

Talking to the Moon |

Rogues

“Olivia, I love you. I didn’t mean to hurt you,” Leo implores, trying to close the distance between us.

I step back, my hand raised in a clear signal for him to keep his distance. “But you did.” I let Lumen take control again, retreating into the safety of my own mind. Maybe tomorrow I’ll find a solution to all this mess.

I wake up in a field of winter moonflowers, the sun high in the sky telling me it’s midday.

I’m naked, save for the necklace nestled between my breasts. I’ve grown to despise this piece of metal that once symbolized their love for me, yet I can’t bring myself to remove it.

I often wonder if it’s some lingering mate bond that prevents me from discarding this last piece of them.

It’s time to return to the pack and talk to Jason. A night spent in my safe place has given me a plan.

I’ll request a reassignment and focus on my lycan duties, forgetting about mates and love. Maybe I can make a difference by dedicating my life to protecting others.

It’s clear that a mate and pups aren’t in my future.

A growl echoes from behind me, quickly followed by another, then another. I spin around to find several scruffy-looking wolves.

I’ve stumbled into the rogue’s hideout without even realizing it. Some lycan I am. The only consolation is that I’m fresh out of the Academy and not a seasoned lycan.

Lumen chuckles. *“Thought you needed a distraction, so I tracked them all night and found their camp just downhill from this meadow.”*

I guess I’m a better lycan than I gave myself credit for—or at least Lumen is. *“Thank you, Lumen.”*

I take stock of my situation. Five medium-sized wolves with matted, mangy fur. One wolf bears more scars than I’ve ever seen.

They look like they've been in more than their fair share of fights and probably lost most of them.

The wolf in the middle growls and lunges at me. Since I'm still in human form and don't have time to shift, I drop to the ground, letting the wolf sail over me. As it recovers, I start to shift, beginning with my claws.

Two more wolves approach from opposite directions. One wolf clumsily attacks my leg, leaving his side exposed. I swipe at him, leaving four long claw marks from his hip to his ribs.

The wolf collapses, and I turn to face the other wolf. He backs off when he sees his companion on the ground, bleeding out.

This gives me enough time to fully shift, and I manage to go for the throat of the first wolf, ripping it out. I watch the life fade from his eyes before turning to face the remaining three wolves.

They're all advancing on me, teeth bared, snarling. Their hind legs coil, signaling they're about to pounce.

I snap at the wolf on my right, managing to bite her shoulder. She yelps, but my moment of triumph is short-lived as one of the others bites my leg and twists.

I hear a sickening snap, and pain radiates through my body.

The adrenaline coursing through me allows me to keep fighting. Limping on three legs is challenging, but my determination prevails.

My claws rake across the face of the wolf that bit me, leaving marks over his left eye. He whimpers and scurries off down the hill.

The two remaining wolves are momentarily distracted, giving me the chance to gain the upper hand.

I roll onto my back, baring my neck, luring them in. They take the bait and approach. The only wolf left unmarked by me attacks, going for my throat, but at the last second, I roll over and knock him off balance.

He lands on his back, hitting his head on a large rock, and falls unconscious. The last wolf swipes at me with his claws, and blood starts to drip from my shoulder and front leg.

I keep going, and the wolf's eyes dart between me and her unconscious friend. She tucks her tail between her legs and runs off.

The only wolf left is still lying by the rock. I limp over and snap his neck. It's not a warrior's death, but I can't risk him recovering and seeking revenge.

After a deep breath, I scan the area for more rogues but find none. Using the sun to orient myself, I start limping towards the pack house.

Several hours and a significant loss of blood later, I'm still nowhere near the pack grounds.

My consciousness is fading in and out, and I fear I might not make it in time. I lie down to rest my legs for a moment, but when I wake up, it's dark.

I don't know how long I've been out, but I know I'm running out of time. Despite being a lycan, my wounds haven't started to heal, probably because they're too severe.

I muster up some strength—my adrenaline long gone—and keep limping, one step at a time.

I start to hear the familiar sounds of wolves playing, laughing, enjoying themselves. A few more steps and I'm out of the woods, clearly visible.

