

## Chapter 2 Chapter 2

‘Tate, everything alright?’ Lucianne’s concerned voice came through their link. Unless urgent help was needed, Tate never linked her this late at night.

As awkward as it was for Tate to speak to Lucianne, who he had been in love with for years before she met the king and became queen, Tate persisted to answer as normally as he could, ‘Yeah, yeah, uh...we caught another three today but...it looks like we’re entering uncharted waters from here. One of them is a minor.’

There was a pause before Lucianne's link in her authoritative queen voice came through, ‘How old?’

Tate sighed in dismay and muttered, ‘Thirteen.’

‘He or she?’

‘She.’

Another shock pause before Lucianne's voice came out so er, ‘How is she?’

Tate's brows arched in uneasiness as he studied the girl with sympathetic eyes, and he replied to Lucianne, ‘She looked shit scared at first but she sure is trying to put on a brave front now. Should I still keep her here? I have to admit, I feel kind of bad.’

Lucianne reluctantly admitted in a murmur, 'You and I both, Tate.' A er a sigh, she added, ‘But we know what happened to the warriors from Forest Gloom when they decided to show that seemingly-petrified rogue mercy.’

That really was a horrifying tale to remember. A frail-looking she-wolf was shuddering and shivering non-stop behind bars a er being caught by Forest Gloom warriors. The warriors sought permission from Lucianne to offer the rogue better treatment and accommodation within the pack house itself, describing how bad the situation was for the intruder. Lucianne gave the green light, reminding them to exercise the highest level of caution. The moment the rogue took the first step out of the dungeon and saw daylight, all hell broke loose. The rogue attacked the wolf escort and continued to attack those around her until the Alpha, Clement, plunged his claws right through her chest to put an end to her life.

Despite that nightmare, Lucianne was still hesitant to insist that this girl should remained in her cell. This was a minor, and Lucianne always had a so spot for children. ‘What do you think, though? Is she just acting scared so that you’ll let her out or...’

‘This doesn’t look like an act. There's something...innocent about her. I'm not sure how to say it.’ he replied.

Lucianne then asked, ‘What about the other two who were with her? What do you make of them?’

‘From whatever I can tell, they’re practically rogues with no balls. They didn’t even bother to turn defensive when we cornered them.’

‘Strange,’ Lucianne muttered. A er pondering for the next few minutes, she hesitated before giving out her decision, ‘I WANT to be lenient with her, Tate, but I NEED you and the rest of White Blood to be safe. Please leave her there. It’s not worth the risk.’

It was clear from her tone that she wasn’t satisfied with her own decision, and neither was Tate. But what choice did they have? The probable danger outweighed the benefits of letting her out.

Lucianne then continued, ‘I’ll personally come and collect them tomorrow, just so that they won’t be too daunted by the lycan warriors. Don’t let them out until I get there.’

‘Roger that, Lucy,’ he responded, and as cheerfully as he could, the Alpha added obligatorily, ‘Say ‘hi’ to the king for me.’

Tate wasn’t as good as Lucianne was when it came to putting on an act, so she still heard the tinge of sadness there. What she was grateful for was that he sounded less sad now compared to a few months ago. She spoke to Tate as little as she could, allowing her Alpha friend time and distance to heal and move on. Toby, Tate's Gamma and Lucianne's best friend, updated her frequently, and she was glad to hear that Tate was getting better each day.

With a gentle voice, Lucianne linked, ‘Thanks, Tate. Xandar will appreciate it. Have a good night.’

Right a er ending the link, every bone in Tate’s body was set on following through Lucianne’s instruction to leave the minor there. But as soon as his cleared eyes looked at the girl hugging her legs with sad eyes staring into space with her head tilted to face the floor, he found himself rooted to his spot.

He couldn't put his finger on it, but there was something about this kid that made him grow alert and turn protective. His animal, for some unexplainable reason, just KNEW that it would take a bullet for this girl, not in a romantic kind of way but a 'you're-one-of-us-and-I-will-have-your-back' kind of way. Leaving her in this place was going against the dead certainty of his animal's primal instincts. He wanted to make sure she was comfortable, safe and cared for. But the queen's orders were the exact opposite to that.

