Day Out

Freya

This wasn't quite how I'd spent my Friday nights during the summer, but now I was back at school, it was time to chill. I am sat on my bed watching 'To All the Boys I'd Loved Before' on my laptop, arguably my favourite rom-com of the moment. I was also doing my nails for the weekend. I knew that the next time I shifted, my nails would go right back to normal, but the full moon wasn't until next week, and I wasn't due on patrol. Hopefully there wouldn't be any reason to shift this weekend, as it was time to indulge my human side a little and enjoy some shopping and good food with my friends, in one of the nearby cities tomorrow. Sometimes, I enjoyed the human things in life, particularly after a whole summer of Lycan related things.

The bedroom door opens and my newest friend walks in. I am quite eager to nd out tomorrow how well I can get Ella to scrub up with a little bit of my guidance.

She was denitely one of those classic girls who were pretty on any average day with almost no effort, but had pure bombshell potential hidden underneath, and it was my duty as her friend to bring that side out of her.

"Good run?" I inquire. Ella walks by me to prop the window open a little and I catch a scent on her that I really wasn't expecting.

Whoa whoa whoa. Why does she smell like Austin? I wonder to Mira.

Oooh...looks like our human roomie can't resist the allure of an alpha either. Good for her! Mira laughs back at me.

Typical response from Mira.

If anyone ever thought male alphas were bad, the lesser known alpha she-wolves were worse. Mira would have me be a female version of Ollie, if she could.

"Yes, thanks, no random wild wolves today!" she laughs happily, taking her trainers off.

"Did you run with anyone?" I ask innocently, wondering how she will respond.

"No...I just went by myself," she replies. With a blythe smile on her face, she then heads into the bathroom with some clothes and a towel. I frown,

What a little liar! I exclaim to Mira.

You warn her away from him, and you're surprised that rstly, she has become curious about him, and secondly, has decided not to admit that she was with him? Mira counters.

True. I did say that. Ella isn't exactly a rebel though, I thought she'd listen, I sigh.

I whip my phone out as soon as the bathroom door is shut.

Me: WHY can I smell you on Ella?!

Austin: Not that it's any of your business, but I saw her heading out for a run earlier after the gym, and given the random rogue attack the other evening, Atlas told me to follow her to make sure she didn't encounter any more. She tripped over pretty badly and I helped her up. Then we just had a quick chat.

Me: okay..fair enough. But PLEASE don't encourage her, though... I mean I know how the girls here get around you. In fact please just try to avoid her as much as you can.

Austin: Chill out Freya, we just had a chat. It's not a big deal.

Me: She's nice and NORMAL, she doesn't need our world ruining her, especially without her knowledge.

"Freya, are you okay? You look a bit pissed off!" Ella suddenly asks, having just come out of the bathroom.

"Uh...yeah, sorry....angry text face," I suggest, "are you looking forward to shopping tomorrow?"

Ella laughs a little and nods.

"Yeah...but, I mean...I did grow up in London so it's going to be on a little smaller scale than I'm used to," she jokes. I throw one of my throw cushions at her and she shrieks with laughter a little, as she dodges it.

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Ella

I wake the next morning feeling thoroughly refreshed, enjoying the fact my alarm didn't have to go off.

Bliss, this is what weekends were about. I was really looking forward to today, as I had never been on a girly shopping trip before.

I get myself dressed in some dark skinny jeans and a white tank top and stand in front of the mirror. I had kept my damp plait in overnight and I now carefully work my ngers through it, enjoying how the plait had made my hair beautifully wavy. It was naturally dead straight, and despite so many girls saying they'd kill for my straight hair, I did nd it a little boring. This looked quite nice though.

I hear a whistle as Freya springs up behind me in the mirror.

"Oh, YES Ella, now that's what I'm talking about!" Freya exclaims at me, running her hands through my hair. I can't help but laugh at her delightful silliness.

"So, it looks good?" I ask, hoping it wasn't just in my head. She arches a brow at me and looks bemused.

"Ella, many women would pay a lot of money to have hair like yours!" she says reassuringly. She get herself dressed, and we are soon heading down to meet Annabelle for breakfast.

As we start eating breakfast, I subtly glance over to Austin's table, a little disappointed to see that he isn't there.

Hmm...was I perhaps getting a teeny tiny crush on my roommate's older brother? I couldn't help but hear Freya's warning to me on that rst morning replaying in my head over and over. I had no reason to think she wasn't trying to protect me, but could it really be that she didn't think I was good enough for her brother?

