

The Unwanted Wolf – Chapter 46

It was just Mark and me in the room with the incessant beeping. Before the beeping was reassuring, letting me know Mark was still alive. Now with everyone gone, it was the most prevalent noise. Beep. Beep. Beep. Mark was still asleep. I felt a deep longing for him. The beeping was just a constant reminder he still wasn't awake.

I moved to Mark's bedside and sat on the bed with him. My fingers brushed his cheek, and his skin was cool. It wasn't as cold as it was when we were outside, but it was still too cold. It wasn't the warmth I had fallen asleep to many nights ago. It had been much too long since I had been surrounded by Mark's warmth, and my body ached for that feeling again.

I stroked his hair back out of his sunken eyes. He still had a bruise above his cheekbone and a split lip. Those wounds should be healed by now. If Mark hadn't come after me, he would have been fine. If I hadn't willingly gone with Theron, maybe we would have been able to fight him off with more wolves around.

I pressed my lips against Mark's forehead and felt a small spark prick my lips. I touched my lips with my fingers and still felt a small tingle. My eyes lowered to Mark's neck, and I felt my mouth start to water. I imagined what it would be like to mark him, to feel his skin against mine. My body started feeling heated.

I pulled back and swallowed hard. Marking him would help him heal faster. I would be able to see him again soon and surround myself with his warmth again. But I didn't want to do it like this. I wanted to tell Mark how sorry I was for everything I put him through. I wanted to tell him that I wanted to be with him and that it shouldn't have taken so long for me to realize all of this.

I took a deep breath. I would just have to be patient. Mark waited for me, so now it was my turn to wait for him. He would wake soon enough. At least I hoped it would be sooner rather than later.

"Are you going to do it?"

The voice startled me, and when I turned around, I saw Jori standing in the doorway. I hadn't heard him come in.

I got off the bed with Mark. "Do what?"

Jori scoffed and looked to the side. "Mark him. Claim him as yours."

My throat suddenly tightened, and I felt like I had done something wrong. "I... I'm not going to mark him, yet. Why would you ask that?"

"I know everything going on in my pack house. I know if you claim him as your mate, it'll help him heal." Jori shut the door and leaned against the wall. He still wasn't looking at me.

"I know, but I'm not going to do it." I moved away from Mark's bed, somehow feeling like I was betraying Jori by being so close to another man.

"Yet." Jori threw my word back at me. "But you plan to." This wasn't a question.

I didn't respond right away. I looked down at the ground. I wasn't ready for this conversation, but I felt it coming.

"You're picking him over me." Jori took a step towards me, and there was a slight growl in his voice.

My body tensed as Jori took another step closer. My breath grew shallow and my eyes finally met his. His eyes were darker, just like in the field. His unspoken words were just bubbling beneath the surface.

"I saw it in your eyes when you saw Mark on that field. The pure desperation to save his life, the devastation that came out of you when you thought he died." Jori looked me up and down. "I wonder if you would have looked at me if I had been the one at death's door."

I opened my mouth to speak, but I didn't know what to say. I didn't know if the roles were reversed how I would act. I would care if Jori died. I think a part of me would break with him. But I didn't know if I would be devastated.

"Say something," Jori said. He took another step forward.

"What do you want me to say?"

"Tell me I'm wrong," Jori pleaded. He was now directly in front of me, looking down at me. "Tell me I'm the one you want, and you just didn't want Mark to die because you didn't want to feel responsible for his death."

I licked my lips, trying to bring moisture back to my mouth. I wasn't ready to have this conversation. I wanted Mark to wake up first. Or maybe I wanted to avoid rejecting someone after being rejected so many times. I knew what it was to be unwanted, and I was terrified of the idea of making another person feel that way.

"Adira." Jori's eyes softened for a moment, and then a hunger burned in them. They brightened and his lip twitched. He grabbed my arms and pulled him close to me. "Don't just stand there saying something. I deserve better than for you to ignore me."

My tears started welling up. "You're hurting me."

Jori's grip got tighter. "Tell me the truth."

"It's not that easy!" I tried to push Jori away, but he wouldn't let go of me.

"Just tell me you don't want me. Tell me the truth." Jori shook me.

I could feel the bruises on my arms, and the tears started streaming down my face. "You're hurting me."

"Just answer me!" Jori snapped and his eyes went almost black.

"No!" I snapped. "If this is how you are going to treat me, why would I want to be with you?"

Jori pulled back, dropping his arms to his side. "When your mate wakes up, I want all of you out of this pack house."

"Jori-" I reached for him, but he stormed out of the room.

The pressure in my chest grew, and the next thing I knew, I was doubled over, dry heaving. That conversation was much worse than I had even imagined, and I was having a hard time calming down. I pressed my hands into my knees and tried to take deep breaths, but it felt like my nervous system was on fire. Is this what it felt like to be rejected by your mate?

I had heard rumors about what it felt like to be rejected by a mate. People said being rejected was the worst pain a werewolf could feel. Some wolves suffered severe depression or even died from the rejection. I hadn't known any personally, since the pack I had grown up in was so small. Maybe it was

better this way. Jori rejected me, putting me in pain and not him. He made the decision, which likely saved him some suffering. I was the one who deserved to suffer.

