

An Explanation and an Offer

[Bellamy]

When the door opened we walked into a room with rows of chairs and tables. At the front was a podium, white board, and a table with a bunch of different foods and fruits. My eyes widened at the food. They didn't expect me to eat all of that, did they?

Next to the food table, was another little table with a chair behind it. Daniel carried me there and put me in the chair. He moved to the food table and gathered a little of everything on a couple plates, putting them in front of me. Then he nodded to the group and a few others came up to get plates. Thank goodness.

I picked through the plate directly in front of me. It was full of fruits. I noticed the man from the kitchen in the front row of seats with a notepad. Not weird at all... I picked up something green with a ring of little black dots and bit into it. I wrinkled my nose a little, but nished the whole piece. I didn't like the avor.

After trying a few more things, some I knew and others I didn't, I looked up to see if people were ready. Most of them were chatting lightly, some were watching me, others were focused on their food. Alpha Kieran saw me looking and cleared his throat, gaining everyone's attention.

"It looks like Bellamy is ready." He said. They all turned to me. "Go ahead."

"I'm trying to think of where to start. Both of my parents were pack wolves, everything I learned about being born a rogue, I learned during a year I spent in a rogue collective. A few other things I learned while traveling with others. Like, vampires prefer the taste of pack born wolves to rogue born wolves." I stated.

There was a low growl in the room at the mention of vampires. I knew the animosity wolves had with vampires. Talia, the vampire I'd traveled with for ve months, was surprised at my lack of aggression. I fed her in exchange for information, training, and companionship.

"Did a vampire attack you?" Olive whispered.

"Yes, but not the one who told me that. She was my friend. We were together for ve months. She taught me how to ght like a vampire." I explained.

This caused the faces of Kieran, one of the elders, and Clint, to light up. Exactly like I'd hoped. Now there was a chance they'd take my training requests seriously.

"Being rogue-born means my senses are heightened. More than that of a pack wolf. The wolves you generally deal with are ex-pack wolves who were already crazy or violent. Some ex-pack can't cope with being rogue and begin hurting themselves or others. It helps if they were banished with their mate." I told them.

"So, none of the rogues who've attacked have been rogue-born?" A young man asked.

"Some might have. For the most part, they have no reason to attack. All they usually want is to live their lives. Unless a rogue king or rogue queen orders it, they're pretty non-violent."

"A rogue king or queen?" Kieran asked.

"Yes. They're an alpha rogue-born. Males and females are equal in rogue culture. You can see that difference in our mating rituals. When you turn seventeen, as a pack wolf, you nd your destined mate. They are given to you by the moon goddess and the males protect, while the females support. Rogue-born wolves don't have destined mates." I saw Olive's hand cover her mouth.

"Instead, we select our mate. We look for a person who will be compatible with our lives, strengths, weaknesses, and personalities. When we pick someone, their wolf is given our request. If they accept, we get to feel the stuff you do when you nd your mate, if not, we move on and so does the other person. It's not a rejection, but a refusal. Since it doesn't anger the moon goddess, the person who denies the other can still nd a mate." I explained.

The room was silent as they took the information in. Mates were important in werewolf society, no matter how they were born. Every young wolf was excited to nd their other half. I hoped to nd one when I was old enough, though, it wasn't likely.

"When you're old enough, how will you nd a mate?" I was guessing the woman was the Luna.

She was sitting with Olive and another woman in the same pattern as their husbands. Luna in the middle, beta female to the right, gamma female to the left. I saw the same sort of pattern with my new older brother and two other young men.

"If I wanted a pack wolf, I'd look for an unmated male with no second chance mate. Alternately, I can look for a rogue-born who has no prejudices. That's pretty hard to nd. Otherwise, I'll just have to remain unmated. To request a mate who's already been promised would make the goddess mad. I don't want to do that. Though... I guess I need to tell you... A rogue king may come looking for me after I turn seventeen. I have to train. If I can't beat him in a ght, I'll have to be his mate." I told them with a blush.

"Explain." Kieran commanded.

"When was younger, I lived in a rogue collective. A bear I'd been travelling with took me there after we were attacked by vampires. The king, Mr. Fuller, said I could stay as long as I wanted. Once I was healed, I trained, and I learned more about being born rogue.

One day, about a year later, Kyle, Mr. Fuller's son, also a rogue king, told me his father promised me to him when I turned seventeen. I told him I'd deny him. I refuse to be told who to mate with. He hit me and told me he'd beat me until I accepted him."

I took a deep breath. "He was thirteen and I was eight, but I'd spent six months training with Stanton, the bear, ve months with Talia, the vampire, the whole year I was in the collective I was training with the other rogue-born, and my father was a warrior who'd trained me since I could walk.

I beat Kyle up and ran away. He feels entitled to me. I told him I'd only mate with a male who didn't lose to me in a ght. Now, it's a requirement for me nding a mate. He must have turned seventeen in the last month, because I've already gotten an offer from him and refused it."

"We'll protect you." One of my new brothers said. The others nodded in agreement, along with every other male in the room. They didn't understand. I sighed.

"You can't do that. I'm happy you all are willing, but I can't allow it. It'll make my wolf upset. I have to protect myself." I got nervous.

Telling them about Kyle made my stomach turn, but I didn't want them to be caught off-guard. This was the only way. I knew I had to tell them why I couldn't be protected. If they were going to be my pack, my family, I had to be honest.

"I'm a rogue queen. I have to accept his challenge just as any Alpha would have to accept the challenge of a rival Alpha. If an Alpha challenged Alpha Kieran and everyone stepped up to protect him, he'd be seen as weak. For him it might mean losing his status, for me, it would mean losing my wolf or my life. I either have to ght him, or nd a mate who is as strong as me." I said softly.

