

## Continuation from The Unwanted Wolf to The Hunted Wolf– Prologue

Twinkling lights were hung all around the room, giving the room a magical glow. It was the night of finding true love, and everything had to be absolutely perfect. Twinkling star decorations were hung on the walls, and silver streamers hung from the top of the entrance. The lights were dimmed, except for a few spotlights that were shining on a mirror ball in the middle of the room.

The room was mostly empty still, except for a few people running around to make sure everything was perfect for the evening. It was a big night, especially for Pack Lyna. It was their first chance hosting The Lycan Ball. It was an honor that was given to a different pack each year. Normally such small packs were skipped, since they needed to be able to host members from packs all over the southern territory.

The alpha and luna of Pack Lyna campaigned the elders for the right to host, showing they could handle such a large number of people. The luna was the real reason this happened. She wanted to get her pack on the map and prove they were strong and capable.

“Luna Fraya!” a young girl in her early twenties came running up to the luna, waving papers in the air.

“Baylee, is everything okay?” Luna Fraya asked. She stopped what she was in the middle of to give her full attention to the young woman.

“We just got a few more last minute RSVPs. I think we need to prepare a couple of extra rooms for the families for tonight. I don’t know if any more are available,” Baylee said. She had a light layer of sweat collecting on her face, and she was out of breath from running to find the luna.

Luna Fraya placed her hand on Baylee’s shoulder. “Relax, love. I reserved a few extra rooms for this situation exactly. It’s not uncommon for some families to not understand the proper etiquette of RSVPing in advance. I’m sure we may even have a few people show up who never even confirmed if they were coming. A luna always prepares for extra people.”

Baylee’s face relaxed. “Oh thank goodness. I wasn’t sure what we were going to do otherwise.”

Luna Fraya smiled. "I appreciate your urgency in this matter. Go talk to Reyland. He will be able to help you assign the rooms to the families coming."

Baylee nodded and ran off. Luna Fraya smiled at the girl's dedication. She was working hard to become the next assistant to the luna, and Fraya was quite impressed by the girl's dedication. It was much better than all of the other young girls who applied for the position.

A little girl in a bright pink dress came running through the ballroom, her arms outstretched like airplane wings. She was making rumbling noises as she zizagged through the room, almost running right into a waiter carrying a tray of drinks.

Fraya's jaw clenched at the sight. "Adira!"

The little girl froze, her eyes wide. She looked from side to side, debating about the possibility of escaping her mother's wrath. Fraya lifted her finger up and motioned for the little girl to come towards her. Hanging her head in shame, Adira walked to her mother, moving as slowly as possible.

"What do you think you're doing?" Fraya demanded, her tone leaving no room for laughter.

Adira continued looking at the ground, afraid to face her mother. "I was just trying to have some fun. Mason said that if you hold your arms out and run really, really fast, you can fly, just like an airplane."

Fraya sighed. "You know better. Girls do not run in dresses. They also do not make fools of themselves just because a boy tricked them."

Adira's head snapped up, glaring at her mother. "Mason didn't trick me! He was just trying to teach me--"

"That's enough, young lady," Fraya snapped. "You are the luna's daughter, and you will act like it, especially at the ball tonight. You will stay out of trouble, and you will not embarrass me. Do you understand?"

Adira was still angry, but she slowly nodded her head, knowing it was in her best interest. "Yes, mother."

"Don't disappoint me tonight, or you will be dealing with your father tonight," Fraya warned.

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The party was starting to pick up as more and more people arrived. They were a lot of awkward teenagers on the dance floor, avoiding dancing with each other. They were dressed in beautiful dresses and fancy tuxes. Adira was sitting on the chairs on the side of the ballroom, and she was jealous of the stupid teenagers in the middle of the floor. They were all eighteen or a little older, here to find their true love.

Adira rolled her eyes. Mates were just a stupid concept. She didn't understand why anyone cared about finding their mate. It was just an excuse to fall in love and act lovey-dovey with each other. Adira would much rather run around and have fun with her friends then worry about some stupid boy.

Her mother always told her that one day she would change her mind. In eight years when she came of age, she would long for a man to love her. Finding your mate was supposed to be the most magical moment of your life, but Adira didn't buy into that. There were so many more exciting things to do than fall in love.

That's why she hated being at this stupid party. She was too young to participate, but her mother still made her wear a frilly pink dress. Adira was expected to show up to the party, because she was the beloved daughter of the alpha and luna, but she wasn't allowed to go on the dance floor or do anything fun. It made no sense. She wished she had just been left home alone. At least then she wouldn't be forced to wear an uncomfortable dress and could play with her toys.

As is, she was bored out of her mind. There weren't even any other kids her age to play with. Adira lay down on the chairs and sighed. She just wanted to go home, but she knew that wasn't going to happen any time soon.

"Adira! Sit up. You're in a dress," her mother scolded.

Adira snapped up to a sitting position. That was the first time she had even tried to lay down. How did her mother sense it and come running to scold her so quickly?

"Mom, can I go home?" Adira already knew her mother's answer, but she thought it was worth a shot.

“Certainly not. It is your responsibility to be here after all. One day you will be running this pack, so you should get used to responsibilities like this. Now I have to go. Please try to behave yourself for the rest of the night.” Her mother disappeared into the crowd.

Adira let out a frustrated sigh. This was the worst night of her life.

After a few more minutes of sitting there, bored out of her mind, she decided to get up and find something to eat. It would occupy her mind for at least a few minutes. As she made her way through the crowd towards the snack table, the entrance to the party caught her eye.

