

Chapter 19

Garret

Hugo was relentless. He kept whining, nagging me to go to our mate and telling me to stop being such a brat. Even my wolf was against me! Finally, after hours and hours of his insistent complaining, I went to find her. She wasn't hard to find; Even when I wasn't following the pull of our bond, I knew the most likely spots she would be. And just like I thought, I found her sitting on her favorite bench in the park nearby, a book in her hands. I took a minute to just look at her; She was as beautiful as ever, even if seeing her stirred mixed emotions inside me.

As if she could feel my presence, her head lifted and turned, our eyes connecting. Hers with wide with surprise, but I kept mine neutral.

"Garrett."

Her voice drifted to me. I walked the remaining distance, sitting next to her the bench. Looking over the park, I noticed for the first time it was rather busy. Parents had brought their kids out to play in the nice weather, swinging and sliding and generally having a great time. The atmosphere of laughter and happiness contrasted hugely to the wave of angst inside of me.

"What are you doing here?" Sophia asked softly.

"I came to find you." I answered bluntly.

"Oh." She put a bookmark in her book, closing it and placing it on her lap.

"You know we need to talk." I stated.

"Yeah."

I sighed, pinching the bridge of my nose. So many things I wanted to say; I was afraid they would all come out at once, and honestly, some of them weren't nice. Sophia sat quietly, waiting. Finally, after I felt I had composed myself enough, I looked at her.

"Why?" I asked.

Her shoulders hunched a little, head bowing lower. "I don't know." She mumbled.

"Don't." I snapped. She looked at me. "You had a reason. It's tortured me for a long time, the fact that you never told me why. I'm asking now, and I want an honest answer. Why did you cheat on me? Why did you destroy what we had?"

Tears brimmed her eyes, her long lashes fluttering as she tried not to cry openly.

"Because... I didn't want to disappoint you. I thought... I thought if I had some experience... you would be satisfied with me when finally..." She trailed off, her eyes once again on her book. I blinked at her, almost spastically.

"Are you telling me you slept with him because you didn't want to disappoint me in bed?" I whispered.

She nodded, her cheeks turning red, her hair falling over her shoulder to hide her face.

"That's...." I was stumbling. Stupid? Idiotic? Pathetic? "Dumb." I settled on.

"I know."

"Do you? We could have shared that experience together Sophia. Wasn't that the point? To make love with the person you actually love?"

"I'm sorry. Looking back now, I don't know what I was thinking. It was stupid, and selfish. I should have opened up to you, told you how I was feeling."

"Yeah, you should have."

I got up, too angry to sit there anymore. In my head, Hugo begged to go back to her, but I pushed him aside. I didn't want to talk to her anymore. But Sophia came after me, grabbing my hand.

"Garrett wait!" She pleaded. "Are you going to reject me?"

"I don't know." I said. Her hand slid out of mine.

"Stop that." She snapped.

I turned at the sound of her voice, incredulous to see her so angry. What right did she have to be angry?

"Excuse me?"

Sophia crossed her arms. "Stop doing this to me. I get that you want me to hurt, but this is wrong. You're not just hurting me, but you're hurting my wolf too. And yours."

I rolled my eyes. "I'm not vindictive like you Sophia."

Pain flashed in her eyes but she kept going. "Really? I heard what you did to your sister."

"That's not your business." I snapped.

"Either reject me, or accept me, Garrett. I'm serious. This purgatory you're leaving me in is cruel! I haven't shifted yet, so our bond isn't so strong, but my wolf wants her mate, and she's hurting badly over it. I won't let you string me along for days, weeks, months, only to reject us in the end. Just get it over with!"

I took a step back, shocked that she thought I would do that to her. Didn't she understand the effect this had on me? I needed time to think!

"But how long will you take? She's right, this is painful, for everyone." Hugo whined.

"You haven't even asked my wolf's name." Continued Sophia. "And I don't know yours. If you don't want me as a mate, I get it. I understand, I fucked up. But maybe we can both find chosen mates, or even a second-chance mate, and move on. And be happy. Please Garrett." She was crying now, silent tears running down her cheeks steadily.

"Is that what you want?" I rasped. "To be with someone else?"

Sophia scrunched her eyes tight, something she did when she was really upset. "No! Of course I want to be with you! But it's clear that you can't decide if you want to be with me, to move past what happened in the past, and try to be happy."

"You expect me to forget about it so easily!" I hissed.

"I never said that. I know you won't forget, but you're not even trying to forgive either. Look at what happened with Violet! The Garrett I know would never have tried to come between his sister and her mate! You're letting this hatred consume you!"

"Because of what you did Sophia! You expect me to be okay, to accept you, but do you even realize what you did? You took everything we had, and threw it in my face!"

"I'm sorry!" She cried. "I know, I know what I did! And I know it hurt you! But I don't regret that as much as I regret what it did to you!"

"You have no idea what it did to me." I growled.

"This, -" She waved her hand at me, "-Isn't you Garrett. What I regret the most is taking someone so beautiful, and with my actions, turning him into this." She shook her head, tears falling on the ground. "Please, just reject me." She sobbed.

I flinched at the plea in her voice. She really wanted me to; She really wanted to end this, whatever it was. Heartbreak? It felt like it. I couldn't bring myself to answer, let alone form the words of rejection. Another sob broke from her chest and my heart hammered painfully in my chest. What was I doing?

