

The Hunted Wolf – Chapter 16

MARK

I sat there quietly, listening to Adira explain the conversation with her father. I bit my tongue, waiting for her to finish how he just showed up and saved her from Haley, and then told her that there was some magic council that wanted her dead. My blood boiled hearing this. I knew Ginger said there was a greater darkness Adira would have to face, but I wanted to live in ignorance for as long as possible and enjoy my time with her before anything came along.

Our relationship was still so new. I barely had time to fully appreciate having a mate, and now there was another threat that wanted to take her away from me. At least Haley was no longer a threat, but I felt like we couldn't catch a break. There was one thing after another that stopped us from truly enjoying our life together.

Adira stopped talking and bit her lip, looking at the ground. She hesitated when she was scared of how I was going to react to something. "My father said the only way to stop the council from going after me is to give up my life here and go with him."

I stopped breathing at her words. How could this council put such an ultimatum on someone they knew nothing about? Adira wasn't a threat to anyone. She cared deeply about everyone around her.

I looked at Adira, trying to search her face for her thoughts about it, but I couldn't tell what she was thinking. She was stressed and overwhelmed. We both were. We barely had any sleep since we were out all night cleaning up the mess from the hunters. She was pacing the room, unable to hold still.

"Do you want to go?" I asked. I hated this question. I hated the thought of her leaving, but I didn't want to just tell her what to do.

She froze and looked at me with wide eyes. "Of course I don't want to go." She walked over to me and sat in my lap, holding my face. "I couldn't possibly leave you."

Her touching was always so calming to me. I pressed my cheek into her hand and closed my eyes. She was warm and still gave me butterflies.

“Good, because I can’t stand the thought of you leaving.”

Adira softly pressed her lips against mine. “You don’t ever have to worry about me leaving you. I love you and want you for the rest of my life.”

I couldn’t help but smile like an i***t at this. “I love you, too.” I wrapped my hand around the back of her head and pulled her into a deeper kiss. Her body responded, pushing into me harder. My blood started to flow, and suddenly I felt extremely warm.

She pulled away suddenly, leaving a cool air between us. “As much as I want to, there’s more we need to talk about. If I don’t go with Cain, the Magic of Council will come after me. I don’t know how strong they are.”

My jaw clenched at the thought. “Then we’ll make a plan. Maybe Cain will help you fight them or at least tell us what to expect.”

Adira tensed in my arms and looked away from me. I could hear her heart racing. “You want me to see him again?”

Of course this would upset her. I should have thought about it from her perspective. The father that abandoned her and kept her true nature hidden from her suddenly comes swooping in, telling her to give up the life she worked so hard to build without him. I wouldn’t want to associate with my father if he had done that to me.

“I’m sorry. I know that can’t be easy for you. You don’t have to.” I didn’t want to make her do anything that would make her uncomfortable.

She turned back to me with hard eyes. “No, you’re right. He would have useful information, and maybe he would be willing to help. He said he was trying to protect me.”

“I can go with you if you want,” I suggested. “If that would make you feel more comfortable.”

Adira was silent for a moment. “I feel like this might be a conversation best for the two of us, but I don’t even know how to contact him. He just showed up.”

I didn’t like that Adira wanted to do this on her own. This man wanted to take her away from me and just expected her to go easily. He abandoned her at a young age, and his son tried to kill Adira. I was worried that this was just a

trick, and he wanted to cause her harm. But I trusted Adira and her choices. All I could do was support her in any way I could and hope she'd take my help.

"What about that magic sensing thing that you did with Theron? Cain is family. Shouldn't you be able to find him that way as well?" I suggested.

Adira nodded slowly. "Probably. I don't think I'm ready to face him again."

Tears started filling her eyes, and it broke my heart. I pulled her in and kissed her on the forehead before hugging her tightly.

"Take your time. The past twenty-four hours have been a lot to process." I stroked her hair until I could feel her calming down in my arms. "You were so strong and brave last night. I hope you know that."

She took a deep breath. "I tried my best. I feel like a mess right now, though."

"You haven't slept enough and meeting your father has to be extremely draining. Give yourself a break and rest for today."

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ADIRA

I woke up from the second nap that day, feeling much better and more rested. My wounds were already starting to heal. The amount of wolfsbane must have been extremely minimal, since it didn't seem like my wolf healing abilities were affected at all.

Soft breathing drew my attention, and I looked over at Mark, who was still asleep. After our conversation about my father, I fell asleep in his arms. It was hard not to, especially when I was tired. Mark was so warm and comforting, and I felt safe in his arms. Sleep easily overtook me when he was around. He must have fallen asleep when I did.

