

Chapter 97

Skylar

“Murdered?” I echo, my eyes darting to the dark forest beyond. A prickling sensation crawls up my spine; something within me is telling me to follow the trail.

“I think so.” Irma confirms, her face pale. “And if that’s true, then we need to be careful.”

I hear what she is saying, but I can’t sit still. My inner wolf is present inside my head, not speaking but staring at me with her purple eyes. In real life, I relax my shoulders, sighing inwardly before addressing my inner wolf. ‘Am I supposed to follow the trail of blood leading into the forest?’

‘If you don’t, then you will never figure out what’s happening since you won’t let me in.’ My wolf’s voice is tinged with a measure of accusation, yet I don’t let it get to me.

“Irma,” I say, eyes kept on the forest. “I think we should investigate.”

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea. We are on Alpha Max’s territory and technically, we aren’t part of his pack. If we investigate, we could get in real trouble for trespassing, you know”

“He gave us permission to hunt on his territory.”

“Yes, but not here. Skylar!”

“Does it matter?” I continue. Arguing isn’t something I do often with my sister, but I can’t deny this feeling inside my chest that tells me to investigate.

Irma must realize I’m serious, too. Her lips part in surprise as if she can’t believe her nerd of a sister is taking charge and trying to give her orders. But there must be something in my eyes that grounds her because her shoulders slump in resignation. “Okay, I will let you investigate the trail, but I’m coming with you.”

I arch an eyebrow. “You’re willing to risk your good relationship with Alpha Max for me?”

“Of course,” she mutters, but she doesn’t seem one bit happy about this. “You’re my sister, and I can’t let you take the blame if he finds you sniffing around. Hell no. We are in this together.”

My heart swells, and I swear I’m close to tears. Irma might be a diva who acts as if she cares more

about her popularity and the boys on her phone than she does for me, but when it matters, she truly is there for me. “Thank you,” I mouth to her as I open the door. “Shall we go?”

“We should,” she agrees. “Max’s pack members are busy arguing with Jaiden and Lucas, so this is our chance to enter the woods without them seeing us.”

I giggle. “I feel like a criminal already.”

“Me too.”

We share a grin before leaving the car, making sure no one sees us as we follow the trail of blood. Since shape-shifting wouldn’t go unnoticed, we stay in our human forms, and I let Irma take the lead since her hybrid nose is far more talented at picking out scents than my werewolf one.

“It smells like there’s been a struggle,” she whispers.

“You can tell that by just a sniff?”

Her eyebrows lift before she wags them at me. “I can tell a lot by just a sniff, sis.”

“Such as?”

“Such as the fact Lucas is carrying your used panties with him in his pocket. Mind telling me more about that, hmm?”

My face turns beet red. “I... I don’t know what you’re talking about!” I lie, flustered because I thought I had imagined my scent on his clothes in the car. Turns out that boy is more lewd than I thought.

Irma chuckles. “You have to give me the full story later.”

“There is no story...”

“Sure, there isn’t,” she says in an exaggerated tone that tells me she doesn’t believe me for one second.

“Let’s stick to the task at hand. Irma.” I growl at her, trying to divert the conversation away from Lucas and my rather embarrassing secret.

“Fine, but I won’t let this go!”

She’s giving me that teasing grin of hers, and all I want is to wipe it off her face. But there are far more pressing matters at hand. The woods grow denser as we delve deeper. No birds are singing in the trees either, which is a clear warning sign. Yet I continue walking, following Irma with a pounding heart.

“We should’ve brought weapons,” Irma murmurs, gazing around warily.

“Weapons?” I question.

“Dude, we are werewolves.”

“I know, but a gun still makes me feel safer than my own claws.”

“That’s because you don’t want to ruin your manicure.”

“Heh he,” she shoots me a sheepish grin. “Guilty.”

I roll my eyes before stopping in my tracks. “Let’s shape-shift. It should be safe to do it out here.”

