

## The Unwanted Wolf – Chapter 56

I met Ginger in the garden. She was sitting in the middle of a bunch of flowers with her legs crossed. Her eyes were closed, and her hands were resting on her knees. Her breath was slow and steady. As I approached, I did my best to move silently. I didn't want to disturb her meditation.

I stopped and looked around, unsure if I should let her know I was there.

"Sit, child," she suddenly ordered. She kept her eyes closed.

I jumped at her voice, not expecting it. I looked around me and found a patch of ground that was not filled with flowers. I carefully sat down, not wanting to accidentally crush any flowers. I tried to mimic Ginger's pose, placing my hands on my knees and sitting with a straight spine.

"Relax your shoulders, and your palms should be facing up." Ginger didn't open her eyes. She definitely had some sort of clairvoyant powers. She was too knowing, even without being able to see.

"How did you know-"

"You shouldn't rely on your eyes so heavily, girl. You must use all of your senses to be aware of your surroundings. Sound, taste, feel, and smell are just as important as your sight, but too many people rely solely on their eyes. You can see so much more when you learn to look in other ways."

I made the adjustments Ginger asked for in my position. I let her words sink in. "So what's the first lesson?"

Ginger took a slow, deep breath before answering. "Breathing and senses. They may seem basic, but you need to learn the basics before you can become a master. We have to take this one step at a time. Now close your eyes, and follow the pattern of my breath. Use your other senses to follow along."

I closed my eyes, and the world became dark. I listened closely to the breath Ginger was taking. Five seconds inhale, five seconds exhale. I slowly matched my breath to hers. It took a few tries to match her count at the same pace, but when I was insync with her, the world felt a little different. I couldn't physically see Ginger, but her movements were clear in my head. I knew her chest was rising and falling. The slight breeze was blowing her partially

grayed hair. Her nose twitched from a new scent that was carried among the breeze.

One. Two. Three. Four. Five. I could hear the tree branches scraping each other. I could smell the rain clouds rolling in. I could feel the drop in temperature. I could taste the morning dew. I saw the world more clearly now than when I was walking out here with my eyes open. I was amazed at how a little breath work could open my mind so much.

I watched the world around me unfold like a movie in my head. I had no idea how much time had passed, when Ginger finally broke my concentration.

“Excellent. If you can’t do something, just remember to come back to this breathing technique. Work through the task in your mind, and it will help you be more successful.” Ginger’s voice was almost jarring.

I opened my eyes and saw her staring at me. “That’s it? That’s the basics?”

“More or less.” She stood up and motioned for me to do the same. “The more you practice something so simple, the more naturally it will come to you. You also have achieved the desired level of concentration faster than others. You really are something special, girl.”

I stood, but I kept my eyes on the ground. I was unsure how to respond to such a compliment. It was both exciting and scary. I hadn’t received many compliments like that before.

“So what’s next?” I asked, still avoiding eye contact.

“You will need to get that confidence of yours up. You can do more than you think, and once you accept that and let go of the words of outsiders, the more powerful you will become.” She didn’t give me a chance to respond, and moved on with the topic. “The next thing for you to practice is shifting. You have been successful with it, yes?”

I nodded my head. “I’ve gotten better at it, but I usually have done it in more tense situations. My emotions got the best of me, and it just sort of was happening.”

“What kind of emotions were you feeling when you were successful?” she asked.

I thought back on the times I was successful. “Mostly fear and anger.”

She hummed in response. “Fear and anger are temporary feelings, and they are difficult to replicate. They can cause great power to emerge, but it can be unpredictable and dangerous. You need to learn to use emotions that are more stable.”

I thought about my emotions recently, and none of them felt very stable. Depending on what was happening around me, my feelings changed drastically.

“Think about what makes you happy,” she said when I didn’t respond.

Mark instantly came to my mind, and I felt myself blushing. He was the biggest reason I had felt true happiness recently. Before, I thought I was happy, but now I knew I was only content. Mark brought out a smile in me that I didn’t even know existed, and I could feel myself smiling thinking about him now.

“Good. Hold onto that thought about your mate. He can be the source of your powers,” Ginger coached.

I held onto the feeling I had from thinking about him, but I didn’t know what to do next. “How do I use this? Fear and anger were easy for me. It didn’t take much thinking to accomplish.” I could feel a power bubbling in my core.

“Focus that feeling into what you want to accomplish. Visualize the two together if that’s what it takes. Start with trying to shift.” Ginger pointed across the garden to the tree. “Shift to that tree.”

I looked over at the tree and visualized moving to it. Nothing happened. I tried imaging Mark over there and wanting to join him. Nothing.

“Remember your breathing,” Ginger said.

I closed my eyes and took a few deep breaths. I imagined Mark standing by the tree and moving over to him. I opened my eyes to see the result. Nothing.

I frowned, not understanding what I was doing wrong. Mark made me happy. I was breathing. Why wasn’t I shifting?

“Close your eyes again,” Ginger instructed. “Only focus on your breathing right now.”

I did as she said and stopped trying to visualize Mark. I focused on the movement of my chest and made a point to keep the pace steady. My senses started to come alive. I could feel Ginger move closer to me, so I wasn’t surprised when her voice rang in my ears.

“Good,” she said. “Now imagine your mate by that tree. Imagine his eyes beckoning you towards him. Imagine his arms around you, and the warmth of his body.”

I could see Mark’s face so clearly. I wanted to be by him so desperately. Deep breaths. I could do this. I wanted to be in Mark’s arms right now. I could hear the tree still in the distance, and I knew I hadn’t been successful with shifting yet.