After a few moments, my breath normalized, and I was able to stand up straight. My chest ached still, and I wasn't sure if it was from all of the dry heaving or if it was because part of my soul was breaking.

"Are you there, Moon?" I waited for her to respond, but my head was silent. I hoped she was okay, but I wasn't sure how rejection of a soulmate affected a familiar. I needed to know so much more about my unknown nature. I needed to go see Claire's friend.

I looked back at Mark and his stillness. My body moved to him before I could even think about it. I sat on the bed and touched his hand. I tried to warm his cool skin with my hands, but it was difficult when my own hands were shaking.

My eyes started feeling heavy, and my body was exhausted. I hadn't rested since the fight. I pulled my legs onto the bed and lay down next to Mark. I made myself as small as possible and did my best not to touch him. He was still healing, and I was afraid to bump his injuries and delay any healing. I couldn't bring myself to leave though.

My body quickly succumbed to sleep, and that was the first time I hadn't dreamed in weeks. It was dark and quiet. The calm was almost peaceful, but something felt off about it. I had become used to Moon and Shadow visiting in my dreams.

When I woke up, my body felt heavy. The silence from the night left me feeling unrested, which didn't make sense to me. It was uninterrupted sleep, so I should feel better than before. I sat up, a little disoriented. The beeping from the machine hooked up to Mark brought me back to the moment. I looked over at the body next to me.

Mark had a little more color to his skin now compared to before. I pushed myself up, so I could get a better look at him. I reached my hand up and stroked his cheek. His cheek was pink, almost like a blush. Touching his skin warmed something inside of me, bringing back some of the energy that seemed to be missing.

"Mark, please wake up." My voice was no more than a whisper. "I will wait as long as you need me to, but please don't make me wait too long, okay?"

Mark reached up and grabbed my hand on his cheek. He curled his fingers around mine and squeezed. My heart was racing as I stared at his fingers. Slowly, my eyes moved from his hand to his face. His piercing blue eyes met mine, leaving me breathless once again.

“You don’t have to wait any longer, Adira.”

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I blinked my eyes several times, wondering if this was a dream. I had fallen asleep in the hospital bed with Mark, and I feared I had dreamed he was awake because I was so desperate to see his eyes and hear his voice again.

“Mark?” My voice was dry and cracked from sleep, and I was barely audible.

“Hey.” He smiled at me. I didn’t realize just how much I missed his smile until I saw it again.

“You’re awake.” I let out the breath I was holding in. This wasn’t a dream. It felt too real to be a dream. My body ached from sleeping in a bed that was not meant for two. My head throbbed from waking up every half hour, paranoid I would hurt Mark. My heart raced out of control from the excitement of seeing Mark’s eyes again.

“I’m alive, too.” Mark seemed a little dazed at the thought. “How did I...” His voice trailed off, and he looked at his hand clasped in mine. “I was gone. I felt it. I felt myself drifting away into this darkness. By then I saw this light. Your light. And I followed it back.”

Our eyes met with his realization. I could feel his heart beating against my chest, racing with confusion and something else. His free hand grabbed the back of my head. He pulled me in, pressing his lips into mine. I threw my body onto his, wanting more, and immediately I heard him groan in pain.

I shot up, looking at him with wide eyes. “Are you okay?”

Mark chuckled, trying to hide the pained expression written all over his face, but I saw right through his facade.

“Yeah, I’m just still bruised and banged up.” His eyes softened as he stared at me. “Adira, you saved my life. You brought me back from the brink of death. How... How did you do that?”

I chewed on my lip. "I'm not sure. It's something sorcerers can do, I guess. How I did, I really don't know. I was trying so hard to heal you, but it wasn't working. But then... suddenly it did. I thought you were dead, Mark. I thought I had lost you forever, and I couldn't stand that thought."

Mark's fingers stroked my face, brushing a piece of hair out of my eyes. "I know the feeling. When you were taken from your birthday party, I lost it."

"Why did you come after me by yourself? You could have died. He tortured you, didn't he?" The thought of Mark being tortured and nearly killed by Theron was too much for me. I squeezed my eyes shut and pressed my face into Mark's palm.

"Because I would do anything for you, Adira, even if it meant sacrificing my own life. I knew you would have been happy without me."

"No." My eyes snapped open, and they burned with an intensity. "You make me happy. I need you to know that. I don't want to keep living without you."

Mark paused, mulling over my words carefully. "What about Jori?"

My ribs squeezed my lungs at the mention of his name. The pain of Jori's rejection still lingered in my body. "I choose you, Mark. I'm sorry it took me so long to figure it out, but I choose you. I want you. I-" I paused, choking on my last words. I wanted to tell Mark how I felt, but it seemed to be stuck to my throat like glue.

Mark pulled me on top of him again. I felt him wince underneath me, but he pushed through the pain. He squeezed me as if I would disappear if he let me go. "I'm so relieved to hear you say that."

"I'm sorry for everything you've been through because of me." My face was pressed into Mark's neck, and my words were merely a whisper.

Mark rubbed my back, soothing my entire body. "None of this is your fault. I'm just so happy that you want me."

I breathed in Mark's scent and let it fill every cell of my body. It felt right being in Mark's arm, and the pain from Jori's rejection was dulled compared to before. I shifted my body so I could look at Mark's face again. His cheek twitched, and I frowned.