"You'd need a mate of Alpha blood." Kieran replied. "A son of an Alpha at least."

"That'll depend on her strength." Clint told him. "Once you're feeling better, we'll test you and see where you're at. I'll train you to the best of my ability."

"Thank you. I'll be happy to share what I learned while travelling." I smiled.

This seemed to please several of the men. They may not like not being able to protect me, but I could help them protect their pack. It would be enough.

"What about the witch who's tracking you?" Daniel asked.

"She needs to use my blood in a lot of complicated spells and then sacrice me for the power she wants. Since I ran away, she has to start the ritual all over again." I told him.

"Can we protect you from her or is that going to hurt you, too?" Tobin asked.

"You can protect me from anything not wolf related. I don't know that she'll keep looking after losing my trail. Once the light witches clean my aura, she'll probably give up and try to nd another rogue-born Alpha female." I shrugged.

"Is there anything else that's important about you or rogue-born wolves? I don't want to keep you from your rest too long." Alpha Kieran asked.

"There's little that's immediately important. I can talk to the medical team later about the physiological differences. There is one thing. I... It's a little awkward. I want to help protect your lands and... I can discourage other rogues from attacking, but... I have to claim your pack as mine. It doesn't mean anything really to you or your pack. It won't change anything about how it's run or what I expect from you. If rogues ever came to this land, they would sense it was protected by a rogue queen. I would meet them at the border and call this my territory." I blushed.

He looked appalled, but I continued. "They would smell my connection to the pack and the pack's connection to me. It would make them back off. A rogue Alpha rarely claims a pack or territory they can't defend. Word would spread among rogues and we'd be treated as a rogue collective rather than a pack."

There was some heavy mental messaging in the room. I picked at my food again. I wanted to offer my protection. Making it so they'd get a voice when dealing with larger groups of rogues would help a lot. If they didn't want it, I wouldn't do it. I just wanted to make the offer.

"What would it entail exactly?" Alpha Kieran inquired.

Honestly, it shocked me. Most Alphas would be threatened with another Alpha trying to claim their pack and lands. I knew it meant they had trouble with rogues in the past. At least I would be useful in some way.

"When you swear me into your pack, I will ask that you are loyal to me as I am to you. You just answer to my, and we'll be set. Rogues don't like a lot of chatter when getting things done. This is probably the most I've talked in one sitting." I laughed.

"You won't require anything but my loyalty? What does it mean, though?" He questioned.

I sighed. Alphas weren't very trusting when it came to outsiders in their packs. He was doing what he needed to for his people. I just really wanted to go to sleep for a while.

"It means we talk about things, especially decisions which will affect me or the territory I'm claiming. You won't try to get another rogue Alpha to kill me, I won't try to get another pack Alpha to kill you. If I see anything which could harm you and yours, I tell immediately or attempt to protect whomever it is, you promise the same. Pretty basic." I replied.

He had a thoughtful look and mind-linked to Daniel and Tobin. They all nodded. I was hopeful that meant they were accepting my offer.

"You're a twelve-year-old girl! You can't protect anything! It doesn't matter that you're a rogue queen, just of the rogues will take your claim seriously and others will think we're weak! What kind of pack could be claimed by a little girl!?" An older man growled. He shocked the ranked members and their families with his venom.

"Dad. Chill out. She's just trying to help." Gamma Tobin hissed.

I pushed my chair out and stood. My energy was low, but I needed to see if I could nd a way to calm him. I hoped I wouldn't pass out from the attempt. Taking a deep breath, and closing my eyes, I focused on everything in the room.

The moth in the corner, the small crack in the window sill where a slight breeze tried to come in, each person and their existence. The way each one breathed, the way they smelled, the way the air made space, the sound of their heartbeats.

When I opened my eyes, I focused intently on him. I could taste his age and experience, I could feel his life and its connections. He was a widower. Too old to need a second chance so his connection was empty. His son and grandson were right there. I could feel the connection to Tobin's mate. The boy's connection to his mate was light and wispy. She wasn't in this pack.

I focused again on the older man. He was angry and embarrassed. As the previous Gamma, he probably had a lot of pride in his pack. With no mate to spend his time with, he was lost and wandering like a spirit.

I sat down again and started snacking. It was too much. I couldn't pull his fear from him. I couldn't bring him someone to soothe him.

"Then don't accept. I already explained the benet. Like gender, age doesn't matter to rogues only skill and strength. The threat of a twelve-year-old who could take on a pack and claim them, is more frightening than you'd think. I'm sorry you're lonely and feel useless, but I won't let you have a home in my head. Too many things already live there." I replied quietly and with a slightly quivering voice.

Part of me was angry because I sounded like I was upset. Most of me was too tired to care. If he wanted to win a ght against a child, I'd let him. There were more important things for me to worry about.

"Let me think about it, Amy. You make a good point. I'm not going to disrespect you. You look tired. Let's have your parents take you home and get you to bed." Kieran smiled.

"Okay. I'm not great anyway." I told him.

Daniel stood and picked me up. The younger boys and Olive followed. The oldest was talking quietly with his future Alpha. I wondered what they were discussing, but wouldn't question it.

When we reached my room, Olive helped me change into a nightgown. She told me we'd have dinner in the small kitchen in their living area, so I wouldn't have to change. Once I was tucked into the soft bed, I fell asleep almost immediately. I couldn't help but wonder if I'd sleep without the nightmares. This was a big shift in my life, and I knew my brain would want to replay the others.