

Chapter 5

Sage

“Sage! Please come out, sweetling. It’s important!” I hear my guest call to me through the door.

“Leave me alone!” I bite back.

I’m still mad at him for the disrespectful comments he made earlier. Even if I do go weak in the knees at hearing him call me “sweetling.” Suggesting I’d let Cassius or any Alpha use me as a sex toy was a step too far.

I may be inexperienced, but I read romance novels. I know what a “fuckboy” is, and it’s not Cassius. Implying I’m too stupid to know the difference is just insulting!

“Please!” He’s scratching at the door now and his voice is closer, his tone pleading. “I’m sorry I hurt your feelings. It wasn’t my intention. But we really need to talk.”

I crack the door, peeking through the thin strip of space to find him just on the other side of it, staring back at me with those slate eyes, unreadable emotions swirling in them. I sip air in short little gasps. Why does being so close to this man make me feel so . . . warm? I have to fight the urge to fan myself.

“There you are, sweetling.” He murmurs, deep and rumbley, and I feel it in my core. But his next words douse the building fire. “I think we might have a problem.

“I heard a noise outside so I looked out the window. I only saw her back but someone with long black hair was running into the woods. I think she may have heard us talking or even seen me. I could be wrong, but the woman’s clothes were nicer than anything the wolves in this area are wearing. I can’t think of a reason anyone from the inner circle would come this far out if they weren’t looking for something specific.”

“Oh no! If she tells someone, they’ll come for us. No one can find you here!” I pace the room, my voice rising as I speak. “What do we do?”

“Hurry back to the packhouse and pretend like nothing happened. Just go back to work as you normally would” He suggests. “Don’t worry about me, I can take care of myself.”

“Okay! I’ll go now!” I say, already heading for the door.

But he grabs my wrist and pulls me back so hard I smack into him, bouncing off his chest.

“Stay safe, sweetling.” He cautions, looking in my eyes as he kisses the back of my hand.

He seems to come back to himself, dropping my hand like it burned him. I don’t have time to think about why that might be, dashing out the door to begin my mission.

I’m almost to the packhouse when sirens blare all around me. Uniformed warriors storm into the yard and fan out everywhere. I duck behind a tree, listening to their general barking orders.

“Rogues have breached the border! I want everyone on alert. Try to bring them in alive!”

I whirl around in a panic, heading back the way I came while dodging the guards who seem to be everywhere. People are pouring from their homes with their weapons poised, the whole pack on high-alert. My body aches and I’m out of breath, but I don’t stop.

I can’t let them catch my new friend. For both our sakes.

Alaric

“What’s going on?” I jump to my feet when my little savior bursts through the door.

Some of her wounds are bleeding, the scabs torn open. She’s only just starting to heal and obviously pushed herself beyond the limits her wounded body could handle.

“Rogues!” She spits out between ragged breaths. “They’ve breached the border. The guards are combing every inch of Blackthorn land, hunting the intruders. You have to go before they find you here!

“Please! If they find you here, you’ll be killed. I would die if anything happened to you. You’re my first real friend and I can’t lose you!”

She flings herself into my arms and I rub her back awkwardly, doing my best to soothe her. I’m not the least bit scared of what this pack’s Alpha or his guards might try to do to me. But I’m also not ready to reveal who I am or why I’m here, so it’s best I go before that becomes a necessity.

But for some reason, the idea of leaving her behind doesn’t sit right with me. An Alpha is meant to care for his pack, no matter who they are. And this Alpha is clearly doing a shit job of that.

She clings to me so I hug her tighter, careful not to crush her broken ribs, hoping it’s comforting enough that she’ll be willing to let go. Instead, her little fists twist into my shirt and she sobs into my chest. It melts the ice around my stone-cold heart the tiniest bit.

I don’t understand why I’m so drawn to her, so reluctant to leave, but I know I have to. “You’ll be alright, sweetling.” I reassure her. “Be careful. Keep yourself safe, okay?”

“I’ll try.” She agrees, leaning away to give me a shy smile. Then her nostrils flare and her smile fades, “Do you smell that? What is that? It almost smells . . . electric, like the electricity in the air before a thunderstorm.”

Shit! I don’t even realize I’ve let my aura slip out until her eyes glaze over, her expression a little dazed. It would be overpowering for a young omega like her, especially one without a wolf. I reel it back in before she gets too overwhelmed.

I let her go and step away. I don’t know why I lost control, but I can’t risk it happening again. “I don’t smell anything.” I lie, then send her away. “You better go now, back to the packhouse where it’s safe. If there are rogues wandering these woods, you shouldn’t be out here alone.”

She hesitates for a minute, then finally agrees with a reluctant nod. I stand there watching as she walks away, wondering what it is about the tiny girl with the delicate features and strange, violet eyes that calls to me the way she does. My emotions are locked down tight. I never lose control, but I did today, with her.

Shaking off the concern those thoughts bring, I head back inside. In the end, it doesn’t matter. I’ll probably never see her again. Grabbing what remains of my tattered jacket, I head back across the Blackthorn border, towards home.