

# Grace of a Wolf #

Chapter 252: Caine: Peacock

## CAINE

I glare down at the bed where my entire wardrobe splays out like darkness incarnate. Fashion isn't something I've ever paid attention to, but I don't think I ever realized what lack of variety exists in mine.

Black on black on fucking black. I grab one shirt, examining it for any distinguishing feature that might set it apart. There isn't one.

*You dress like an emo teenager.*

"Shut up." I don't need fashion advice from someone who considers fur their only outfit.

*What you need is color, my wolf continues, ignoring my irritation. His enthusiasm grows with every word. Something that catches the eye. A vibrant red, perhaps. The color of blood freshly spilled. Showcase your strength.*

I toss the shirt back onto the pile. He isn't helping, but telling him so will only make it worse.

*You could shift for the occasion instead of worrying about clothes. Show yourself in all our glory. Have you ever seen a wolf as magnificent as us?*

"Your idea of dressing up is showing up naked and furred. Your opinion isn't even to be considered."

*Better than anything you can come up with. My coat gleams like the darkest night. My eyes hold storms. My presence alone—*

"Shut up. Are you writing a novel?"

*Maybe I should. My romantic side is far more developed than yours. Maybe my books will bring in extra income. Goddess knows we need it.*

Ignoring his amusement, I stare at my phone, the only lifeline I have left. With a final, resigned curse, I snap a photo of the clothing spread and send it to Jack-Eye. Before I can change my mind, I hit the call button.

He picks up on the fourth ring. "What?" His voice sounds strained and breathless, like I've interrupted something physical. Knowing him, it involves another person.

"Check your texts."

"Are you fucking serious? Do you have any idea what you're—never mind. Hold on."

There's rustling and a faint groan, and I look at the ceiling with a long sigh. It isn't the first, nor will it be the last, time I'm an unwilling witness to his escapades.

"Now, Jack-Eye."

"I am, I am, I—what the fuck? Why am I looking at your laundry?"

I inhale sharply through my nose. "I need to convince Grace to let me mark her tonight. Everything has to be perfect. I can't afford any detail to go wrong."

The silence on the other end stretches so long I wonder if the call dropped.

"Are you saying you're dressing up for a date?" Jack-Eye finally asks, his voice suspiciously high.

"Is that so fucking hard to believe?" I snap.

A choked sound comes through the line. I've heard it enough times to recognize exactly what he's doing. Then he clears his throat. "Yes. Yes it is. You buy the same shirts in bulk since I've known you."

"I do not—" Wait. No, I guess I do. They're cheaper that way.

"And they're all black. Sometimes with slightly different necklines. Once in a blue moon, a dark charcoal gray." He's definitely laughing now. "Holy shit, you must be serious. Your charm isn't enough?"

*And you're choosing his help over mine? I hope he dresses you like a peacock.*

I drag my hand down my face, regretting my luck in wolf and beta combined. "Are you going to help or not?"

"I'm intrigued enough to try." There's a strangely calculating tone in his voice, enough to send a vague sense of worry through me. But then he asks crisply, "Where are you taking her?"

"There's a hotel in the human city near the edge of Blue Mountain's territory."

A long pause.

"....that's it?"

My brow furrows. "We're going out to dinner." Somewhere. Still haven't figured out where.

"Dinner and bed. How romantic." Another muffled snicker. "Alright, you need something new. Something that says 'I'm still a terrifying apex predator, but I bothered to look nice for you.'"

My unease grows. "I don't—"

"Hold on, I'm already looking. There's a nice place in town, but you'll have to drive. Maybe thirty minutes. Do you have time?"

There's a lot to do before the other packs arrive, but— "Yes."

"Okay, I'm looking through their inventory now. Hold on."

Pacing the room is the only thing keeping my mind settled as he does whatever he's doing.

Then, "Okay, I got it. I ordered it for pick-up and it should be ready in an hour. It's perfect."

My eyes narrow. He sounds sincere, but this is Jack-Eye we're talking about. "What is it?"

"A shirt. Pants. Socks and shoes. What, do you need me to pick your underwear, too?"

"Of course not."

"It's a date, so you have to dress up, right?"

"Right."

"There you go. Just trust me, boss. This is our future Queen; I won't let you down."

\* \* \*

Thirty minutes later, I realize I never should have trusted Jack-Eye.

I stare at the items the cashier's handed me, my brows twitching as I ask, "Are you sure this is the right order?"

The cashier glances at the receipt. "Caine, right?"

"Yes."

"Yep, this is it. Rush order, placed thirty-three minutes ago, paid by card. It's yours. Would you like it gift wrapped?"

I glare at the monstrosity folded neatly into a plastic bag, pulling it out to inspect what I'm already regretting trusting Jack-Eye to buy.

It's an ostentatious red shirt with silver dragon embroidery, paired with black slacks with matching silver embroidery down the sides. The shoes, at least, look normal.

"No," I say, my jaw tight enough to crack molars. "No gift wrap."

*I think it looks quite regal, Fenris chirps.*

*Shut up and focus on what you need to do.*

*Grace is just sitting at the diner still, he grumbles. Then his attention sharpens. Oh, they're leaving.*

*Follow them.*

I shove the offensive clothing into the bag and step outside the store, pulling out my phone. Jack-Eye doesn't answer my call, as expected.

**[CAINE: I will kill you.]**

**[JACK-EYE: I saw you picked up the order. Like it?]**

**[CAINE: This will make me look like a peacock.]**

**[JACK-EYE: Girls like peacocks.]**

**[CAINE: I'm not wearing this shit.]**

**[JACK-EYE: Then don't blame me when she says no. Hey, do you think a peacock's cock is as small as a pea?]**

**[CAINE: I'm cutting your salary.]**

**[JACK-EYE: Also, I hear girls like pierced dicks. Maybe check out the local tattoo place. You should be healed in time for tonight.]**

**[CAINE: How do I block a number?]**

**[JACK-EYE: Good luck tonight, boss. Tie down our Queen! Literally, if necessary. Be careful with rope, though. Rope burn is a bitch.]**

Irritated, I call him again, unsurprised when he answers this time.

"You've gone too far—"

"Boss, you wound me. I picked it all out with you in mind."

My eyes twitch. "Then wear it yourself."

"Oh, no, boss. I don't have the aura to pull it off. Not like you."

I pinch the bridge of my nose, barely containing the urge to reach through the phone and strangle my Beta with my bare hands. "Would it kill you to do something properly?"

"Probably. But if you really hate it, just ask the attendants to find you something appropriate."

I gnash my teeth together. "I wouldn't wear this shit if you had a gun to my head."

"Your loss. You know, studies show that bold fashion choices can make a woman more receptive to—"

I hang up on him mid-sentence. The urge to throw my phone across the parking lot is almost overwhelming, but I need the damn thing. Grace might call.

*I have good news. And bad news.*

"What is it this time?"

*Bad news: You aren't going to have time to shop for a new outfit.*

"And the good news is?"

*We found their Luna.*

The Novel will be updated on this website. Come back and continue reading tomorrow, everyone!

