

Chapter 12

The rst rogue charged at her, and she didn't even honour him with a blow of her own, simply dodging at the last moment and letting him meet the wooden boxes behind her.

Another was already launching a sneaky attack of his own from her back, and she found it disgraceful that he didn't have it in him to do it properly. It was like they weren't even trying. He simply attempted to grab her from behind, and that was insulting, to say the least. These guys didn't even have their claws out, completely underestimating the trouble they had just got themselves into.

She sent that one ying across the narrow street, pleased with how far he ew, knocking into some old crates on his way. It was impressive, considering he was a heavy fellow.

Claws elongated immediately, and the men bared their teeth at her, nally realising they hadn't chosen easy prey this time.

"Come on, guys!" she taunted, blowing a silver strand of hair off her face, a savage grin on her face. "I thought you wanted to have some fun! And so far, this has been boring!"

They leapt at her, and this time, she spared no one, catching the rst one to reach her and twisting his arm, breaking it in a way that wouldn't let him regenerate quickly. She knocked another one out, stomping in the hollow of his knee until she heard a distinctive cracking sound. The third one got his head smashed against the stone wall. Before the fourth wolf could reach her, she jumped up, grabbing the metal bars of an old balcony on the nearest building and swung her legs out, grasping her opponent's neck between her thighs so hard that his ability to move and breathe were now severely restricted.

This was when Astrea noticed that the dirty rogues left muddy stains on her beautiful white outt and frowned, thinking about what to do with them next. She would have probably just killed them if it were any other place. However, here in the East, she didn't know the boundaries and didn't want to get onto Fenrir's bad side. The king was already too hard of a nut to crack, and she didn't need any additional trouble with him.

"What is going on here?" Fenrir's voice sounded like thunder, bringing her out of her trance. He found her too soon.

Their eyes locked, and she saw how dark his gaze was, how his sts clenched at the sight of what she did to his disgusting men.

Nevertheless, she was in trouble.

"Some of your men wanted to get acquainted, but they forgot to ask for my consent," she tried to explain awkwardly, still holding someone's head trapped between her thighs, which, she was sure now, made Fenrir's jaw twitch. Rogues probably did not care about such things. "Sorry," she mumbled and released the rogue.

He fell to his knees, desperately gasping for air, making her roll her eyes involuntarily. She hated weak men. Those were usually the ones who gave hell to women, trying to compensate for what they themselves were lacking. Just like these four who clearly wanted to have their way with her, knowing that a regular girl wouldn't be able to stand against four men.

"Stupid b'tch!" one of the guys spat blood, wiping his mouth and preparing to leave as this was ocially over.

"How dare you?" Astrea chuckled with mock indignation. "I am a very clever b'tch! Mind your manners!"

She hoped this would make the King of Rogues laugh, or at least not look this gloomy, but to no avail. Comic relief probably wasn't his thing.

"Move," the man with the bloody mouth tried to push Fenrir out of the way, not recognising his own king, but the latter didn't budge, closing the only possible exit with his broad chest that was going up and down at a faster rhythm than usual, eyes still on Astrea.

She expected to be scolded or reproached because the gaze cast on her was so heavy and dark. However, a gasp escaped her when, instead, Fenrir abruptly placed his large palm on top of the rogue's head and twisted it with force, breaking his neck, the breathless body of the man dropping to his feet to Astrea's shock.

"Who," Fenrir growled menacingly, catching another man who tried to ee for his life now, "do you think you are?"

"Man, it's just some girl! We didn't know anyone already had dibs on her~" The captive never nished his sentence because sharp claws sliced his torso so deep that his bowels fell out, dirtying the ground. Something that was very hard to achieve without shifting.

The king moved with speed faster than any shifter Astrea had encountered. Quick, deadly, merciless... His st pierced the third rogue's chest, bursting out of it holding a heart that was still beating. Fenrir threw it away as if it was a piece of trash and moved on to the nal offender.

The fourth man didn't even try to run, trapped between Astrea, who didn't move as she watched the scene unfolding before her eyes in awe, and Fenrir, who had his hand covered in blood. Slowly, the king approached the last rogue and grabbed his neck, yanking him up to his feet and then up in the air until his legs kicked uncontrollably... uselessly.

Fenrir's eyes found Astrea's again. "What? Are you not going to ask me to spare him?"

The words brought her out of the daze, startling her even more.

"Why would I?" She arched her brow at him. "So that he could go and hurt some other girl who can't protect herself the way I can? I will not plead for him or anyone like him for that matter."

"Good!" Fenrir scowled, and she heard another cracking noise, knowing far too well what it meant.

The Rogue King had just killed four of his own men.

Her mind was ooded with thoughts of what it could mean, but at the same time, she didn't want to read the situation wrong.

