

Chapter 12

Dean (Ryder)

I leaned over in the cheap plastic chair as my uncle continued to yell at Mike and I. Like he was fit to lecture anyone about putting differences aside in the name of peace, not that I thought he actually meant any of it. Right now, I didn't care. I just wanted to get out of there and check on Brook. The cut on her head looked bad.

"Don't you think Dean... Dean... DEAN!"

My attention jumped to my uncle. It was obvious that I wasn't listening to a word he'd said for a while. My uncle scowled at me, and I saw his fists clenched so tight, his knuckles were white. His now amber eyes stared down at me with contempt.

"I'm sure your father would be so disappointed in you. The well-known pacifist's son getting into a brawl with another for no reason." He said the word pacifist as if it was an insult.

I nearly jumped from my seat to tell him it wasn't without reason but I wouldn't put Brook in that kind of danger. So instead I took a page out of my brother's book and shrugged petulantly. It only seemed to piss off my uncle even more.

"Fine, if that's the way you want it. Silver them both. It might humble them up," my uncle said with a cruel glint in his eye.

"What? Dad, you can't be serious! It was just a stupid fight."

The alpha charged at his son and Mike shrank, pushing himself back into the chair.

His dad stopped abruptly in front of him, rage on his face. "I can't be serious? You got into a fight in a public place full of humans. You are a stupid, pathetic idiot. It well warrants silvering! And don't you dare challenge me again unless you've grown a pair of balls and want to be alpha."

I was stunned. I looked around me, and my disbelief grew. Everyone had a 'business as usual' attitude. This was normal? What the hell kind of dad

talks like this to their kids? I felt sorry for Mike. It wasn't enough to forgive him for what he did to Brook though. I still owed him big time for that one. I watched my uncle backed away from Mike with a superior sniff. "Silver them."

Two men came forward each with a black zip tie. The zip tie had a silver core, stripping a werewolf of all their abilities and making them on the same level as a human but the plastic coating prevented silver burns. As much as I hated making myself so weak in an enemy pack, I had no choice. To refuse might be seen as a challenge and an invitation to war. I couldn't be the one to break the rules.

I held out my left wrist and let the zip tie be tightened around my wrist. I watched Mike out of the corner of my eye do the same. "Good," Alpha Ryan said, with his hands behind his back. "You two will be two weeks like this or until I deem both of you have learned your lesson."

That didn't make me feel any better. Just the opposite.

"Harry," he barked, surprising me. I didn't realize the beta was here. "Ensure that our guest arrives at my home while I have a discussion with my son."

Mike turned a shade pale as Harry nodded. I quickly got out of my chair and followed him out of the office. Despite my eagerness, I waited until we were well out of earshot before I dared asked, "How's Brook?"

"She's alright," he said tersely, surprising me some. "Most likely has a concussion but her mother and I are going to be keeping an eye on her."

A whole ton had been lifted off my shoulders. "I want to see her. Can you take me there before taking me back to my uncles?"

"No. No, I can't," Harry said so matter of fact as we got in his truck.

I stared at him for a moment as we left the parking lot. "Why not?"

"Because she doesn't want to see you."

I grunted as if I'd just been hit. "What? Why?"

Harry turned to look at me, an odd expression on his face before he turned back to watch the road. "I can't decide if you're pretending to be that stupid or you really are. Between Mike and you, she was out of her mind

with fear. She ran home, begging her mother to leave right then and there.'

This couldn't be real. "But I was..."

"Trying to protect her, I know, but Brook had never seen the wolf, except once when I shifted for her and then I tried to play the part of a big dog. She's never seen our wild side, and she wasn't ready for the violence of that side, and it's made her believe we're monsters."

"No, no no," I said, holding my head in my hands. Damn it, how did I manage to mess up so badly.

Harry sighed. "Look, give her a few days. Maybe she'll calm down enough that you can talk to her."

He was trying to help but just the thought of being a couple of days without talking to her seemed like torture. I sat back up and tried to think positively. This wasn't the end of the world. Just a couple of days.

Harry's phone rang, and he took it out with a glance. "Nancy," he said, with obvious relief. It looks like I wasn't the only one in the dog house. His relief soured as he frowned. "She's gone? Are you sure? Alright, I'm on my way right now." He put the phone back and took a sharp turn right that had me gripping on the dashboard for dear life. "God damn it, she said she would wait until tomorrow!"

"What happened?" Harry didn't answer, only drove back to his house.