“Let me go get Doctor Zayla. You’re clearly in a lot of pain.” I started to move away from Mark, but he just pulled me in closer.

“Not yet. I just need another moment with you.” After a small pause, he continued. “What’s Zay doing here?”

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“You are still facing the effects of the wolfsbane,” Doctor Zayla said. “It will take several days for it to be completely out of your system, and then your healing will increase rapidly. Until then, you must have minimal activity and let your body rest.” She turned to me and made direct eye contact. “That means no s****l intercourse.”

My face instantly heated at the comment. Why did she have to make direct eye contact with me?” I was now sitting next to Mark’s bed, but he was still holding my hand, not wanting to let go, even when Doctor Zayla had been conducting her examination.

“Zay,” Mark scolded. “You’re a little blunt.”

“I am just making sure my patient is fully aware of his limitations, especially as an alpha. I know you are tempted to get out of bed, especially now that your mate has accepted you. You must resist your urges.”

“Zay,” Mark said again, this time a little more firm. “I understand the directions.”

“I’m just so glad you’re awake,” Rie said, throwing her arms around Mark for the third time since she found out he was awake. “I don’t know what we would have done without our alpha.”

“Good thing we don’t have to find out,” Scythe agreed. His face fell, and I could tell something was wrong. His cheery demeanor was nowhere in sight.

“Scythe, what’s on your mind,” Mark asked.

I wasn’t the only one to have noticed Scythe’s mood. He wasn’t good at hiding his concern, but neither was I.

“Jori wants us gone now that you’re awake,” Scythe said.

I hadn't had a chance to tell Mark about what had gone down between Jori and I yet. I hadn't told anyone, but I'm sure rumors had already spread. Scythe and Rie were fully aware of Jori wanting our presence gone. Even though I hadn't said it, I was sure they could guess what was going on, since they knew I wanted to be with Mark.

Mark's face tightened. "Of course he does. We should leave as soon as possible then. Can you guys help start packing up? I think it's time we head back to the pack."

I shoved my free hand into my pocket and felt around for the little piece of paper I was keeping close to me. I let go of Mark's hand and opened the note from Clara. I looked at it carefully, rereading the address for the umpteenth time.

"Actually, I have something I need to do." I still hadn't felt Moon's presence since Jori rejected me, and it worried me. "I'm sure Theron will come after me again. I don't think he'll stop until one of us is dead. I have to be ready for his next attack."

"I won't let him get you," Mark growled.

I looked at him with a small frown. "He almost killed you last time. And without Jori's help, we'll be outnumbered."

"We have the rest of the pack back at home," Mark said.

I curled my lips around my teeth. "I don't know if it'll be enough. I think the key to defeating Theron is to learn more about him and more about that side of me." I didn't want to tell everyone I was worried that I had lost my powers. If Theron came after me right now, I was afraid to admit I wouldn't be strong enough against him.

"How are we going to do that?" Mark asked. He wasn't around before to hear my story about how I escaped and how Clara saved my life at the expense of her own. We had only a few minutes together alone after he had woken up, and it didn't feel right to talk about it at that moment.

I held up the piece of paper with the address of Clara's friend on it. "I need to go here. Apparently, someone there can help me learn more about the truth of my nature."

“Are you sure that’s safe?” Rie asked. “You didn’t know the woman who gave it to you. It could be a trap.”

I looked around at the worried and curious expressions staring back at me. “I don’t have a way of knowing for sure, but I have a gut feeling this is my next step. I won’t ask anyone else to come with me, since this is a journey I need to take.”

“I’m not leaving your side. Don’t be silly,” Mark said instantly.

“Of course we’re going to go with you,” Rie said. “You’re our family now.”

I looked to Scythe, but he was looking at the ground. I had a vague idea of what was going on in his head, and I didn’t blame him for the hesitation. I would have a hard time leaving Mark, if I had to make that choice right now.

“I’m sorry, Adira. I don’t think I can go.” Scythe was still looking at the ground, his hands clasped behind his back.

“Why wouldn’t you go?” Mark asked, completely shocked.

“It’s okay,” I said before Scythe could respond. “I understand. Do what you need to do.”

Mark opened his mouth to say something, but I squeezed his hand and gave him a look. He shut his mouth.

“When you need me for a fight, I’ll be there,” Scythe continued. “I just have to figure out some things with Percy.”

Rie wrapped Scythe in a hug. “We understand. Hopefully we see you again soon.”

“I too will not be joining,” Doctor Zayla said. “I have other duties I must take care of.”

“I’ll come.”

I looked at the door, surprised by who I saw. Daniel was standing there, his bag already packed. “Daniel? Why would you want to come?”

“Because it’s a grand opportunity to conduct more research.” He looked around the room, and his eyes lingered on Doctor Zayla a little longer than everyone else. “Besides, you’re my friend.”

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I packed up my clothes and the few other items I had brought on this trip. I didn’t have a lot of stuff with me, since it was supposed to be a short trip, instead of what it turned into. It felt a little odd knowing I was leaving, and I wouldn’t be welcomed back.

A sharp pain radiated through my chest at that thought. Jori hated me, and I didn’t blame him. I was consumed with guilt from how the conversation had gone down. I wanted to sit down with Jori and explain everything to him. I wanted to tell him that I still cared about him, but I had to be true to my heart.