I got out of bed and wrapped a rope around me, instantly missing the heat Mark's body gave off. I didn't want to wake him though. Even though he didn't admit it, I knew he was just as exhausted as me, if not more so. He was just putting on a face, since he was the alpha, and he had to stay strong in front of the rest of the pack.

I needed some fresh air, so I headed downstairs and went to the porch in the front of the house. I sat down in one of the chairs and listened to the nature that surrounded us. It was almost twilight now as the sun hovered above the mountains, slowly sinking to its slumber. It was quiet around the packhouse, and I imagined it was because most of the residents were either recovering from the fight or helping those who were injured.

A frog croaked in the distance, crickets started to emerge from the cool night air. An owl even hooted in the distance and the light grew dimmer in the sky. It was the first time I had sat outside of the packhouse and just enjoyed the sounds of nature. There had been something or other going on since we moved between unpacking and the hunters threatening the pack. It was peaceful outside, and I took a deep breath, inhaling the stillness.

A feeling grew inside of me, knowing that this was only temporary. Threats were pounding at the walls in all directions, and it wouldn't be long until they broke through, and the wall crumbled to the ground. They would all pour into the peaceful area, and suddenly the biggest fight of my life would take place.

"Care for some company?"

I looked over at the front door and saw Scythe approaching me. I smiled and patted the seat next to me. I had seen him plenty through all of the meetings and planning for the fight with the hunters, but it had felt much too long since the two of us had sat down together and just enjoyed each other's company.

"I'm always happy to have your company," I said, pulling my feet into my chest to protect against the cold air.

Scythe took a seat next to me. "Crazy night, huh?"

I nodded my head. "You can say that again." He didn't know about all of the details about what transpired when I was off my own, but I wasn't prepared to rehash all of that again.

"Percy is worried about how Jori is going to react to all of this," Scythe said. He was looking off into the distance, and he seemed pretty far away mentally.

"I doubt he's going to be happy. I'm glad Percy did what he did. There is no way our pack would have been able to handle it on our own. We would have been crushed by how many hunters there were." That thought sunk into me.

Jori's stubbornness could have cost the lives of most of this pack if we had decided to go after the hunters on our own.

"Percy knows that," Scythe said. "It could still make things difficult for us for a while."

I turned to look at Scythe. "I hope Percy knows how grateful we are for what he did. I will make sure to thank him personally when I see him next. And if there is anything Mark or I could do to mitigate the situation, don't hesitate to ask."

Scythe pulled his lips into a tight smile. "I appreciate that, Adira." He laughed and shook his head, looking at the ground. "When I was in school, I remembered reading Romeo and Juliet, and I hated the book. They were just two stupid lovers fighting against the odds. As much as I despised the characters, I find myself in a position just like them."

My heart went out to Scythe. He was able to spend most days with Percy now that we lived in the same town, but I knew it wasn't easy. They had to split time between the two packs and balance their own duties.

"Hey, it's not just like Romeo and Juliet. You don't have to keep your relationship a secret from us, and we are rooting for you two all of the way." I lightly punched Scythe's arm, trying to cheer him up a little.

"True. And I don't plan on drinking any poison any time soon," Scythe chuckled, showing the smile I loved from him.

I shoved him with my shoulder. "Good, because we need you here."

Scythe let out a sigh as his smile faded. "I know. I just wish things were different. I wish Percy would leave and join our pack. Or I wish the packs could just merge into one again."

I chewed on my lip, thinking about this. "I wish we could merge the packs, too. I doubt Jori would ever go for that. I'm pretty sure he hates me."

"Plus there's the matter of two alphas. I doubt those two could ever get along well enough to run a pack together. They can barely be in a room together."

I half-laughed at that. "Yeah, I suppose that is a pipe dream, huh? You know, there is one solution you didn't suggest. You could join Pack Sallow again." I

hated the idea of Scythe leaving us, but him being unhappy was worse than him leaving.

Scythe's eyes went wide. "Adira, you know I could never do that. Mark needs me, and you all are my family. As difficult as it has been with Percy, we can make it work."

I touched Scythe's arm. "And you are our family. I don't want you to leave, but if you ever decide that was what was best for your happiness, just know that I'll be rooting for you."

Scythe smiled. "I truly appreciate that, but you moved the pack here for me. There's no way I'm leaving after that. Besides, how could I leave a pack with such a caring and understanding luna?"

"I'm not the luna yet," I reminded.

"Not in title, but you already act like our luna. Speaking of which, I can't wait to plan your luna ceremony. It's going to be so much fun!" Scythe beamed at the thought.

I chuckled, not understanding how Scythe enjoyed planning parties so much. "Well, that might have to wait a little bit. I'm pretty sure a wave is going to crash down on us soon."

"Then I better start planning now so this can happen before anything else happens." Scythe gave me a wink. "This pack needs their luna after all."