

An Unwanted Second Chance

Chapter 1

“Enter!” yelled Commander Whey. Riley pushed open the door to see the commander seated behind his mahogany desk. The room was large and spacious, the desk set right in the middle with a couple oversized armchairs in front of it. The right wall was floor to ceiling windows that overlooked the central plaza of the Werewolf Council’s main compound and to the left of the room was a conference table and chairs. Through the windows, Riley could see the sky dappled in pinks and purples as the sun set, a few people hurrying across the plaza as the day ended. Commander Whey stood as Riley walked in, smoothing his silver tie as he gave her a mild smile. His once black hair was mostly gray now, but his brown eyes were still sharp. “Please, sit,” he said, motioning to the chairs in front of the desk. “I appreciate you coming in on such short notice. I know you’ve only just gotten back from the Silver Streams pack this morning. I was reading through your preliminary report while I was waiting for you. You did good work, as always.” “Thank you, sir,” Riley said as she sat on the edge of one of the armchairs. While she was used to the commander and his office, she still always felt a sense of caution when in his office. She had been working for the council for six years now, having worked her way up to head warrior advisor about two years ago. The Werewolf Council was in charge of overseeing all the packs in North America and lending assistance when packs were in need. A lot of Riley’s job involved arbitrating pack boundary disputes and lending advice on pack security issues. Riley, like everyone at the Council, reported to the commander and the commander reported to the Council Elders, a group of elected elders who met twice a month. The commander sighed, folding his hands on his desk. “I hate to ask this of you, Riley, knowing that you’ve just come back, but it appears that we have a dire situation with the Red Moon pack.” He pursed his lips before continuing. “Wesley is the advisor out there right now and things are not going well for him.” Riley frowned, trying to remember if she had ever heard of Red Moon before. There were close to a thousand packs scattered around North America, so it was hard to keep track of them all. “We were discussing the issue in our morning briefing,” the commander continued, “but unfortunately you hadn’t arrived in time. The alpha at Red Moon is dealing with persistent rogue attacks, starting about two years ago. The problem has been getting worse until the pack finally requested Council assistance six months ago. We initially only sent additional warrior assistance, but we sent an advisor about six weeks ago.” “Wesley?” Riley knew Wesley. She had worked with him. He could be a bit hot-headed and impulsive, but overall was a pretty good guy. He was one of the few who had never talked down to her or treated her as inferior simply because she

was a woman. The commander nodded. "Yes, and the alpha there is quite displeased with Wesley. I guess Wesley made some changes to a patrol schedule without consulting the ranked members of the pack. There was an attack and the alpha blames Wesley for it." Riley relaxed slightly back into the chair. "You don't change a patrol schedule without consulting at least the gamma. Wesley knows that." The commander sighed, rubbing his forehead. "Yes, well, we all know how hard headed Wes can be." "True." Riley brushed her long brown hair over her shoulder. "If Wesley is the advisor, who is the head warrior?" Riley knew that while warrior advisors were not always sent, head warriors were sent whenever Council warriors were. They maintained control and order of the council warriors. "Leo Anderson." The commander drummed his fingers on the desk. "It was Doug Hart, but I had to switch them out about two months ago. Doug didn't like the alpha and the alpha detested Doug. They simply couldn't work together. Leo has a calmer temperament than Doug, so I figured it would work out." Riley had heard that Leo had left for assignment while she was at Silver Streams, but she hadn't had time to check in with Leah, Leo's mate. Leah and Leo were her two closest friends. "The alpha seems difficult," Riley said. "On his second head warrior and now wants a different advisor?" The commander smirked slightly. "You misunderstand, Riley. He doesn't want a different advisor. He wants a second advisor. The best, he said. He asked for you in particular." Riley frowned. "A second advisor? That's highly unusual. And why would he ask for me? I don't know him. I've never even heard of his pack." "Your reputation precedes you it would seem. He heard of an advisor named Atwood from another alpha. He said he was told you were the best, so therefore he wanted the best." "Does he know that I am a woman?" This was always a concern for Riley. While the Council had many women who worked there, some packs were set in their ways and did not like to listen to a woman in charge. The commander shrugged. "It didn't come up. He asked for the best. You are the best. If it bothers him that you are a woman, he can get over it." Riley smiled slightly. "What is this alpha like?" "His name is Kent Westwood. He took over the pack about ten years ago when he was nineteen." "That's pretty young." Most alphas took over their packs sometime between twenty-one to twenty-five "His father, the previous alpha, died unexpectedly so he had no choice as the heir. He is well-loved by his pack, but not by many outside of it. He has a reputation of being an asshole. At alpha meetings, he is quiet and not social. When he talks, he is exceptionally blunt and direct. He was initially very resistant to Council assistance and had a lot of reservations. He doesn't like ceding control to our people. Riley shrugged. "Most alphas don't like ceding control." "True," the commander agreed. "Leo gets along well with him, but Leo gets along with most people. Leo does give me positive reports about the ranked members of the pack. He says they are smart, detail-oriented and strategic. He seems to appreciate the alpha's bluntness." "So Wesley blundered the patrols and now I need to go?" "Well..." The commander paused, rubbing his forehead. "The attack that happened can't be directly linked to the patrol

