

## Chapter 8

Faith's Pov

My heart beat very fast because of the nerves and adrenaline. Faster, faster than my legs could carry me. I didn't look back. I couldn't.

The garage, where my parents were, was now a blurry spot behind me, lost in the dark woods. I had fooled them. They thought they had me. They thought I was just going to the bathroom. But I ran. I ran like the wind.

The ground in the forest was rough under my old shoes. Small branches snapped under my feet, leaves crunched. Every sound felt too loud, like an alert telling them where I was.

I was afraid, but I would not go back. I'm getting my life back.

Then I heard it.

Several howls.

It's not strange to hear these kinds of animal sounds because I'm in the woods, but I can recognise werewolves.

The Warriors. My parents had sent them. Which means that they are very close to me, and one wrong move and they might catch me...

But I had no wolf. Just me. My own two feet, which were no match for them, but I tried to hide my scent before I ran. I rubbed mud and strong-smelling plants on my clothes, on my skin. They wouldn't smell me easily. Not now.

I quickly ducked behind a thick oak tree, pressing myself at against its rough bark. My breath came in short, fast gasps. I closed my eyes for a second, then forced them open. I had to see. I had to listen.

Footsteps. Heavy, sure steps. Not far. They were moving through the trees, like dark shadows. I could hear their whispers, low and deep.

They were close. So close. One of them walked past my tree. I could feel the whoosh of air as he went by. My heart nearly jumped out of my mouth. I bit my lip so hard I tasted blood.

Don't move. Don't breathe. Just stay still like a stone.

He kept going. The sounds became a little softer. My lungs hurt. I waited, counting my breaths slowly. Then, I pushed off the tree. I ran again, as quietly as I could. I needed to lose them.

A small stream owed ahead. I splashed into the icy water, not caring that my clothes got wet. I walked through it, moving against the ow. Water would wash away any tiny smell I still had. It would make them unsure. I hoped. The cold made my legs ache, but I kept going. Deeper into the trees. Away from them.

I climbed out on the other side, shaking water from my hair. My legs felt very weak, but I pushed harder. Up a small hill, then down into a thick group of bushes. I squeezed through, sharp points on the bushes cutting my arms, but I didn't care. Pain was a small thing compared to being caught.

I could hear them again. Louder this time. They were closer. They must have found my old path, or they were just searching the whole area. Like a net, closing in. My hidden scent wouldn't last forever.

I needed a better hiding spot. A place they wouldn't expect.

I saw it. A space inside a fallen tree trunk, half-covered by green moss and plants. It was small, tight, and dirty. But it was a chance. I crawled inside, pulling leaves and small branches over the opening. The darkness wrapped around me. It smelled of wet earth and old wood. I curled into a tight ball, my knees to my chest.

I was met with silence. Only the sound of my own thumping heart. And then, the Warriors. Their heavy boots thumped on the ground right next to my log. I heard a low sound, a grunt, and a soft voice.

"She's good. But she can't run forever."

Another voice, closer. "No one outruns us. We'll nd her. The smell is faint, but it's here."

My breath caught in my throat. They were so close. I could feel the ground shake a little as they moved. I closed my eyes, wishing I could disappear. Wishing I had a wolf, fast and strong, to ght them off or carry me far away. But I was just me. Small, scared, but not broken. Not yet.

They moved on. The sounds became softer again. I stayed in the log, not daring to move for a long, long time. The dark was my friend.

I don't know how long I stayed there, but I didn't even come out when I felt them walk away, and that must have been 4 hours ago.

When I nally crawled out, the moon was high in the sky. I was tired, my body hurt, but I was free.

I was worried that they were still hiding around, and I don't have the ability to hear noise that is close by, so I had to trust my instincts.

I ran through the woods even though I was tired and dehydrated, but I couldn't stop.

I couldn't feel the physical pain that was caused by the twigs that scrapped me or the falls and I endured but emotionally and mentally I was a wreck.

The two people who were responsible for everything I was growing through right now were my parents. My biological parents, but they didn't give a ying sh what I was going through.

I got on a bus in a small town, then walked for what felt like hours, following the directions I remembered. My adoptive father's house. The one place I knew I could truly be safe.

Finally, I saw it. The familiar small house with the blue door. My heart pounded, not from fear, but from a new kind of hope. A real hope.

I walked up the path, my legs shaking from the long journey. I knocked on the door. One knock. Two. Three.

The door creaked open.

"Faith?" A voice said.

My blood turned to ice. My breath caught in my throat. It wasn't my adoptive father.

No, it was a voice I knew too well.