

## The Hunted Wolf – Chapter 2

MARK

I watched as Adira chatted with several members of my pack, and I couldn't help but smile. She was so beautiful, and her voice was like a song. I could listen to her all day. And the way everyone took to her was absolutely incredible. I knew she was still shy around everyone, and I couldn't blame her. It was hard joining a pack full of people who had known each other for a long time. Everyone already knew the rhythm of the other pack members, but people didn't really know Adira.

They liked her, though. They clung to her presence and her smile. She didn't see it. I could tell by the way she tucked her hair behind her ear and looked at the ground as she spoke about herself. It was so obvious to me. The way Darian leaned in a little closer when she spoke. The way Callie asked Adira to tell her another joke. They were falling in love with her one by one, and when she was ready, Adira would become the official lune of Pack Aphelion.

Alpha Mark, we have an issue outside the pack house, Julian linked me. Julian was on patrol right now.

I found myself straightening. We hadn't been here long enough to already be having issues. What's the problem?

It might be best if you just come here as soon as possible, Julian linked.

I had a sinking feeling in my stomach. Of course today of all days an issue would arise. I squeezed Adira's hand and gave her a smile. She was having such a pleasant time at breakfast, and I didn't want to worry her.

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

Adira furrowed her eyebrows. "What's going on?"

She could read me too well, and I knew she was worried. I wished I could link her to tell her. I didn't want to worry everyone at the table. Soon. Soon I would be able to have that private connection with her.

I just tried smiling again. "There appears to be a small matter I must attend to. Just enjoy the rest of your breakfast. I'll be back soon enough."

I leaned in to kiss her, but she was already standing.

"I'll go with you. I'm done eating anyway." She turned to the rest of the table and gave them such a sweet smile. "I had such a great time this morning. Enjoy the rest of your morning and I'll see you all later."

My heart swelled seeing her reaction. I knew she didn't see it, but she held herself with the grace of a luna. It made her even more beautiful.

I took her hand and walked out of the dining room with her in tow. She squeezed my hand as I rushed towards the front door. I still didn't know what the issue was, but Julian made it sound urgent. If it wasn't, I knew he would've been able to handle it without the help of his alpha.

"Mark, what's going on?" Adira asked. There was worry in her voice now that she had kept out in front of everyone.

"I'm not sure yet. There seems to be some sort of issue with the patrol," I explained. I stopped at the front door and let go of her hand. "Maybe you should wait here, just in case there is trouble."

Adira gave me her signature look. "You know I can handle myself. I'm getting better with using my magic, and I can even use it a bit in the daytime. Plus you've been teaching me to fight as a wolf. If anything, I would be an advantage if there's any issue."

I sighed, knowing she was right. It was hard not to be overprotective with her. I had almost lost her much too recently, and I never wanted to feel that way again. I couldn't take away her agency just to protect her though. She was strong and talented and didn't need me to protect her. That didn't stop me from wanting to keep her safe from the world.

"Okay, just be on guard," I finally said.

I jogged out of the pack house towards the location Julian indicated. It was at the border of the land. I slowed when I smelled Julian and Hunter. There were three other scents I didn't recognize. The hair on the back of my neck stood up as I got closer. I didn't know who the three strangers were, but I knew they were trouble.

"Look, we don't want any trouble. Please just leave," Julian said.

"If you don't want any trouble, then your pack shouldn't have moved into Pack Sallow's territory."

I felt my jaw clenching as I approached the group. These men were from Jori's pack. I stood tall as I approached.

"What's the issue here?" I asked. I could feel Adira's presence behind me, but I didn't dare look back at her. I didn't want to turn away from these men.

"Oh look, it's the traitor," the man in the middle said. He seemed to be speaking for the two men slightly behind him, but they also looked ready to start trouble.

"I suggest you go back home before you say something you'll regret," I warned. Jori told Adira we could make the move into town work between the two packs. Clearly he didn't have as much control over his pack as he thought.

The man took a step forward, and I could feel Julian's hesitation increase. He was new to patrol. He had never done it before joining my pack, and so far we hadn't had much to worry about. He would have to learn to take command, but I was glad I could be here to have his back right now. I nodded to him to give him more courage.

"I suggest you go back where you came from," the man said. He puffed out his chest, trying to make himself seem bigger.

"In case you forgot, this is where we came from," Julian said, taking a step forward. I could feel his nerves, but I was proud of him for standing up for the pack.