Perhaps it was against this 'girl code' I had no concept of, but had heard about at times. I wasn't sure. Either way, I couldn't help but feel a little bit intrigued by him, and it had not escaped my notice how handsome he was. Today, I wanted to try and look my best at the formal. Particularly since I now apparently owed him a dance...

"Come on blondie, our ride is out front," Freya says, standing up and putting her phone into her back pocket.

"My...uncle is giving us a lift. His name is Stephen."

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Freya

Out front was my dad's beta, Stephen, in his SUV, ready to take us out to one of my favourite cities for a few hours.

Stephen wasn't my uncle at all, but he was as good as. I had known him all my life. He was a quiet man and enjoyed the simple things in life, so I knew he was probably just going to grab a quiet drink in a pub and read a book while we were busy.

As my father's beta, he was my dad's closest condante, aside from my mum, who was his Luna. In my Dad's absence he was in command of the pack. It didn't happen often, but sometimes when my dad went away on pack matters, Stephen would step in. Sometimes, though, he was chauffeur for me and Austin. Since Austin had now passed his driver's test, he was just mine. I could've asked Austin to take us but he was busy today with training and homework. I knew Stephen didn't mind, as he got to just chill out somewhere while Annabelle and I did our own thing.

There were some cute little boutiques in the city we were going to that sold some really beautiful dresses, plus it was generally a gorgeous city with a busy market on Saturdays, that also offered lots of different food to try. It was denitely one of my favourite places to go.

The drive takes us a little under half an hour and it was just so nice to get out of the school grounds.

I'd spent the whole summer at the pack house and hadn't been allowed to go out of our territory much, which had been very boring. While one could've been dismissed, the fact that three local Seers had warned the nearby packs and covens of an increase in dark energies over the past year, this meant my father had taken that threat rather seriously. He doubled down on the pack's physical training and kept us younger ones within our boundaries for our safety. He somehow put even more pressure onto Austin in response, too. I was amazed he was happy for us to go shopping today, but trouble didn't tend to happen in busy high streets so that was probably why.

Stephen drops us off at the top end of the High Street and I turn to thank him.

"I'll be nearby, we will leave here at this spot in exactly four hours," he says to me before driving off.

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After two hours of shop hopping we came to one of my favourite boutiques. The prices were a bit steep but it wasn't every day I needed a new dress for a formal. I did have a lot of dresses but I was not someone who wore the same outt twice around the same people.

"Any thoughts?" Ella asks me, holding a somewhat shapeless dress in a dreadful colour up against herself. I shake my head at her and put the dress back.

Luckily, she has me, now.

"Hmm...no. Trust me, that colour is no good for you with your skin tone and hair colour," I reply gently, suddenly eyeing a colour that would be perfect for Ella, extracting the source from the rail. Actually, the dress itself is gorgeous.

"This. Trust me, this is the dress for you," I say excitedly, holding up a gorgeous light blue, lacey midi dress. It was sleeveless, had attering straps and a v-shaped neckline, but it still looked very classy and age appropriate.

Ella bites her lip and stares at it uncomfortably. I could tell this was perhaps a little out of her comfort zone but I knew she'd thank me once she tried it on. I encourage her to go try it on while I go to see how Annabelle is getting on.

"Ooh purple, I really like it!" I nod approvingly, spotting Annabelle in front of one of the full length mirrors by the changing cubicles. She has tried on a deep, plum coloured, satin bandeau dress that suited her gorgeous shoulder length hair so well.

"Any ideas for me, AB?" I ask tentatively. I hadn't seen anything I liked just yet.

"Yes! Although, it depends...are you up for hot pink?" she asks. She heads over to a rail I haven't looked at yet and plucks out a gorgeous hot pink chiffon dress with a corseted top and owing skirt, featuring a sweetheart neckline. This denitely looked promising, I didn't have anything like it already in my wardrobe. I turn around to go to the changing cubicles to nd Ella standing in front of us looking absolutely incredible in the light blue dress.

"Wow. I almost didn't recognise you," was all I can say, my expression one of total surprise. I look at her up and down, feeling more than a little jealous of her lean legs, but I knew she was a keen runner so that really made a lot of sense. She hugs herself with her arms a little awkwardly and I feel quite guilty at badgering her try on the dress that put outside her comfort zone.

"It's not typically what I would go for but...I actually love it," she beams, her eyes wide with tentative excitement, "I'm going to get it, it'll be a nice birthday present to myself on the day."

I feel relief ood through me. She loved the dress, even though she looked so awkward coming to show us.

"Wait...when is your birthday?" I ask, wondering how I'd slipped up so badly on basic roommate etiquette. How had I not asked her this already?

