

## The Hunted Wolf – Chapter 11

ADIRA

Percy arrived with the promised warriors a little before sundown, giving us enough to organize and go over the plan together in person. We planned to attack under the cover of night, knowing human hunters were at a disadvantage due to their weak eyesight. Werewolves thrived under the cover of night. The moon energized us and gave us strength.

I would be even stronger under the light of the moon, even though it wasn't even close to a full moon. The moon gave my magic strength, and I wasn't going to be ignorant about the fight tonight. I expected the worst case scenario, and I fully anticipated having to use my magic on the hunters. I just hoped for a quick fight with minimal injuries.

Percy and Mark stood side by side with all of the warriors outside of our pack house. With nearly twenty of us in total, I felt confident the mission would be successful tonight. If there were only three hunters, we were more than prepared. If there were more, we would be able to handle them with the extra help.

Mark stood tall, emitting a strong aura. There was no doubt about his alpha nature at this moment. He exuded respect and authority, which stirred something deep inside of me. He didn't even have to say anything to gather everyone's attention.

Mark began his speech once everyone was silent. "First of all, I want to thank you all for being here. I know as warriors, it is your responsibility to protect your pack, but that doesn't make you all being here any less honorable. You are risking your lives to make sure all werewolves in town are able to live a safe life, so thank you all for being here.

"Second of all, these are werewolf hunters we are dealing with. They are aware of how werewolves work and will be ready for us. There is a high probability that they will have wolfsbane as well. It is extremely important that you avoid getting hit in any way possible. If you need to retreat for any reason, communicate with us. If you are overwhelmed, ask for backup. If we are going to complete this mission as quickly as possible, we need to have open communication."

Percy stepped up once Mark was done. "I know we come from two different packs, but we have the same goal tonight. We are eliminating the hunters to protect our loved ones. Keep that in mind tonight. I know you are all skilled and capable, so I expect full cooperation and respect. We are the warriors of the night and children of the moon. These hunters will regret entering our territory."

Everyone cheered at Percy's words, and I felt in awe of the way he spoke. He was usually more on the quiet side around me, but when he spoke to these warriors, I could see his leadership skills shining through. He was born to lead and inspire those around him. No wonder he gained the role of beta for Pack Sallow. I was grateful he would be on the battlefield with us tonight.

"Everyone has been assigned a group with a designated group leader. You all should know what your role is tonight, but if you have any questions, please refer to your group leader," Mark said. "We leave in ten minutes. Make any last-minute preparations you need to now."

Everyone started breaking up into their groups, and I approached Mark in the chaos. He smiled when he saw me, but he stood tall and didn't reach for my hand like he normally did.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

I nodded. I felt a little nervous about my role tonight. It put more pressure on me than I was used to, but I wanted to help out and make this go as smoothly as possible. If what I sensed earlier was in fact traps the hunters had set up, I wanted to make sure everyone avoided it. I hoped we would be able to complete the mission with minimal injuries to our people tonight.

I wanted to take Mark's hand, but he seemed to want to limit our contact in front of everyone. I wondered if he felt like it would make him look weak in front of the other pack. I resisted the urge to touch him and focused on taking a deep breath.

The sun had fully dipped behind the mountain now, and it wouldn't be long before we departed. The wolves around us chatted as if this was normal for them. Perhaps it was. They were trained warriors, and they were likely used to intense situations. Or maybe this was their way of coping with the potential danger of tonight.

I, myself, was focused on keeping my breathing steady. I found that the more I practiced my breathwork, the better using my magic went. It steadied the light burning inside of me, as if flaming the coals before cooking a meal. It also calmed my heart rate and stopped me from overthinking or thinking of the worst-case scenario. The more I breathed in and out, the more aware I became of my surroundings.

The laughter coming from Pack Sallow's warriors was a cover for their pounding heart beats. They wanted to look strong in front of us, but they hadn't experienced many battles for a long time. Asheville was a mostly peaceful city with very few incidents. Pack Sallow was known as a larger pack, so hunters stayed away from the area. Usually.

The members of Pack Aphelion were quietly going over the battle plans. Some of them were trained in Pack Sallow when everyone was a part of one pack, but a lot of them were on the younger side and only had training under their belts. This was the first real fight they would experience, and they wanted to prove that they were worthy.

The air was tense with nerves and expectations. Each breath I took tasted shaky. If this atmosphere continued, I was sure mistakes would be made. I could almost see it happening.

I opened my eyes and saw Mark watching me carefully. He was nervous too.

We need to brighten the mood somehow. Everyone is too on edge, I linked to Mark.

He looked at me carefully. Isn't it good for them to be on edge?

Not like this. I looked around at everyone again. Someone is going to make a detrimental mistake if they stay in this mindset. I can just feel it.

Mark nodded, understanding what I was saying. It was about time to go, so Mark pulled everyone's attention again.

