

Chapter 6

Sage

By the time I reach the packhouse, a crowd has gathered. The Alpha stands outside on the stone steps, the imposing stone façade of his home adding to his aura of power. The dead bodies of three rogues lay on the ground at his feet, an offering from his loyal guards.

The pack waits with bated breath to hear him speak, to explain these frequent invasions and his plan to stop them, to keep our people safe. I press up on my tiptoes, trying to see over the throng of people. Cassius stands next to his father. And by his side, a self-important smirk on her face, is Daphne.

As far as chosen mates go, Cassius could do so much better. Everyone knows she only wants him for his money and power. I don't know how he can't see it.

He should be with someone who loves him for who he is on the inside. Someone who would make sure he knew everyday how wonderful he is, not use him for what he can give them. Not that Daphne would ever let anyone get close enough to show him the appreciation he deserves.

Daphne scans the crowd as if she's looking for someone. Her eyes lock with mine and I see the evil lurking just under the surface. Her smirk spreads into a wicked grin before her expression turns grim, full of contempt and feigned horror.

"It was her!" She accuses, pointing one manicured nail straight at me. "She let them in!"

She can't mean me, can she? I'm terrified of rogues. I almost let my handsome stranger die because of that fear. I would never conspire with them.

But the crowd parts like the Red Sea around me, everyone staring at me suspiciously. I don't understand what's happening. I've done nothing wrong. Surely they can't believe her.

"Wh-, what?" I stutter, cowering under their scowls and glares.

"Daphne, that's a serious accusation! We cannot convict her on that statement alone. Please tell us exactly what you saw." Cassius' voice carries above the crowd.

Hope flares that he'll come to my rescue. Surely he sees through her ridiculous claims. She doesn't have any proof because there is none. Maybe he'll even punish her for lying.

The crowd is roaring, demanding answers, but Alpha quiets them with one raised hand. A hush falls over the yard as everyone hangs on Daphne's every word. I want to scream at them to open their eyes, to see her for the evil witch she is, but they're all under her spell.

"I noticed her acting strange lately." Daphne preens under the pack's attention, dramatizing every word. "She's been stealing food from the packhouse kitchen and rushing off like she was meeting someone. So I followed her and discovered she's been harboring one of them in that little shanty of hers!" The entire pack audibly gasps at that.

"What? No! That's not-" I yell but the Alpha's command forces me to stop.

"Quiet!" He barks. "Bring her to me!"

I stand my ground as the guards rush toward me, knowing I have nothing to hide. The pack closes in around me, eager to witness the spectacle. I beg and plead for them to listen to me, but no one does. No one would dare defy their Alpha, not for a wolfless omega like me.

I go willingly as the guards drag me forward, helpless to do anything else. They throw me at the Alpha's feet and not even Cassius bothers to help me up. I'm completely at their mercy.

Now that even Cassius has abandoned me, I can see my situation for what it is, hopeless. I'm a wolfless omega, worth less than nothing to the pack. Of course they'll believe Daphne's lies over me.

"Stand!" Alpha orders and my body complies.

He leans in, drawing in deep breaths to scent me then recoils as if he'd been pushed. His face turns crimson and his fists ball in anger. But I don't understand why? Do I smell that bad?

He bends low and speaks in my ear, so low only I can hear him. "You've been in the presence of a powerful wolf. I can sense his aura on you and he is no rogue. Who was it?"

He demands. "Who is conspiring to take over my pack?"

"N-, no, Alpha! I swear. I've conspired with no one. I've never met anyone powerful." I plead with him to believe me.

"Fine, you ungrateful whore! If you refuse to answer me, maybe a night in the dungeon will loosen your tongue."

"Please! I'm telling the truth!" I sob, but he ignores me, stepping back to address the crowd.

"The aura of another wolf surrounds this girl." He announces. "She smells of him still and he does not carry the Blackthorn scent. She's guilty of treason! Take her to the cells to await her punishment!"

"No!" I scream. "I did nothing wrong! Cassius, please help me!"

But when he looks at me, his eyes are cold and he turns away, leaving me to my fate. Daphne loops her arm through his, leaning into him and smiling victoriously as she leads him away.

"He wasn't a rogue! He was my friend!" I continue screaming but no one listens. They all just cheer as I'm dragged away.

I finally give up, my voice raspy and my throat raw from screaming. I'm tossed in a tiny cell, nothing but concrete walls and a cold hard floor. Left to wonder how many hours I have left to live.