I collapse, letting out a sigh of relief as voices surround me. I can't make out what they're saying, but I feel two strong arms lift me up. The scent of green apple and lemon fills my senses, and I can't help but snuggle closer.

I'm growing tired of waking up disoriented and in unfamiliar surroundings. The beeping monitors tell me I'm in the hospital, and I can smell the twins in the room over the antiseptic.

"I know where they are, or at least where they were. We can pick up their trail from the campsite and track them." I try to sit up, but the pain in my leg reminds me of my injuries, and I quickly lie back down.

The twins are standing by my bed, their faces filled with concern. Liam reaches out to touch my hand but quickly pulls back. "You're not going. Just tell us where, and we'll handle it."

"No," I protest through gritted teeth. The pain is manageable, and it seems my healing has finally started.

"Olivia," Jameson begins, then looks to his brother for support.

Liam nods and continues. "We can't let you get hurt anymore. Just tell us where."

"No."

"Why can't we? Do you despise us that much?" Jameson implores.

"You're not prepared for this, you're not tough enough, you're not lycans," I retort. My words echo the reasons they once used to reject me. They're almost there, almost tough enough. Almost.

Their eyes darken to a deep black, speckled with familiar gold flecks. Their wolves are rising. "And Leo is?" Jameson retorts.

"Do you see him here? Standing by me?" I throw back at him.

"He tried to get in, but Alpha Jason told him to stay out. I guess he doesn't want his brother to witness his mate in this condition."

I let out a laugh, its sound bouncing off the walls. "Leo couldn't give a damn about my state."

"That's not true. He's your mate. A mate is the most precious thing in the world." Liam intertwines his fingers with mine and meets my gaze.

I'm boiling with rage. What does he know about the worth of a mate? He discarded his like it was nothing.

"Maybe he should have considered that before he fucked your sister and marked her," I yell at them, yanking my hand from his. "Bring me Jason."

Both twins are stunned by my revelation and quickly exit to fetch Jason. A few minutes later, I hear their footsteps in the corridor, and they reenter my room, Jason following them.

"You can leave now," I say calmly, watching them slowly back away. I've propped myself up and made room for Jason to sit on the bed in front of me. I pat the bed, signaling for him to sit.

"I need you to meditate with me so I can heal," I request.

"Alright, but we're going to discuss Leo afterward."

Jason takes my hands and begins to chant in the ancient lycan language. It doesn't take long for a soothing sensation to wash over my wounds as they start to heal, only to be replaced by a wave of heat.

Half an hour later, most of my injuries have healed enough for me to walk, albeit with a slight limp. Jason assists me in getting dressed, and I make my way to the door, only to be halted by Jason's voice. "Sit. We need to talk."

I roll my eyes and slump down like a defiant pup being scolded. "Alright. Talk."

"I had a conversation with Leo." He sighs. "He's in pain."

"Too bad."

"He loves you," Jason insists, but his words ring hollow.

"He doesn't understand what love is. What we shared was genuine, not the result of some mystical force binding us together. My love was real. She can never offer him that."

I start to crumble, feeling safe enough in Jason's company. "We were even trying for a pup."

Jason scoops me up and cradles me in his lap. "I know, Olivia. He's an idiot for doing this to you. No mate could ever be better than you."

He plants a kiss on my forehead. "It's no secret that I love you, and if you'll let me, I want to make you happy."

"Jason?" I sniffle and wipe away my tears. His face is sincere; his words are heartfelt.

"I do care for you...but I have no love left to give. After Liam, Jameson, my baby, and now Leo, I'm nothing more than a shell. I can't trap you in a relationship like that."

"You're not trapping me," Jason assures, and kisses me. I lose myself in his lips but quickly snap back to reality.

I'm seeking solace in a man who loves me, but I can't reciprocate. A man who belongs to another: Betty.

I break off the kiss. "Jason, I'm going to complete my assignment here and then I'll request a new one, then another, and another after that. I'm not returning home with you."

"Please," Jason pleads, cupping my face.

I look down and shake my head. I want to console him, but my words can't mend the heartbreak we both bear. "I... Jason, what about Betty?"

Leo bursts into the room and freezes when he sees us in each other's arms. His eyes darken with rage. "What the fuck, Jason?"