Two adults walked through the silver hanging streamers. They were an absolutely stunning couple. The man had dark brown hair and dark eyes, while the woman had jet black hair with green eyes. They looked like they belonged in a movie. They were not who caught Adira’s attention though.

Behind the couple, two boys walked through the door. One of them looked just like the man, the same dark hair and dark eyes, but the other one had bright red hair and piercing blue eyes. Adira’s eyes instantly went wide. There were other kids here, and they looked like they were her age!

She weaved in and out of the crowd, trying to get closer to the boys. They were following the power couple through the ballroom closely. They looked like they were a family, except the redheaded boy. He looked like he didn’t belong. Adira wondered why he was with them. She wanted to say hi to them and see if the boys would play with her, but she saw the couple walking right towards her own parents.

Adira stayed back, trying to stay out of the sight of her mother, afraid she would get yelled at and told to sit back in the corner of the room. After a few moments of the adults taking, Adira saw the woman wave to the boys. They didn’t hesitate to run off away from their parents. Adira curled her fingers, frustrated at the sight. Why were these boys allowed to run off and have fun, while she couldn’t do anything that might look the slightest bit bad? It wasn’t like anyone was even paying attention to her.

The boys continued running off, and Adira saw them slip out of the ballroom. Adira ran after them, desperate to play with them. She knew if she got caught, she would get in big trouble, but she didn’t care anymore. She couldn’t take being in that room a minute longer. If she could have some fun, it was worth getting in trouble for.

When Adira slipped out of the room, the quietness of the hallway threw her off. She didn't realize just how loud the music had been inside, but it was an instant relief to her ears. She looked around, wondering where the boys had gone. She couldn't see them, but she heard some laughing to her left. She took off running, not wanting to get left behind.

When she turned the corner, she saw the boys pushing each other in the lobby. They were laughing with each push, and Adira wanted to join them. She took a step back, but then she paused, her mother's words ringing through her ears.

"Little girls don't play with boys. Little girls behave and read and are pretty pictures."

Adira gritted her teeth, thinking about this. She was tired of being told what girls were and weren't supposed to do. She started running, only stopping when she caught up with the boys.

"Can I play with you guys?" she asked.

The boys stopped, surprised at the new person.

"Who are you?" the boy with red hair asked.

"Does it matter?" the other one said. "She's a girl. I don't want to play with a girl."

Adira glared at him. "What's wrong with playing with a girl? I'm probably faster than you anyway."

The boy with dark hair scoffed. "Yeah right! There's no way a shrimp like you could be faster than us."

"Jori, can't we just play with her?" the redhead asked. "So what if she's a girl?"

Jori rolled his eyes. "Mark, you are too soft. As a future alpha, I can't just play with weak little girls like this."

Adira pursed her lips. "You're a jerk. I'm not a weak little girl. You don't even know me."

Jori looked her up and down. "Can you even run in that pretty pink dress of yours? You might get it dirty."

Adira huffed, having enough of this stupid boy's attitude. "I'll show you. I bet I can beat you to the garden."

She kicked off her shoes and started running. She didn't even look back, not wanting to waste the time to see if the boys were following her. She knew she was fast. She could beat most of the boys her age.

"Hey! No fair!" she heard the dark haired boy shouting after her.

Adira kept running, knowing she had to beat the stupid jerk. She had to prove herself to him, so they would play with her. She saw the garden up ahead and burst through the door to the outside. She was almost there. She just had to run a little more.

Suddenly something hit her ankle, and Adira tumbled to the ground, scraping her knee. She saw Jori run past her, and she knew he tripped her. She wanted to yell at him, but she felt the tears threatening her eyes from the stinging on her knees. She quickly got up, afraid she would look weak and ran after the boy. She was about to yell at him, when the redheaded boy stepped in.

"Jori! That wasn't very nice. You made her fall. She could have gotten seriously hurt," Mark said.

Jori rolled his eyes. "She's fine. See? She came over here just fine." He turned to Adira and looked her up and down. "You even had a head start, and I still beat you."

"That's because you cheated!" Adira yelled. She was starting to not like this boy at all.

"Whatever. I don't want to play with a girl anyway. Come on, Mark. Let's go," Jori said.

"No," Mark said. "I'm going to hang out with her."

Jori rolled his eyes again. "Whatever, dude. Hang out with this little girl if you want. I'm going to do something else." Jori pulled Adira's hair before running away.

Adira winced, grabbing her head as Jori ran off. She felt her hair and frowned. "He messed up my bun! My mom's going to kill me." Adira felt overwhelmed.

Her knee still hurt, and she just wanted to have fun. Now she was going to get into trouble, and she didn't even get to play.

"Don't cry," Mark said. "I'm sorry my friend was such a jerk to you."

Adira frowned and looked at the ground. She felt embarrassed that she was crying in front of this boy she didn't even know.

"I'll be right back," Mark said.

Adira watched him run off. She was worried he wouldn't come back, especially when he had been gone for several minutes. She sat on the edge of the fountain, crying at the loneliness she felt.

Adira looked up when she heard footsteps coming her way. Mark was running back into the garden towards her. She smiled, realizing he hadn't actually abandoned her. He stopped in front of her and reached out to hand her something. Adira took it hesitantly. It was a chocolate covered strawberry wrapped in a napkin.

She looked up at Mark and smiled. "Thank you."

"Good. You're smiling," Mark said. He then knelt on the ground. He pulled something out of his pocket. He wiped her knee with a cloth and then put a bandaid on the cut. "There. That should be better. Now you can stop crying."

Adira sniffled and then wiped the tears off her cheeks. "Thank you. Your name is Mark, right?"

The boy nodded and then sat down next to her. "What's your name?"

"I'm Adira. It's nice to meet you."