Chapter 4

KYSON

I am already beyond annoyed as we pull into the sleepy pack community. We haven't even been here for five minutes, and I already want to leave. Damon, my Beta, is driving, and I shoot him a furtive glance as we enter the town. I open the mind link to my men in the other cars, purposefully masking my aura and my scent. Yet, I know that won't be enough if I want to keep my identity a secret.

I don't want the alpha and his people to be alerted to my true identity. They know I am arriving, but I need to know what is truly going on in this pack, and picking up on who I am will make them be on their best behavior. Little did they know, I have been watching this pack closely for the last few years since Alpha Dean handed down his title to his son, Brock.

I don't like him, and I want to truly see how he runs his pack in this small, sleepy village.

"Keep your auras up to mask mine," I command my men before hearing a chorus of "Yes, my king," come through the link. My Beta casts his gaze to me briefly before watching the road.

"You really don't like this, Alpha, do you? You are going to extremes to mask who you are," Damian states.

He is right. In fact, I surmise the new Alpha has been killing off rogue children. Reports from neighboring towns have said they keep finding their bodies in the surrounding forests. There are strict laws prohibiting their deaths until proven guilty or until they turn of age. This shows the Alpha lacks character and morality. Someone like that can't be trusted.

It is unacceptable, and the council needs to put a stop to it before more children are harmed, but since they are all but useless at their jobs, I have decided to investigate for myself. Rogue or not, they are still kids. It disgusts me how they can kill off children, which is exactly why the law was brought in - to prevent the pointless death of innocents. Children should not be held accountable for their parents' crimes unless directly involved, and even then, that still needs assessing. Even a rogue child could become a functioning member of society given the right guidance.

"Just be alert," I tell him as we pull up in front of a run-down orphanage. I think it is odd that only two rogue girls are listed in the orphanage. The numbers should be higher, which is what alerted me to the change in titles in the first place. Alpha Dean, the previous Alpha, did everything by the book, but I have heard rumors the new Alpha is terrible in most aspects of running a pack. The pack has taken a slow decline, putting their pack into debts that the kingdom has been digging them out of to stop the human communities from looking too deeply into the town that resides here in the mountains.

Peering out the window, I notice children playing, skipping, and running around. The small brick fence around the building has missing bricks, and the building itself looks so run down and decrepit looking that it makes me wonder what they did with all the generous donations they receive. I look around as I get out of the car, and my Beta comes over. Looking up at the brown brick building, my lip curls back in disgust. This place is not suitable for anyone, let alone children.

"Place looks like a dump," Damian comments, and I have to agree. This is no place for children. Even the play equipment is so weathered and run down that I am surprised to find it supporting the weight of the children playing on it.

The entrance doors open and I notice two girls exit the building. They are definitely the oldest of the children that live here. Then I catch a whiff of their scents, which tells me they must be the two rogue girls that live here. They'd be coming of age soon and would learn their fates, maybe even today. Yet something nags at me as I watch them be greeted and jumped all over by the children. The children clearly love the two girls, hanging off them and trying to grab their attention.

A woman, looking somewhat frazzled, rushes out. We are an hour early, but that was the plan. We wanted them to be unprepared, and by the look on her face, she wasn't expecting us to be this early.

The woman rushes over, introducing herself as Mrs. Daley, the headmistress of the dilapidated place.

"You must be...?" She looks around, confused at all my men. Her eyes fall on my Beta hesitantly; his aura masks mine, making me appear to be a guard like the rest of the men. I fight the urge to blast her with it to make her step away from me.

I can't stand women who are only looking for the next opportunity. It's clear this old hag is trying to impress someone. Her makeup is over the top, and she has a ridiculous amount of pheromones sprayed on her. I never understood why she-wolves think they need to spray themselves in that crap. To me, it smells like cat piss. Lycans can easily smell the difference. Werewolves may find it appealing, but Lycans find the fake stench revolting. She looks like a mutton dressed up as a lamb. My lips pull back over my teeth in disgust before I forcefully make myself calm my revulsion of her.

"I thought the Lycan King was coming?" she purrs, a little disappointed. I have to mask my repugnance at how desperate she sounds, her eyes roaming over my men hungrily before falling on me. She holds her hand out to me, and I look at it before my Beta takes it, shaking it when I make no move to shake hers.

"He couldn't make it; he sent us instead," Damian tells her. The wind shifts again, and I feel a growl seep its way up my throat before I quickly suppress it, looking around for the smell. I can smell the rogue girl when my eyes snap to the other girl. She has the deepest black hair I have ever seen, so dark there's a slightly blue hue to it when she moves. She stares at me curiously before quickly looking away when the other girl grabs her attention.

I observe her, completely forgetting about this annoying woman with her high-pitched voice talking to my Beta about goddess knows what. Something about this girl piques my interest; I just can't put my finger on it. I feel something strange stirring within me, awakening urges I haven't felt before. Both girls hesitantly walk past us, and before I can stop myself, I grab the girl's arm, looking down at her. Her heart beats frantically, eyes wide and fear so strong I can almost taste it.

"Rogue?" I question, looking her up and down before my eyes fall on her cerulean blue ones –such an odd blue, I think. Werewolves usually have amber or brown eyes, sometimes green, rarely blue. She bows her head in respect to us. I hear the headmistress quickly stifle a growl, which gives me the feeling their fear isn't because of me, but this old bat who is staring daggers at the poor girls.

