

## Chapter 5

### IVY

"I now sentence you both to death by beheading," the Alpha says, his voice ringing out across the crowd. The crowd cheers, and my stomach drops, though part of me knew it was coming.

Abbie clutches my fingers with hers. "Don't cry. They don't deserve your tears. We're finally free," she whispers, barely audible over the cheering from the crowd.

The Alpha grabs my arm, leading me to a huge stone block. I can smell the blood on it as he shoves me down, pressing my forehead against it.

That is when I feel something hit my face before it splats on the stone next to me; a tomato. Bloody animals, I think, blinking back tears. The death of two girls isn't enough for them? They have to humiliate us too? If this is how the world truly works, then I'm glad to be leaving it.

The Alpha drags his sword over the stone and I feel the cold blade press against my neck. To my horror, I feel that it's blunt. I bite my lip to stop the sob that wants to escape me—trying to picture anything other than what is about to take place.

I recall a memory of the Spring Festival and let it flood my mind. Abbie and I had sat in our room but could hear the music. We wanted to go, wanted to know what it would be like to be part of the pack, even just once. However, Mrs. Daley refused, locking us in our room.

Instead, we pretended we were there and slow danced with each other while giggling and twirling each other around. I focus on that memory when I feel something placed over my head: a hessian bag. This is it. I am going to be free of my torment. Free of this life. I just hope the next life is better and Abbie will be with me there.

"What do you think you are doing?" A deep voice that makes the crowd go silent fills the air. I hold my breath before hearing a collective gasp from those watching.

"Putting this rogue out of its misery," Alpha Brock snarls. I try to look through the hessian bag but can't see much of anything.

"She is not even of legal age for this. Free her now," comes the voice, strong and unwavering.

"Under whose authority do you have the right to demand that of me?" Alpha Brock asks, the sword sliding off the stone with a loud clang.

"Are you questioning me, Alpha? I assure you, if you don't heed my warning and let her go, I will be forced to take your life. Now free her and hand her over to me," comes the voice, only this time, I feel a rush.

The stranger's aura bursts out of him as fast and powerful as a rushing river, and I hear the Alpha take in a sharp breath.

"Lycan," Alpha Brock gasps.

"Correct, and it is about time you recognized your superior, Alpha Brock," the man says.

"Pack law says we may decide how we choose to handle the rogues," the Alpha tries to argue, though I hear his voice diminishing.

"Yes, rogues of age. She has no wolf, or I would sense it. Now free her," the voice says, getting closer, and the Alpha laughs nervously.

"You have no authority here. This is my pack."

I can hear the tremble in his voice. What is with this guy? Most Alphas would've been smart enough to capitulate in the presence of a Lycan. He is speaking out of embarrassment. Lycans rule, they are the superior species, and my Alpha is treading dangerously into uncharted territory. Lycans, no matter their status, will always overrule any werewolf and can do mostly as they please.

"You dare speak to a Lycan like that? Have you forgotten your place on the chain of command, Alpha?" comes another voice. This man's voice was deeper, his tone oozing authority, and his aura made me whimper.

A hush falls over everyone, the place so silent even the wind seems to listen to his command. You could hear a pin drop, and I am suddenly too scared even to breathe loudly.

"I, King Kyson, order you to free her now!" The deep voice carries a sincere threat, despite how calmly he speaks to them. His scent wafts to me and my mouth fills with saliva at his tantalizing smell. I hear the Alpha whimper beside me before the sword falls from his hands, clanging loudly on the wooden stage beside me. I listen carefully, hearing footsteps move closer before I feel a presence behind me where Alpha had been. The aura coming out of whoever it is makes me tremble violently.

"You dare speak out against my Beta? Who do you think you are?" the voice booms menacingly. I feel someone grab my arm, pulling me up. Sparks rush over my skin, and I hear him gasp as my heart thumps loudly in my chest while I try to make sense of what is going on.

My legs tremble under the weight of his aura, his grip the only thing holding me upright when the bag is lifted from my head. I find everyone on their knees except the two, imposing Lycan men. One is the blond man from the orphanage. He is smiling at me. I look at the man holding my arm and my breath hitches when I catch sight of his silver eyes watching me strangely.

Instantly, I drop my gaze only to see my Alpha on his knees, cowering. The man holding my arm pulls me from the stage and down the steps before walking up the aisle between the rows of chairs.

However, I see that Abbie still remains on her knees, trembling at the uncertainty. The man lets me go, passing me off to the blond man, who grabs me. He doesn't hold as tight as the man who pulled me from the stage did.

The King drops his aura, and everyone takes a deep breath. The Alpha growls on stage, and I turn to look back over my shoulder as he grabs Abbie. Her shriek of terror makes me shove the blond man away when I see Alpha Brock push her over the stone and pick up his sword from the stage next to her head.

"No!" I choke out.

Panic seizes me, and instinctively I run to the man that saved me, or at least I think he saved me. I have no clue why he stopped the Alpha or what his intentions are with me, but I am alive because of him, for now. I at least trust in his power to change our outcomes, and I didn't want to live in a world that doesn't include Abbie.