His human wanted to obey orders and walk away like he had been trained to do all his life. But his animal persisted arguing with him. At this rate, Tate doubt he'd get any sleep that night with his animal whining and growling. So, he sighed and, when he gave in to the beast he was born with, he told his animal, ‘Lucy is going to kill us both for this. You'd better be ready. Whatever she does to us is going to be on you.’ His animal wagged its tail, completely indifferent to the consequences of its decision.

Tate took out the keys from his pocket to unlock her cell, and the girl's eyes amplified in surprise. She remained on the bed, and made no move to come out. Tate decided that this was not a time to be friendly, still unsure whether she was acting vulnerable or was genuinely vulnerable. In a harsh tone, he asked, “Are you coming out or not?”

She seemed to be brought out of her shock, and got out of the bed before taking steps towards the opened door. When she stood right before Tate, his head motioned ahead and said, “Walk. That way.”

She nodded and began walking, glancing at her surprised friends as she strode past their cells. Tate kept a three-step distance from her in case she attacked. When they emerged from the dungeon, he continued giving directions from behind her to lead her to the pack house. In his basement, Tate turned on the lights and air-conditioner. He made the teenager stand at a corner where he could see her while he removed a white fabric covering the old couch.

A er getting out spare pillows from the cupboard, and his maid came with a spare quilt, his fierce eyes fixed on her as he began, “You’re sleeping here for the night. There’s a restroom right through that door. I’m going to lock the basement a er I leave. For your own sake, don’t try to escape.”

She nodded obediently with seemingly-grateful, though still-fearful, eyes. What annoyed the Alpha was that his animal was cooing in his mind when she gave him a small, grateful smile. This was an Alpha wolf of one of the strongest pack in existence. It was NOT supposed to so en for a rogue, damn it!

He made a mental note to give his wolf a pep talk later. Once Tate le and locked the door as promised, he spoke to the warrior stationed outside the basement, “The moment you hear anything suspicious, link me with a scream, Timmy.”

“Will do, Alpha.”

As Tate went to his own room and lay in bed, he thought about what he just did and muttered into the darkness, “Lucy, you are so going to kill me for this.”

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In the thick forest not far from White Blood, the only other red wolf in existence, Margaret, had her fist clenched on the table, where her rogue members now sat around. They all just returned from trying to find three of their own for hours, and when they learned where the scent trails were leading them to, all of them were afraid to go any nearer.

The only one who didn't share that fear was Margaret, their leader. She was worried, but she was even more furious! A er emitting a low, angered growl, she asked, "Which one of you was supposed to watch them?"

All eyes fell on Kate. Kate's teeth let go of her bottom lip, and a er swallowing a lump in her throat, she tried to walk around the problem by explaining meekly, "We caught their scent trailing to White Blood, Margaret. We can get them back."

Margaret's eyes burned in fury when she delivered a low, condescending remark, "Do you how idiotic you sound right now, Kate? My daughter and her friends have, under your supposed supervision, found their way to one of the most guarded packs in the territory. You think we can just show up and snatch them back?"

A sudden protrusion of her claws which went through the table made most of her followers jerk in fear as she conveyed a chilling warning, "For your own sake, Kate, you'd better hope I'll get my daughter back in one piece, or I'll rip out your throat myself."

Everyone agreed that it was reckless to enter the pack. Fortunately, rogues like them had been noticing that lycan warriors would come a day a er a rogue capture to escort caught rogues and board them onto jets, bringing them to Goddess knew where. So, the plan was to take back her daughter and the other two with her a er they were transported out of the pack but before they were brought onto the jet. It wasn't a foolproof plan, but it was the best one they had.

A er putting together her best team for a rescue mission that they were going to execute the next day, Margaret went to bed and couldn't help but imagine her poor girl being locked in some filthy dungeon. Her eyes pooled in tears as she considered the possibility of her only pup getting raped. These pack leaders of the strongest packs had no mercy, especially to rogues. She simply hoped that this Alpha was either gay or already had a Luna, who would be merciful enough to spare her daughter of any torment, at least until tomorrow.