I know the girl cannot feel my aura. I made sure to suppress it. When she draws near, it diminishes more; my body's reaction to her startles me. On some deeper level, it is like my subconscious is making sure not to scare her. Her eyes dart nervously to the woman off to the side of me. What I want to know is why she fears this vile woman. Did she hurt my girl? I shake my head at my sudden possessiveness; she isn't mine, I try to remind myself. But why the strange urge to protect and keep her nearby?

Mrs. Daley's eyes narrow at the girl before me, her lips pressing in a line. "Yes, sir, they are just on their way. Run along now, girls," Mrs. Daley tells them, and they rush off up the street.

"Now, if you will follow me, sir. I will show you around the facility," she says.

Facility? The place looks like it should be condemned.

'What's with you?' my Beta asks through our unspoken link. I realize I haven't moved and am still staring after the two girls who are huddling close together as they walk.

I force myself to move, following the birdlike woman. Her face came to a sharp point with equally sharp facial features. Her poorly-dyed hair did nothing to hide the gray peeking through, and her mouth seemed to be formed in a permanent scowl. Man, I'd be depressed to live here, he thought.

"Those girls, follow them and stay out of view," I tell Damian before he turns around quietly, walking after them. Gannon, my third in command, takes his place beside me and follows me inside.

The inside of the building is clean but sparsely furnished. The old woman shows me around, jabbering to me about the different activities the kids appear to enjoy and some other rubbish. Yet I still can't seem to get the girl out of my mind.

"The two older girls that are here. What is the deal with them?" I ask.

"Oh them, you need not mind about them. I don't think they will be around much longer," Mrs. Daley says as she looks at me over her shoulder, trying to figure out what to call me. "I'm sorry, I didn't get your name," she says.

"Gannon," I tell her, and I see Gannon's lips tug up in the corners at me stealing his name.

"Right, Gannon, well those two girls are nothing but trouble. Been here eight years and a right pain in my ass," she says.

"Their names?" I ask her, following her upstairs to the bedrooms, peering in each one.

"Um..." she pauses, and I stare at her. How does she not know their names? She blushes before looking away and trying to change the subject.

"You didn't answer, Mrs. Daley. The girls' names?" Gannon asks her, knowing I want to know. He knows something is up with me, yet I can't even explain it myself. I have never shown interest in anyone in these packs when I've visited before, but there is something about that girl that entices me, and Gannon can tell. He's an observant man—one reason he is so good at his job—so he keeps on pressing her to answer.

"I don't know. I will have to look up their true names," she says, wandering off, and Gannon follows her into an office. I was going to

push for their names but was grateful to Gannon for the support, knowing I'm trying not to come on too strong.

"They have been here for eight years, and you don't know their names?" Gannon asks, just as shocked as me.

"They are rogues, sir. Not worth knowing," she states, pulling out some papers. With as long as it's taking, I realize she must not have any actual files on the girls, which irritates me more. How hard is it to do things properly around here?

"Then what do you call them, if not by their names?" Gannon snaps at her. She is clearly shocked by his tone, and I smirk at her.

"Usually rogue, or you, or..." her voice trails off as she averts her eyes in embarrassment. Gannon holds up a hand, dismissing her, also disgusted that this woman would be so discriminative of them just for being rogues. It wasn't uncommon; packs never bothered to hide their dislike for rogues, but even they gave them the basic decency of using their names.

"That's enough. Move on," I tell her, wanting to get this over with already. This woman is infuriating me, and I am finding it harder and harder to hide who I am the more she speaks.

All I want is to go find those two girls, telling myself it is just out of curiosity and not the dark-haired beauty that has been taking up my

thoughts, having caught my attention completely. Damian will watch over them until I figure out what I want to do.

The mind link opens up and I feel Damian come through. 'My King, is there a particular reason I am following them?' he asks curiously.

'I just want to know where they are going,' I tell him.

'Seems to be a meeting; the new Alpha just arrived and has called them to a stage. It seems to be some sort of hearing.' He pauses for a second before I hear his voice again flit through my head. 'Wait, it is the determination of whether or not they stay,' Damian tells me, and I realize something: the dark-haired girl; I never sensed her wolf, so she wasn't even of age to be determined.

'If he auctions them, buy the dark-haired girl,' I tell him.

'Yes, my king,' he says, closing the link. It is common practice. I never agreed, but the packs kicked up a stink when we said the children were off-limits. They agreed to stop killing them if they could choose their fates when they came of age.

Most packs banished or took them in, but some still sold them off or killed them, though the two last options are frowned upon unless warranted.

As we walk back outside, Mrs. Daley shows us the run-down equipment and some of the kids' paintings hanging on the clothesline to dry. The link reopens abruptly.

'He is sentencing them to death! What do you want me to do?' Damian asks, alarm in his voice.

'Stop it. I will be there soon. The dark-haired girl isn't even on age for him to decide her fate!' I tell him. Abruptly turning on my heel, I walk out, knowing Gannon would deal with the headmistress for me.

"Sir, I still have a few things to show you," I hear her voice call out, but I ignore her. Something is pulling me toward the center of the village, urging me on to that raven-haired beauty. I can't explain it; something in me wants her, and the thought of someone hurting her makes me want to kill whoever dares to try.