“Now imagine Theron taking a knife and digging it deeply into Mark’s side.”

My heart jumped, and the air around me whooshed. I kept my eyes closed, but I knew exactly what happened. The tree branches danced in the wind right next to me. I finally opened my eyes, and Ginger was frowning from across the garden.

She shifted and was suddenly standing in front of me. “Fear motivated you to shift. This is going to take more work than I anticipated.”

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I fell back on the ground, trying to catch my breath. I had no idea how shifting could be so exhausting. I didn’t think it took much effort, but after doing it repeatedly, I felt sore and winded. Ginger told me that performing magic was like exercising a muscle. I had lost count of how many shifts I had completed.

“Take a break. Get some food, and then we will continue with the next step afterwards,” Ginger said. She walked away, disappearing into the house.

We had been in the garden for hours training. When I couldn’t shift successfully by imagining happiness, Ginger used fear and anger to motivate me. It worked, but it was emotionally exhausting on top of the physical exhaustion. She cautioned me that this was not the ideal way of handling matters, but if that’s what I needed to do to stay alive, it would work.

After shifting for at least an hour or two that way, she started having me focus on the happiness again, saying to use the feeling of shifting to add to the attempt. It took much longer this way, but I had successfully managed to shift using that method a handful of times. I was told I would need a lot more practice, but it was important to move on and learn new skills.

“Are you hungry?”

I cracked my eyes open and saw Mark standing above me.

I instantly smiled and held my hand out to him for help up. There was no way I would be able to get up on my own at that moment. “Starving.”

He grabbed my hand and pulled me up with ease. He pulled me into his body and held me tightly. “Let’s find you something to eat then. How is training going?”

I rested my head against his chest. “I’m absolutely exhausted. I’m honestly glad we went to bed early last night.” I paused, worried he would take the implication the wrong way.

He kissed the top of my head. “Good. I want to make that night special for you anyway.”

I felt the embarrassment creeping in and decided to change the subject right away. “I’m worried I won’t be able to get the hang of this right away. What if I can’t master magic enough to beat Theron?”

“Nonsense,” Mark said. “I have complete faith in you.”

“That makes one of us,” I muttered into his chest.

Mark pulled back and looked me in the eyes. “Adira, you are amazing, and I don’t have any doubts that you will learn what you need to to win this fight, but I want you to remember that you are not alone in this. We are going to be there with you, and we are going to make a plan. We are not going to go into this fight blindly. You’re not alone. Just remember that.”

I lifted up on my feet and kissed Mark’s lips softly. “Thank you for that reminder. Can we get food now?”

Mark smirked at me. “Sure thing.” He quickly grabbed my legs and picked me up bridal style, completely surprising me.

“Mark!” I said, hitting his chest lightly. “Put me down! This is embarrassing.”

“Too bad,” Mark laughed. “You’re tired, so I’m letting you relax for as long as possible.”

I wrapped my arms around his neck, knowing it was useless to fight him. “At least put me down before we get into the house.”

“Not a chance.”

“Mark!”

## **The Unwanted Wolf – Chapter 57**

After lunch, I met Ginger back out in the yard for more practice. I felt better after eating, but I was still a little worn out from training earlier. I knew we were going to move onto something new, which excited me. I wanted to learn more about what sorcerers could do, since I only knew a handful of things.

Ginger paced back and forth in front of me, as I stood there shifting on my feet. I was waiting for her to give me the next instructions, but she seemed to be deep in thought.

Suddenly she stopped and looked at me. “What kind of a sorcerer do you want to be?”

“What do you mean? Like how do I want to use my powers?” This was not the kind of question I had anticipated from her.

“How would you want the world to know you as a sorcerer? The benevolent? The destroyer? The all powerful? How do you want people to view you?” she clarified. Her stare became more intense.

“I...” I stopped to think about it. How did I want people to see me? I had always been desperate to please people. I didn’t want to offend them or make them run away from me. It was never about how I wanted them to see me, though. Not exactly. I didn’t care if they saw me for who I really was as long as I didn’t feel unwanted. Things felt different now, though. Mark saw me for who I really was, and he cared about me.

Finally, I said, "I don't need the world to see me. As long as I have people around me who truly care about me, then I don't care if the world knows about who I am. I don't care about being powerful or having some title. I just want to protect the people I love."

Ginger smiled. "Excellent. Let's get started. I want to see what kind of abilities you can accomplish, so we will start with some basic magic. Is there anything other than shifting that you have been able to do?"

"I healed Mark after Theron stabbed him. I almost couldn't though." My heart raced thinking about that memory. If I had been a moment later with healing him, he might not be alive right now.

"Ah, but you were successful with it, and that is step one. Magic is not some innate ability that you can be successful with the first time you do it every time," Ginger said. She started pacing back and forth again.

I furrowed my eyebrows. "It's not?"

"No, girl. Sorcerers are born with magic inside of them, but it is up to the sorcerer themselves to nurture that power into something more. Most children of sorcerers attend a special school that teaches them how to do just that."

I frowned, thinking about this. "How am I supposed to ever catch up to Theron? He has been raised as a sorcerer. He is going to be better than I am, no matter how hard I train."

Ginger walked over to me and smacked me in the back of the head. "Don't be so negative. Of course Theron is going to be stronger than you when you first start out, but that doesn't mean he will always be stronger than you."

