

## The Hunted Wolf – Chapter 19

CAIN

I let a few days pass since I last saw Adira, not knowing how to approach her again. I understood why she wouldn't want to come with me. She didn't know me, and I didn't know her, but she also didn't understand the gravity of the situation. The council was not a force to be reckoned with. They were all of the most powerful sorcerers in existence, and when they wanted something, they got it. If they wanted Adira dead, they would make sure she was killed before she even had a chance to fight back.

I had to try to convince her to come with me again. Her life depended on it. But I didn't know how to make her listen. She was in love with her mate, and he loved her. I could see it in the way they looked at each other. Love made a person do stupid things. I knew that first experience.

But I couldn't ignore the fact that she was my daughter, even if I had never been a proper father to her. I had to do whatever it took to keep her safe. I had to make her realize this was the only way she could go on living. Love wasn't worth risking your life for.

I had to get her away from these werewolves. With them, I knew she would never live up to her potential. She was destined to be one of the most powerful beings ever since she was born, but she would never live up to her full potential if she stayed with these werewolves. They couldn't protect her from the council or worse.

I could help her though. I could train her how to use her magic properly. I could keep the council away from her. Together, we could defeat the evil that was after her.

Anger burned in me. Adira was safe when no one knew of her existence. Theron screwed all of that up. He revealed her existence to everything we had tried to hide her from, and now she was in more danger than ever.

I watched her kiss her mate on the front porch of her pack house, happy as ever. She was completely ignorant of what was to come. They say that ignorance is bliss, but what they don't say is ignorance can also lead to death.

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## ADIRA

Several days had passed since Jori approached us, and the situation was constantly on my mind. Percy had been openly accepted into our home, but I could tell he was a mess. He cared about Jori, and he cared about Pack Sallow, to the point that he had been willing to give up his own mate at one point to protect those he cared about. He even went behind Jori's back to make sure the pack was properly protected, and it backfired on him in a way he hadn't anticipated.

"I knew he'd be mad, but I wasn't expecting him to kick me out," Percy said. He was sitting in the living room with his head in his hands.

Scythe was sitting next to him, rubbing his back. He didn't say anything, because he didn't know what to say to comfort him. I knew Scythe loved the idea of Percy joining our pack. He had admitted to me the previous day that he felt guilty about getting Percy all of his time, but he still didn't want his mate to be unhappy.

"I wasn't expecting that either," I admitted. "We shouldn't have asked for your help in that way. Maybe if I tried to talk to Jori-"

"I don't think you talking to him would do any good," Percy interrupted. "You're the reason he's been so angry. He was fine until you showed up and broke your heart."

"Percy," Scythe scolded. "Adira's just trying to help. She's been so supportive of our relationship. You shouldn't talk to her like that."

I held up my hand. "It's okay."

Percy's words stung, and I didn't like being talked to like that, but I understood he was angry, and part of me knew he was right. I didn't know Jori well, since I never got a chance to get to know him better, but I never got the impression that he didn't care about his pack. I think some part of him still cared about Mark, too. He did help us save Mark's life, and if Jori truly didn't care about Mark, he wouldn't be so angry about everything that had happened.

"I know all of this hasn't been easy on Jori, and I know it's been a direct result of my actions." I looked into my hand. I tried to not feel guilty, but it wasn't easy to let go of guilty feelings. "I don't really know what to do in this situation."

I've been thinking about it constantly, but none of the things I think of seem like they would work. If you have any suggestions, please let me know."

Percy looked up at me. There were dark circles under his eyes. "Scythe is right. I shouldn't have spoken to you like that. I'm sorry. I don't know what to do either. Jori isn't himself. I don't even recognize him anymore. He has been running off doing god knows what, and he doesn't care like he used to. I was the only one keeping the pack together, and without me, I'm worried about what will come of everyone else."

An uneasy feeling sat in my stomach. Something told me there was more to this Jori situation than I was seeing, but I didn't know what it was.

A knock on the front door pulled my attention away from Percy. I stood up.

"We'll think of something." I touched Percy's shoulder before heading to the front door.

I opened it and froze. Cain was standing at the door, his face completely unreadable.

Mark, I tried to link, but it felt like something was blocking my connection with him.

"You're not going to be able to contact your mate right now," Cain said. "I'm sorry to do this in this manner, but we need to talk."

I turned to Scythe. "Get Mark. Now." I took a step back from Cain, but he reached forward, touching my shoulder, and then he shifted us away.