Everything with Mark made me lose focus on staying neutral, and Jori saw that. I let out a long sigh. Even if I had sat down and talked to Jori the way I wanted to, it likely wouldn’t have mattered. Rejection was difficult. I knew that first hand. How you get rejected doesn’t matter in the end. It was still rejection.

If my mother had sat down with me and told me that she loved me and cared about me, but I still had to leave the pack and never come home, I don’t think it would have made the rejection better. It might have made it worse. Maybe I would have been angry instead of confused, but in the end, my family didn’t want me.

And I didn’t want Jori. I couldn’t blame him for throwing me out. Another sharp pain shot through my body, and I had to sit down and take a break from packing for a moment. I didn’t know how long this pain would last, but it made me ache for Mark’s presence again. It dulled the pain when he was near.

I missed Moon’s voice in my head, too. She hadn’t been there for very long, but I liked her. She felt like a part of me that had been missing. She was confident and smart. I hoped she was okay.

“Are you ready?”

Rie was standing in my doorway, her bags packed and a solemn look on her face.

“Almost.” I threw the last few items in my bag and zipped up my suitcase. I turned my face away from Rie as I stood up, so she wouldn’t see my pained reaction.

“Are you okay?”

I looked at her, and her eyebrows were slightly furrowed. She looked me up and down and c****d her head to the side.

I tried to smile. “I’m fine.”

“No, you’re not. Talk to me.” Rie entered my room, and shut the door behind me.

I bit my cheek in hesitation. I wasn’t planning on telling anyone what was happening. “I’m okay, really.”

Rie sat on my bed and patted the seat next to her. “I can see right through you. Sit. Talk. You have no choice in this matter, so don’t fight me or lie to me.”

I sat on the bed and let out a long sigh. “Jori rejected me.”

Rie nodded slowly. “I thought you were going to reject him.”

“I was. I just wasn’t ready to have that conversation. With everything that happened with Mark, I got swept up in everything. Jori could tell that I had made my decision, and before I had a chance to bring it up, he rejected me.” Talking about it made my body ache even more. I wanted to move past it.

“Ah, so that’s why he wants us all out of the house so fast. I had a feeling that was the case, but I wasn’t sure. How are you handling it?”

I squeezed my hands together and closed my eyes. “Ever since it happened, I have been in pain. It dulls when I’m with Mark, but I still feel it. I don’t understand why. I was going to reject Jori. I shouldn’t be feeling this way.”

Rie put her hands over mine. “We should talk to Doctor Zayla.”

“No,” I instantly said. “I don’t want to tell people about it. I’m sure I’ll be fine. Especially when Mark and I strengthen our mate bond.”

“Adira.” Rie’s voice was calm and full of concern. I knew she didn’t approve, even without me telling her. “You should at least tell Mark.”

I nodded. “I will. I promise. I haven’t had much alone time with him to talk about everything. I don’t plan on hiding what happened with Jori from him, but I don’t want him to worry about the pain. I’ll be fine.”

Rie let out a long sigh. “Fine, but if it gets any worse, tell me, and we’ll get you help, got it?”

I forced a smile. “Got it. We should get going before Jori throws us out of here.”

We packed up the car, and then together Rie, Scythe, and myself helped Mark to the car. He still wasn’t in the best condition, but he insisted he would be okay. Once Mark was in the car, we all said goodbye to Scythe and wished him luck. I wished he was coming with us, but I knew I would see him again. I just hoped it would be sooner rather than later. I knew he was doing what he had to for his own happiness though, and I wouldn’t blame him if he decided not to return to Mark’s pack.

Everyone else piled into the car, Rie in the driver’s seat and Daniel in front. I was about to get into the back with Mark when Doctor Zayla grabbed my arm and stopped me.

“He won’t recover his full strength for a few days,” she warned me. “I’m leaving his safety in your hands. If you get attacked again, he won’t be able to defend himself. He has to come home, understand?”

I nodded, understanding what she expected, but I was terrified I wouldn’t be able to fulfill that promise if we got attacked. Shadow was still with me, and I had my wolf strength, but if Theron attacked, I wasn’t sure if I could do anything to defeat him without Moon’s assistance and my sorcerer’s powers. We barely won the last fight with more wolves at our disposal.

“Excellent. I hope you find what you are looking for, and it’s enough to stop this brother of yours.” Doctor Zayla let go of me.

“Me too.”

The sense of relief I felt when Mark woke up was quickly fleeting. I knew this was far from over. We would have to face Theron again, and I couldn’t let him

escape, or I would be spending my running and always in fear. I didn't like the idea of it coming down to killing him, though. I was never a warrior. My parents didn't want me to participate in training, because they said I wouldn't need to as future Luna of the pack. I would have had a security team to take care of that for me.

After I was on my own, I took self-defense classes so that I could protect myself. It wasn't as good as the training I could have received growing up, but it had kept me alive so far. I knew it wouldn't be enough in the upcoming fight with Theron. I needed something more. I needed answers. I needed training. Even then, I wasn't sure it would be enough.

"What did Zay want?" Mark asked as I slipped into the back seat.

I shut the car door and looked at him. "She just wanted to make sure I was looking out for you until you fully heal."