“Good idea!” Irma and I quickly get rid of our clothes before shape-shifting. Turn into my grey wolf with purple eyes while she becomes her cream-colored wolf with a patch of white on its chest; even her wolf form is gorgeous.

‘Jealous?’ my inner wolf asks.

‘No,’ I say, and it’s the truth. ‘I admire my sister, and being jealous of her would be a huge waste of time.’

‘Too busy trying to fight my presence, huh?’

‘You could say that...’ my inner wolf is harder to push into the far corner of my mind after I’ve shape-shifted. That’s why I usually don’t shape-shift, and my inner wolf knows it.

‘My name is Jinx, by the way.’

‘Fitting name...’ I grumble. Jinx doesn’t respond. Instead, it’s Irma that reaches me through the mind-link.

‘I think I’ve found a new trail!’ she sounds excited and even tilts her head with her tongue sticking out. It makes her look. crazy. ‘Follow me!’

With a yip of agreement, I dart forward, slipping into a run that matches Irma’s pace. We move with practiced ease, our bodies made for this wilderness, Irma is larger than me, more powerful in every way, but I keep up with her easily.

The trees fly by in a blur as we run deeper into the wilderness, long past where we were given permission to be. As soon as I feel a strange smell hit my nose, a low growl of uncase rises up from Jinx inside me, but I push it down. This feels right. But apparently, I’m the only one who thinks that. Irma skids to a halt so abruptly that I nearly barrel into her hind end. She snaps at me playfully before dropping her nose back to the ground, sniffing at something I can’t see.

‘What is it?’ I ask over the mind link Irma does not respond. Instead, she lifts her head and squints at the trees. ‘What?’ I repeat the questions. ‘Talk to me!’

‘I would tell you what it is, but the problem is that I don’t know. I’ve never smelled something like this.’

Since her words make no sense. I push her aside and stick my nose into the ground, sniffing the area. She is right. The smell is horrid and like nothing I've ever stumbled upon. It's a mixture of rot and blood of some sort?

'Is it the blood that's making you uneasy?' I ask Irma, the hair on my back standing up as a primal fear courses through me.

'Yes. I have no idea what creature the blood belongs to, but it's just not that,' she confirms, her voice trembling through our mind-link. 'That blood doesn't belong here. It smells wrong, somehow.'

Suddenly, a loud screech that definitely doesn't belong to any normal animal echoes between the trees, causing us both to stand there, paralyzed as the ground quakes. Something huge is moving through the forest, but then, as suddenly as it comes, it stops.

'What was that?' I ask my thoughts a frantic whirl.

'I have no idea,' Irma replies, her voice shaky – a clear sign that she's scared. And if Irma, one of the strongest people I know is horrified, I should be terrified.

We don't dare to move, all senses on high alert as we wait for the next sound. For what feels like an eternity, the only noise is wind and the pounding of our hearts in our ears.

‘Maybe it was nothing? I try to sound convincing, but there is no mistaking my fear. Irma, however, is okay with pretending nothing is wrong and smiles wolfishly at me.

‘Y-yeah, maybe we just imagined the whole ground shaking?’ As we get ready to continue our mission, another noise shatters the silence. This one is different from the last. It’s a growl, but not like any we’ve ever heard before. It’s too loud and thunderous, almost like one produced by a monster in a TV show. Jinx snarls inside my head.

‘We need to leave!’ I hear her loud and clear, but I can’t move, not after my eyes see something I thought was never possible.

One of the huge monsters from my nightmares emerges from the forest. It’s standing on its hind legs, taller than at full-grown man. This thing must be at least ten feet tall and all muscle. It has the face of a wolf if you look away from the fact its eyes are missing. Its body, however, reminds me of a human bodybuilder.

‘It’s a shadow Lycan,’ Jinx says.

‘A what now?!’

A Lycan raised from the dead, Jinx explained. ‘And we should really get going unless we want to become its pack’s next meal.’

It has a pack? Yes, and the Alpha is even bigger.