## Chapter 5 TRUST NO ONE

## ATHENA'S POV

Xavier left, and the red-headed she-wolf stood in the sitting room across from me, watching me with her burning, scornful gaze. Her expression and obvious negative intentions toward me sent terror up my spine.

"You're lucky he found you first," she said, then cackled in the most sinister manner.

My insides churned, and my breathing became ragged.

A gruesome grin spread across her face. "I would be having you for supper right about now," she stated, obviously assuming I was human.

I wished I had my wolf. With my alpha blood and my wolf, she would have been no threat to me. As it was, though, I was no match for her.

Part of me thought I should have told Xavier what had happened. But I had to heed my parents' advice not to trust anyone, which was why I went along with the handsome wolf's assumption that I was mute. I had to feel him out first.

My tummy rumbled, and I swore if I didn't get something to eat, I would perish before the next sunrise.

"The dumb girl is hungry?" Scarlet teased. In a flash, she rushed to me and gripped me by the back of my neck. "Okay little girl, I'll give you something to eat."

Fear devoured me. My mouth trembled while my body battled against the she-wolf as she dragged me to her backyard. She threw me onto the ground, and my lips blistered as the taste of dirt invaded my mouth. Tears began to fall.

"It's okay, honey. Don't cry," she uttered as she lifted me and thrust me against a tree trunk.

I sat up with my back pressed against the tree.

"Now eat!" she ordered, pointing to a pile of wolf shit next to me.

Swarms of flies circled the smelly mass of feces. The thickness of its odor defeated the fresh air, creeping into my throat and suffocating me from the inside. I shook my head in protest, silently begging the she-wolf not to do this.

"I promised my love I would feed you," she declared, crouching next to me. With her thumb, she wiped my tears. "You don't want me to break my promise to Xavier now, do you?" That sickly grin spread across her lips again, and her eyes turned bleak and black. Then her hand clutched my throat again. She extended her talons as she dug them into my skin, deep enough to create a painful sting. Before I could think or react, she shoved my face into the mountain of shit, holding me there with a power I had no defense against.

Why had the Moon Goddess forsaken me?

When Scarlet finally let me go, my head flew up. My mouth opened, gasping for air to soothe the burning in my chest.

"I saw the way he looked at you," she spat. "He used to look at me with lust-filled eyes. But he never looked at me the way he did you earlier, like he was ready to give you the world. I can't have that. He's mine."

She lodged her fingers in my hair and pulled me into the woods. I kicked and fought, but she was too strong. She didn't stop until we reached a cliff and she hung me over the edge. I swallowed hard, staring at the long drop down.

Then she yanked me to my feet. "Stand up!" she commanded.

I stood on wobbly legs, knowing she could push me off in one quick swoop. But recent storms had made the river deeper. Maybe I'd survive the fall? Then again, the storms also made the water swifter and angrier, too. The usually calm river had become a swirling torrent. Still, I might make it if she pushed me off.

But then she pulled a dagger. My body quivered.

"Don't worry," she taunted. "I'll make it quick." She let out a shriek of maniacal laughter. "I'll just tell Xavier you ran away when I went to fetch you food. And he'll never be able to track you."

No wonder she'd covered me in her wolf's shit.

The river raged below, and the steel of the dagger glistened in her hand. I gulped, then parted my lips, wanting to beg the she-wolf to spare me. But something stopped me. Maybe I'd have better luck simply jumping in the water. I stepped back closer to the edge.

But the red-headed harlot caught me by my collar before I could jump. Excruciating pain

spread throughout my insides as she plunged the knife into my stomach. "Now you can jump, bitch!" she snarled, pushing me over the cliff. Her evil cackle faded as I fell. The wind whipped at me, and my ears popped. A second later, my body hit the water with a loud splash.

The river swept me away before I could surface for air. It felt as though I was being stabbed

managing to take a breath. But the raging waters were too strong, and I couldn't reach the bank.

So I sought to gain purchase on a log or boulder. Every few seconds, the current would pull

by a thousand needles as the freezing water engulfed me. I fought against the current, barely

me under. Simply coming up for air took nearly all my effort. The river roared like an angry lion. Several times, I almost bashed into boulders. Yet, no matter how hard I tried, everything I grabbed onto slipped through my fingers, yanked away by the force of the water.

It was unrelenting and so powerful that a frothing foam had developed on its surface. Worse,

the raging sound grew louder—the unmistakable indicator of a waterfall ahead. It felt like I

was being sucked into a vacuum as the river dragged me toward the drop. Debris rushed over and down the slope, and my body followed suit. My screams were lost against the gushing echoes of the water, as I was pushed over the edge.

Comments (1)