"Well...it's the same day as the formal," she says, looking a bit sheepish. Bless her. I had denitely gotten the impression this week that she really didn't have many friends at all at her last school, so I guess she wasn't used to celebrating it. I knew her parents were usually out the country so she probably hadn't ever done much. I look at her kindly.

"I wish you'd mentioned it earlier, we will have to plan something fun during the day to celebrate! But you are going to need some heels to complete this look," I said.

"Oh, but I've got -" she begins before I cut her off. "Ella. You cannot wear your Asics or your school shoes with this dress! It would actually be criminal," I exclaim, "besides, I get a great discount at a shop down the street because they're a really good family friend."

A short time later we are leaving the boutique, each clutching a bag containing our brand new dresses. Before we grab lunch, I make sure we stop in at our pack member's shoe shop and I talk Ella into buying her rst pair of silver sparkly heels that would look great with her new dress and many others to come. I also encourage her to get some casual ats so she didn't have to wear her running trainers everywhere. Annabelle also found the new school shoes she desperately needed; although I wasn't sure how much they conformed with the school dress code.

It had denitely been a successful shopping trip.

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It was soon food o'clock and we enjoyed sampling some of the food from the various stalls in the market. There were many different types of food available. Chinese, Indian, Thai, Cantonese, the standard hog roast that appeared here every week and a large bratwurst stand I hadn't seen before. We decide to get several different types of food and we go and sit down in the sunshine, near the city's cathedral in a beautiful public garden. We are surrounded by gorgeous owerbeds and the sound of water from the nearby stream. It is pure bliss. This is what Saturdays are all about, I think to myself, as I lay down on the warm grass and shut my eyes.

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Ella

After eating our tasty food from the market, we lay down on the grass watching the uffy white clouds drift across the sky, thoroughly enjoying the sun on our faces. I think back over my rst week at Exton and how thankful I was that I'd somehow made two friends already. Bizarrely I'd also scored a potential dance from someone who was arguably one of the best looking guys in the school.

Had I stepped into a different universe a week ago? It sure felt like it.

"Do you guys have boyfriends?" I ask, as I had no idea. Annabelle didn't seem like it as she was always on the lookout.

"No," Freya sighs. I nd this really hard to believe.

"How come? I mean you're so pretty, you're so nice and you're fun. Plus, you're tall; you're like a model," I begin, before another thought pops into my head, "oh! Sorry....or maybe you have a girlfriend?"

Freya laughs.

"No, no girlfriend either. It's denitely boys for me," she says. She pauses for a moment and looks a bit downcast, "the guys at our school don't want to go anywhere near Austin's sister."

I knit my eyebrows in surprise.

"What? That's so weird, why?" I ask, wondering what Austin had to do with it. Freya looks though she had just said something she shouldn't have said, and she shrugs.

"He's quite protective, I guess. He's the best person, but the guys at school apparently nd him intimidating. It puts them off," she explains.

"That sucks, I'm sorry," I reply, but privately thinking that nothing about him seemed intimidating.

"It's ne. He'll be gone next year," she laughs with a grin.

I suddenly remember Freya's strange timetable and the word that I had tried to search for on the internet, several days ago. I sh my phone out of my pocket, relieved to see that I nally have some internet signal now that I am back in a city.

I sit up and search the word 'Lycan' and start scrolling through the results. Now I know why the word seemed familiar. Of course, I had seen a few of the Underworld movies over the years. Lycans, I read as I continue to scroll, were basically like werewolves, but more specically, they were humanoids that could shift at will, into wolves, versus simple werewolves who had to shift without control and only during a full moon. The myth suggested that Lycans were born that way, as opposed to a dreadful curse like it was depicted in TV shows and lms.

But, it was all myth....right? Stuff of legend, of movies and books.

None of it was real, surely?

But, now I can't get the memory of my encounter with the angry black wolves out of my mind, or the fact the school had all sorts of wolf paintings and sculptures dotted around the school.

Was there something to it?

Presently, Freya's phone alarm goes off, interrupting my thoughts abruptly.

It was time to return to school.

We pick up our shopping bags and head back to where we had been dropped off. We nd Freya's uncle already there waiting for us and I am dismayed to see that he doesn't look particularly happy...

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Freya

We pile back into Stephen's car and I notice his expression is rather sombre in stark contrast to how he was only four hours before. I look at him with concern and he simply says, "Ask your father."

I frown as I take my seat next to him and I get my phone out of my bag.

Me: Dad? Why does Stephen look like something awful has happened?