"I don't have the kind of time it would take to get better than him. I can't hide out here forever, and he'll find me sooner than later, and if I can't stop him--"

Ginger smacked the back of my head again. "You're spiraling. That's not going to do you any good. You're forgetting something key in all of this. You don't just have your magic to help you."

I thought about this for a moment. I knew what she was implying, but I didn't know how that would give me an advantage against someone who could use magic. Magic seemed more powerful than any werewolf.

“How does having a wolf help me?” I finally asked.

Ginger just smiled at me. “You know the answer to this already, girl. Your wolf is strong and protective. She helps you heal and move faster. You can shift into a wolf at will. Werewolves are powerful creatures unto themselves. Add in a little magic, and you have something quite incredible.”

“I don’t feel incredible. I have never been incredible. I have always been plain and unwanted.” I tightened my fists, thinking about how my life had gone.

Ginger approached me and patted me on the cheek. “Child, I have seen your past and I have seen your future. You are incredible in more ways than you realize. You have survived on your own for years. You have shown compassion to people when they don’t deserve it. You never stopped fighting, even when you had plenty of reasons to.” She grabbed my hand and pressed it against my heart. “Your skills and power don’t matter if you don’t have the heart to use them properly. You are destined for great things. It’s as simple as that.”

I felt my heart pounding against my hand. For some reason, Ginger’s words rang in my ears, and something told me there was truth in her words.

“So what next?”

Ginger jumped back, scaring me a little. “First we see what you can pull off. Let’s test out what kinds of magic you can do.”

I nodded my head. “Okay. I’m ready.”

“Let’s try elemental powers first. Is there anything that sticks out to you?” she asked.

I thought about the different elements, but I wasn’t sure how one would speak to a person. I didn’t think ice suited me. I didn’t like being out in the cold.

“Maybe fire?” I suggested, feeling completely unsure.

Ginger nodded. “Okay, imagine creating a flame in the palm of your hand. Remember the breathing exercises from before, and use your imagination to visualize what you want to create.”

I closed my eyes and slowed my breathing. I saw the little ball of light deep within me, and watched as it grew larger with each breath. Then I tried to



imagine the ball of light turning into a flame. I held out my palm and willed a flame to create. I felt the heat growing in my palm.

Finally, I opened my eyes, expecting a little flame to be in my palm, but there was nothing there. I frowned, feeling disappointed.

“Try again,” Ginger ordered.

I continued trying to imagine a little flame appearing in my hand, but the most I was able to accomplish was heating my palm. Ginger said it was a start, but she decided to have me move onto different elements. I tried creating a breeze, water, manipulating plants, and various other techniques, but none of them were successful. At most, I would have the start of the element, but nothing came from it.

After the elements, Ginger had me try other types of magic, including healing. I was unable to recreate the healing effect from before, I couldn't create anything new, and I couldn't even mold something into something new.

After several hours of failed attempts, I found myself sitting on the steps of the porch, feeling completely discouraged. I couldn't seem to accomplish anything new with magic. Maybe I was too late with my training, I would never be able to learn anything serious.

“This was just the first day. Don't look so glum, girl,” Ginger said, walking up the steps. “We'll try potion making tomorrow. Get some rest, and we'll try again tomorrow.” She disappeared inside the house to start dinner, but I stayed out on the porch.

The sun hovered above the horizon, and it wouldn't be long before it completely sank out of view. Day one did not go as I expected. I thought I would be able to accomplish a new skill, but the most I did was fine tune my shifting a little. Nothing new that would ensure success in the fight with Theron.

I closed my eyes and balled my hands into fists. I had to do something to turn the tides. The last fight with Theron was too close. We almost lost, and I couldn't risk going into the inevitable fight without something new. I was sure Theron would have something up his sleeve as well. It was a close fight for him, and I was sure he would prepare something sneaky to ensure his win. I was feeling hopeless at these thoughts.

“Hey, what are you doing out here still?” Mark asked from behind me. “It’s getting cold.”

I opened my eyes and looked up. He was standing behind me, and his face was a welcomed sight. “I’m just tired from today.”

Mark frowned. He pulled his jacket off him and placed it on my shoulders. He then sat next to me and pulled me into him. “Things didn’t go as planned?”

I let my head rest against his chest. I instantly felt better with his contact. “I don’t know if I can do this, Mark. I can’t seem to control any magic. What if I’m not good enough? What if I can’t learn what I need to in time? What if Theron wins because of me and you lose me or I lose you? It’s just too much pressure. I don’t know if I can handle it.”

“Then don’t put pressure on yourself,” Mark said. He tightened his grip around my shoulders. “We won’t rely on your magic to win. It’s as simple as that. There has to be another way to get an edge on Theron. Instead of you trying to push yourself, don’t. If it’s going to cause your face to look like that, then it’s not worth it.”

I squinted my eyes at him. “And what does my face look like?”

Mark smirked. He poked my forehead. “Well, you have these deep creases in your forehead.” He touched my lips next. “And your lips have this awful curl down.” Then he poked my nose. “And your nose is all scrunched. Although, that’s pretty cute if you ask me.”

I stuck my tongue out at him, and he laughed at me. “What if it’s not enough without magic?”

Mark smiled in return. “It will be. I have to believe it will be. If trying to learn magic is upsetting you this much, then I will find a way to make it work without it. Then you can train at your own pace without the pressure of Theron’s threat looming over you.”

I snuggled into Mark again. “That sounds much nicer.”

“Good. Then tomorrow we’ll see if Ginger has any suggestions on how to defeat Theron without your magic. We’ll make a plan. We’ll make it work. And then you can smile again.” Mark leaned down and kissed me on the forehead.

