

The Hunted Wolf – Chapter 7

ADIRA

I checked my phone to look at the time. It was late, so I was surprised Mark wasn't in the room.

Mark? I tried linking. My heart raced in anticipation. I didn't know exactly how the mating process worked or if I would be able to link him.

You're awake, Mark's voice rang in my head.

His voice felt like a part of me, and I couldn't help but smile. I could link him. He was officially my mate.

What are you doing out of bed so late? I asked.

I'm visiting Julian. I'll be back in a minute.

No. Stay there. I want to visit him.

I got out of bed, but when I stood up, my legs were shakier than I expected, and I fell right back down. My body was weak and tired. The mating process took more out of me than I had expected. I stood up again, prepared for the weakness in my legs this time. I threw on a pair of pajamas and grabbed a robe. I left the room and headed over to the medical room.

I peaked my head in there, and it was quiet except for the beeping of the heart monitor hooked up to Julian's chest. Mark was sitting in a chair, watching him, but as soon as he felt my presence, he stood up. He was the only other person in the room. I walked up to Mark and grabbed his arms, holding onto his forearms.

I looked over at Julian. He looked peaceful in the bed, but his shoulder was wrapped in bandages, and the blood was starting to soak through.

"How is he doing?" I asked.

Mark let out a sigh. "Zay says he'll make a quick recovery. Luckily, the arrow missed anything major. A couple of days, and he'll make a full recovery."

“Good.” I leaned forward and buried my head into Mark’s chest. My body still felt tired, and I needed a little extra support. I could hear his heart racing as I leaned into him.

He reached up and stroked my hair. “You should go back to sleep.”

I looked up at him, seeing the dark circles under his eyes for the first time. “Have you gotten any sleep?”

He gave me a forced smile, but I could feel his stress under the curl of his lips. “I couldn’t fall asleep. I wanted to check on Julian.”

I could feel there was more that he wasn’t saying. I reached up and cupped his face. “It’s not your fault. You are a good alpha. You can’t control everything that happens. They did their job as warriors and protected the pack.”

Mark dropped his head into my shoulder, and I could feel his facade fading. “But I’m supposed to protect them, and I don’t know if I can do that. I couldn’t protect you today, and there are at least three hunters. I have never dealt with more than one at a time. I don’t know if we have enough warriors to take them out, especially if there are more we don’t know about.”

I held Mark tighter, wanting to help take some of the burden off of his shoulder. He was the most caring alpha I had ever met. “First of all, I can protect myself. I love that you always want to protect me, but I’ve been training to fight and protect people. And I’m okay. I’m not hurt. Second of all, if we need to reach out for help, we will ask. Hunters threaten all werewolves in the area, not just our pack.”

Mark looked up with a scowl imprinted on his face. “I really don’t want to deal with Jori again so soon, especially after the way he talked to you today.”

I touched his face, feeling the tight muscles forming the frown on his face. “I know. I don’t want to deal with it either, but let me take care of it. I think I might know a better way to go about this than dealing with him directly. Just focus on this pack and what you can do for them.”

Mark pressed his forehead against mine, and I could feel him relaxing. “You are the best mate.”

So are you, I linked, loving the ability to do it. “Now you should get some sleep. I’m sure you’re absolutely exhausted, and you’re no good if you aren’t taking care of yourself.”

Mark glanced over at Julian. “I don’t want to leave him by himself.”

“I’ll stay with him for the rest of the night. Now go get some sleep.” I tried to push Mark towards the door.

He grabbed my hands, stopping me. “I don’t want to leave you either. I missed you.”

I rolled my eyes, but I secretly loved him saying he missed me. “It hasn’t been that long.”

Mark pulled me into him. “I know, but I always miss you when you’re not here with me. And I know tomorrow will be hectic, so I know we won’t get a lot of time together.”

I didn’t want to leave Mark’s side, either, but I agreed with him that someone should stay with Julian. Even though Doctor Zayla said he would be fine, waking up after being injured was an overwhelming thing, and I didn’t want Julian to wake up alone.

I saw the lounge chair in the corner of the room and pulled Mark towards it. “Then let’s stay here together. The chair was big enough for us to fit in, although it was a tight fit. I pushed Mark to sit down, and his body easily collapsed. I crawled in next to him and pulled him into me. He rested his head on my chest and I stroked his hair. His body relaxed with my touch, and I could feel him drifting off to sleep.

