

The Hunted Wolf – Chapter 13

MARK

I tried to link Adria after the explosion, but she didn't respond to me. The hair on my wolf spine rose and my muscles tensed. She wasn't responding. I tried to think of logical reasons why she wouldn't respond. Perhaps she was busy fighting and didn't want to get distracted. Or maybe she was nicked with some wolfsbane, disrupting our linking capability.

Where's our mate? Conall, my wolf, demanded.

I don't know. I was trying to oblige to Adira's wishes by focusing on the battle, but I couldn't help but look for her, especially after the explosion disrupted the camp and her not responding to me. I needed to make sure she was okay. Conall was on edge, wanting to be near our mate as well.

We were in wolf form together, taking hunter by hunter. I was shocked at how many hunters there were. We should have seen signs of this many hunters in the area. At most, I thought there would be five or six, but there were easily twenty if not more. Something was wrong, and this made me feel uneasy. This was not a normal hunter attack.

An arrow came flying by me, but I was able to twist my body easily to get out of the way of the attack. I had yet to be hit so far. I leaped into the air, landing on the hunter who had shot at me. My paws landed on his shoulders, pinning him to the ground. I ripped the crossbow out of his grip with ease and snapped the weapon in half with my teeth. With a quick snap of our jaw, the hunter was no longer a problem.

Conall pushed us to move on and run faster to find Adira. I couldn't explain the uneasy feeling exactly. At first I thought it was just the uncertainty of her not being near me in a fight, but as things went on, I realized there was something more. This was an extremely coordinated attack from hunters that usually worked alone. In the way they didn't move as a team, I knew they weren't used to working together. However, there had to be someone pulling the strings on the puppets to make them all agree to join us. I had a feeling this went deeper than the hatred and desire to eliminate werewolves.

I saw three hunters starting to gang up on Scythe and didn't hesitate to run over and assist him. I jumped between two of them and gripped one by the arm with my mouth, throwing him to the side. I kicked back, throwing the other

one several feet in the air. Scythe was then able to take care of the last hunter on his own.

Thanks, he linked.

Of course. Have you seen Adira anywhere? I was hoping he had eyes on her recently. It would make me feel better, knowing someone had seen her recently.

Scythe shook his head and linked back. No sorry. I'll let you know if I see her though.

I nodded in acknowledgement and then took off. The chaos seemed to be dying down to me as we continued overpowering hunter after hunter. I helped out another wolf who was from Pack Sallow and then moved on. Still no sign of Adira anywhere.

Darian was the leader of her group, so I decided to link him. Is Adira with you?

I waited a moment, but I didn't get a response. Darian should have responded immediately, unless something was seriously wrong. I asked him to keep an eye out for Adira. Adira not responding to my link already worried me, but him not responding made me panic to start to set it. If both of them were unresponsive, I was worried their group was overwhelmed by a group of hunters, and they were seriously hurt. Or worse.

I tried not to think about that. Conall started taking over the wolf body, too determined to mind our mate. We weaved between the arrows flying and the fights continuing, our eyes only looking for Adira, but she was nowhere to be found.

I could smell the smell of burning flesh. Something told me to look for her that way. I bounded through the air, stopping around the ring of fire around the hunter's camp. It was a trap for sure, and somehow it had been set off. Adira was in charge of that, but she must have been interrupted in the process. Bodies were strewn about the camp, burned and beaten. I saw the body of a female with dark brown hair lying on the ground in an unnatural position.

It felt like hours before I could move my body towards hers. If it was Adira, then I knew I would completely lose it, and I wasn't ready for that feeling. I hadn't had enough time with her; although, no time would ever feel like enough with her.

Conall was the one who finally pushed our feet forward. We dashed towards her body, pushing her over with our nose. My heart stopped when I saw her face.

It wasn't Adira, which meant she could still be fine. If she was in trouble, I needed to find her immediately.

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ADIRA

I chased the shadowy figure through the forest, seeming not able to keep up. The sound of fighting dulled, and the smell of fresh pine filled my nose instead of ash and blood. I shifted forward as much as possible, but the figure seemed impossibly fast. How could they move like that unless they were a sorcerer themselves?

That thought froze me in my tracks. If this was a sorcerer leading me away from the werewolves, I could be falling into a trap. If they were more powerful than me, I would be too far away to call for help.

I turned around, getting my senses back. There were more important things happening at the sorcerer's campground anyway. There was still fighting and people who needed healing. I shouldn't be running off by myself. Whoever this figure was could wait until I had more support and was at full strength.

"Hello, Adira." Her voice came from directly behind me, and I knew exactly who it was.

I shifted several feet away, not wanting to be any closer to her than I needed to be.

"Haley, what are you doing here?" My heart raced as I stared at her. When she disappeared after the battle with Theron, I thought she would leave. Theron didn't treat her right, so I hoped she would be able to find peace and leave me alone. I was ignorant in that thought.