changes, but three council warriors were killed as well as two warriors from a nearby allied pack and two from Red Moon itself. The alpha is worried that if the problem persists, his allied packs may start pulling their assistance. He feels that Wesley's strategies aren't effective. He wants someone to work in tandem with Wesley. He feels this will get the result he wants." "But two advisors working in the same pack is not our protocol." "It's not," he agreed. "But this situation is unique. It's rare that we see this level of rogue attacks on a specific pack that result in such high casualty rates. It seems that we need to deviate from standard protocol." "So you want me to go out?" He nodded. "I told the alpha I would speak to you, but I did warn him that you were fresh of a stressful assignment and we don't typically put advisors on back to back assignments." That was true. Riley generally had a minimum of two weeks between assignments so that she could finish reports to the Council Elders and do any necessary follow up with the packs. The Silvers Streams pack had been on the brink of war with their neighboring pack, Misty Lakes, so it had been a stressful two and a half months of mediating discussions and renegotiating boundaries. Riley had been looking forward to getting back to the compound for a couple weeks. "OK, tell me more about the pack," she said with a sigh. "They're fairly isolated, but mainly because of location. They don't share any borders with other packs and they are about two hours away from the closest human city. The woods around their pack are full of rogues, but until the last two years, they haven't reported any issues. They are very self-sufficient and have never requested assistance from the Council prior to this event. They used to be very small but have been growing, especially under their current alpha. They are well-known for their warriors. They are considered some of the best and they have high numbers that attend the academy." Sending pack warriors to the National Werewolf Academy was a source of pride for packs. Only the best warriors were accepted to the academy and the more warriors a pack had in the academy, the better the pack. Riley, like almost all Council workers, had also attended the academy and prided herself in being a strong fighter. Riley shifted in her chair. "What about the beta? Gamma? Luna?" The commander glanced at some notes on his desk. "There's not much noted about the beta or gamma, other than they are close in age to the alpha. There is no luna." Riley raised an eyebrow. "The alpha is almost thirty and doesn't have a mate? That's highly unusual." Werewolves were lucky in the supernatural world, as each one had a fated mate, gifted to them by the Moon Goddess. Finding a mate was like finding the other half of your soul. They were meant to complete you. The attraction to a mate was powerful and most werewolves searched out their fated mate as it was supposed to be a bond like no other. It was highly unusual for an alpha of that age to not have a mate. Mates were supposed to make each other stronger, so mated alphas were viewed as better leaders. Most alphas either searched for their fated mate or took a chosen mate by the time they were in their late twenties. The commander shrugged. "How old are you? You still don't have a mate." Riley frowned, ignoring the coldness that spread throughout her chest. "I

don't want a mate," she said sternly. The commander chuckled. "Yes, Riley. We all know that." He sat up slightly in his chair, staring at Riley. "So will you go out to Red Moon?" She nodded with a sigh. "Yeah, I'll go. If the problem is as bad as it sounds, they need help." He nodded. "I can always count on you. You'll need to leave in the morning. I'll have Gloria work on booking your tickets and contacting the pack. "Ok, sir." Riley stood, stretching slightly. "I'd say I'll start packing, but I haven't even unpacked yet." The commander smiled slightly. "You can take a month off when you get back. You'll have more than earned it."