

TWELVE

Ryder's POV

It's been a year and six months already and we still do not have a clue who is behind the attacks. They seem to have a similar pattern, combing through different packs and attacking their alpha's and luna's. In the past eighteen months, at least thirteen pack luna's have mysteriously died, or their alpha's just go missing and their abductors or killers always leave the same message, in the same handwriting.

... Justice or nothing...

At first, my dad tried to solve the riddle but he has a lot on his hands and with everything that was happening around me at the time, I decided to soak myself in more work and take the case off his hands. I needed the distraction and I have been so engrossed in uncovering this mystery for the last eighteen months and each time I feel I was close to uncovering the case, I find myself at a dead end again.

Another pack just sent a message that their alpha mysteriously died and there was the note again. I have not visited any of these packs personally because as the future alpha King, my safety was very paramount and for anytime I stepped out, it was always with an entourage or two body guards at least. It gets tiring most times especially when I want to have alone time but I have long given up on that.

My younger brother Louis is seated in front of me in my office, and besides him is Adrian, my cousin and also one of the future beta's that would serve during my reign. There are usually three royal beta's seeing the large amount of workload that we have to handle at the royal castle and Adrian happens to be one of them.



Most times, he is the one that goes over to the packs as a representative during these investigations and brings back the report to me. He has also been a close friend and ally since I was a child. His brows are furrowed together as he looks over the note that was discovered at the scene that was sent to us.

It appears as if the killers wanted to wipe off all alpha's or just cause pain for something that may have happened to him or her and was taking justice into their hands. I have another meeting in about ten minutes and I'm already feeling exhausted from this particular case. Eighteen months, and every time we think they have stopped, another body wounds up dead.

These are apparently not rogue attacks but deliberate attempts to make a point and whosoever was behind this has some kind of backing somewhere, because how is it that they did a clean job every time and no one can trace it back to them? All the victims always have a stab wound in the cervical spine along with several other bruises that suggests there had been some sort of fight before death.

The alpha's are the strongest in their packs and are not easily defeated. Whoever was involved in these killings had to be an alpha themselves or someone of a higher authority. There weren't any wolf bites, if not it would have been easier and when these bodies are found, there is never a scent to trace back to the killer.

"Louis, place a call through to the luna of that pack, and Adrian, I think it's about time I visit these scenes myself," I tell them.

Louis nods his head "I will place a call right away but we both know there is no way you would visit those packs yourself," he says. Adrian quickly concurs. 1



“There’s a lot to be handled around here and you know it. If you insist on someone else joining the case then Louis could tag along, or Princess Elsie, She has wanted to assist for as long as I can remember,” Adrain adds.

I scowl at him at the mention of my sister’s name and he quickly looks down. I don’t want to drag Elsie into this. If she wants to help then she can do so from here. Adrian should know better than suggest that.

“You know Elsie would want to help out. She is good at tracing scents and –“ I didn’t let Louis finish, I scowled at him too, my eyes turning dark instantly.

The last time she had been on a mission with Louis, she almost died and that was about four months ago. The thought still scares me till date and Louis kind of blames himself so it’s surprising he would even mention her name now. She is a woman, a princess for that matter, and not some warrior. She can use her gifts on other things and not on the damned battleground. I’d be damned before I allowed her into any of these cases again.

“Okay,” Louis raised his hands in submission “ I shouldn’t have mentioned her name at all, my bad,” he admits. “I think I would look closely into this one with Adrian,” he admits and I nod my head.

“Better,” I say dryly. Then I start to get to my feet. The meeting was to hold in the board room and I was a minute late already. My dad would be at the meeting and we have not exactly been on good terms for a while because he’s trying to get me married by all means even though I’m not attracted to his idea of a wife.

I gave up all hopes since Adeline, and eighteen months later, I find out I have a second chance mate. I feel my heart flutter at the thought of her.



Tiana! I have never met anyone so beautiful and intriguing, she was a natural, a beauty without even trying and I felt my heart squeeze when I remember the way Louis was staring at her.

He is my brother, and he probably did not know she is my mate. Hell, I did not think I was going to have a second chance mate. I had been with some of the nobles discussing some crucial matters when my wolf starts to act up. I knew something was wrong then and the more I tried to block him out and pay attention to the issue on ground, the worse he became.

You see as an alpha prince, my wolf senses are the most active and definitely the most powerful. I can feel a danger coming and smell a rogue or possible harm from miles away. This is why I needed to take this case by myself but too many issues coupled with my status would not allow me. I can take down hundreds of rogues by myself, I also have the power to control some aspects of nature, but these are just a few of my many gifts that have helped us in the past. But as the future king, there were certain places I could not visit until I become king and I would do well to change all of that soon. If I had handled this case I would have gotten the culprit by now but all these superstitious beliefs would not allow me to.

Anyway, I thought something was wrong and earlier on, I was told we received gifts from the western packs as a form of tribute to my late grand father. These things are common occurrences and I was in no mood to meet with any of them because I woke up feeling grumpy so I told the others to go on with them and Louis to take over. I would send a message to the packs later on when the meeting was over. What I didn't expect was one of those girls would be my mate.

I decided to check on how things were going on there because my instincts just kept on leading me there. The closer I got, the more excited



my wolf became and when I finally saw her, it made complete sense.

Just the fact that my brother was next to her was enough to get me angry and I wanted to make a statement to everyone in that room that she belonged to me which I did without thinking twice and when she passed out. I thought I'd done something wrong, I panicked instantly. She felt so fragile and petite in my arms and as I carried her and stared down at her beautiful face, I knew I needed her, more than I ever needed anything.

Focus Ryder, focus. I tell myself as I made my way out of my office and into the board room. My dad was already seated with other members and he had a snarl on his lips but I totally ignore him and settled into my seat and my eyes did not meet his until I was comfortably seated, then I gave him an equal stare back. I like to challenge him many times, he may be the king but he is always in everybody's business and he thinks he can control all our lives. He could try with Louis, but he knows better than to force his ideas on me.

After a few seconds of staring at each other, I finally avert my eyes. He is still the king and I should not challenge him in public. I didn't miss the smile on his lips before he cleared his throat and started to speak.



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