"I know this is an intense situation for us all," Mark began. His voice was soft, but it rang out among all of the warriors. "But trust in yourselves tonight. I have seen every one of you fight, and I know you are capable of handling any situation. Have patience and strike when the moment is right. These hunters won't know what hit them, and they will regret threatening this territory."

Everyone shouted in agreement, and I could feel the mood lift as Mark's words sank in. I felt much better about the upcoming attack.

"Let's move out!" Mark said.

We all shifted into our wolf form and moved to our designated leader. I followed Darian, just a step behind him. There were four of us in our group. We traveled through the woods with Darian leading the way for all of the wolves. Percy's group wasn't far behind us, since they would be part of the first wave of attacking wolves.

As we approached the area we had found the hunters at before, the smell of burning wood hit my nose. Now that we were closer, Darian signaled the group to stop. He looked at me and nodded his eyes. It was my time to shine.

I shifted back into my human form, since I had better control of my magic this way. I slowly walked forward, making sure to watch where I stepped carefully. In order to get the surprise attack, we couldn't afford for the hunters to hear us before we were ready. Luckily, it was easy to see the ground with my wolf eyesight.

I moved past the point I had stopped at before but not much further. I could hear voices echoing in the cold night air, and I was able to look through the branches of a nearby bush. The glow of the fire flickered off the faces of four hunters sitting in a circle. There were three men and one woman, and all of them had their weapons by their sides, ready to grab in a second's time. A layer of dirt covered their faces as if they hadn't showered in several days. There was a roughness to their expressions. It made me wonder what kind of hardships they had been through.

In the end, it didn't matter though. They were threatening my people. They made the first move, and they would soon learn it was a mistake.

I concentrated on my breathing, this time looking around the camp for something that couldn't be seen by the normal eye. The same uneasy feeling from earlier in the day overcame me, and I knew there was something unusual about the camp. With each breath, I focused on the energy fields. After a moment, a blue light as thin as a wire started to glow. It went around the entire camp. I couldn't tell what it was exactly, but then it hit me.

It was a tripwire. If anyone hit it, the hunters would instantly be alerted to our presence. No. The energy was stronger than that. I was confident that the wire would set off an explosion.

I took a few steps back in order to relay the information to everyone else. We had to be extremely careful to not set off the trap for our own sake. I was sure it would be best to lure the hunters to us instead, but I wasn't sure how we would be able to do that. Darian would know that kind of information.

Darian wasn't very far from me, and the other two warriors in our group were flanking his side. I approached his wolf and knelt down in front of him.

I kept my voice as soft as possible as I spoke. "I saw four hunters total in the camp. We can't approach them, though. They have some kind of tripwire set up, and I'm pretty sure it has some sort of explosive attached to it."

Darian pressed his wolf's nose into my hand, and I knew he understood what I meant. His eyes turned glassy for a moment as he linked everyone else the information I had obtained. I waited in front of him for him to finish.

Suddenly, something Ginger had taught me popped into my brain. I looked back towards the camp.

We can do it, Moon said in my head. She already knew what I was thinking.

I looked back to Darian, and his eyes were back to normal. "I think I can disarm the trap. Get into position, and I will let you know as soon as I finish it."

Darian didn't move. He whined, and I knew what he was thinking. He didn't like me being so near the camp by myself. I was sure Mark had tasked him with my life again, but I knew I had to do this. It would eliminate an unnecessary danger for us if a fight broke out, especially because the wire was placed so carefully that it would be difficult to see, even with a werewolf's enhanced sight. They were werewolf hunters, and I was sure they knew how werewolves worked.

"It's okay," I assured. "You all will be nearby, and I can take care of myself. And don't worry about Alpha Mark. If he tries to scold you, I'll take care of him."

After a moment of hesitation, Darian nodded to me. He signaled to the other warrior wolves, and they moved into a new position. I made my way back to

the camp as quietly as possible. I checked that the hunters were still in place, and they were still busy cooking their dinner.

I returned my attention back to the blue energy of the trapped and focused on it. Ginger said that everything has an energy associated with it. If we concentrated enough, we could not only see the energy of objects around us but also manipulate it to our benefit. That's how Ginger used her magic. She saw the energy of inanimate objects and manipulated it into something she wanted it to be.

She gave me a few lessons, and I wasn't the best at the skill, but I had practiced it since. I knew that was the best bet for eliminating the trip wire. I let all other thoughts fall out of my head except the blue energy surrounding the trip wire. I could feel the energy stirring inside of me, and the blue energy became more malleable as I focused on it. It became thick in my throat, and I could feel it at my fingertips. Just a few twists and tweaks, and I could redirect the power.

"And who do we have here?" a voice said from behind me.

I broke my concentration and flipped around, finding myself face to face with the hunter who attacked me when I was shopping.