Was this planned? Or was it a coincidence? Did Fenrir care about her safety because she was an important representative from the South? Did he care about her at all?

She was a mess inside but still didn't let a single emotion slip onto her face. Exactly like she was taught.

"Are you hurt?" he asked when their silence became too awkward.

"Does it look like I am hurt?" she felt slightly offended by such a reaction. "I was handling them ne on my own, you know."

"Were you?" his lips pressed into a thin white line, a little wrinkle forming between his brows. "You were not supposed to be here at all!"

"Oh, excuse me for YOUR people dragging me here without asking for my permission rst!" She retorted, narrowing her eyes at him.

"You shouldn't have wandered off alone!" he persisted with his attitude, adding fuel to her re.

"Weren't you the one who told me to get lost?" Astrea chuckled darkly, all fear and admiration for the man gone.

"No, I told you to give me a minute!" Fenrir clared, sting his hands so hard his knuckles became white.

"And that is what I did! It's not my fault that a gorgeous, nicely dressed woman can't take a step here without being assa"tted!" she scoffed, not sure why he irked her so much. She wanted to provoke him, test him, get more emotions out of him, to see that re in his icy eyes burn... Astrea desired it all. Not because it was her work. Not anymore. So, she added, "If only there was a King to x that!"

"Good point!" Fenrir growled, a dangerous glint appearing in his eyes as his lips curled in a menacing smile, making her regret taunting him. "Your safety is my rst priority, Menace."

He took a step forward, and she took one back, feeling the dangerous dark energy that was pouring off of him.

"Wh-what are you doing?" She knew she wasn't going to like the answer.

"See, Astrea, the problem is that I can't x the city in one day," he sneered at her, "but I sure as hell can keep you safe."

"Fenrir!" she warned him, lifting her hand in front of her as if to ward him off.

However, he only used it to pull her closer and in less than a second, her world turned upside down.

Literally.

"Fenrir!" she yelled, realising that the rogue threw her over his shoulder and now was walking away leisurely.

"The best way to keep an esteemed guest safe is to keep you close," he explained in a matter-of-fact tone, his grip tight.

"You can't do this!" she protested.

"Really?" he chuckled. "Looks like I am already doing it."

"That's~" Astrea wanted to do and say so much, but only exhaled heavily, giving up. It wasn't like she could ght him. Not only because it would go against the mission. Mostly because she wasn't sure, after what she had just witnessed, that she would be able to take him down if she fought him. She had to admit that Fenrir was possibly too strong for her. Which meant she would avoid physical confrontation at all costs, letting the rogue feel he was the winner in this argument.

That would be the real win for her. She had to think of the long game.

Fenrir halted, not expecting her to give up so easily. His hands slid up the woman's body adjusting her position and she didn't react to that either, taking the fun out of it all. The last thing he wanted was to hurt her or make her angrier.

He was already worried he'd made a mistake by losing his temper earlier and felt he was walking on a thin line with her.

"What's the problem, Menace?" He asked.

"Problem? Here?" She chuckled darkly as she hung over his shoulder. "How did you guess?"

"I am observant like that." He smirked as he kept walking with her over his shoulder.

"Goddess, we have so much work to do!" She whimpered in response, making him huff a laugh. "You can't just do what you want!"

"Watch me."

"It's unacceptable!"

"Says who?" Fenrir chuckled. The darkness gone and the arrogance and sarcasm back.

"Everyone! A gentleman would never~"

"Gentleman?" He scoffed. "You must be kidding me! This is literally the Rogue Kingdom. I am their leader, and I am no gentleman."

"That you are not!" She agreed, still hanging upside down limply. "But maybe you should be! When you are at the Alpha Convocation, you can't behave like this, no matter what the situation!"

"Noted!" With a groan, he put her back to the ground but only to change the position, and he lifted her up again in just a few seconds. Astrea found herself in a bridal-style carry, facing the king now.

"This is not better!" She glared at Fenrir, who pretended not to notice her frustration and annoyance.

"Of course, it's better," he smirked. "Even if you don't want to admit it."

"I can walk by myself!" She insisted, nonetheless.

"I am aware," he informed her, but made no move to release her.

"How is this better again?" Astrea demanded, wriggling in his arms.

"Because when the rest of the city sees us like this, they will know that you are off-limits!" Fenrir stated.

"When they see us like what?" Astrea furrowed her brows, and their eyes met.

"Like you belong to me," Fenrir replied, placing her back on her feet next to his car. She didn't even notice that they were back, staring at him in shock. "Shall we?" He opened the door for her, ignoring how startled she was and not giving her a chance to respond to what he said.