“I like that plan much better,” I said. I felt much lighter after talking with Mark.

“Good. Let’s get some dinner and rest then. I’m sure you are exhausted.”

Mark stood up, pulling me up with him. He was about to go inside, but I pulled him back and kissed him on his cheek. “You’re the best.”

## **The Unwanted Wolf – Chapter 58**

Heart racing. Head pounding. Screams echoed in the distance. I was running through the forest in the middle of the night, and I couldn’t remember how I had gotten there. It was dark, and I could barely see anything in front of me. Clouds hung in the sky, blocking out any moonlight.

I was being chased, and I didn’t know who or what was behind me. I was barefoot and in my pajamas, but I wasn’t cold. I was panicked. I knew I was in danger. I just had to keep running. Shadows flickered all around me, and I was terrified for my life. I felt like I was surrounded by the danger, and no matter how fast I ran, I couldn’t seem to get away.

I tripped and fell, scraping my hands on the dirt. I tried to get up, but something grabbed my ankle and started pulling me backwards. I flipped onto my back, trying to break free from whatever had a hold of me. I couldn’t see the figure, since it was covered in darkness. It was large and angry. It had no face or distinct features.

I grabbed a nearby tree, trying to stop it from pulling me any farther, but my grip wasn’t strong enough, and I just ended up ripping my skin on the bark. I could feel the sting of the broken skin, and I knew I was bleeding, but that didn’t matter.

I kept struggling, trying to break free from the grip, but nothing I didn’t made any difference. Eventually I was pulled out from the trees and into a clearing, where the creature let go of me. I looked to the sky and saw where the moon was hiding beyond the clouds. I let out a scream, and the clouds parted. I felt full of energy, and there was power surging through me.

The monster lunged at me. Sitting up, I shot my hands forward. An iridescent glow flowed through my hands, surrounding the creature. It’s screams pierced my ears, and I had to cover them, because the noise was too much to bear.

I shot forward with my heart pounding like crazy. When I looked around, I realized I was in the room in Ginger's little cottage with Mark sleeping next to me. It was just a nightmare. I was safe.

Sweat coated my forehead, and I could feel my back covered as well. Based on the blankets, I had been thrashing from the nightmare. I looked to Mark, who was still peacefully sleeping. I was surprised I hadn't woken him up.

My entire body was energized, and I knew I wouldn't be able to get back to sleep any time soon. I threw my legs out of bed and stood up. I made sure to tuck the blanket back over Mark before grabbing my coat and tiptoeing out of the room.

The house was dark and quiet, but my wolf senses made up for the lack of light. It was easy to navigate around and avoid stepping on anything as I moved to the kitchen. I wanted to make myself a cup of tea to calm down. I was sure the warmth would help calm my nerves. I heated up water and found a bag of tea to steep. When that was done, I took my cup and stepped outside.

It was too cold to be outside, but I didn't mind the blast of cold air for a moment, especially with the heat steaming from the mug I was holding. I jumped when I saw Daniel sitting in the rocking chair and reading a book. Tea spilled out of my cup.

Daniel looked up from his book. "Oh, Adira, what are you doing awake?"

"Bad dream," I smiled. I held up my cup. "I thought some tea might help."

"It's not uncommon to drink tea before bed." Daniel placed his book mark in the book and closed it. He set it in his lap to give me his full attention.

"Can I admit something to you?" I took a seat on the porch, crossing my legs.

"Sure," Daniel said, giving me a curious look.

"I hate tea." I laughed at my own statement.

Daniel tilted his head. "Then why would you make tea?"

I laughed again. "You always see people drinking tea in movies or read about it. It just felt like something I should do. I much prefer coffee, but I didn't think drinking coffee in the middle of the night would be a good idea."

Daniel joined in my laughter. "Probably not. Do you want to talk about your dream?"

I held the cup close to my face and breathed in the steam. I had no intentions of drinking it anymore, but the warmth still felt nice in the chilly night air. "It was just a typical nightmare, really. I was running for my life. Shadows were chasing me. Then I think I used the moonlight to fend them off."

Daniel hummed in response. "That's not necessarily a typical dream. Do you think it means anything?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "Do dreams actually mean anything?"

"Sometimes. It can be the brain's way of telling you something you don't know, or processing intense information. I have this book at home that is all about dream interpretation. It's pretty interesting, actually."

I looked down at the cup, thinking about the nightmare. Was this trying to warn me about that great evil Ginger warned me about? In both visions I defeated the creature, which was helpful, but I wasn't sure how I would manage to do that at this rate. Wait.

I sat up suddenly, spilling the tea on my legs. I set my cup down and jumped to my feet. I ran off the porch and into the garden looking up at the sky.

"Adira? What's wrong?" Daniel chased after me, stopping next to me.

"I think I get it now. It all makes sense," I said, smiling as I looked up.

"Get what?" he asked. He looked up into the sky with me.

I smiled as the moonlight shone down on us. I held my hand. With a deep breath, I imagined the moon in my hand. I could feel the energy surging through me, and I didn't even bother closing my eyes. Before my eyes, a ball of light was floating in my hand. My skin tingled, and I felt energized.

"The moon is my source of magic," I said, beaming with joy.

Daniel blinked at my hand a few times. "Whoa. How did you do that?"

“Magic.” I played with the ball, switching it from hand to hand. It was small, and I didn’t know what this would allow me to do exactly, but it felt easy compared to all of the training from earlier. With the moon shining down on me, I knew this is where I would thrive. I was the daughter of the moon and magic, and now I fully understood what Ginger was trying to say about my wolf giving me an advantage.

