

Chapter 98

Skylar

‘Bigger?!’ I ask Jinx in disbelief, yelping when the shadow Lycan twists its head in my direction. I don’t dare to breathe, knowing the shadow Lycan is blind. Though, that doesn’t matter. I can tell the moment it senses me, and Irma’s ears flatten against her head when the monstrous creature roars at us. I look back in horror as several more monstrous figures appear from the depths of the forest, eyes socketed but vacant. These creatures are grotesque parodies of our own wolfish forms. They snarl and snap at one another before falling into line behind their leader, their titanic Alpha.

‘Oh my god...’ Irma says through the mind link. ‘There’s no way we can take that thing down!’

For the first time in history, I agree with my sister. The shadow Lycan’s Alpha is a towering behemoth wrapped in darkness. Its form ripples with power and it doesn’t take an expert to figure out it isn’t friendly.

‘Back away slowly,’ I advise Irma through the mind-link, but the words are hardly out before the pack of shadow Lycans lurches towards us.

We bolt. Our instincts take over, and we become flashes of grey and cream against the greenery. Jinx growls deep within me. ‘I told you we should have left.’ She sounds almost smug-if a wolf could be smug-and I push back the irritation that flares up at her comment.

‘This is not the time for an ‘I told you so’ moment!’

‘Whatever!’

Even though I’m irritated at my wolf, I keep running, knowing my life depends on it. The ground beneath us rumbles as the shadow Lycans give chase, their monstrous roars ringing in our ears.

‘I don’t want to die!’ I shout through the mind-link, hoping Jaiden or Lucas can hear me before I throw caution to the wind and yell his name. ‘Lucas, where the fuck are you?!’

‘Yes, where the hell is he?!’ Irma agrees.

There is no answer from our Alpha, and my heart pounds like a drum in my chest as I push myself to run faster, faster than I’ve ever run before. Irma’s frantic pace matches mine as we dart through the forest, branches scratching against our fur. But no

matter what, we can't shake off the Lycans. Leaves rustle, and twigs snap under the weight of their feet, their growls growing louder with each passing second.

'Left, left!' Irma cries out via our mind-link and I follow her command, swinging left so sharply that I feel my paws skid under me before I find purchase again. I'm afraid we will never get away from the monsters, but suddenly. I hear a loud howl.

'Alpha Max!' Irma exclaims. 'We are safe!'"

The burly brown werewolf snarls and charges forward, with the rest of his pack following him. They outnumber the Lycans, but I'm not surprised when most of Max's men are defeated in a few swings from the shadow Lycans.

'You could easily defeat them.' Jinx singsongs inside my head. 'All you need to do is brace what you are!'

Discomfort swirls in the pit of my stomach before I growl at my inner world. 'Shut up!'

'What are you so afraid of?'

The answer is on the tip of my tongue, but I can't say it. I'm too much of a coward. Jinx, however, seems to know exactly what I fear.

‘Being the center of attention frightens you, doesn’t it? That’s why you shy away from people, dress like a nerd, and seldom speak a word. That’s why you don’t join pack hunts and let your sister make fun of you. You’re going out of your way to be invincible, Skylar. And it’s all because you think blending into the background will prevent people from taking advantage of you again.’

Jinx’s words hit the bullseye, and it’s so painful that I shut my eyes and scream at her inside my head, ‘LEAVE ME THE FUCK ALONE!’

My inner wolf finally fades away, though it might have been a mistake to get rid of her. When I open my eyes, all I see is shadow Lycans fighting werewolves, and we, the werewolves, aren’t winning the battle.

‘We can’t just sit here and watch!’ Irma cries, her voice crackling with desperation.

‘But we are just two wolves against a pack of shadow Lycans!’ I retort. I don’t want to sound like we have already lost, but the reality of our situation is grim....and terrifying.

‘We are not just two wolves. We are from the Bloodmoon pack, and we are strong!’ Irma growls before charging forward. ‘Sit back if you want, but I’m going to fight!’

I watch in disbelief as Irma plunges herself into the chaotic battle, her cream-colored fur standing out starkly against the black fur of the monsters. She snaps and snarls ferociously. Her body moving fluidly as she fights. She looks so defenseless compared to them! Fear surges through me again, not for myself, but for my brave sister. And it's at that moment I realize I can no longer sit back and watch. I won't let my fears rule me. I won't let my sister die alone! So, with a rumbling growl, I surge forward, my eyes trained on Irma, who is now struggling to defend herself against the Alpha shadow Lycan. It's standing over her, roaring with spit coming out of its mouth. It's a frightening image, yet I don't back down.