When they were back to the fortress after the most awkward car ride in the history of the shifter world, Astrea wanted to get out of the car with dignity but found the car door locked. Trying it over and over, she did not plan to give up.

Fenrir's shadow fell on her as he stood in front of her window. He pressed a button on his key fob, and she heard the mechanism unlocking, but before she tried again, he opened the door for her.

"There is no need for this!" she hissed, getting out without accepting the hand he offered, but the rogue was still blocking her way, keeping her trapped between him and the car.

"You implied that I should try to be a gentleman, so here you go." He was imperturbable, and it annoyed her even more. She'd had enough of him and his dominating unbreakable aura for one day. This man could wear anyone's patience thin.

"I don't know who we are kidding here!" She snapped. "Hell would freeze over before you'd be considered a gentleman!"

"And here I thought you were a professional!" He leaned lower so that his face was almost touching hers. "Teach me, master."

His hot breath tickled her skin and made her think of things she shouldn't be considering.

Heat rushed to her cheeks. Angry, uncontrollable heat.

"What happened to you two?" Devoss interrupted them, assessing the way they both looked as his brows went up. He was the only one to greet their return and had already changed into a bright yellow suit with a phoenix embroidery on it.

"A little accident," Fenrir responded without sparing his friend a glance.

"A little?" Devoss scoffed.

"Four people dead!" Astrea crossed her arms over her chest with a huff. She didn't want to let Fenrir downplay the events of today.

"Just four?" Devoss snorted, unfazed. "And I thought something big must have happened for you to have bloody handprints all over you. Did the dead people clutch you before they died?"

Astrea and Fenrir exchanged side glances.

"No," she shook her head deantly, "a barbarian clutched me after he killed those people!"

"Did Fenrir kill them?" Devoss barely stied a laugh, and Astrea awarded him with a dark glare. Everything was just fun and games for them.

"Four newbies attacked her, and I made sure they would never attack anyone again," Fenrir explained coldly. "That is all."

"That is not all!" Astrea protested. "When he was done, he manhandled me!"

"For all of three seconds!" The king retorted.

"And ruined my clothes!" She pointed at her jumpsuit covered in red handprints.

"It actually doesn't look that bad!" Devoss tilted his head, rubbing his chin as he took a better look. "It's edgier now and more appropriate for living in the Rogue Kingdom. Don't you think?"

"I think we have a lot of work to do if you want an alliance with the South to work out!" Astrea gritted her teeth. "From what I've seen so far, I am not impressed."

"How good it is that we have you to instruct us now!" Fenrir was clearly mocking her. "You will help us with that, won't you? Didn't you say you were the best of the best?"

She glared sharply at him. Was any of this serious for him?

"Astrea, love, the outt is to die for, literally, but the smell... you need a bath," Devoss' nose wrinkled all of a sudden, even as he grinned.

"Yeah, thanks for reminding me!" She rolled her eyes, trying to calm herself. It was time to regroup. "I'm going to get a shower now."

She wanted to leave them both as soon as possible.

"That's probably not the best idea," Devoss stood in her way.

"Why the hell not?" Astrea had had enough of their games for one day.

"The warriors just returned from training. Unless you wish to take a shower with a few dozen naked rogues~"

A low, menacing growl escaped Fenrir, and Astrea sighed, covering her face with her hands.

"Luckily, I have a solution!" Devoss smirked, winking at her.

"You do?" She arched her brow, not even sure she wanted to hear it.

"It just so happens that I've drawn a bath for Fenrir in his tower," Devoss tried to look as innocent as he could. "I am sure, as the gentleman that he is~"

A snort escaped her.

"As the gentleman that he is," Devoss repeated, "Fenrir will allow you to take it in his stead."

Her lips parted in shock. What kind of offer was that?

"And you knew to prepare a bath for him, how again?" Astrea knitted her brows together. This whole day was bizarre. And it was just day one here.

"I am perceptive," Devoss winked at her again. "So, what do you say, Fenrir? Can our dear guest use it?"

"Sure," he replied, not taking his eyes off her. "If you are not afraid, that is".

Now she simply had to take that bath.

"That's so kind of you!" She hissed, turning on her heel. "Thanks! Offer accepted!"

Astrea marched away, Fenrir following her with his gaze until she was gone, the corners of his lips curving upwards.

However, his smile dropped when he noticed Bash walking towards him from another part of the fortress. He could tell by looking at his facial expression alone that something had happened, but he wasn't ready to deal with this now. Astrea captivated his whole mind.

"Bash, not now, please," he said wearily.

"Sorry, but I think you have to take it," the young wolf handed him a phone, and Fenrir accepted it with a low snarl.

It couldn't be anything good.

"Hello, brother," Joran's silky voice sounded from the other end of the line, bringing back the memories that Fenrir had tried to block for so many years.