It wasn’t about isolating my wolf or my magic. I needed to let them join and become one. I needed to accept both sides of me. The little ball of light petered out, but I didn’t care. I knew this was the next step to truly being able to use my magic.

I threw my arms around Daniel, thrilled about what happened. “Thank you so much.”

Daniel patted my back. “You’re welcome. Although, I don’t really understand what I did.”

I let go of Daniel, still beaming like an i\*\*\*t. “What you said about dreams, it made me realize what my dream was trying to tell me. It was scary, and I thought it was a nightmare, but my mind was just trying to show me the way I could use my magic.” I pointed up to the moon. “Because I’m part werewolf, I think my magic comes from the moon.”

Daniel looked up at the moon, processing everything I said. “Incredible. I’m going to have to write this down. I wonder if all half-werewolves half-sorcerers get their power from the moon. I wonder if there are any half-blooded people out there. That would be absolutely fascinating to learn. I should ask Ginger about it in the morning.”

I shook my head, amused by Daniel’s academic mind. He always wanted to know more. “Who knows. Maybe there’s more of my kind out there. My parents can’t be the only ones who have crossbred like that, right?”

Daniel shrugged. “I don’t know. With how little ‘mythical’ creatures mingle, it could go either way. I wonder how I could find out that information.”

“Well, if anyone could discover it, it would be you, Daniel,” I said.

Daniel smiled at this. “You should probably get back to bed. It’s late.”

I laughed a little. "I don't know if I'll be able to sleep now. I'm too excited. What about you? What are you doing up?"

"It was my turn to take watch," Daniel said. "I still have a little time before Rie takes over."

I nodded, forgetting that they were taking watch to ensure our safety. "Do you want company?"

"That would be lovely."

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The next morning, I could feel Mark shifting in the bed, pulling me into a half-awake state. It felt much too early to be awake. It had taken much too long to get back to sleep after the excitement of discovering the source of my powers. I had no idea how long I had been asleep, since I refused to open my eyes to check the time.

I felt Mark's warm lips press against my cheek as he placed his hand on my hip. "Good morning," he whispered directly in my ear.

I merely groaned in response. This made him laugh.

"It's time to get up. I'm sure Ginger is waiting for you for training," he said. His voice was light and airy, but it didn't make me want to get up anymore.

I squeezed my eyes tighter and shook my head. "Uh uh." I felt like a child but I didn't care.

Mark didn't say anything right away, so I thought he had given up in his attempt to wake me up. Then I felt his hand brush the hair out of my face. He leaned down and pressed his lips against mine.

"If you don't want to get up, I'm going to have to give you a reason," he said, his voice low and husky.

He pressed his lips against my neck and trailed kisses down to my collarbone. His fingers slid from my hip up my side, sending tingles through my spine. My body automatically turned to his, craving more and more. With each night we held out, it made it so much harder to stop myself from going all of the way

with this beautiful specimen. With each of his touches, I was filled with a new energy and no longer wanted to go back to sleep.

I opened my eyes, searching for him to pull him even closer. However, when he saw my eyes open, he simply smirked at me.

“There you are.” He stood up and started walking away from the bed.

I whimpered in response. “Mark, where are you going?”

“You’ll have to get up to find out.” He winked at me before slipping out of the door.

## **The Unwanted Wolf – Chapter 59**

We all sat around the table after eating breakfast. I filled everyone in on the night before. Silence filled the air as everyone processed the information.

“This is very interesting,” Ginger said. “This might make your powers more inconsistent. They will be affected by the cycle of the moon. They may not be very strong during the day, at least initially.”

My ears perked at this. “So I might be able to use them during the day eventually?”

“You have before, right?” she asked. I nodded. “That’s what I thought. With intense emotions, you’ll be able to use your powers, and with enough training, it’ll be easier to use them during the day, but that will likely take time to accomplish.”

“So we should make sure our fight with Theron happens at night,” Rie concluded.

“On a full moon,” Ginger added.

“Which means we will have to make sure we are the ones to initiate the fight,” I said. “When’s the next full moon?”

Ginger got up and started rummaging through everything. Finally she pulled out a calendar that showed the phases of the moon. “One week from today is the next full moon.”



“Looks like we have a week to figure out our plan and prepare,” Mark said. He turned to me and grabbed my hand, squeezing it as reassurance. “We’ve got this.”

I smiled back, feeling much better than I had before. I then turned to Ginger. “Do you have any suggestions on how we’ll be able to find Theron?”

Ginger blinked at me a few times. “You already know the answer to that.”

I squinted my eyes at her. “I do?”

She nodded. “How did Theron find you?”

I thought about that for a moment. “Well, I guess he used our familial bonds to find me, but I don’t know how to do that.”

She smiled at me. “It’s the same technique that magic uses. I’ll go over it in more detail later, but you’ll be able to do it. I suggest you don’t start searching until you’re ready, though. He’ll be able to sense you when you are pulling at him like that.”

“Got it,” I said. I didn’t want him to find me before we were ready, and we still needed more time to prepare.

“I have things to get done, children. Don’t mess up my house,” Ginger said, standing up. “Adira, I expect to see you when the moon rises tonight. Don’t be late.” She left the room and quickly disappeared.

The rest of us stayed around the table discussing the best way to go about the actual fight. The conversation was mostly Mark and Rie discussing the best plan, since they had warrior and battle training. Daniel was able to input his thoughts based on books he read, but I mostly just sat there listening and nodding. I never had proper training growing up, and I really wished I had pushed my parents to let me train more. I always thought there would be time for that later, but now it felt too late.

