Chapter 4

The next morning, Xandar and Lucianne kissed baby Reida goodbye, and left her in the safe hands of the 300-year-old babysitter, Mrs Parker. Lucianne took Xandar's private jet with three lycan warriors, and they made their way to White Blood.

Tate came to pick them up from the open field where they landed. On the passenger's seat in the car, Lucianne noticed that her friend was feeling uneasy, like he was hiding something. Since he was driving, she didn't think it was a good idea to bring it up.

As soon as Tate parked outside the pack house, Lucianne turned to the lycan warriors in the backseat and said, "Phelton, August, Fiona, could you give Alpha Tate and I a moment, please?"

"Yes, my Queen," they obliged, and got the cue to get out and wait.

As soon as the door shut behind Phelton, Tate continued to stare at his windscreen as he blurted, "I let her sleep in my basement last night."

The lilac shade in Lucianne's eyes turned onyx in anger as she prompted, "And?"

Tate shrugged to get off some of the fire that he was feeling from his longtime friend, who was beginning to bubble like an active volcano. "And I offered her breakfast this morning."

"And after that?"

"I locked her in my basement again. Timmy said she only used the attached washroom once throughout the night. She didn't try to escape." Tate's brown eyes showed that he was visibly scared. Even the lycan warriors saw this, and they were praying for him as they waited.

"Was anyone hurt?" Lucianne was angered but she was also worried.

"No, of course not," Tate tried to sound carefree to cope with Lucianne's rage.

Lucianne sighed in relief as the lilac shades in her eyes returned.

"Wait, you're not mad at me anymore? I could have sworn that you were going to kill me," He deliberately disregarded her order for a stranger, and he did this out of pure instinct.

Lucianne smirked. "My concern was the safety of everyone in this pack, Tate. Since no one got hurt, you're safe from my wrath for now."

He chuckled as the atmosphere eased, and the lycan warriors outside sighed with relief at that scene. Tate led them into the pack house, and Lucianne insisted that only she and Tate went to the basement, so the warriors waited in the living room.

The moment the rogue she-wolf heard the door being unlocked, she closed the dusty photo album in her hands and put it back into the shelf in the exact position she found it in, and sat on the couch to wait.

As soon as Tate and Lucianne stood in front of the girl, she got on her feet and stared at Lucianne with more curiosity than fear. Her scent was that of a lycan, and she was brought up to fear and even hate lycans but why wasn't she able to channel any fear or hate now?

Tate's cold voice rang through the space, "Bow before the qu—"

"That really isn't necessary, Tate." Lucianne moved to sit at the far end of the couch before looking at the rogue with a welcoming smile. "Have a seat," she invited.

The rogue obliged, sitting somewhere in the middle of the couch instead of the far end, wanting to feel Lucianne's warmth.

"What's your name?" Lucianne began.

The teenager seemed hesitant. Her mouth opened and her lips quivered, not knowing whether to lie or tell the truth.

Lucianne saw her predicament and tried again, "This isn't going to be on any official document, so you don't have to give me your real name yet if you don't want to, but I do need something to call you by."

When her rosewood eyes met Lucianne's soft and sincere gaze, she found herself giving her real name. "Stella."

Lucianne nodded with a small smile and chose her next words carefully, "Stella, do your parents know where you are?"

Stella bit her bottom lip and a long moment of silence passed before she pleaded in a whisper, "You can't ask me to do this."

"Do what?"

"Admitting and exposing everything and everyone," Stella muttered, though her wolf was telling her to tell Lucianne everything. It was her human part that was having trust issues.

Stella's loyalty when it came to her family was eminent, and Lucianne's heart ached from the undeniable fact that she and her family were rogues. "Stella…why were you and your parents cast out?"

She saw and felt no menace in this teenager, and wondered what her parents could have possibly done to disqualify them from seeking refuge in any other pack in existence. Stella thought about whether her answer would give something away, before she muttered, "My mother left her old pack, and took me with her. We've been running with a few other rogues ever since."

"Weren't there any packs to take you both in?" Blue Crescent, Lucianne's birth pack, would've taken them in without question. This was a single mother and a child!

"Mom…didn't know who to trust. She said that it was better…safer to be on our own so that we don't get cast out again."

Tate asked all of a sudden, "Cast out? You said you both left."

Stella's body stiffened in realization when she said something that she shouldn't have, and regret and fear filled her eyes. Lucianne threw Tate a look of disapproval, and his hands raised in front of him like he was surrendering as he muttered, "Sorry."

Stella stammered, "W-We didn't know wh-who to trust. Mom said t-that packs could be enemies one day and allies on another. W-We didn't know if…if…"

Seeing how she was struggling with averting eyes, Lucianne decided to finish her sentence for her in a gentle voice, "You both didn't know if the pack you later sought refuge from turned out to be an ally of your old pack, who would then send you and your mother back to your birth pack to be punished."

Stella nodded in confirmation.

Lucianne looked at Tate. Both of them wanted to know which pack Stella was referring to but they doubted that she would give up the location so willingly. She had already given more than Lucianne had expected. Lucianne then began wondering whether Stella's mother was even safe. Perhaps Stella and her friends were out hunting for food for her sickly mother?

Lucianne's sights returned to the girl. "Stella, I'm going to bring you and your friends back to lycan territory." Stella's eyes widened in horror, so Lucianne leaned towards her as she continued, "I'll make sure you're safe but we need you to cooperate with the

authorities when they ask questions. Your mother…might not be safe where she is. We can help her as we'll help you. We'll keep you both safe."

"Please don't do this to me. Please. Just let me go. I'll be fine, I promise," Stella pleaded with glistening eyes.

"Stella, there's nothing to worry about. You will be fine. Your mother will be saved soon,"

"She's safe. She's completely safe at where she is. Please, just let me go. Don't go after her, please." Tears trickled down her cheeks, and she continued begging as her voice lost strength.

Lucianne and Tate threw each other perplexed glances. How could one ever expect to be safe as a rogue? Nothing about being a rogue was safe. They were practically shunned from everyone, and now hunted down by everyone. Rogues, as far as they knew, didn't form alliances like packs did. If they worked together, it would be solely for commercial reasons. Cooperating solely for commercial reasons, with little to no trust and confidence in each other's loyalty, was NOT safe.

In the same gentle voice, Lucianne uttered, "I'm sorry, Stella. But I can't just let you go. I need you to come with me. But I'll make sure nothing bad happens to you, okay?"

"And my moth-er?" Her voice croaked.

Walking on eggshells again, Lucianne said, "If and when we find her, and she isn't guilty of any crimes, she'll walk away a free creature. We'll then provide you both with any aid you may need to start a life together again."

"And if she…isn't innocent?" Stella knew she just let another cat out of the bag but she couldn't help herself from asking.