Brook's mom paced the living room, her face streaked with tears. She looked at the beta with a mix of scorn and despair as she shoved a piece of paper at him. He read it and scowled. I ripped the paper out of his hands.

Mom,

Sorry I didn't tell you what was going on. You were so happy, and I didn't want to ruin it, but this world - their world. It's not like you think. I can't be a part of it anymore. You're with Harry, and he'll keep you safe, but I'm not safe. I'm nothing more than a thing to the werewolves, and I can't live like that. Please don't be mad at Harry. I begged him not to tell you anything. Stay away from Mike and his dad, though. They want you dead as much as they want me dead. Please, keep close to Harry. He'll keep you safe, but

don't trust the alphas, any of them. They're the real monsters. I love you.

Harry,

Sorry I couldn't take the risk. Too many things can happen in a day. I'm fine.

Brook

I stared at the page. This was a nightmare. I had to be dreaming. Don't trust the alphas, any of them. They're the real monsters...Those words were like a knife through my heart. She thought I was a monster. I looked at the page again, hoping this really wasn't as bad as it seemed when I noticed something else.

Sorry I couldn't take the risk... "She said she would wait until tomorrow..."

I looked up at Harry. My blood boiling. "You knew she was running away?"

Brook's mother looked at both of us. "What is he talking about, Harry?"

The beta sighed. "Brook had to leave, Nancy. They were going to end up tearing her apart. Ryan, Mike, him." He glared at me. "She wanted to leave, and nothing we did or would've done was going to keep her here, though she promised she wouldn't leave until tomorrow when we were sure she was okay. Don't worry, she has money and everything she needs-"

The slap rang throughout the room, and Harry looked at his mate in surprise and held his cheek. Now I saw where Brook got it from.

"How dare you." Brook's mom glared at her mate with the same icy glare that Brook gave me when we first met. "How dare you do something like this without talking to me? You do not get to decide what is best for my daughter. You let her go out into this world, alone, with a major head injury. How is that for the best? If it gets worse, Brook might have a car accident or pass out on the side of the road. She could die because of you, you son of a..." She hugged herself.

"Wait, what? What do you mean die?"

She turned her icy glare on me. "What did Harry mean when he included you with Mike and his father? Have you been hurting my little girl?"

"Never."

"What is she to you? Why are you here?"

I swallowed, suddenly nervous. "Uhm, Brook, is um...my mate."

Her eyes widened then she narrowed them at me. "What exactly happened today and don't you dare lie to me."

"I was getting a book out of my locker when I heard her scream. When I found her, she was on the ground bleeding with Mike standing over her." I rubbed my neck, so god awful nervous. "I kind of lost it and got into a fight with Mike. I didn't mean to scare her. I just wanted to keep him from hurting her, I swear."

"Wonderful," she said, pinching the bridge of her nose. "Is there anything else I should know about?"

"My name's not really Dean. That's my brother. I'm Ryder."

She cocked her head to the side and gave me a bewildered stare. "Why would you take your brother's name. That's not important right now. We have to find Brook."

"Why did you say she could die?"

"She had a concussion and refused to go to the doctor. We don't really know how bad she is," Harry said.

"Exactly, and now she's all alone out there." Brook's mother shot Harry a scathing glare before worry took over her expression.

"Wait, you said she wanted to go to California?" Harry nodded. "She would have to take the interstate to get there, and that runs right through my pack's territory. They can help us find her, and they'll get her off the road and safe." I took out my phone, taking a picture of one of the pictures of Brook on the wall, and texted it to my dad before calling him and explaining the situation.

"Don't worry, if she comes this way we'll find her. What happened over there?"

"I promise I'll fill you in, but right now we have to find her."

"Are you safe?"

I sighed, ran a hand through my hair, scowling when I remembered the zip tie. "Yeah, for now."

Brook's mother gave me an appreciative look of hope when I hung up.

Harry, however, glared at me. "I won't let you take her captive, mate, or not."

I glared right back at him. "I can't decide if you're pretending to be that stupid or you really are. This isn't about staking a claim, Brook is hurt and needs help. That's the only thing that matters."

Suddenly I was swallowed in a hug from Brook's Mom. "Thank Dean, thank you so much,"

"Ryder," I grunted, as she squeezed me. I clearly have been underestimating human strength. Harry continued to glare at me as if he'd love to tear out my throat. This was his own damn fault. He should have been honest with his mate.