"Please, please don't let him kill her!" I beg him desperately, tugging on his suit jacket. The bag over Abbie's head had fallen off, and I see my Alpha shove it back on. The King stops, looking down at my hands clutching his shirt. When I drop to the ground at his feet, I hear whispers from the crowd –murmurs about me grabbing the king– and I realize what a stupid mistake that had been. He could order me killed for even speaking to him, let alone touching him.

"Please, just let him kill me. I want to be with her," I beg, looking at his shiny shoes.

I know it is against the law to touch a royal, and I, a lowly rogue, had grabbed him stupidly. I am as good as dead now. I settle myself, waiting for my death. The King growls, and I tremble.

"Stop! I want the other girl too," his voice booms, and I look up to see him staring at me. I swallow under his intense gaze and start shrinking away from him when I see his Beta move, making me look over at him as he walks to the stage.

"Hand the girl over. You heard the King," the King's Beta says. Alpha Brock growls but grabs her, shoving her down the stairs toward him.

The blond man catches her before she face-plants into the ground, and the Beta growls at the Alpha for pushing her.

I watch as he lets Abbie go, and she rushes over toward me when fingers grip my chin. The King forces me to meet his gaze as he crouches next to me before speaking.

"Anything else?" he asks, brushing his thumb along my jaw and making me shiver. He smirks before releasing me when I shake my head. My brows furrow in confusion and I look down, embarrassed at my behavior and hoping that my punishment wouldn't be too severe. But he got Abbie for me. Despite me grabbing him, he still saved her. Abbie throws herself at me, clutching me as she sobs.

"Thank you," she whispers, glancing at the king, baring her neck to him. He nods to her before speaking, his eyes falling back on me.

"Follow me," the King says. Turning on his heel, he starts walking. Abbie looks at me before his Beta stops next to us.

"You heard the King, follow him," he says, looking at us both on the ground, though his words are soft, and he is smiling, which I didn't expect of him. We scramble upright, rushing after him and ignoring the shocked looks of the townspeople.

We follow him back to the orphanage. The King walks rather quickly with his long strides; we have to jog to keep up with him but make sure not to pass him either. His Beta follows a few steps behind us before we stop. Mrs. Daley is standing out the front and rushes over, staring with her mouth open, gaping at us.

"Hurry, girls. Get inside," she says, clearly shocked and trying to recover quickly. We go to do what she says when the King opens the door of his sleek black car and steps into my path, blocking me from passing him. He grips my arm, turning me toward the door.

"Get in," he says, and we stop. Abbie is clutching my arm tightly, her fingers gripping me so hard I feel my skin bruising. My fingertips hold the side of her shirt, not willing to let her go when the King leans closer, his breath moving across the skin of my neck.

"Your friend can come, but you are coming with me, so get in the car. I don't enjoy repeating myself," he says softly, though it is clear we are not to argue with him on the matter. I swallow before feeling myself nudged forward toward the door by his hand that had moved to my hip.

"Gannon, sir, may I ask what is going on?" Mrs. Daley speaks up behind us.

"No, you may not," the King snaps, but I could have sworn he said his name was Kyson. She goes to speak again when the Beta speaks behind us as we climb in the car.

"Be wise to close your mouth lady. The King doesn't like to repeat himself, and your incessant yapping is rather annoying," his Beta warns.

"King?" Mrs. Daley squeaks, and Kyson glares at her before looking down at me.

"Yes. King Kyson," the Beta confirms, and she drops her head. Instead, the King pays her no attention, reaching over and pulling some straps across me. I flinch, wondering what he is doing.

"Seatbelts," he says before pointing to the other beside Abbie. She quickly copies what he did before looking at her hands and fiddling with them.



The King then does something I never expected. He pulls a handkerchief from the pocket of his suit before gripping my chin. King Kyson wipes my face clean with it, removing the sticky stuff on my face that everyone threw at me.

I notice his Beta watching him, just as shocked by his actions. When he finishes, he tucks some loose hair behind my ear before letting me go. He finally closes the door, and I suck in a breath. My back is stinging from leaning on it, so I angle my body, turning slightly, and lean on Abbie, who moves to help me get comfortable against her.

I see the King speak to his men outside the car, and Abbie whispers to me.

"What's going on?" she asks before tangling her fingers with mine on my lap.

"Maybe they are casting us out," I whisper hopefully. Abbie squeezes my hand, clenching it, and I squeeze hers back when the Beta gets in the driver's seat, the King in the passenger seat. I thought it odd he would get in the same car as two lowly rogues, although I also thought it strange that he cleaned my face and was willing to touch me. Most Alphas flinch with disgust when in our presence. Maybe they're taking us to be servants to the royal family? That wouldn't be so bad; we knew how to clean.

The car starts and begins to move. Abbie and I clutch the seat in panic, having never been in a car before. Her grip on my hand tightens.