

## The Hunted Wolf – Chapter 3

ADIRA

Jori agreed to meet us at a coffee shop in the afternoon. It was a neutral location, which Mark thought would be for the best. With the tension between the two packs, we didn't want the meeting to get interrupted. It would also avoid the risk of any fights breaking out.

When we arrived at the coffee shop, Jori was already there with Percy at his side. He was sipping on a steaming cup of coffee and didn't look concerned in the slightest. Mark and I approached the table and sat on the other side.

"Nice of you to finally join us," Jori said. There was a slight bitterness in his voice.

"We're not late," I said. I felt on edge from Jori's attitude. "You're the one who showed up early."

Mark placed his hand on my arm. I'm sure he could feel my nerves. "Thank you for agreeing to meet up with us so last minute."

"And why did you want to meet up so last minute? In a public place no less?" Jori leaned forward, resting his chin on his hands. "Are you afraid of me?"

I furrowed my eyebrows. That question didn't seem very fitting. "There's no reason to be afraid of you. We are here concerning a matter of your members."

I glanced around the room at the other customers. That was the downside to meeting in a public place. In order to keep our werewolf nature a secret, we would have to be careful with our words. I was glad Mark suggested a public place, though. I was getting a strange vibe from Jori, and I didn't know what it was about.

"What concern is it to you? You should only worry about your pack," Jori said.

Percy shot a quick glance at Jori, surprised at his carelessness. "Al- Jori. We should choose our words wisely here."

Jori rolled his eyes. "Yes, of course. So what is your problem with my people?"

"Your people came onto our land and threatened the safety of my family," Mark said. His voice was surprisingly calm, especially with Jori's attitude. Normally, Mark was a lot more reactive when it came to Jori.

"Did anyone get hurt?" Percy asked. His lips curled down at the thought.

"Not this time," I said. "But we can't have things like this happening again, or someone could get hurt. If we are going to make this work with the packs, we need to find a way to smooth things over with everyone."

Jori smirked. "Maybe you should just leave. Maybe it was a mistake for your pack to move here."

I curled my hands into fists under the table. After the last time I spoke to Jori, I thought he was going to be more reasonable with us. Did he change his mind after? Did he not care about the pack members who were friends with each other or Percy and Scythe's relationship?

"We are not going anywhere," Mark said firmly. His voice was still level and under control, but he meant business.

"We'll talk to the pack," Percy said before Jori could respond. "If we continue to have issues, I'm sure we can figure something out."

"I can't make people like you," Jori said. "It's not my fault they see you as a traitor and her as a floozy."

Mark's jaw clenched in response to him. I had a feeling Jori was trying to get under his skin, and it was working. Jori was really starting to irritate me, but I knew I couldn't lash out if we wanted any kind of results.

"I don't need your pack to like me," Mark said once he regained his composure. "I need them to respect my pack and our boundaries. These are our people's happiness at stake, so it would be best for us to work this out. We could be allies and make our packs stronger. It's not going to be easy, but if both of us are on the same page, we'll be able to figure things out."

For a moment, Jori's eyes flashed completely black. I glanced at Mark to see if he noticed this, but he wasn't acting any differently. I blinked at Jori's eyes for a moment, wondering if I had just imagined that. He looked completely normal.

Jori noticed me looking at him and smirked at me. A chill ran down my spine. Something about his eyes were cold and unnerving.

“What are you looking at, Princess?” Jori asked.

My hands shook from his condescending tone. “Nothing,” I quickly said. “I just want this to work out. I want our packs to be able to live at peace, not just for our sake. Your life would be easier if we could all get along.”

“My life would be easier if you all left. Or if you had picked me or this filth.” Jori’s words were filled with anger, and a shot of pain attacked my chest.

I thought I was over this, but Jori’s rage still affected me in ways I didn’t want. I wanted all of us to be able to find peace, but he was still so angry.

“You were okay with us coming here. What happened?” I didn’t understand Jori’s change in demeanor. I hadn’t spoken to him or flaunted my relationship with Mark to him, but it felt like his anger was amplified.

“You told me you would give me a chance. What happened?” Jori spat back at me.

I didn’t have a comeback for his spiteful words.

Mark grabbed my hand under the table and squeezed. “Let’s get back to the matter we came here for. We need to make sure our people aren’t fighting with each other.”

“We will figure this out,” Percy said before Jori had a chance. There was a slight desperation in his voice. He had more to lose than the rest of us. If Jori tried to force us out of town again, Percy would have to choose between Scythe and his pack again.

