

## CHAPTER 38

Ava: Challenging Common Knowledge 38 Ava: Challenging Common Knowledge What do you mean?♥ Selene sighs in my mind, a little huff that brings a picture to my mind's eye of her resting her chin on her front paws. I miss her. You are not an omega, she finally says. Omegas don't exist. I tilt my head. It isn't that I don't believe Selene, it's just that... well, I mean, how do omegas not exist? All shifters have ranks, once they come into adulthood. Well—I never got a rank, because I didn't have a rank. But everyone else has one. Selene growls. Omegas were created for the pleasure of the alphas of old, who wanted nothing more than to breed and dominate. It was a different time. I talk out loud, because I'm giving myself a headache by thinking too hard at her. "What about the 'true omegas' they're talking about?" 1/8 38 Ava: Challenging Common Knowledge There is no true omega. There are only shifters with powerful heat cycles. Some of them were known to breed strong alpha pups. Wolves and humans both tend toward the superstitious. Powerful heat cycles come to powerful she-wolves. It has nothing to do with their arbitrary rankings. I rub my eyes in frustration. It isn't that I'm not understanding the words she's saying; it's just that nothing is making sense in my head, like we're speaking of a foreign land. "So they just made up this entire thing, because some strong wolf got really horny during heat?" Yes. "How does that even make sense?" All of these ranks are for human ego. Alphas have always existed, though we did not have a word for them. Even strong betas can be alphas. It isn't a birthright, but a matter of strength and leadership. Strong wolves lead the pack. Weak wolves follow. It isn't rocket science. I groan, resting my forehead on my hand as Selene tomson a homb on the antiro ranking hiararahu of 2/8 38 Ava: Challenging Common Knowledge shifters. Hush, little one. I hear your skepticism. Having a wolf in my head gives me no privacy at all. But even our wolves refer to our ranks, I protest. Don't they? Selene's sigh this time is so strong I can almost feel it in the room with me. Child, there is too much history to go through. Yes, the weak wolves of today's shifters have accepted this, as this is how your packs work now. But they were not always so. It sounds like Selene's telling me the entire history of shifters is wrong. It is. I groan. Somehow, I know I don't want to hear this. This is why I didn't tell you anything before. any of Okay. I take a deep breath. Explain it to me from the beginning, Selene. \*\*\* Long ago, wolves and humans lived in harmony, Selene 14:56 3/8 38 Ava: Challenging Common Knowledge begins, her voice a soothing rumble in my mind. The Great Wolves, Lycans, were respected and revered by human magicians. They worked together, each benefiting from the other's strengths. But as with all things human, war eventually came. The gods, fickle beings that they were, grew tired of the constant bloodshed waged in their names. They decided to flee this world, to find solace in another realm. The Lycans, in their wisdom and loyalty, agreed to be sacrificed to ensure the gods' safe departure. Their souls were to guide and protect the gods on their journey. Sacrificed. The word is heavy in my mind. To give up one's life, even for a god—that's a level of devotion I can't fathom.. But some among the human magicians were not content with this. They delved into forbidden magic, seeking to bring the Lycan souls back from the realm between life and death, desiring their strength. And so the first shifters were born(w)wW.n(v)èl@rM.c@m

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, weakened Lycan souls merging with human bodies. But such a violation 14:54 A/B 38 Ava: Challenging Common Knowledge of the natural order could not go unpunished. I hold my breath, dreading what comes next in Selene's tale. The Lycan Curse descended upon the magicians and their descendants. The returned Lycan souls, enraged by the betrayal, consumed them. Over time, these souls developed their own identity, working in harmony with the souls they shared life with. They became Lycan Shifters. I frown, trying to reconcile this with the history I've been taught. Shifters, cursed? It goes against everything I know. We are blessed by the moon goddess, and given a gift—or so we're told. As centuries passed, the Lycan Shifters became simply known as wolf shifters. They formed their own packs, their own traditions and values, based on their unique history. And that, little one, is the true origin of our kind. Two souls cursed into one body. Selene's voice fades, leaving me in a stunned silence. It's a lot to take in, this alternate history. Part of me wants to reject it, to cling to the familiar stories I've grown up with 14:54 5/8 38 Ava: Challenging Common Knowledge But- "What does this have to do with me?" It means, Ava, that you are more than what they've told you. You are not an omega. You are a descendant of the original magicians, a being of magic and power in your own right. "But—doesn't that mean I'm cursed?" Of course. I wait for her to elaborate, but she doesn't. "But I'm different." Yes. "Then why aren't Jessa and Phoenix different?" It is in your soul, not in your blood. I sigh. "Okay. Selene, how am I different? Explain it to me like I'm five." You are stronger than the others. "So, because I'm strong, my heat is strong." That's what she'd said just a few moments ago. It is one of the reasons, she concedes. Though, your 3/8 38 Ava: Challenging Common Knowledge Yours is to gain strength. "Did you miss the part where I jumped Clayton's bones and tried to f@ck him in front of the hospital staff?" s@x, of course, is part of it, Selene says primly. I sigh. It's like having half-answers, which Selene excels at so thoroughly. But, I remember clearly feeling a heat going through my body once before, and feeling refreshed and stronger after- I think I might understand, a little bit. Not really, but kind of. You have the strength of the arcane running through your blood, she says simply. And I... She stops. Well, that's for another time. "What, that you're a Lycan?" Well, we are all Lycan, of a sort, Selene says vaguely. Wait. When she says strength of the arcane- "Selene, are you saying I can do magic?"Vww.n(v)elWôrM.C@m