Everything went blank, and when the world came together again, I didn't recognize where we were. My heart raced with panic. I jumped back from Cain, holding an energy ball, ready to fight him.

"Take me home now," I demanded.

Water surrounded us on all sides, and I could hardly see the land around it. We must have been in the middle of a large lake. I knew I wouldn't be able to shift away, since I still couldn't shift more than a few feet away. I had a gut feeling that Cain knew this as well, which is why he shifted us here. How long had he been watching me without me realizing it?

Cain lifted his hands, trying to make him seem less threatening. "Look, Adira, I'm not here to hurt you. I just need to talk to you."

I didn't let down my guard and kept the energy ball prepared in case he tried anything. "I'm not interested in talking to you. I told you that I don't want anything to do with you. Just leave me alone."

"I can't do that. You're my daughter, and you're in danger," Cain said.

His skin was still as stone, almost void of all emotions, but I could feel something simmering deep within him. His intentions were not that of malice, but I still didn't feel like I could trust him. For all I knew, he wasn't my real father. No. That wasn't true. I could feel his magic, and I could feel the similarities with mine. He was definitely my father.

"I don't need your help," I said. "I can handle whatever danger I'm in without you."

"Do you truly understand the kind of danger you are in?" he asked. "Do you know what the council is capable of or how they operate? Are you willing to risk your life, your mate's life, your pack's life over it? What about that dark magic that almost attacked you? Do you know what that is? Because I do. I can give you answers. You just need to give me time and agree to consider that I might be able to actually help you."

My throat felt tight. If he could actually give me those answers, it would help make sure we were prepared for whatever was to come. There were other answers I wanted that had been sitting in the back of my head for a while. But I already knew what he wanted me to do. He wanted me to leave Mark, and I knew that was not an option. Maybe there was some sort of compromise we could come up with.

I dropped my hand, releasing the fighting magic, but I didn't drop my guard. "Fine. But I have a few questions of my own. If you can answer my questions, I'll listen to what you have to say, but I'm not going to make you any promises."

Cain nodded. "As long as you are open to listening to me. You might change your mind after you hear what I have to say."

"Mark is my mate," I reminded. "I love him, and I have fought to have him in my life. I won't ever stop fighting for him."

Cain looked to the sky, and for a moment, I thought I saw sadness flicker on his face. "I said that once upon a time. I had to learn the hard way that love and mates is not always enough to keep two people together."

"What do you mean?" The way he spoke told me this was just the beginning of his story.

"Your mother was—no is—my soulmate," Cain said. "We were once deeply in love, and we thought we could conquer the world together. Soon we learned that there were stronger forces out there than love."

"So you weren't a fling my mother had while she was married to the man I thought was my father?" When I had found out that the man who had raised me wasn't my father, I assumed my mother had cheated on him.

"No. What we had was not a fling." His eyes softened and a small smile found his lips. "We found each other by accident. She was on a trip to get a rare item, and I was investigating a strange appearance near my territory for my father. It was a neutral zone that wasn't owned by werewolves or sorcerers. We bumped into each other by accident, but we both felt the connection and knew that we were destined to meet that day.

"She was actually engaged to the future alpha of Pack Lyna. She was from a powerful family, so it was a reasonable match. It was arranged by their families, but it was never love for her. We had plans to run away together and start a new life, knowing we couldn't go to either of our homes. It is taboo to mingle with other species, and we knew our relationship would never be accepted by either of our families."

I found myself holding my breath as I listened to his story. The way he described my mother made her seem like someone I never knew. She was always about following the rules and appearances. She hadn't been the most loving mother either, but the woman in Cain's story was a whimsical woman who was ready to give up everything to be with the man she loved.

"What happened?" Their story sounded like one from a fairytale, but I already knew there wasn't a happy ending for them.

"She found out she was pregnant with you," Cain said. "At first we were thrilled, but then I remembered a prophecy I had grown up being told about. 'In the darkest hours of the darkest days, the Daughter of Moon and Magic and the Son of Blood and Magic would be fated together, creating the most

powerful couple in existence. It was a bond no one could break and one that would end up breaking the world. Destruction would rain when the two became one, and the world as we know would be lost.' I didn't think anything of it at first. I didn't want to think anything of it.

"Eventually, I told your mother about it, and she said she had heard the same prophecy. It was used as a warning against mingling with other species. That's when we realized that you were the Daughter of Moon and Magic."