



## 73 AN UNWATED COMPANION

JASMINE'S POV 1

I quickly went down to my feet.

"You can punish me in any way you want." I said to him.

My heart was racing so fast that it felt like it would jump right out of my chest.

"But please spare the lake." I begged, daring myself to look back up at him.

How could I explain that I was scared of losing the lake because of what had happened to me back home?

My family had destroyed the one thing I had loved, and I had watched it burn to ashes. 1

The entire place was destroyed.

I couldn't go through the trauma of that again.

"We will discuss this later." He said, sounding irritated. "Get up."

I did as I was told.

"I'm sorry for being in this. I will go on my own back home." I apologized and started to leave when he grabbed me and hauled me to him.

"Where the hell do you think you're going?" He demanded. "The people who didn't attend the hunt are in their homes, and the doors are locked. Those in the villages near the castle are doing the same thing. Why? Because the wolves are wild. They run mad, and you don't want to know what they will do to a female wolf alone. Especially after she just bathed naked. You're lucky it wasn't someone other than me who found you. You would have never been the same."

I gasped and shut my eyes in fear.

He was right. I had been so stupid.

"Even if you're out." He started. "Didn't Loren tell you about the dangers?"

"No, don't put this on him. He didn't know. I sneaked out." I pleaded.

"You're breaking a lot of my rules. And you're testing me." He said.



Then, I realized that we were inches apart.

With just me moving up close to me, our lips would collide.

I could feel the electricity in the air. The tension. The awareness that our bodies were almost conjoined.

The sudden heat overwhelmed me just being this close to him.

And I was scared.

I was scared of what I was feeling.

He let go of me as if on cue, realizing how close we were.

"Stay close with me." He said. "Don't try anything stupid."

I swallowed. "I'm going to follow you."

I was confused.

"You want to stay here?" He asked me. "As much as I want to get rid of and punish you, I won't let you be a feast for wolf wolves. Neither will I allow them to take over my pack if I waste time taking you to safety. So you better come with





me." 1

I swallowed again, and I nodded, this time in understanding.

I tried not to look at his muscled chest or chiseled body.

Then there was his bleeding shoulder that he still wouldn't let me mend.

I said nothing as he led the way.

We were walking for a while.

He led the way, and I followed behind like a puppy, too scared to ask questions.

I wondered how he knew how to even search for the elk.

It troubled me to know that they would kill such an animal.

"When you find the great white elk, would you kill it?" I asked, hoping he would give me a different response.

"It doesn't concern you." He replied.

I said nothing after that, and then I heard him



sigh and say.

"I have to present the horns. So yes, I must kill it." He said.

"It's an innocent animal. And it deserves to live." I corrected him. "Not just be slaughtered like a sacrificial lamb. If only the horns were offered, then that would be fine. It didn't say anything about killing the elk, did they?"

He gave an exasperated sigh. "Why the devil won't you know your thoughts to yourself? It's just an animal; it doesn't matter."

"But I heard you grew up in the wild and were friendly with animals. Doesn't it hurt you knowing that you would kill one of the animals you hold dear for sport?" I blurted it out without thinking.

He turned to me sharply, and just when I was ready to receive a good slap, he drew me up against me.

I gasped, wondering what he was doing.

"Don't move." He whispered.

I didn't.



We were close again.

And then, in a split second, something jumped from a bush and attacked us.

It was a wolf.

Xaden turned behind me to fight the wolf.

His sword was slashed, showing expertise to fight the intruder.

I gasped as I watched him rip the wolf apart.

It dropped dead, but about seven more wolves were in front of us, and we were surrounded.

He held me tight to him, protecting me from them.

He looked around, and I could see them sauntering to us.

Their tongues were hanging, and their teeth were dripping with saliva.

"Stay close to me." He told me. "No matter what."

My heart fluttered, and I felt weird knots in my belly.





Just like how I felt the very first day I met him.

"Do you understand me?" He asked as he looked me in the eyes.

He was so calm.

So soft.

Like an entirely different man. A kind and gentle man who only wanted to protect.

I nodded.

Then he hauled me up against me and began fighting the wolves.

He dodged and pulled out his sword, using only one hand to fight because he was using his other hand to hold me close to him.

I felt horrible knowing that I was the reason why he was so handicapped.

He managed to kill some wolves, and then I was dragged by my dress, and I was separated from him.

"Jasmine!" I heard him say

I was down on the floor, and the wolf crawled up



to me.

I gasped, and my heart was beating so fast.

And then an arrow from nowhere went right into the wolf, and it dropped dead at my feet.

I looked up and saw it was Xaden.

"Run!" He told me.