Mark suggested reaching out to as many werewolves as possible to see who was willing to aid in the actual fight. We knew Scythe would be there for us, and Mark was sure his other pack members would be able to help us out. We were pretty sure Jori would forbid any of his pack from helping out, which limited our numbers. I really hoped Theron didn’t have any other numbers on his side, or that would put us at a big disadvantage.

After what felt like hours, we agreed to take a break from planning. We agreed to take a break and take some time to relax, knowing there was a lot of work to be done in the upcoming days.

Rie and Daniel were the first ones to leave the table, but I stayed there for a moment. The lack of sleep was really starting to get to me, and my eyes felt heavy.

Mark offered his hand to me and helped me up.

“You look tired,” he said. “How much sleep did you end up getting last night.”

I wrapped my arms around his waist and rested my head on his chest. “A few hours, maybe. I don’t know for sure.”

Mark kissed the top of my head. “You should take a nap, so you’re prepared for later. You have training with Ginger later.”

I nodded against him. “I know. I don’t want to leave you though. I feel safest when I’m in your arms.”

Mark suddenly picked me up bridal style. “Then I will just have to rest with you.”

“Mark! I can walk myself,” I giggled. I didn’t want to admit it, but I liked when Mark held me like that. I was so used to taking care of myself for years that it felt nice to let someone take care of me for once.

“You said you feel safest in my arms, so I’m just ensuring you feel safe.” He smiled down at me as he carried me to the bedroom.

I rolled my eyes. “You’re too much, you know that?”

“You love it,” he said confidently.

I stuck my tongue out at him, knowing I couldn’t argue against him. When we got to the bedroom, he crawled into the bed, keeping me in his arms. I closed my eyes, and let myself relax in bed. My body felt heavier now, but my mind was still racing. I couldn’t stop thinking about the upcoming battle.

“Mark,” I said, my voice groggy from fighting the urge to sleep.

“Hmm?”

“Can we go on a date before everything goes down with Theron? I want to make sure we have a really good memory before everything happens. Just in case. You know?”

I cracked my eyes open and saw Mark looking down at me with concern in his eyes.

“Don’t think like that, okay?” he said. “We are going to win this, and then we will get to live our happily ever after.”

“Can we still go on a date?” I wanted to believe Mark’s words, but the future was unpredictable. Just in case things went south, I wanted to make sure he had a good memory with me, especially after all of the drama with Jori.

Mark stroked my hair. “Of course. Anything you want.”

“Thank you,” I whispered, closing my eyes again.

Mark’s breathing was soothing, and I listened to his heartbeat.

“I wish we had a secret weapon, something to guarantee the outcome of the battle,” Mark said. I barely heard his voice, but I instantly knew he was more worried about the battle than he was letting on. We had both almost lost each other because of Theron, and he must have been as scared as I was.

Wait...

A secret weapon.

That gave me an idea.

—

I rushed outside to meet Ginger, knowing the moon was set to rise soon. I was excited to do more with the training, knowing the moon was the source of my powers. But it was more than that.

As I walked outside, I felt the wooden box in my pocket. Ginger had not arrived yet, but I was early this time. I pulled out the box Clara had given me and stroked the wood with my fingers. In the chaos of everything that happened, I had forgotten about this little box, but I had a feeling this would be the key to our success, if it was what I thought.

“What do you have there?” Ginger asked, suddenly appearing in front of me.

I shrieked when I saw her, not expecting her to just appear like that. I placed my hand over my heart as I tried to calm it down.

“Do sorcerers have something that affects them like wolfsbane affects werewolves?” I asked.

Ginger looked down at the box. Her eyes focused, and she looked more serious than normal. “It’s called belladonna. It’s extremely rare, and it’s frowned upon using it against other sorcerer’s.”

“Wolfsbane is the same. It’s considered a crime to use against another werewolf,” I said.

Ginger’s eyes snapped to mine, and for a moment she looked like a completely different person. Her eyes flashed dark, and her skin paled. “Clara gave that to you, didn’t she?”

I nodded slowly. “She didn’t tell me what it was, but I saw her use a similar syringe on Theron when he attacked her. It wasn’t hard to figure it out, but I wasn’t really sure.”

Ginger’s body grew tense, and the shadows of the night danced on her face, making her seem a little scary. “When Ned died, Clara begged me to help her get revenge. I refused at first. But Ned was my friend. His death wasn’t easy to handle, and seeing my friend in such pain... Soon I wanted revenge as well.”

She looked up at the moon, and her face twisted in the light. At first, I thought I saw anger in her wrinkles, but then I realized it was grief plaguing her face.

“I helped her make the belladonna into a poison to get her revenge. It stops a sorcerer’s powers, leaving them defenseless. It’s a cruel way to let them die. Imagine feeling so helpless.”

“Then why make it?” I asked. The box in my hands felt like a brick suddenly.

“Grief and anger makes people do stupid things,” Ginger said. “I decided not to give it to her in the end. I came to my senses, and I begged her to do the same. I didn’t want her to do anything she would regret. She didn’t want to

listen, though. She took the serums and ran away. That was the last time we spoke.”

“How many did you make?” I asked.

Ginger finally looked back at me. “Two.”

I thought about the conversation I had had with Clara. “I don’t think she ever went through with it. She must have heard you on some level.”

Ginger’s expression softened, and I swore I saw the beginning of tears forming in her eyes. “Was she at peace when she died?”