The man moved forward, shoving Julian in the chest. "Until you decided to leave with this traitor. He tried to steal the alpha seat from Jori. You're just as bad as him for taking his side."

I stuck my arm out, separating the man from Julian. "We have an agreement with Jori. I suggest you leave our territory right now."

"Or what?" the man challenged.

I simply smiled at this poor man. He was trying to act tough and start something, but I wasn't afraid of him. I could see behind his true nature easily.

He was the type to talk big, but he wouldn't be able to back it up when it came down to it.

I took a step forward. "I will protect my pack as necessary. However, I would prefer to go our separate ways in peace. It will be a lot less headache for you in the end."

The man scoffed. "Right. You are just afraid of a fight because you don't want to look weak in front of that b\*\*\*h of yours." His eyes moved to Adira. "You are a pretty little slut. Do you only go for alphas, or will you take anything that moves?"

Something snapped in me. It was one thing to insult me or my pack. It was another level to insult my mate. I grabbed the man by the neck before he could even blink, and then I swept his legs out from under him. His back landed flat on the ground with a thud, and he gasped as the wind was knocked out of his lungs. I pinned the man to the ground by his neck, careful not to completely choke him.

"You shouldn't talk to a woman like that," I growled.

A felt a hand on my shoulder, and Adira's touch instantly soothed me.

"He's not worth your energy, Mark," Adira said. She looked to the other two men, who were hesitating to act. "I suggest you run back home before the same thing happens to you."

I stood up and brushed off my shirt. I could have snapped this man's neck if I wanted to. He was lucky I had no desire to kill a werewolf simply for being an ignorant a\*\*\*\*\*e. "You're lucky my mate stopped me," I said, looking down at the man.

He still hadn't made a move in response to my attack, but my words seemed to trigger something. He tried to stand up, but Adira stepped on his chest, pinning him to the ground again.

"I would get that temper under control if you ever want to find a mate. Don't come around here again, insulting our pack, unless you're willing to face the consequences," Adira warned.

She sounded almost sweet with her words, despite them being a threat. It made her more intimidating. She was almost scary calm as she pinned the

man to the ground, but she was protective and firm. She was going to make an excellent luna.

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ADIRA

“That man was so infuriating!” I complained. I had tried to keep my cool in front of Julian and Hunter, but the moment Mark and I were back at the pack house, I lost it. My hands were shaking from the adrenaline rush.

Mark laughed, finding my fury amusing. “Unfortunately we will likely deal with others like him.”

“But Jori agreed to us moving the pack here for the sake of Scythe and Percy. You’d think he’d control his pack better.” I fell back onto the couch, afraid my legs would give out as the adrenaline wore off.

“You can’t control a pack with commands,” Mark said.

He was standing calmly on the other side of the room. How could he be so calm at a moment like this? His pack was just insulted. If something like this happens again, it could result in a fight or someone getting hurt. I couldn’t stand the idea of someone picking on sweet little Callie just because her mother chose to follow Mark as an alpha instead of Jori.

“I know. I’m just worried about everyone’s safety. We have to do something about this.” I ran my fingers through my hair.

Mark knelt down in front of me and put his hands on my knees, smiling. “And we will do something about it. Try to relax a little. No one was hurt today. That is the most important thing.”

I let out a sigh. He was right, but I couldn’t calm down. When the man threatened the pack, I couldn’t stop myself from stepping in, but it was terrifying at the same time. “I know. I just don’t like that something like this even happened. Also, why are you smiling at me?”

“Because you were pretty sexy earlier. The way you put that man in his place.” His smile turned almost devious.

I pursed my lips at him. “Don’t tease me. That was nerve-wracking.”

Mark shook his head. "I'm not teasing you. You acted like a true luna today. It made me want you even more before."

I hesitated, realizing this wasn't a joke. I lifted my hands up to Mark. "I'm shaking from it. Would a luna shake like this from a small confrontation?"

Mark grabbed my hands and kissed each one. "A luna would stand up to a man insulting her pack, no matter how terrifying it was."

Mark's words were kind, but they were hard to believe. I wanted them to be true. I wanted to be a good luna to this pack, but part of me was still worried I wasn't good enough. I wasn't even a full werewolf.

"We should reach out for a meeting with Jori to let him know what happened today," I said. "He needs to know that kind of behavior will not be tolerated."

Mark stood up and helped me to my feet. "That's an excellent plan, Luna Adira."

I rolled my eyes. "I'm not the luna, yet."

"But you will be," Mark quickly returned. "And you'll be the best luna this pack could ask for."