

## Chapter 0311

We are all sitting around the cramped living room. Osiston isn't the only one who showed up today. That's how I know this is bigger than we thought. Jorge, Alyssa and William are all here and I guess there is a team of five running the perimeter around our place.

"What have you guys come up with? Anything?" Osiston asks, sounding more irritated than I have heard him before.

"Right now, we just know that the male wolf population is growing each week. Many registered for college for this semester. We haven't seen or heard anything more unusual than that. I haven't heard of any girls being taken or reported missing either." I tell him, honestly. I have no idea what's going on, but I also feel like we aren't doing enough.

"Sky did get us an invite to run with some of the guys on Thursday though. It's the first time the wolves have interacted with us." Mina adds.

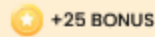
All heads turn towards me and I'm not sure I like the looks in their eyes. It's the kind of look that says I'm about to be pulled from this for my safety. I can't help the growl that rumbles in my chest, my wolf doesn't want to be sidelined any more than I do, especially now that someone we know has been taken.

"Relax Little One, no one is going to stop you from helping."

He reads my mind. "You're too deep into this now, but you can't fault us for being concerned. The rogues started increasing when you got here and didn't approach until you and Mina were on campus. There's something to be said for their timing." Osiston calms me. "We do know that there has been no rogue presence near Blue Crescent in the last five months, and two smaller packs have been attacked and completely wiped out from what we can tell. If anyone got away, we have not found them yet. When we did a search of the destruction though, only male bodies were found. No females, no children. So there is a spark of hope that some were able to escape. We did find both the Alpha and Luna for both packs amongst the dead though." He finishes sadly.

"So, are they here? The Rogue King and his minions. Do we have any confirmation of that? Do we know where to look or where to start?" I'm frustrated now. It feels like these rogues are several steps ahead of us all the time. "It's like chasing a ghost or a fairy tale.

"The only confirmation is the increase in the population here, with no pack to speak of, it's suspicious. This, like most prominently human public places, is neutral territory for us. No packs lay claim to areas like this. The Alpha King offers protection if there are wolves on campus, but no one group occupies the space." He turns to me. "You got an invite to run with these rogues?" I nod. "On your first day of classes with them?" I nod again. I feel like this is a trap waiting to happen.



"Yeah, Thursday night. How do we want to play this? They all have a scent, so while they're on campus at least, they aren't trying to hide. Where will you guys be?" He smiles at me, both of us coming to the agreement that I am going and he is going to be there to follow. "We need a reason for Royal Pack warriors to be running on the grounds. Nickolas is going to have to stay behind. He is on a 'leave of absence' to take care of us. So he can't be on duty."

"We can put it out there that we will be running a training op near here. We do things like that all the time when we are forming teams with new recruits. We have a few people placed in leadership on campus, they can do their thing and spread the word. It will give us cover for our scent being all over the woods and we don't have to explain ourselves any further than that. If we do meet up with you for any reason, you and Mina have to pretend not to know us. Copy reactions from the rogues and blend in. We'll try not to engage unless we have to." Jorge comes up with a plan on the fly.

## Chapter 0312

"Perfect!" Mina smiles. "Now let's see what Tyler sent you." She grabs for my phone again. I slap her hand away.

"Remind me to change my password, again." I say as I open my phone to Tyler's message.

"You know I'm training to hack right? So technically I should be allowed to break into your phone, you know, for research purposes and practice." She winks at me.

"You're an idiot! And I am definitely keeping you away from Sierra, she's a bad influence on you." I laugh at her then look down at my messages. "Tyler said to meet up by the student center and we will run the trails, 'like normal' is in quotes, then we will change and do a real run once we are about five miles into the trails." I look up at Osiston, but Mina has to chime in before he can respond.

"He also said he'll have a bag and would be more than happy to hold your clothes for you while we run." She starts giggling, like a toddler. "He wants to make sure he gets to see you naked."

I groan. "Not a chance, I'm not stripping to shift, I don't have to, neither do you remember?" She stops laughing for a second then grins again.

"It's still funny and kind of cute. He's pretending to be

chivalrous, while being a total guy." We both laugh and a clearing of the throat catches our attention.

"If you two are done drooling." Osiston says, but he doesn't look angry, just like he's rolling with the teenager vibe in the room. "Although, I don't know if you should advertise that you can shift without changing..."

"I'm not getting naked with these guys. I wouldn't have even if I couldn't shift with my clothes. They are unknown and that makes me vulnerable. Never gonna happen. If one of you were going as part of the group or if Xander or Oscar were there maybe, but they can't be here, and you can't be seen, so no go. We can both do it, so we'll just say it's a pack thing if they even ask." I hope that is enough to finish that argument.

