

Chapter 96

Skylar

“This pack hunt is going to be so much fun!” Irma tells me on the way to my tiny Fiat. I smile at her, even if I don’t agree. I rarely participate in pack hunts because shape-shifting makes it harder to block out my inner wolf. But I still like to be social, so I usually bring a book to read under a tree.

“Oh man, I’ve been waiting for this all week!”

I turn around when I hear Jaiden’s happy voice. He is walking up to us with a grin on his face while Lucas, who is following silently behind him, wears an emotionless expression.

“Uh, I don’t remember inviting you guys,” Irma crosses her arms over her chest with a pout. “I also don’t think it’s a good idea if you tag along. Our family is good friends with the Alpha family, and Alpha Max is a friend of mine, but you...” She points her finger at Lucas towering figure. “You’re an Alpha, and Max might feel uneasy if you enter his territory.”

“Uneasy?” Lucas scoffs. “A true Alpha is confident in his position.”

Jaiden laughs out loud but falls silent when Lucas shoots him a pointed look. “What’s so funny, Jaiden?”

“N-nothing!” he squeaks, visibly shrinking under Lucas’ intense gaze..

“Good.”

“It’s just that...well... you’re pretty fucking intimidating. No normal person is 6’8 feet tall, and you’re all muscle. This Max person will feel like a little kid looking up at you.”

Lucas’ eyes narrow, a dangerous glint flickering within them, but he doesn’t argue with Jaiden. Instead, he glances down at me, who instinctively backs up from him. Even though I can speak with him just fine, I don’t like how ridiculous our height difference is. Whenever I’m around Lucas, I feel less significant, and Lucas frowns once he notices my obvious fear of him.

“Whatever...” He mutters. “I won’t join the hunt, but I will sit in the car.”

“And why would I let you do that?” Irma demands, her hand resting on her hip. As if having eavesdropped on our entire conversation, our mom comes out of the house.

“I was the one who asked Lucas to tag along, sweetie. There’s been a lot of rogue attacks lately, and thought it would be a good idea if you had a capable Alpha around.”

“And you don’t think Alpha Max is capable enough to protect us from the rogues?” Irma asks. Max is her latest crush, and even though she is probably stronger than him as a hybrid, or at least on his level, she acts as if he’s the epitome of strength and gallantry.

Mom rolls her eyes. “Of course, I think Max is capable, Irma. I just feel better with Lucas there, too.”

Irma huff’s but doesn’t argue any further. Instead, she gives Mom a quick kiss on the cheek and grabs my hand to pull me towards the car. “Fine, let’s go then.”

“Are you sure about this? You’re not gonna change your mind and freak out halfway through?” Jaiden teases as he falls into step beside us.

“Shut it, Jaiden.” Irma gives him the finger before separating from me to take the passenger seat. I sit down in the driver’s seat while Lucas flops down behind me his knees bumping into the back of my seat due to his towering height.

I glance at him through the rearview mirror as he tries to adjust himself in the tiny space. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine. Let’s hit the road already,” Lucas grumbles, looking as cramped as a grown man in a kid’s playhouse. With a reluctant chuckle, I start the engine and get us underway.

We leave our neighborhood behind and enter the woods. that lead toward Alpha Max’s territory. Jaiden tries to fill the silence with his frivolous chatter, talking about his latest hunt and the doc he had managed to bring down all by himself. But his voice seems to bounce off the car walls since my mind is elsewhere.

Since Lucas mentioned he wouldn’t mind dating me last night, I can’t seem to get him out of my head. I’ve been obsessively thinking about it all day, and I even delved into my dad’s study to research the mating habits of demons. I am aware that Lucas is a quadbrid, but having lived with my hybrid sister, I am already familiar with vampires and werewolves. What I am not sure of, however, is how angels and demons express their love and affection in relationships.

Despite my efforts, I was unable to uncover any information about angels. Angels are either rare or non-existent. However, my dad had some personal notes about Xavier. One claimed demons are like cats and love bringing dead animals to their special people. I hope that part isn’t true, though. I love gifts, but animals? No thanks. The mere idea of Lucas leaving dead mice outside my door is... was going to say disgusting, but now that I think about it, it would be hilarious. I giggle to myself, and Lucas looks up.

“Did the road say something funny?”

“No,” I reply, my cheeks warming as I focus back on the road, ignoring his bemused stare. “Just... remembering a joke.”

Jaiden looks at me with a raised eyebrow, clearly not believing my lame excuse. But he is interrupted by the sudden jerking/ of the car as I swerve to avoid a fallen branch. A low growl erupts from Lucas. “Focus on the road, will you?” He snaps, sounding more worried than I expected. I bite my lip, nodding even though he can’t see me. I continue driving but hit the brakes when a large tree blocks the entire road ahead. A few other cars are parked on the side of the road, and a few distraught people from Max’s pack surround the Tree.

“What’s going on here?” Lucas barks from behind me.

“I don’t know, but I don’t like this,” Irma says. “Whatever caused that tree to leave huge claw marks. Look...” She points to a set of jagged scrapes etched deeply into the bark. “That shit isn’t normal or caused by werewolves...”

“Jaiden and I will check it out,” Lucas says, unbuckling his seatbelt. He shoots me a look through the rearview mirror. “You two stay in the car.”

“Eh, why me?!” Jaiden whines. “I’m just as frightened as the girls are!”

Lucas sighs. "Because you're supposed to become my future Beta? Come on now. Enough fooling around."

Jaiden rolls his eyes but unbuckles his seatbelt, as he steps out of the car mumbling something under his breath that sounds suspiciously like, "Why is he always so Bossy?"

As Lucas and Jaiden walk away, I turn around to face Irma. She looks concerned, and I don't blame her. It's obvious that whatever caused this tree to fall wasn't natural. I wet my lips, ignoring the fear in my chest, as I ask, "What do you think happened here?"

"I don't know..." She says in a quiet voice. "But it couldn't have been anything good because there's a trail of blood leading into the forest. I...I think someone might have been murdered here, someone from Max's pack."