My muscles stretch and pull as I race across the moss, my claws gripping the ground before I propel myself at the Lycan. 'Stop harassing my sister!' I shout through the mind-link even though the monster can't hurt me. What the monster can do, however, is feel my teeth sinking into its muscular arm. It roars in pain and lifts me into the air as it tries to shake me off, yet I hold on like a dog refusing to let go of its favorite toy. The Alpha's growls echo like thunder in the dark forest, its enormous paws swiping in mid-air, trying to dislodge me. I'm flung around like a rag doll, but I grip tighter, my fangs sinking deeper into its shadowy flesh, the taste of darkness invading my senses.

'Irma, run!' I command her through the mind-link.

'But...' she stammers back at me.

‘Now!’ I insist.

‘No!’ She argues. ‘I won’t leave you! Not now. Not ever! Now, where the hell is your mate?!’

Bitterness churns in the pit of my stomach. If Lucas isn’t over his powers, and that’s probably why he isn’t here, then he won’t come. I know that he doesn’t have any control

‘You really think I would abandon you?!’ Luca’s voice cuts through my inner monologue. A rush of joy and relief washes over me, but I don’t let it distract me from my deadly dance with the shadow Lycan. Its howls continue to boom around the forest as I rip into its flesh, my heart pounding in rhythm with the beast’s struggles to off its arm. But my strength is running out and with it, my patience gets to me.

‘Where are you?’ I ask Lucas through the mind link. His response is a visceral snarl that fills my veins with adrenaline.

‘Coming for you.’

There, in the midst of chaos, an enormous black-and-white harlequin wolf leaps into view. My heart skips a beat when it lunges at the shadow Lycan Alpha. I’m shocked by the wolf’s colors. I’ve never seen Lucas in his wolf form before. He is...majestic.

‘Ready to fight together with me?’ Luca’s amused red and blue eyes meet mine, and I swear the mirth dancing within them fills me with renewed strength.

‘Always,’ I reply, setting aside my fear of standing out. It’s time to shine.

With a forceful pull, I release my grip on the Lycan’s arm, sending it staggering backward before I charge at its side. Lucas mirrors my movements so that the shadow Lycan Alpha won’t know who to go for. It works. The horrific creature howls in confusion, but it’s too late. Lucas and I leap at it simultaneously, our bodies colliding with the beast with so much force that it’s knocked onto its back. We don’t stop there; we continue punishing the creature, tearing into its shadowy flesh.

A satisfied rumble rises in my chest as I witness the Lycan’s fearful expression. ‘How does it feel now?’ I broadcast my thoughts to the beast, hoping that it understands my question and my fury. Its only response is a pained whimper before Lucas and I bite down into its flesh to tear it apart. But the Alpha is not so easily beaten. With a mighty roar, it pushes us off of its body, sending Lucas and I hurtling across the battleground. We land in a heap, battered and bruised. But we’re not out of this fight yet. Lucas is on his feet first, shaking off the dirt and blood. His eyes are aflame, burning brighter than ever before. I feel his anger as though it’s my own, hot and furious. I rise more slowly, wincing as I put pressure on my injured leg. Still, I manage to

meet the Alpha's terrified gaze with a steady one of my own. 'We are not done yet,' I warn him.

Suddenly, Lucas tenses beside me, his ears perked up. Following his gaze, my heart sinks as I see reinforcements pouring into the clearing more shadow Lycans join the Alpha's side. 'Looks like we have company,' Lucas mutters grimly.

'We do,' Irma's voice says. She appears beside me, out of breath but not defeated. 'What do you guys wanna do?'

'I don't think we have any other choice than to fight,' Jaiden's voice cuts in. 'Or what do you say, Alpha Lucas? Is this a battle we can win?'

Lucas looks at Jaiden but doesn't respond. He is breathing hard, and my heart stops when I see his angelic and demonic wings trying to break through his back. I realize this is bad. If we don't end this battle soon, we will have a bigger problem to take care of-Lucas after he has lost his control.