His breathing slowed, and I was relieved when it became steady. He put so much pressure on himself, and I hated it, but I also knew that was part of what made him such a good alpha. He went out of his way for everyone, almost to a detrimental point. However, I was happy I was here to take some of the burden off him and make sure he was okay. While he was taking care of everyone else, I could take care of him.

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I woke up several hours later to the sound of the door opening. Doctor Zayla came into the room and started doing a check over on Julian. I watched her

carefully, looking for any signs of distress, but she was always difficult to read. She didn't give any indication that she was aware of my presence, but that wasn't unusual either. When she was doing something, she was also hyper focused on the task and saw little else.

When she was done with her examination, she motioned for me to follow her out of the room. I untangled myself with Mark and walked out as quietly as I could. She stopped in the hallway and waited for the door to shut.

"The patient is doing extremely well," she began. "I would be surprised if he doesn't wake up in the next couple of hours. He should be back on his feet tomorrow."

My body relaxed at the news. "That's great to hear."

"And how are you feeling?" Doctor Zayla asked.

I tilted my head, confused at her question. I hadn't been injured in anything. "I'm fine."

She motioned towards my neck. "I see Mark finally marked you. Are you recovering from that well enough?"

My hand shot up to my neck. I forgot that the mark was visible to other people, and I hadn't looked in the mirror at it myself yet. "Oh, yeah. I'm a little tired, but I'm okay."

Mark pressed his forehead against mine, and I could feel him relaxing. "You are the best mate."

Doctor Zayla nodded. "Did you use protection?"

My eyes widened. "Doctor Zayla!"

"Please, I've told you that you can call me Zayla. The 'doctor' title is much too formal for us now." She blinked at me expectantly, but when I didn't answer, she continued. "Protection is important. I know it can be easy to get swept up in the moment, so if you need to talk about other options-"

"We used protection," I interjected before she could continue with the mom talk. I could tell my face was flushed from the conversation. It felt too personal and awkward.

“Good. Unless you are ready for-”

“I’m aware of what could happen,” I quickly said. I really didn’t want to continue this conversation. “I should probably get dressed for the day.”

I waved goodbye and hurried off to my room before any more awkward conversations should come up. I also wanted to get back to Mark before he woke up, but I really needed a hot shower after sleeping in an uncomfortable chair. Clean clothes were also a necessity.

I finished freshening up within fifteen minutes, and I went back to the medical room right away. Mark was still sleeping when I went in there, but I was surprised to see Julian awake. He looked a little groggy, but his skin looked a lot brighter than before.

“Adira,” Julian greeted with a smile.

I walked over to his bed, happy to see his bright smile again. I didn’t know Julian well yet, but we had trained in groups together several times. He was young, but he was smart and funny. I knew he would get stronger the older he got and would become one of our best warriors with training.

“How are you feeling?” I whispered, not wanting to disturb Mark.

“A little sore, but much better.” Julian’s face fell. “I’m sorry I wasn’t able to get rid of those hunters.

I moved closer to him and placed my hand on his shoulder. “You did a great job. It was unexpected, and you and Darian chased them off. You’re alive, too. That’s the most important part.”

Julian smiled at me, but I could tell there was still a lot on his mind. “You’re too nice. I need to get stronger if I’m going to protect this pack.”

“And you will get stronger. I believe in you.”

“Thanks,” Julian said. He looked over at Mark. “Has Alpha Mark been there all night?”

I nodded my head. “He didn’t want to leave your side. He felt responsible for your injury.”

“He’s a really good alpha,” Julian said.

I liked hearing the pack members express their approval of Mark. I knew it had been difficult for Mark to establish himself as a leader in other people's eyes, but I knew the werewolves who chose to follow him truly respected him.

"He is a great alpha," I agreed.

"You know, you're going to make a great luna of this pack one day."

I blushed at his compliment. "I sure hope so." I glanced back at Mark who was still sleeping. "I have some things to take care of. If you need anything at all, please let me know."

I stepped out of the room, pulling out my cell phone. Today was going to be a stressful day as we figured out how to deal with the hunters in town, but I knew there was one thing I could do to take some concerns off Mark's plate.

My phone rang, and when I heard the voice on the other side pick up, I said, "Hey, what are you up to? There's something I need to talk to you about."