Dad: Because it has. Three of our pack patrol were found slaughtered two hours ago near one of the borders next to Fern River. They hadn't checked in from their morning patrol, so we grew concerned. I've just spoken to Austin about increasing protection around the school. Something strange is going on.

Me: Oh my god!! Who did it? Rogues?

Dad: Their throats were cut. This wasn't the work of rogues or another pack. It seemed sacricial in the way their bodies were laid out, likely to aid a magical purpose. I don't want you and Annabelle leaving the school grounds alone anymore aside from coming back to the pack.

My heart sinks.

But...he was right, the school was the safest place; possibly safer than the pack with all the protections and enchantments it had on it.

I text Austin and arrange to meet him once we are back at the school.

I nd him waiting for me on our bench, dressed in his somewhat shabby basketball gear as I walk down the side of the pond. He looks impassive as he stares out across the water.

"Anthony...Steve...Connor... I just can't believe it," Austin says sadly with a shake of his head, looking up at me as I sit down. I sigh.

"Yeah. We've never been attacked, not for as long as I can remember, anyway. I don't understand why someone would do this!" I exclaim passionately. Austin clenches his jaw a little, which was about as angry as he ever really looked.

"Dark magic requires blood sacrice for particular spells," he says darkly. He puts his arm around me and hugs me into him as we both sit there staring out across the pond. We sit for several minutes in a mournful silence, watching a few ducks repeatedly dipping their heads in and out of the water.

"How was your shopping trip? Although I feel I should point out in defence of dad's credit card that you have an obscene amount of clothes already," he says, clearly trying to lighten the mood. I look at him curiously.

"How did you know that I went shopping?" I ask.

"A blonde birdy might have told me yesterday," he replies with a smirk. Exactly how long did they actually talk for? Sounded like more than a quick chat, particularly if today's plans were discussed.

"Oh yes, when you stalked my new roommate," I joke. He scowls defensively at me for my comment.

"I didn't stalk her," he says with an exaggerated eye roll, "but you were right, she doesn't smell typically human, she's got this sort of owery, sunny scent."

"Flowery? Sunny? I wouldn't have said that at all. Just...an edge. Slightly off. Where did you get owery from?" I ask with intrigue. His cheeks almost seemed a little pink...

"Perhaps my senses are a little keener than yours?" he teases, "but the weirdest thing Freya, was when she ran around thirty miles an hour. It was insane, only an Olympic athlete could do that. She doesn't even have the build of an athlete, she shouldn't be able to do it."

I raise my eyebrows in surprise.

"You reckon thirty miles an hour? Isn't that faster than the world record?" I ask. He nods.

"Yep, twenty seven miles an hour is the record, I looked it up. I could be wrong of course but I'm pretty accurate at assessing speed. Do you still think she's human?" he asks with his eyebrows raised.

"I don't know. She's not anything else we know of. She's denitely worth keeping an eye on, though," I say thoughtfully. Austin's expression changes slightly so I hastily add, "by that I mean me. YOU need keep your distance!"

I couldn't understand why Austin, of all people, seemed intrigued by Ella, and I suddenly feel quite protective of her. He frowns at me and looks a bit annoyed.

"Freya, you're being ridiculous. I'm not going to purposefully avoid your roommate just because she's a girl," he says with a shrug. I growl with annoyance.

"Aus, HOW have you not gured this out yet. It's the alpha effect. Without trying, you have girls fawning all over you; thirsty sixth form she-wolves especially. I told you this so many times over the summer but you don't seem to have heard me. I couldn't care less how disappointed all those other girls are when you reject them, but Ella is my friend and she will never know about our world and everything that goes with it. I just don't want there to be any chance that she will get hurt by you or any other Lycan, especially when their destined mate rolls up. But, if you stay away from her, there won't be! To her you can just be my older brother...from afar."

He stands up and stretches a little, sighing in annoyance but nodding in response.

"I understand what you're saying. Anyway, I've got to go. Yet another miserable session in the gym with Ollie awaits," he says sounding a little weary, "my arms and pecs still ache from yesterday. Ollie is brutal."

I look at him sadly.

"Aus, do you ever do anything fun?" I ask, getting up and following him back toward the school.

"Heirs don't get to have fun, Freya," he laughs, half joking. There was a high element of truth to that statement.

"I'm sure that's not entirely true. But you should tell that to Cassian, I notice he's not on the patrol rota much. I bet he has heaps of down time," I tut as we enter the main hall from the patio.

"Yes...well, Cass is a bit short for an alpha and he isn't much use to the rest of us until he grows up a bit anyway. He's too hot headed, his ego is huge and he's also incredibly annoying," Austin grumbles, waving at me before he heads down the sports corridor toward the gym.