"I told you, I'm fine."

I rolled my eyes at him and grabbed his hand. "You will be. You're not now."

"Don't act so macho, Mark," Rie said, starting the car. "You're allowed to not be at peak performance all of the time."

"No one could run at peak performance one hundred percent of the time," Daniel added. "They would simply exhaust themselves."

"I've been trying to tell him that for years," Rie muttered under her breath.

Mark laughed at the comment. "I'm your alpha. It's my responsibility to take care of the pack and make sure everyone is safe."

"You haven't been my alpha that long," Rie retorted. "Besides, as part of your pack, it's my job to support my alpha and protect him when he's being an idiot."

Mark sighed and shook his head. He turned to me, letting go of the conversation. "I'm just happy you're here with me and safe. I feel like I'm on top of the world knowing you picked me."

I felt my face heating up, and I knew I was blushing like crazy. Butterflies spun around in my stomach, and for a moment I felt like I was floating. "I'm glad I picked you too."

"Gross," Rie said from the front. "Can you tone down the lovey dovey nature while I'm in the car with you?"

"I would also appreciate that," Daniel agreed.

Mark chuckled, his low voice vibrating in his chest. He pulled me closer and grabbed my head. He pulled me into a heated kiss. I instantly melted into the kiss, completely forgetting about who was in the car with me. My body tingled all over, and the craving for more burned deep in my stomach. Finally, Mark pulled away, leaving me breathless.

Rie made fake gagging noises. "I'm going to pull this car over if you decide to be smoochy teenagers in love while I'm driving."

Mark laughed again. "Alright, alright. I'm done." He paused and looked at me. Then he whispered, "For now."

I felt my body heat up again, and I felt a craving for his touch in a way I hadn't before. I wasn't scared anymore, and knowing I wanted him as my mate made my mind start to wander to new places. I suddenly couldn't wait for some alone time with him.

The rest of the car ride went fairly smoothly. The address given to us was only a couple hours away. We ended up driving through my hometown, and I was holding my breath the entire time, terrified I would see someone I recognized. Mark held my hand the entire time, and I knew he could tell I was on edge. Luckily, we were just passing through on a main road, so there wasn't an opportunity to see anyone.

We continued on, driving on a road that wound through the forest that surrounded my hometown. The GPS took us on a small, unpaved road that I didn't even know existed, despite it being so close to where I grew up. It took almost an hour of driving on the small road before we came to a road block.

Rie stopped the car and turned it off. "This is where the GPS says we are supposed to go."

I looked around, seeing only trees around us. "I don't understand. I don't see a house."

"Maybe she wrote the address wrong," Daniel suggested. "She was in a stressful situation when she wrote it."

I pulled out the piece of paper and studied it again. There was still a small blood stain on it from that night. Clara didn't make a mistake. "No, it's here. I'm going to take a look around."

Mark grabbed my arm. "Wait, I'll come with you."

"I'll be fine. I'm just taking a quick look. You should stay in the car and rest." I smiled to reassure Mark, but it didn't seem to help.

"It's okay. I'll go with her," Rie said, stepping out of the car. "You two stay here, just in case we need to get away quickly." She winked at Mark and then left the car.

I left the car and walked over to the blockade in the road. It almost looked like a few trees had fallen and nature overtook the trees with time. It looked like a natural block, but something told me it was more than that. I looked past the trees in the road, but I didn't see any path on the other side of the road. It was as if the road stopped where the trees fell.

"Doesn't something look off to you about all of this?" I asked. I couldn't quite put my finger on it, but something was gnawing at me.

Rie shrugged. "Not really. I don't see any houses around here though, or anywhere else to go."

I squinted my eyes, and I didn't see anything specific, but I could feel something beyond the roadblock. For a split second, I felt like I could see something beyond. I started climbing over the trees, knowing I needed to move past them.

"What are you doing?" Rie asked. She moved closer to the trees, but she didn't follow. "That's dangerous."

I ignored her and kept climbing. My feet landed on the other side of the blockade, and I reached forward, knowing something was there. My fingers brushed against something cold only a few feet in front of me, but I couldn't

see anything. I took a few steps forward, and it felt like I had been transported to a completely different area.

There was a cabin surrounded by trees. It was small, but it was there. Why hadn't I seen it before?

"Adira? Where did you go?" Rie asked.

I turned back, but I couldn't see Rie or the trees or anything. It looked like I was somewhere completely different, but I could hear her clearly on the other side. There was some kind of invisible wall in front of me separating us.

"I'm right here," I called out.

A shotgun noise rang out nearby, and I dropped to the ground, suddenly terrified for my life.

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I looked up, not daring to stand up. I was looking for the person who shot the gun. They didn't hit me, thankfully, but I had no idea if it was because they missed or it was a warning shot. I didn't see anyone, and the area around the cabin was serene. There was a small brook running next to the house, and the babbling was soothing. Flowers grew in a garden in front of the house, and there was a rocking chair swaying in the slight breeze on the porch. It reminded me of a grandparents' house, a place where someone would retire.

It looked like I was by myself, but I felt a presence nearby. I couldn't see them, but I could feel them. I didn't dare move from my position, terrified they would see me as a threat and actually shoot me.

