

Chapter Seven – Levi

They should be here any minute.

Levi did his best to look casual as he leaned against the wall. This plan was risky, there was no doubt about that, but considering the alternative... Well, they needed to take risks in order to gain the rewards they wanted. Or more rightly, *needed*.

Levi closed his eyes for a moment, letting his breathing hitch for a moment as he thought of his four tiny, helpless children. No matter what he told Lucy, the whole ordeal with their little moon babies had terrified him. It was dangerous enough for shifter women, who could shift themselves so their biology was compatible with their babies. But a human mother?

It was a miracle that their three sons and daughter survived. Hell, it was a miracle that *Lucy* survived! Only time would tell if there would be further complications.

At the moment, however, he had to concentrate on the current happenings. They had to be able to prove that Captain Anthony was involved in the drugs running through Coyote territory. Getting him to admit blowing up the undercover cop would be an added bonus. It might not make all of their problems disappear, but once Steven and Levi weren't on trial, things would have to improve. Wouldn't they?

The earpiece he was wearing made a buzzing noise, then Lucy spoke. "I just saw them round the corner. They'll be there soon."

Levi straightened. This next part of the plan depended on timing – and the hope that Moose and Forsythe wouldn't just shoot him. He plucked a donut from the box he carried under his arm and waited. As soon as his two favorite cops were in sight, he chucked the donut at them. It hit Moose right in the face.

"Hey, losers!" he shouted. "Thought you looked hungry!"

He didn't wait for them to register what was happening. Shouts rose up after him as he ran away, and he grinned.

"They're following," he said. "Get ready."

"Copy that," Lucy replied.

Levi glanced back once to judge the distance between him and the cops. Fury was written all over their judgmental little faces. He stuck his tongue out at them before he dodged into an alley. Once he was through it, he slowed down just enough for

them to follow before he ducked through the door of an abandoned theater. He dove into the first room and rolled under the seats.

"Where are you, you little punk?" Moose shouted as he barged into the theater after him. "I'm gonna skin you and use your pelt as a carpet!"

Levi grabbed the earmuffs that had been taped under a seat earlier and slid them on, patting around in the dark for the sunglasses next. The faint glow from his watch told him he only had ten seconds left – his hand brushed against something furry and he jerked back instinctively. Three seconds. Levi threw both arms over his eyes and screwed them shut tightly, pressing his face into the floor.

He felt the shock more than heard it, but his efforts didn't keep all of the flickering lights from his vision. The bright white flashes made his head spin. He burrowed his eyes into the crook of his elbow. When the light show was over, he jumped to his feet and charged the two cops. They were stumbling in circles, eyes wide with dazed expressions. Lucy came at them from the corridor.

They reached the cops at the same time. In their confused state, Lucy easily disarmed them while Levi handcuffed them together. While they shouted and grappled with him, Lucy cuffed them to a protrusion sticking out from the wall. Both she and Levi backed away, Lucy passing him one of the guns.

"What do you think you're doing?" Forsythe shouted. He clawed the air at Levi's face while Moose grunted, trying to pull them free from the wall.

"We're taking down a dirty captain," Lucy told him calmly. "Now take off your uniforms."

That got their attention. Both cops stopped, staring dumbly at her.

"Excuse me?" Moose said. "Why do you want our uniforms?"

"Easy," Levi replied. "We're going to pretend to be you to get access to a crime scene to find evidence that Captain Anthony is a drug dealer and a murderer. Probably that you two were in on it, too."

Moose's eyes widened fractionally before they narrowed. "And how do you intend to get our jackets while we're cuffed?"

Lucy cocked her gun and pointed it at him. "Just take them off. We've got everything covered."

The two cops glowered at her for a moment before they both went to remove their uniforms. Levi couldn't help but chortle as they fought for control of their cuffed-together hands. He glanced at Lucy, but she was stone-faced, giving nothing away.

He grinned at her. She was amazing. And whatever else happened from here on out, at least he had gotten to know her.

Levi covered his nose as the acrid stench of burnt things curled into his nostrils. It was the worst thing he had ever smelled, and that included the sewers that he sometimes found himself wriggling through. Forsythe's uniform was a little tight across his shoulders as he stood to watch at the window while Lucy did her thing, and he kept nervously scanning the street below.

Even though this was his plan, he was starting to see why Lucy argued with him for an hour about the finer details. When it was just him doing it, the risks were acceptable. And when Lucy joined him, he thought that the risks were still worth it, since she knew better than him how to pull it off.

Now, though... What if they had calculated wrong? As the seconds ticked by, it seemed more and more foolhardy. Maybe they should have gotten some of the other Coyotes involved, to even the odds...

Although if he had done that, he would be feeling anxious for their safety as well.

Heather is with the babies, he told himself, trying to keep his mind on the present. If this goes wrong... they'll be provided for. And whatever else happens, I will get Lucy out of this.

"I found something," Lucy called.

Levi cast one more glance at the street below before he went over to her. She was at what may have been a desk, poking through the chunks of charcoal. Something purple was hidden in the mess, and she brushed aside some ashes to hold it up.

"What is it?" Levi asked.

"Shh, not so loud," Lucy chided. "It's a USB drive. Looks like it managed to survive the worst of the fire, but the plastic's all melted at this side. I bet we can still get the information off it, though. With any luck, Knox will have backed up his evidence onto this drive. We have to take it to Captain Smith at once."

"No need," a voice said behind him.

Levi turned, stepping in front of Lucy. Smith stood in the doorway, gun in hand, pointed at the two of them. The Coyote's eyes widened. This wasn't who they were expecting...

"Sir," Lucy said warily. "What are you doing?"