I didn’t answer right away. I hadn’t been around Clara long enough to truly know, so I wasn’t sure if it was right for me to answer. Finally, I said, “I think so. She seemed happy, and she never forgot about you. I think she let go of that anger, too.”

Ginger nodded. “Good.”

Ginger motioned for me to hand the box over to her, and I quickly obliged. She opened up the contents and looked at it closely. After a moment, she handed the box back to me.

Ginger’s eyes hardened again. “Promise me you won’t use this if there is any possible way to avoid it.”

## **The Unwanted Wolf – Chapter 60**

The rest of the week flew by. Most of the time was spent training and communicating with other werewolves to coordinate the attack. I was physically and mentally exhausted from all of the training. Not only was I spending the nights training with Ginger to improve my magic skills, but Mark was also teaching me how to fight.

I wasn’t completely hopeless with my fighting skills, since I had taken many self-defense classes, but Mark wanted to show me some techniques to use when engaging in a fight. I was still clumsy with the moves, but it was better than nothing. It was the same with my magic skills. I didn’t nail anything down, but I was able to do more now than before.

Tomorrow was the full moon, and we were all packing to leave Ginger's house. We had plans to meet up with others today to make sure we were all on the same page for what we planned to go down. We packed up the car and then returned to the house to say goodbye to Ginger.

Daniel was the first one to give her a big hug. "Thank you for everything, Ginger. I really hope we can meet again soon so I can pick your brain again."

Ginger shook her head and then ruffled Daniel's hair, despite him being significantly taller than her. "You're a good kid, Daniel. Don't ever be afraid to follow that heart of yours. From now on, call me Gingy."

Daniel beamed and pulled Ginger into another hug. "Okay. Stay safe, old lady."

Ginger quickly smacked him in the back of the head. "Who are you calling old?"

Daniel just smiled and waved goodbye as he headed to the car.

Rie stepped up to Ginger next. "Thanks for hosting us this week and helping out Adira."

Rie started to walk away, but Ginger spoke up. "Don't be such a stranger, girl." Ginger pulled Rie into a hug. When she let go, Rie smiled and headed out after Daniel.

Ginger approached Mark next. "You take good care of this girl, okay?"

"Of course. She's my life. I'll do anything for her," Mark said. He looked over at me and smiled.

Ginger rolled her eyes. "Take care of yourself, too, boy. You can't take care of her if you don't make sure you take care of yourself."

Mark just smiled and nodded, pulling her into a hug. "Thank you for everything."

When they parted, Mark looked to me.

"Go ahead," I said. "I'll catch up in a moment."

Mark went to the car, leaving Ginger and me by ourselves.

“Don’t get emotional on me now, girl,” Ginger quickly said. “We’ll see each other again.”

I pulled my lips tight and nodded. I hoped so, but I didn’t want to say that outloud. “You didn’t want to help me when I got here.”

Ginger looked at the ground for a moment before looking back up at me. “No. I didn’t. You aren’t the first one who has approached me for help, but you are the first one I decided to actually help.”

“Why?” I still didn’t fully understand what made her make the exception for me.

“Because you have a destiny to fulfill.”

Her words sat heavy on my chest. “But why me? I’m not particularly strong or special.”

Ginger patted me on the cheek and smiled. “Because you are unique. You are the only one in a position where you’ll be able to see both sides and be able to stop the darkness from coming.”

I bit my lip, scared at that idea. “Can’t you tell me more?”

Ginger shook her head. “You know I can’t. I don’t have any more information I can share. You’ll be okay, though. You have a good support system around you, and you’ll be ready when it comes time.”

I took a deep breath, hoping she was right. If she was right, that would mean we would be successful with defeating Theron. “Thank you for everything.”

Ginger pulled me into a hug. “Thank you.” She pulled away. “Now get going. Your friends are waiting for you, and you have a long day ahead of you. Enjoy that date of yours tonight, okay?”

I smiled. I shouldn’t have been surprised that she knew about the date, but I still was. She somehow knew a lot of things that surprised me. I waved goodbye and headed to the car.

—

We made it back to Ashville and exchanged Daniel for Scythe at Jori’s packhouse. We didn’t bother to go inside, knowing it would not end well if Jori

saw us. Daniel wanted to help us, but he had never trained with fighting, and so he thought he would just get in the way. We said our goodbyes to him, and he told us he better see us in the next few days, before we went home.

We met the rest of the werewolves from Mark's pack at a hotel. There were only three others, since the rest of the pack couldn't fight because they were either too young or too unskilled. It made for seven of us in total. It didn't feel like a lot, but if we were fighting against Hailey and Theron, we would easily outnumber them.

The plan was for me to reach out to Theron an hour before the moon was set to rise and challenge him for the end of the battle. We would meet outside of the city to avoid any issues with humans catching wind of the fight. I had a feeling he would come, because he didn't seem like the type to back down from a challenge. He was also the cocky type. Even though it would be obvious we would be prepared, I was sure he would still be confident about winning. Little did he know we had a few tricks up our sleeves.

After filling in everyone on the plan, I started getting ready for my date with Mark. I didn't dress in anything too fancy, because I wanted to have a fun and comfortable night. I didn't want to worry about my feet hurting from wearing heels or the wind blowing up my dress or any of the hazards of dressing up.

"Are you sure that's what you want to wear?" Scythe whined, looking at my outfit.

I was wearing a pair of comfortable jeans and a maroon sweater. "Positive. I don't think Mark will care about what I wear, anyway."