Another gunshot echoed in my ears, and I put my arms over my head in protection. I still wasn't hit. They must not be aiming for me. I wasn't a moving target this time, so if they wanted to, it would've been easy to hit me.

"Don't shoot! I mean you no harm!" I shouted.

There was a pause in the air, and I could feel the hesitation.

"What do you want, girl?" The voice belonged to a female, weathered and worn. I couldn't see her, but her voice had clearly seen many days.

“Adira? What happened?” Rie asked, stepping next to me. “What the-”

I reached up and grabbed Rie’s arm, pulling her to the ground with me. Just then, another shot echoed through the air, and Rie screamed.

“Who’s shooting at us?” Rie asked with wide eyes.

“I don’t know. Stay down,” I said in a hushed voice.

“You don’t have to tell me that twice. Where on earth are we? You just disappeared when you stepped over those trees.” Rie looked around the area.

“I’m not sure, but I think we’re dealing with a sorceress,” I said, looking up again. I still didn’t see anyone, but my eyes focused on the rocking chair. It was no longer moving.

“There’s more than one of you. What are you trying to take from me? How did you find me?” The voice sounded like it was coming at us from all angles, almost like it was echoing in a bubble.

“Clara sent me,” I said, still trying to pinpoint the voice. I didn’t see the stranger hiding anywhere, so I wondered if she used some kind of glamour on herself. I didn’t even know if that was something sorcerers could do, but clearly the house had some sort of spell on it.

There was a moment of silence. “What does that old bat want? Does she want to kill me?”

My throat tightened at her words. I thought this was Clara’s friend. Why would she want to kill this person? “No. She sent me for your help.”

“Why do you need my help? How do I know I can trust you? You and your friend just barged into my home like it was nothing.”

I knew lying there wouldn’t change this woman’s mind. I started standing up, but Rie quickly grabbed my arm.

“What are you doing? You could get shot. This woman is crazy.” Rie tried to pull me back down.

“I have a feeling I’ll be okay. Trust me, okay?”

Rie hesitated to let me go, but then she did, nodding.

I started to stand up again, putting my hands up to show I didn't mean harm. "Clara said you could help me with my powers and teach me about sorcerers."

Another gunshot sound echoed, but it didn't hit me. I felt even more confident that this woman didn't want to hurt us.

"Don't take another step forward," the woman cautioned. "Why should I help you? You look old enough to understand your powers."

I didn't take another step forward, but the voice sounded more direct than before. I stared at where I thought she was standing. "I wasn't raised as a sorceress. My father is a sorcerer, but my mother is a werewolf. Until recently, I didn't even know I had mixed blood, but my half brother is trying to kill me to take my powers. I need to learn to control my powers if I want to survive. Can you help me?"

"I thought I smelled dogs. But you're not lying. You smell different than most dogs. What wolf pack are you from?"

"I am from Pack Lyna," I said. It felt weird saying that. I no longer felt an association with them, and I didn't like introducing myself in that manner.

"And the coven of your father?" she asked.

"Caspian."

After a moment of silence, a woman appeared on the porch. I was surprised when her hands were empty. I was expecting a gun of some sort. Her hair had stripes of gray in it, and she had the wrinkles to match. She was in a long purple dress that had stitched flowers of various colors at the bottom of the dress.

"Interesting," she finally said. "Come inside. Your friend too."

I looked back at Rie, who was still lying on the ground. She widened her eyes, and I knew exactly what she was thinking. Were we making a mistake? It wasn't like I had much of a choice. Werewolves typically didn't get involved in sorcerer's, and each group usually made a point to avoid the other. If I wanted to know more, this lady was my best and fastest shot.

I started walking towards the house, and I could hear Rie following behind me. I got up to the porch, and an overwhelming scent filled my nose. It was a

plethora of different smells combining together in a thick scent that clung to your throat. I resisted the urge to cough it out of my lungs, knowing it wouldn't help. I tried to identify the scents, and I could tell there were flowers and ginger and something that smelled like an antiseptic. The rest of the smells were too convoluted to differentiate from one another.

Rie looked over at me, worry spread across her face. She hesitated to enter through the door, but I walked right through it. The inside was cluttered with glass bottles of various shapes and sizes. The light through the front window was hitting some of the bottles, causing the light to refract the colors on the wall. It was mesmerizing to look at. In the middle of the room, there was a large stainless steel pot sitting over a fire. Steam rose from the pot, and I gathered that was where a majority of the smell was coming from.

"Come in, come in. Don't be shy," the lady said, waving us deeper into the room.

"You tried to shoot us," Rie instantly said. "Forgive me if I'm a little hesitant."

The lady waved her hand. "Hoge posh. I wasn't actually shooting a gun. I was just creating the sound. It's a safety precaution. Most people run when they hear a gunshot. Clearly, you're not most people. Either your stupid or determined." She paused and looked me up and down. "Perhaps a little of both."

"I need help. I don't have much of a choice," I said, following her deeper into the room.

She gestured to a couch, but I decided to stay standing, wanting to stay alert. Rie didn't move either.

"Everyone always has a choice. You could choose to deal with your problem on your own or not even get help." She went over to the pot and stirred it. She pulled the spoon out and swiped a finger on the liquid. She touched the tip of her tongue and made a face. She grabbed something from a bottle and poured it into the mix.