"Do you really think you could kill my soulmate and just walk away free and clear?" Her words came out like venom. She was never a nice person to me, but this was a completely new level of hatred.

“So you hired a bunch of werewolf hunters to take us out. Why didn’t you just come after me?” This was not a question. Everything made sense now. Haley must have been cloaking the other hunters, which is why it seemed like so few of them were in town compared to who was actually there.

Haley scoffed. “Because I wanted to make all of the werewolves who helped kill bae to be punished for what they did. What better way to do that than destroy an entire pack?”

“I did you a favor,” I said, trying to keep calm. I knew Haley was a sorceress, but I didn’t know the extent of her powers. I hadn’t really seen her fight or use her magic before, so I wanted to stay prepared. “Theron didn’t treat you well. No one deserves to be treated so poorly.”

“Says the half-blooded mutt who treated her soulmate like he was worthless.” Her lips were tight, and I didn’t recognize the person in front of me. She was not the girl I had met in the coffee shop, even if that was all an act to get close to me.

Her words struck a nerve. “You don’t know what I’m talking about.”

She smirked, pleased that she was cracking my facade. “Poor Jori, getting mated to a weak b***h like you. I’ve been watching him. He’s not like himself anymore. Like I would take relationship advice from a girl who would do that to someone.”

My jaw clenched, and I found myself throwing a light ball at Haley. She swiped her hand in the air, redirecting my magic to a tree nearby. She retaliated by throwing a fireball at me. I shifted out of the way, but I was just barely too slow. The fire singed the arm on my shirt, making me hiss in pain.

“My life is none of your business.” I shifted behind her and threw a ball of energy at her.

It hit her in the back, causing her to fall forward. Just before she hit the ground, she shifted to her feet. I struck again, not wasting the moment she was off balance. I hit her again, this time in the shoulder. She cried out in pain, and I threw another energy ball at her leg, knocking her onto her back. This time she landed with a thud.

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“Leave now and you can go live a new life in peace. Never come back here, and I can let you go,” I said. I didn’t like the idea of killing someone, but if it meant protecting those around me, I wouldn’t hesitate. I was hoping I would be able to make Haley see sense instead.

“I have no life to go back to,” Haley said through gritted teeth. “You took my soulmate and my life from me.”

I scoffed at her. “He was threatening me and my life, yet you still think this is my fault? There is no helping you, is there?” I prepared to attack, taking Haley out for good.

“How would you feel if someone took your mate?” she asked.

Her words made me hesitate. The idea of losing Mark made my heart wrench. I never wanted to lose him. I could see how someone taking him away from me would drive me down a dark road, wanting revenge. But that also wasn’t me. It wouldn’t be easy, but I was sure I would be able to move on without Mark. I never wanted to find out how I would handle that, though.

“I wouldn’t try to kill an entire pack of people, that’s for sure.” I had enough of talking to her.

I moved forward, throwing an energy ball at her face. I imagined the power within me, moving into her body, shocking her heart and making it a quick death. Just before I made contact with her, Haley disappeared, making me fall to the ground. She wrapped her arm around my neck, pulling me to my feet. A cool blade pressed against my throat, and I tried to shift away from her, but I couldn’t move.

She laughed in my ear. “You underestimated me. Do you think I would come unprepared to kill you? This blade here is infused with belladonna, so you won’t be able to use your magic while the metal is touching you.”

My heart raced as I thought about how to get out of her grip. If I shifted into a wolf, it would take too much time, and she could cut my throat during the transition. I would have to find a way to get the knife out of her grip so I could

get away. I went over all of the self-defense techniques Mark had taught me until I found the right one.

“You’re acting in anger,” I said, my voice quivering. I wanted her to think I was more scared than I was. I didn’t want her to realize I was about to do something.

“Is this the point you beg for your life?” she said. “Because that’s not going to work on me. I have no sympathy for you.

I grabbed the wrist holding the knife and twisted while ducking under her arm. I pulled her arm behind her back, and tried to grab the knife. She shifted out of my grip, reappearing next to me instead. She swung her arm at me, the knife going straight toward my side. I stepped to dodge the attack, but I tripped and fell backwards.

She landed on me in the process. “You’re mine,” she growled, swinging the knife down.

Suddenly, everything seemed to move in slow motion. I could see the knife moving down, little by little. Was this what it was like the moment before death? Did my mind slow everything down to process everything?

No. This was something else. I went to grab the knife, but it was shot out of her hand with a purple bolt. I pushed her off me and rolled away. When I stopped rolling, I looked up, seeing a man with dark hair staring down at me. He had some gray mixed in with his hair and wrinkles to show his age. He was wearing a long black trench coat and tall black boots. His eyes were glowing as he looked down at me, but when they stopped, I realized his eyes were familiar. They looked like Theron’s.