“I guess we’ll see what happens,” Jori said. “Are we done here? I have more important things to do.”

“For now,” Mark said, “but if we have any more issues, this won’t be the last time we have to discuss things.”

Without another word, Jori walked off.

Percy turned to us with an apologetic smile. “I’m sorry. He must be in some sort of mood today. I’ll talk to him. I promise.”

I reached forward and touched Percy's hand. "Thank you. Let us know if there's anything we can do to help."

I was glad Percy was on our side of things. He was Jori's beta and his right-hand man. Jori listened to him and cared about his opinion. Percy was hard to get to know, and I still hadn't had many conversations with him, but he made Scythe happy, and that was the most important thing to me.

"I will," Percy said. "I should get going."

Mark nodded to him. The moment Percy was gone, Mark slumped into his chair, all of his calm composure coming undone. "Could that have gone worse?"

I sighed. "I know. I thought it would go better. After he gave you the amulet back, I thought we would be able to make peace with each other."

"He's clearly not over you," Mark said, his body growing tense. "I was hoping he would have accepted it by now. I know it's not easy. If you had picked him, I would have been a total mess."

I squeezed Mark's hand and leaned over to kiss him on the cheek. "I know. Part of me feels guilty, seeing him like that, but I don't regret my decision. You make me happier than I thought possible."

Mark smiled, and his body seemed to relax. "Same to you. Should we get going?" He stood up and pulled me up with him.

"Probably. We have a lot of unpacking to do still." I frowned at the thought. I was tired of unpacking already, but the place would feel much better when we were done.

Mark led me out of the coffee shop, still holding my hand. It was a nice day out, and the shop wasn't too far away from the pack house, so we had walked here. I was grateful for the fresh air.

As we walked down the street, a thought crossed my mind, making me feel uneasy once again. I slowed down my walking pace. "Hey Mark. Did you notice anything weird about Jori?"

Mark slowed to match my pace and looked at me closely. "Other than him being a complete a\*\*\*\*\*e?"

I nodded. It was weird he hadn't mentioned this yet. "His eyes. Did you see anything... off about them?"

Mark gave me a weird look. "No? What are you talking about?"

I looked at the ground, wondering if it all had been my imagination, but the image was burned into my eyes. Jori's eyes had been completely black, but I seemed to be the only one who noticed.

"It's nothing," I said. "Let's go find some lunch."

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## CAIN

Waves of black filled the room as people entered, dressed to reflect the mood they were supposed to be in. We were here to mourn the loss of the future leader of the Caspian coven, at least the person who everyone thought was supposed to be the next leader.

The sign at the front of the room read, "Theron Caspian, beloved son of Cain and Mayla Caspian. Friend to all. Dedicated sorcerer. He will be missed by the masses."

I wasn't sure how true that sign was, but the memory of someone was always better after death. Theron was my son, and I did love him, but he was arrogant and power-hungry. It was his own fault for getting himself killed. He went behind my back and went to the council instead of myself, causing more headache than was necessary.

I was angry at him.

My face didn't show it, though. I accepted all of the "I'm sorry for your losses" from those attending Theron's funeral. "It wasn't fair your son was taken away from you so soon," they said. "He would have made a good leader," they lamented. "I will miss him dearly," they lied.

Most of the coven hated Theron. They were all just going through the motions of what a person ought to do when someone dies, but I knew the truth. Theron was spoiled and rude. He picked on those he thought were weaker than him. He only cared about power. He didn't care about the good of the coven. If he had, he wouldn't have gone off and done something so unbelievably stupid.

And now I was left to clean up his mess.

I didn't know how he found out about her. No one knew about my illegitimate daughter, except her own mother. My wife didn't even know about the affair. So how did Theron find out the truth? And why did he go after her instead of confronting me?

He was a dumb child. That was why. He found out he had a sister who was older than him, and he knew she would have the right to take over the Caspian Coven over him, and he had felt threatened. So instead of talking to me about it, he went off and tried to kill her. He even made sure the council knew about her to make sure the job would get done.

And now it was my mess to clean up.

It was a mess figuring out everything that had happened too. After the council approached me, I was furious and sent people to find Theron. That's when I found out he was dead and that he had tried to attack her. Now I had to figure out how to handle her. I hadn't even thought about her in years, either. She was supposed to be safe.

And now it was my job to take care of her or kill her.

Adira Lyna, my eldest child and only daughter. Half-werewolf, half-sorcerer. Wanted by the Council of Magic. Existence no longer hidden from the world.