"I don't want to die," I said. "I finally have a reason to try to live, and I don't want to lose that."

"A man," she said simply. "Interesting. Where is this man?"

“He’s nearby with another friend,” I said. I took a step back as the woman scurried around her house.

“Why didn’t he come with you?”

I hesitated to answer. I didn’t like giving away all of these details to someone who seemed a little off, but there was no use in lying. “He’s injured. The man trying to kill me poisoned him.”

“Wolfsbane?” she asked.

“Yes. He sustained several injuries and hasn’t been able to heal, since the wolfsbane is still in his system.” I wondered what Mark was thinking right now. Daniel and he likely saw us disappear into whatever barrier surrounded the house. Hopefully they didn’t rush in to join us.

“I can help him. Bring him to the house.”

“I thought there was no remedy for wolfsbane,” I said. Wolfsbane either killed a werewolf or slowly worked its way out of the system.

“Child, you clearly don’t know much at all about this world or about yourself. Bring him here, and I shall help him.”

“Are you going to help Adira?” Rie asked.

The lady looked Rie up and down, studying her closely. “Ah, so her name is Adira. What might your name be?”

“Rie. And what’s your name, old lady?”

“Rie,” I scolded. I didn’t want to insult the woman who we needed help from.

The lady let out a hearty laugh. “I like this Rie. She has gumption. My name is Ginger. Gingy to friends. To you, I’m Ginger.”

“So Ginger, are you going to help Adira figure out her powers?” Rie asked again.

Ginger didn’t respond right away. “I haven’t decided yet. Not sure she has what it takes. Bring this boy here. I’ll help him, and then I’ll decide if I want to help you.”

The Unwanted Wolf – Chapter 50

Mark wasn't too fond of the idea of coming into this strange lady's house, especially when we told him about our first interaction with her. But with a little batting of my eyelashes, he reluctantly agreed. I told him she said she could heal him, but he didn't believe it. I couldn't blame him on that one, though. If there was a cure for wolfsbane, I was sure someone somewhere would have heard about it, and there would at least be a rumor that it existed.

We all entered the house, and Daniel was the first one to rush in. He looked like a little kid, excited to go to an amusement park. His eyes sparkled at all of the potions lying around. He went to touch something, and Ginger was instantly in front of him.

She smacked his finger. "Don't touch anything without permission."

Daniel shook his hand. "Ow. Can I have permission to touch things?"

Ginger walked away, not even giving him a second look. "Not if you want to keep those pretty little fingers of yours."

I chuckled at the interaction. Daniel was normally on the more serious side, so it was cute seeing him act like this. His need for knowledge was a greater part of him than I realized.

I had my arm around Mark, helping him walk into the house. He tried to protest, saying he didn't need help, but I refused to let go. I was pretty sure a part of him was happy I wouldn't let go. He had his arm around my shoulder and held me tightly. I helped him over to the couch and slowly sat him down.

"Do you really know a cure for wolfsbane?" Daniel asked, standing right behind Ginger.

Ginger turned and waved him away. "Boy, give me space. There's a cure for everything in this world. It's a matter of finding what it is."

"Do you run chemical tests on poisons to find the cure?" Daniel asked. He hadn't moved away from Ginger.

Ginger clicked her tongue. "That mind of yours is going to get you in trouble one day. I test them in a sense. My specialty is breaking things down and building them back up."

“Your specialty? Do all sorcerers have specialties?” Daniel asked.

I had to bite my cheek to hold in a laugh. I wouldn’t have to ask any questions if I let Daniel keep talking. Although, he could get himself in trouble with Ginger if he didn’t listen to her.

Ginger pointed to a seat in the corner of the room. “Boy, go sit over there, and I’ll consider answering your barrage of questions.” She shook her head and looked around the room for a couple of items. She dumped them out on the table.

Daniel sulked over to the chair and sat down like he was told. “So does everyone have a specialty?”

Ginger glared at Daniel before going back to her work. “Yes and no. Everyone can have a specialty, but not all choose to have one, and some never find what they are skilled at, so they work on all of their powers.”

I thought about what she said and wondered what Theron’s specialty was, if he had one. I hadn’t seen him use many of his powers, other than shifting and poisoning people. Maybe he was skilled at poison..

Ginger knelt down in front of Mark. “Give me your hand.”

Mark held out his hand, and Ginger grabbed it. She turned his hand over, so his palm was facing up. She ran her finger down from the pit of his elbow all the way to his palm. She clasped his hand with both of hers and held them tightly. Closing her eyes, she started humming an unfamiliar tune. When she opened her eyes, they were completely white.

“You were given small doses of wolfsbane over a period of time. This was intended to weaken you without completely killing you. It also means it will stay in your system longer than a normal dose.”

Ginger closed her eyes again, and when she opened them, they were back to normal. She let go of Mark’s hand and instantly started moving around the room.

“That is incredible!” Daniel gushed.

“It’s only incredible to a wolf,” Ginger brushed off. “If you knew anything about real magic, you would know that was child’s play.”

"If that's child's play, then what's the real deal?" Rie asked. She was standing in the corner of the room, watching everything unfold. Her eyes kept wandering between Ginger and the rest of us.

Ginger stopped and looked Rie up and down. "Y'all aren't ready for that yet."