Scythe threw himself back on the bed and threw his hands in the air. "Yes, but if you dress up, Mark won't be able to resist you. Don't you want tonight to be the night?"

I instantly felt myself blushing. Scythe saw right through me, but I didn't want to admit he was right. "If what I wear makes it so Mark doesn't want me in that way, then we have bigger problems than wearing a sweater on a date."

"He's going to want you either way," Scythe said, sitting up. "But don't you want to make him crazy for you?"

I rolled my eyes. "Tonight is about having fun. If I'm too distracting, that might get in the way of that."



“You’re at least wearing sexy underwear, right?” he asked.

“Scythe!” I scolded him. I felt too embarrassed to talk to him about that.

“Well?” He widened his eyes at me.

I turned away from him, not wanting to make eye contact. “Yes,” I muttered under my breath. I have to get going. Mark’s waiting.”

I opened the door to my hotel room and came face to face with Rie. She was wearing a big smile, but the moment she saw me, her smile faded.

“Are you really letting her wear that?” Rie asked Scythe.

“I tried! She wouldn’t listen,” Scythe complained.

“I’m not having this conversation again,” I said, slipping past Rie. “I have to go.”

“She’s at least wearing sexy underwear,” Scythe said.

“You are?” a deep voice said from behind me.

My face instantly flushed, feeling completely embarrassed. I knew it was Mark standing behind me. I gave Rie and Scythe a look that said they were dead later, but they just thought it was funny.

I turned around and grabbed Mark’s hand. “Come on! Let’s go before we’re late!”

“What are we going to be late for?” Mark asked, laughing. “I want to hear more about this sexy underwear.”

My face felt like it was on fire. I didn’t want to talk about what I was wearing. I felt silly for doing it in the first place, and this was just making it worse. “I’m hungry. Are you hungry?”

Mark chuckled again. His deep voice churned something deep inside of me. He pulled my arm, making me stop. He wrapped his arms around my waist and pulled me flush against his body. His lips brushed my ear.

“I’m definitely hungry,” he whispered in my ear.

My entire body shuddered from his voice. I turned in his arms and looked Mark in the eyes. I was thinking what he was, but I was determined to have a good date. I wanted the night to be romantic and fun.

“I want to go on our date first,” I said. “I don’t want to rush the night. I want to enjoy every moment I can with you.”

Mark smiled. “Okay. Where to first?”

“Well, I figured we can get some food. And then there is this beautiful rose garden that I thought it would be fun to walk through. I always wanted to go there when I was younger, but I never had anyone to go with. After that, I don’t know. I figured we could see how we feel and go from there.”

“That sounds like a wonderful evening,” Mark said. He leaned forward and kissed me gently.

My body instantly responded, melting into him. Suddenly all of the plans flew out my head, and Mark’s idea sounded much better. I pressed into his body more, but Mark suddenly pulled away, a cocky smile adorning his face. He let go of my face and poked my nose.

“If we don’t stop now, we are never going to leave this hotel,” Mark said.

“I would be okay with that,” I muttered, looking at the ground.

Mark only laughed at this. “Why the sudden change of mind?”

I scrunched my lips. “I don’t know.”

Mark grabbed my hand and started pulling me to the car. “Come on. Let’s go. You want a slow, romantic night, so that’s what I’m going to give you.”

Mark drove us to a nearby restaurant. It was just a simple place, and I ended up ordering a burger. It felt much more casual of a date, but I loved every moment of it. We laughed and teased each other. Mark even did the cheesy wipe my face off with a napkin when I got some ketchup on my cheek.

After finishing our food, we went to the rose garden. It was dark now, but there were twinkling fairy lights covering the garden. Without the sun, it started getting pretty chilly, so the other people who were in the garden quickly left. I

could feel the cool air chilling my nose, but with Mark's hand in mine, I didn't care.

"You know, I grew up in this town, but I have never once been here," Mark said.

"Oh really? You didn't have any girlfriends you wanted to take when you were younger?" I asked. With how good looking he was, I imagined him having several girlfriends or love interests.

Mark shrugged. "Not really. I was never really interested in dating when I was younger. No one ever sparked my interest. Until you that is."

"Really? You didn't even have a crush on anyone before?" I asked.

"Nope. My friends were the most important people in my life. I didn't see a point in dating, knowing I would find my mate later in life," he explained.

"But some people never find their mate, or their mate rejects them," I said.

Mark looked at me and smiled. "Something told me that I would find you one day, and here you are."

I turned away, trying to hide my blushing, but Mark grabbed my face and pulled me back at him.

"You don't have to hide from me. I love seeing every part of you, blushing or not." He leaned in and kissed me softly.

He pulled away and we kept walking through the garden. I loved seeing all of the flowers under the night sky. The lights were the perfect mood lighting, and I could have kept walking for a long time.

"So what about you?" Mark asked. "Got any old boyfriends I need to beat up?"

I instantly laughed. "You wouldn't beat them up, even if I did. But to answer your question, no. No boyfriends. I went on a couple dates here and there, but I never liked any of them enough to get serious. I guess I was waiting for you."

Mark squeezed my hand, and I saw him smiling like a fool out of the corner of my eye. I loved knowing I could make him smile like that.

“So,” Mark said, swinging my arm back and forth. “Is there anything you want to do after this?”

I stopped walking and turned to him. I placed my hand on his chest. “I was thinking we could go back to the hotel and warm each other up.”

Mark’s eyes darkened at this. “You don’t have to tell me twice.” He picked me up, making me squeal, and ran us back to the car.