"The two uniforms you assaulted got free and called me. You should have destroyed their cell phones." The captain shook his head. "I picked you for this job because I thought you were an incompetent detective promoted based on gender rather than ability. I'm sorry I was only partially wrong."

Lucy grasped Levi's arm. He could feel the gun in her waistband pressing against him. His fingers twitched, wanting to pull it out and shoot the man. But the gun was pointed straight at his face. A bullet in the brain would probably be enough to kill him, so he forced himself to be still.

"It was you," Lucy said. "You're the one running the drugs. You're the one that killed Knox."

"Yeah, I heard you were expecting someone else."

Lucy shook her head. "I should have known. I wasn't qualified for undercover work. And then everything you did. Me keeping my own name. Insisting that I get closer to Levi, to use him to get information."

"Keeping your own name, maybe, but using emotional connections for information is standard practice." Smith's lips twitched. "I decided from the beginning that Levi Bennet would be the one to take the fall for this. I have more evidence planned, but then the unexpected happened... You actually fell in love with him. It made it so much easier."

"Because now you can dismiss the evidence I've found against you as an irrational woman trying to protect that man she loves."

"That's the plan."

Levi growled under his breath. "The gun pointed at us says otherwise."

Smith's gaze switched to him, his deep eyes boring into Levi's. "Right now you are an escaped murder suspect. No, you're worse than an escaped murderer, Dog. You're a cop killer, and Detective Gerritsen is the cop that helped you get away. Nobody would condemn me from pulling this trigger. But I plan to bring you in alive. Nobody'll believe you if you tell them the truth, anyway."

"The truth being that you killed Knox," Lucy said. Her voice was low, burning. "Why? He didn't even suspect you!"

"It was only a matter of time before he realized it was me and not Anthony. I told him to back out, but he wouldn't." Smith shook his head. "He'd have ruined everything. I had to kill him. I had no other choice. But you... well, I think you might be able to see—"

"Why?" Lucy interrupted. "Why do any of this? Is it just about the money?"

Smith's face twitched. "It's *all* about the money. It's always money. My sister has cancer. She got it because the factory she worked at didn't want to pay for proper equipment. And the type of cancer she has... is easily treatable. But nobody will treat her if she can't pay."

"So that justifies ruining other lives with drugs?"

Smith cocked the gun. "If the city put the money they promised into these areas, then would anybody be buying my drugs? I'm not the criminal here."

"And the bomb supplies in Levi's apartment. How'd you get that?"

"It was easy enough to pay someone to plant them."

"Well, that is very interesting," Levi said. Lucy squeezed his arm, but he ignored it. A man who couldn't take responsibility for his own actions deserved no pity, in his opinion. "It's tragic about your sister, but if you think you're guiltless, you've got another thing coming. But I guess we'll let the courts decide that."

Smith's eyes narrowed at him.

"Your confession will help, though," Levi added casually.

"My confession?" Smith repeated. "Nobody is going to take the word of a Coyote cop killer over the word of a decorated, respected captain."

Levi grinned at him, happy he could finally brag about his cleverness. "That's true. But they'll take your own word for it, right?"

"Levi," Lucy warned, squeezing his arm.

"What? It's too late for him. We might as well tell him our brilliant plan before he gets himself into even bigger trouble by shooting us, right?" Levi glanced at her. She looked troubled, but nodded. The Coyote turned back to their enemy. "You may be wondering what I am talking about. Well, the thing is, I spent a few hours earlier today stealing various cell phones from unsuspecting passers-by. And Lucy set them up all around this place before you arrived."

He gestured lazily, and Smith glanced around. His face paled as his eyes landed on first one cell phone, then another and another. His grip tightened on his gun.

"They're all livestreaming to various YouTube channels," Lucy said. "And being saved to other sites, where the files will be emailed to all of my coworkers as soon as filming is stopped. It's over, sir. The truth is out there."

Smith stared at her for a long time. Eventually, a twisted smile came to his face and he turned the gun on her. Levi tensed.

"Don't you dare point that gun at her!"

He started to take a step forward but a warning cluck from the captain stopped him. "Stay where you are if you don't want her to die."

Levi snarled, rolling to the balls of his feet. All his instincts told him to attack, to tear this man apart. But if he moved, Lucy would get hurt. Unless he could shield her.

"No," Lucy breathed, apparently understanding what was going through his head. "Even if you take a bullet for me, at this close of range and with that gun, chances are it will just go through you and kill me anyway, Levi."

Another snarl. "So you want me to do nothing?"

"We might be able to get out of this without him pulling that trigger."

"You think so?" Smith's eyes burned as he glared at Lucy. "If this is over, then my sister is dead. Why shouldn't I shoot you right now?"

Lucy held her hands up into the air and stepped away from Levi. The Coyote made a choking noise. What was she doing? She was opening herself up to take a bullet! If Smith shot right now, Levi didn't know if he would be able to throw himself in the way.

"Sir, would your sister want other people dying for her? What if she's watching this right now? And if that's not enough for you, remember that every life you take gets you one step closer to the death penalty. You have a sympathetic story. You might be able to avoid that fate right now. But I'm a new mother. Do you really think anybody would listen to your reasons after killing me?"

Smith leveled the gun at her head. His eyes burned, expression twisted. But then he slowly lowered the gun. It was like all the anger and strength in his body fled. He dropped the gun and held up his hands in surrender, not looking at either of them. His shoulders were slumped, head hanging, as Lucy moved forward to cuff him.

Levi stayed where he was, watching as she brought her former boss's hands behind his back and cuffed him. If it had been up to him, Smith would be dead right now. Or maybe he would be alive, and Lucy would be dead... His own shoulders slumped.

I have a lot to learn.