Ginger keeps moving around the room. She was taking various bottles and pouring things into a wooden cup. She finished it off with a white powder that made a puff of purple smoke appear. She walked over to Mark and handed it to him.

"Take this. You'll start feeling better within an hour, and then your body can take it from there."

Mark looked down at the cup and frowned. The liquid inside looked completely unappetizing. He looked at me for reassurance. I nodded, and so he slowly lifted the cup to his lips. He took a small sip and instantly started coughing.

Ginger started cackling at the reaction. "It doesn't get better as you drink it. It might even get worse. Push through it, and you won't regret it."

"Are you sure this will help?" Rie asked.

Ginger rolled her eyes. "Don't worry, girl. I'm not going to harm your alpha."

"How did you know he was our alpha?" Rie asked.

"Your alpha, not his." She gestured to Daniel. "It's easy to know things if you listen to the energy surrounding people."

"How do you do that?" I asked, standing up. "How do you get in touch with your powers and get stronger?"

Ginger paused what she was doing and looked up to the ceiling. She was focused on something, but I didn't see anything in particular.

"Clara wanted me to help you, but I don't know you. I think I know why she wanted this, though. Clara didn't know you either, but she could tell you were special. You have a special future ahead of you." The old lady suddenly moved over to me, standing only a few inches from my face.

She grabbed my hand and did the same movement to me as she did to Mark. Her fingers dragged down my forearm, leaving little goosebumps along the

way. She clasped my hand, and I felt a warmth surge through my blood. This time she placed my hand over my heart and pressed down. My heart beat faster at the sudden motion, but then it calmed down.

Ginger closed her eyes, and my eyes grew heavy. I felt my mind drifting to a peaceful scene, white snowing down from the sky until everything was blank. I saw Ginger walking through the scene and ran after her.

“Where are we?” I asked, looking around.

“You don’t know?” she asked, tilting her head to the side. “I’m sure you’ve been here before.”

I took a moment to absorb my surroundings. There wasn’t much around, but she was right. I had been here many times. Usually Moon or Shadow or both were here with me. “Is this my mind?”

“Ah, so you do recognize this place. It’s not your mind exactly. It’s a plane of existence that all sorcerers have access to. Usually you can’t enter another sorcerer’s mind plane without them inviting you. It’s a safe place where you can explore truths,” Ginger explained. She kept walking, but I didn’t understand the point. There was nothing around us but white. There was nothing to walk to or from.

“Then how are you here?” She was walking surprisingly fast, and I almost had to skip to keep up with her.

“You invited me in. You need answers, so we are looking for answers together.” She stopped suddenly and changed directions.

“Where are you going? There’s nothing here.” I squinted my eyes to see if there was something I was missing.

“That’s where you are wrong. There’s plenty here. You just have to find it. That’s why you haven’t been very successful with your powers, girl. Where’s your familiar?” She stopped again, looking around.

I felt a sinking feeling, and pain shot through my chest once again. “I... I haven’t seen her since my soulmate rejected me.”

“But isn’t he sitting on my couch?”

"It appears that due to my dual-blooded nature, I have two mates. Mark is the mate for my wolf side, while Jori was the soul mate to my sorcerer's side. He rejected me yesterday." I looked at the ground and focused on my breathing.

"Interesting. Rejecting your soulmate or being rejected by your soulmate can affect your powers." Ginger twirled her hair in her fingers. She started moving again, changing her direction.

"So I have lost my powers because I was rejected?" I bit my lip. That was exactly what my fear was.

"No, I didn't say that. Your familiar is likely just hibernating through the pain. She will emerge again when ready. If you haven't figured it out already, our powers are tied to our emotions. We can be weakened by dejection and sadness. Anger can fuel your power, but it can easily get out of control. Happiness, love-as cliché as it sounds-are where the true control and power lie. If you can learn to harness those feelings, you will be practically unstoppable."

Ginger stopped again, and this time she held her hand out in front of me to stop me.

"We're here," she said.

"We are?"

"Just look. Relax and don't focus too hard."

I looked around us, but I didn't see anything. I took a deep breath to relax, and I started to see some colors come into view. At first it was a light pink, and then a bright blue, followed by a deep red. More and more colors swirled around until they started creating various shapes.

All at once, everything came into focus, and it was like I was watching a movie without sound. I saw a faceless girl running through the forest during the day. The sun began to set, and it grew dark. The moon rose, and the girl transformed into a wolf. She kept running until she reached a river. She looked into the river, and her eyes were sparkling and bright. Her entire body caught the light, and the wolf was sparkling like the night sky.

It was a stunning and gorgeous view, and I felt enthralled watching the sight. Something deep inside of me stirred, and I knew this meant something big.

“Do you see it now, girl?” Ginger asked, her eyes following the scene.

“I see it, but what does it mean?”

I watched as the scene transfigured into something more. A dark shadow grew around the wolf, and then it started chasing her. She ran through the forest and kept running. When backed into a corner, the wolf grew brighter, eliminating the shadow.

“It means you have a grand future. You’re unique in your nature, and you’re the only one that can stop the great evil.

The scene faded before us, leaving only the white background.

“How can I do that when I can’t even control my powers?” I asked. I didn’t like what I saw. I was just trying to survive so I could live out my happily ever after with Mark.

“We train until you learn how to control your powers.”