She turned away, running back to the bench and scooping up her belongings. And then she left. I stood, rooted in place, for a very long time. By the time I came back to reality, it was getting dark, and everyone had already gone home. I reflected on the last couple of weeks, on how angry I'd been. Not just with her, but with everyone. The confrontation with Vie and Jasper played through my mind, and shame engulfed me.

Turning on my heel, I walked as fast as I could back to the packhouse. There was only one person I wanted to see right now, one person I knew wouldn't bullshit me. The trip back home was blurry, but I was more focused as I climbed the stairs, getting to our floor. I ran down the hall, and knocked on his door roughly.

"Come in!"

Dad had barely spoken the words before I was inside his office, closing the door and turning to face him. He was on his feet instantly.

"Garrett? What's the matter? What happened?"

"Sophia..." My breath was coming hard, my mind whirling. Dad's expression turned to one of sympathy. He made me sit in the chair opposite his, getting me a glass of water. I chugged the whole thing, the cold burning my throat.

"You rejected her?" He asked quietly, taking the glass from me and setting it on his desk.

I shook my head. "No."

"Then what's wrong?"

"I..." I was on my feet, pacing. "I don't know what to do!" I yelled.

"Okay, okay. Calm down, breath son. Talk to me."

I told him everything. Everything including what I did to Violet. The words tore from my gut, and when I finished, I collapsed onto the sofa set against the wall. My face felt wet; When had I started crying? Dad stared at me for a while, his face expressionless. Part of me thought he was going to yell at me. The other part of me hoped he would just tell me what to do, because I still didn't fucking know.

Finally, Dad sighed. "Well, that's a mess."

I scrutinized his face again. "You already knew."

"Yes. Your Mom told me."

"Mom knows?!"

"You're surprised?"

I wasn't really. Mom knew more about the going-ons in the pack than Dad did sometimes. Especially when it came to us. Dad pulled the chair up, sitting in front of me. He rested his elbows on his knees, regarding me with a thoughtful face.

"You love her still. Don't you?"

I clenched my jaw. "She cheated on me."

"That's not what I asked."

"I... Yes."

He nodded. "You want my advice?"

"Please."

"It's a tricky situation, because Jasper is your sisters' mate. And whether you like it or not, she's accepted him. Now, I won't claim to understand why Sophia did what she did, or her reason for it. The one thing I will

never understand is women." He smiled. "But it truly sounds like she regrets it. And I don't think she ever meant to hurt you the way she did Garrett. Kids are stupid, they all do stupid stuff. You guys did."

I opened my mouth, but he held up his hand, silencing me.

"I know, not that bad. But still. Regardless of what she did, she was still chosen to be your mate. And I'm sorry, but she is right; You can't string her along like this, you need to make a decision. However, I'm guessing that you've already made your decision, and you just haven't accepted it yet."

I looked at the ground, breathing deeply. "I want her dad. I want her to be my mate, my wife. To have pups someday. To have a family with her. But... I can't stand the thought of her around him. And he's going to be around."

"Jealousy is an ugly thing. Sometimes it takes control of us, makes us do things we wouldn't do otherwise. Sometimes, it turns us into monsters."

He leaned in, placing a hand on my shoulder.

"You are the next Alpha. You need to decide what kind of Alpha you're going to be. I won't lie to you; I was a monster myself once. It's not something I'd like to ever return to, and it would break my heart to watch you go down that path."

I blinked away a few more tears. "Are you saying this because it's what's best for the pack?"

"I'm saying it because you're my son. This conversation would be the same whether you were an Alpha, Beta, or a rogue. You're my son, and I love you. I want what's best for you, what's going to make you happy."

My guts untwisted, my breathing easier. It felt like the hate I'd been clinging onto was physically leaving my body. I felt lighter. Dad nodded at me, seeing on my face that I'd made my choice. I gave him a hug, mumbling a thank you. He shoed me out of his office after that, and once

again, I was running. I flew down the stairs, and through the foyer; A maid dodged out of my way, shooting me a dirty look as she almost got knocked over. I didn't even bother to close the door as I ran out of the packhouse.

In the woods, I stripped and shifted quickly. Hugo was practically dancing on his feet; he was so excited. He took off, winding around trees and leaping over bushes. A herd of deer ran by, terrified of the monstrous wolf moving through the dark. But he paid no mind to them, racing towards the west side of the pack in record time. A few minutes later, we stopped and I shifted back, getting dressed. Jogging to the edge of the forest, I looked up at Sophias house.

Memories flashed in my mind of when we use to hang out here. Her house was small, the siding painted a fading yellow. She always use to complain about it, saying how much she hated yellow. I smiled, looking at it now. Not giving myself time to turn back, or second-guess myself, I walked out of the trees and straight to the back door. Sophias parents worked nights, which was good tonight, as I didn't want an audience. Rapping on the door, I waited anxiously, bouncing from foot to foot. Was she home? Did she me? Was she not going to answer the door?

I looked up as the door swung open. Sophia stared at me, surprised. Then her face clouded over, her arms coming up to hug herself.

"What do you want Garrett?" She asked.

I answered by closing the distance between us. Cupping her face gently, the last thing I saw before I kissed her was her wide eyes. She didn't respond for a second, possibly too shocked. Then she was kissing me back, throwing her arms around me. Joy flooded through me; I wasn't letting her go, not again. We would get through this, somehow. For now, I was happy just to have her in my arms again. I pulled back, grinning at the dazed look on her face.

"My wolfs name is Hugo."