Robbie is questionable at best, but I don't get totally safe energy from the other two either. My instincts say to keep a healthy distance. And I trust my instincts.

Osiston looks at me for a moment, clearly making a decision of some kind. I don't break eye contact, trying to convey my uneasiness at the situation. He must find what he's looking for, because he just nods.

"Okay, keep this boy close though. Engage with him and try to get him to talk. Any information can be helpful. Where he's from, what he's studying, family, all the mundane stuff can lead us to more answers." I nod. "So what is on the agenda tonight?"

"Homework." Mina and I say together.

"I have to maintain my teacher's pet status." I roll my eyes playfully. "I can work the teachers more if they think I'm an overachiever. There's also something about my ecology professor, he's not normal, but I don't think he's a bad guy. Based on his appearance and his scent he spends all his free time outside and probably in those woods. He might have information too. We have a later start tomorrow so we could do a run in the morning before we train." He nods and heads towards the door.

"We are going to go get a patrol schedule going and then we will bring back dinner and talk about anything new we find." He doesn't wait for a response, just walks out the door with the rest following.

I move to sit by Nickolas on the couch and rest my head on his shoulder. He hasn't said much since we came inside.

"Do you want me to make you some tea, or something a little stronger?" Mina asks quietly.

"Stronger would be preferred, but I need my head on straight for this and if I start down that road, I may not be able to stop." She nods and heads towards the kitchen.

"I know you just fought it out with Osiston, but do you want to go workout? It always makes me feel better when I'm frustrated." I look up at him from my spot on his shoulder.

### Chapter 0313

He huffs a laugh. "Yeah, that would probably be the best. It will help me sleep too, or at least settle down enough to rest. I don't think my wolf will let me sleep until we get her back." He rubs his eyes.

"How long have you known?" I ask and I don't have to elaborate.

"Eight years. Her coven is near my home. I caught her scent the day she turned 18. She was out in the woods between her home and mine doing some kind of spell. They come of age at 18 too and get their full strength of magic, although from what I have learned she was like you and showed signs of power earlier than anyone else on record." He looks over at me.

"What do you mean like me?" We walk out the back door and head to the small clearing just inside the treeline behind our house.

"Alpha Reggie and Alpha Lucas have kept a close eye on you your whole life from what I understand. Especially after what happened to your mom during your birth. Once Alpha Reggie put the pieces together and discovered your lineage, they both made a point to keep track of you. I only learned about all of this recently and clearly I don't know your whole story since I still don't understand your so-called bonus

features. Even I noticed your abilities at trials and started asking questions.”

“The problem with all of that, was that I was kept in the dark until about a year ago. Everyone is always trying to protect me because I am a female or because of my size...”

“Okay, let me stop you right there. It’s a hard instinct to shut down when the initial perception of you is this tiny quiet girl who apparently lets people beat her up for the fun of it. You have to forgive natural protective instincts.”

I see red as my temper flares and I run at him. I go to sweep his legs and miss but land a punch to the center of his thigh, knocking him down for a minute.

“It’s not the strangers’ assumptions that make me angry. I get that. It’s the people who know me, train with me everyday and still treat me like porcelain or like I’m incompetent that set me off.” Sweep, punch and a miss.

“Maybe, like me with Gentry, they can’t stand to see you in any kind of harm’s way, no matter how strong you are, how strong they know you are.” He moves to grab for me, but I tuck and roll under his legs. “And you can’t really say you don’t use your size to your advantage, even if you don’t realize it. Like those guys today. Mina is just as beautiful as you and her personality invites people in, but these guys chose to approach you, the small quiet, shy girl. You come off as less intimidating, right up until you beat someone’s ass with your pinky finger.” He laughs as he parries another



move.

We go on sparring playfully for a little while until he tries to put me in a headlock and I kick him in the back of the knee, taking us both down. Then all bets are off and we are both going full force, sweating, panting, covered in dirt with manic smiles on our faces. He's become like another older brother and our competitive natures clash frequently.

"I think that's enough. Sky needs to eat and actually do the homework that will put her in the teacher's pet position. She also needs to check in with the boyfriend." Osiston pulls our attention and it's enough for Nickolas to get the upper hand.

"What! I don't have a boyfriend." I grunt from my face down position on the ground.

"According to the amount of notifications on your phone, I beg to differ. Mina has been eyeing it for an hour. If you don't want her to respond I suggest you get your butt moving."