

# Talking to the Moon |

## Stuck

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I stumble upon the last known location of the rogues.

Abandoned tents, chairs, and other necessities are scattered around, most of them damaged. The remnants of a campfire are still smoldering, sending up a thick plume of smoke as I smother them with the fresh snow that fell overnight.

The snow complicates my tracking efforts, covering up any physical evidence like footprints or broken branches. The only trace of them is a faint scent hanging in the air. I mutter a curse under my breath and sit down to think.

Once the snow melts, all signs of them will be erased. The scent in the air has already dispersed to the point where it's impossible to determine which direction they went.

The cold has killed off the vegetation. Most animals are hibernating, but the rogues still need to eat. They don't have jobs or money, so hunting is their only option.

That leaves foxes, rabbits, and squirrels—unless they dare to venture to the water, which is teeming with wolves.

The only place nearby with enough game to sustain them is south of the mountain. If I leave now, I can scout it out before nightfall.

The crunch of snow behind me and a familiar scent—rosewood and vanilla—alert me to Liam's presence. "I told you not to come."

He stops a few feet behind me. "I know, but I was worried."

I scoff. "That's funny."

"What is?"

"That you suddenly care about what happens to me." I stand up and start heading south towards the fox grounds. "Well, come on then. But do as I say."

We both shift into our wolf forms and make our way to the fox grounds. "*Olivia, your wolf is silver. You're the most beautiful wolf I've ever seen,*" Liam mind-links, his excitement palpable. ~"I've never heard of a silver wolf."~

"Thank you... Let's go."

Lumen, my wolf, is secretly conversing with Liam's wolf, promising to keep me updated on their discussion as we journey.

Liam's wolf, Honos, is just as upset about the rejection as Animos. Lumen thinks he's a strong and protective wolf and is already smitten.

I need to wrap up this mission quickly and move on before Lumen gets too attached to them. It will break her heart when we leave. The sooner, the better.

We arrive just outside the new rogue camp, and I silently celebrate my discovery.

The camp is large, and there must be over a hundred rogues. I don't see any children, and there are very few women. I wonder if they're hiding, or if there simply aren't any.

I signal for Liam to go left while I go right to gather more information. I creep around the camp and take cover under a bush.

After a few minutes, a large man emerges from a tent and starts barking orders. He's the rogue leader.

His imposing stature, the scars littering his torso, and the years of hardship etched on his face all point to his status. He's a menacing figure, and I know better than to get caught alone with him.

I start to back away but freeze when the rogue leader begins sniffing the air. He's picked up a scent, but he's not looking in my direction—he's looking towards Liam.

*"Liam, the leader can smell you. I'm going to try to divert his attention, but run!"* I mind-link him.

Liam doesn't respond, and I fear my message didn't get through. I brush against some bushes, causing the rogue leader to shift his attention towards me.

He starts to approach, and I crouch, ready to attack, when a smaller rogue rushes up to him in a panic.

"Alpha, there's a fight over the last fox caught." The rogues run towards the commotion, giving me the chance to slip away unnoticed.

I meet up with Liam further from the camp. He's sitting on his hind legs, and even in his wolf form, I can see his scowl.

*"That was stupid,"* he mind-links me. So he can reply after all.

I roll my eyes. *"I did what I had to."*

*"You could have been caught."* Liam retorts.

*"Better me than you,"* I snap back, and Liam's scowl morphs into a mix of confusion and concern. ~"I'm a lycan. It's my job to protect those who can't protect themselves."~

*"Are you sure that's it, or is it because you still care for me?"* He smirks.

*"Let's head back. It's getting dark, and I don't like the look of those clouds in the distance."* I dodge his question, not wanting to hurt him, and hope he'll drop it.

The darkness deepens, and the wind picks up as we get closer to pack land. Snow starts to fall, and soon we can barely see a foot in front of us.

*"We need to find shelter, Olivia!"*

I don't want to stop, but it seems I don't have a choice. I know of a nearby cave and lead Liam to it.

I spent many nights here growing up when I wanted to be alone. I never showed it to the twins or Greyson. If we're lucky, some of my stashed supplies will still be there.

I guide him deep into the cave to where I left my stash. After shifting back into my human form, I find it untouched. My old backpack, with a change of clothes, a blanket, a pillow, a few expired granola bars, and a fire starter.

Liam is staring at my naked body, but his gaze then lands on the necklace he gave me nestled between my breasts. He doesn't say anything and turns away when he catches me looking back at him.

I pull on the pants and T-shirt and hand the granola bars and hoodie to Liam. Then I head back outside to gather some wood. Hopefully, I can find some near the entrance that isn't wet or covered in snow.

The pickings are slim, but I manage to gather enough wood to warm us up a bit. After that, we'll have to spend the night as wolves.

When I come back, Liam is working on his own stack of wood, coaxing a few sparks into life. "I brought more wood for the fire," I tell him, setting it down next to him.

In a few moments, the fire is blazing, and Liam settles down next to me on the blanket. The cave is still chilly, thanks to the large entrance that lets the wind whip through, but I'm hoping it'll warm up soon.

"Are you cold?" Liam edges closer to me, and I can feel the warmth radiating from him.

“Yes,” I admit. He lightly brushes his arm against mine. I stiffen, but then relax as he continues the gentle contact.

He wraps his arms around me and lifts me onto his lap. He buries his face in my neck and takes a deep breath. “Is this okay?” he murmurs into my ear, leaning back so I’m resting against his chest.

“Yes.” I snuggle in closer, letting his embrace chase away the cold.

I drift off to sleep to the rhythm of his heartbeat. When I wake up, he’s still holding me, but the fire has dwindled. It’s still dark outside, and the wind is howling. I shiver, and Liam rises to feed the fire.

“Can I tell you something?” Liam breaks the silence as he tends to the fire.

“Sure.” He’s piqued my curiosity, which isn’t hard to do when we’re holed up in a tiny cave with nothing else to occupy us.

“I still love you,” he confesses, his gaze fixed on the dancing flames.

He stands, then settles back down next to me, cradling my face in his hands and forcing me to meet his gaze. “I’m not trying to pressure you. I’m not asking anything of you. But I need you to hear me out...

“I was a fool. We both were. You were the only light in my life, and I snuffed it out because of my messed-up beliefs about wolf hierarchy. Beliefs I don’t hold anymore, and I realize now I never truly did. But my father did.”

He rests his forehead against mine and closes his eyes, taking a deep breath. “You’re the only one for me. You always will be.”

He kisses me and pulls me onto his lap, letting me straddle him. I can feel his erection pressing against me, and I start to grind against it.

My hand finds his hair, pulling his head back so I can look into his eyes.

As I expected, they’re a deep, lust-filled black. But I need to make something clear. “Don’t read too much into this.”