Chapter 26

WARNING: SLIGHTLY MATURE CONTENT

Serena Lancaster

It was nine in the morning and I was too lazy to get out of bed. I absentmindedly twiddled through my phone, thinking about what I was going to eat when suddenly, the door opened and in walked Jon.

He did not look happy.

I sat up and put my hands on my lap, waiting for him to tell me what was wrong.

"I received the summons from the tribunal." Jon said. The tribunal was our equivalent of a supreme court where we had judges decide on cases that were too big to be solved by the Alpha. It housed the great library with literature on our race, and it was also the home of our scholars.

It was like Alpha Theodore was coming back to haunt us.

"When do we leave?" I asked, biting my lip as I thought of which clothes to pack.

"I am leaving this afternoon. I was the one who was summoned, not you." Jon said, sitting on the bed beside me.

"What? But it's our mating. Don't I have to provide testimony?" I asked indignantly.

"You already did. Remember that statement you wrote on your first week here?" Jon asked. I nodded.

"But I still have to be there!" I protested.

"Technically, not. Your Uncle Jasper is required to be there since it was his ruling that allowed me to fight for your hand. Your father, I'm not sure. Alpha Jason Blackmore will be there as he is Alpha Theodore's successor. You have not been summoned." Jon explained.

"But everyone will expect me to be there!"

"Yes, and they will most likely take us to two different rooms to interrogate us until they manage to find some hole in our story. No, if they want to play technicalities then I'll beat them at their own game. You won't be coming." Jon said.

"I don't care about the technicalities. I'll go wherever you go!"

"I won't let them interrogate you, Serena!" Jon vehemently said. "If we're separated from each other, I won't...I won't be able to control myself and we'll end up in worse trouble."

"But Jon..." I gave him my best puppy dog look. His eyes softened, and he gently patted my cheek.

"That won't work this time, mate. I'm not giving them any opportunities to question our mating because there's nothing to be questioned. If you're not there, then they won't be able to do that."

"But Jon..." I whined.

"No buts, Serena." He sternly said, and I kept quiet. "This isn't something you can convince me otherwise. The summons was for the death of Alpha Theodore, and you had nothing to do with that."

"But you said they'll question the marks..." I trailed off.

"Technically, the marks happened after his death. And your mark on my neck should make up for your absence."

There was silence. I knew Jon was not a particularly demanding person, especially when it came to me. The way he was telling me, I knew there was no room for argument and that I needed to support him. I had to pick and choose my battles, after all.

So I pouted and changed the subject.

"What will the west ask for?"

Jon sighed.

"I'm ready to give them more land—Alpha Theodore was been eyeing a few acres south of his territory to build a bigger pack house since his population is growing. I can finance that..." Jon began.

"But..." I continued. "Jon, an Alpha died. That's not going to be enough to placate Desert Fang."

"I know. Which is why I'm going to negotiate on their trade with humans." Jon said.

By law, werewolf packs were allowed to work for human industries and invest money up to a certain degree—all with the consent of the Alpha, of course.

"Their pack has been written up a lot of times for cavorting with human smugglers—stolen goods, electronics, cars, all that. That makes up for around 20% of their pack's annual income. If Alpha Blackmore agrees to stop that, I'll cover their losses for a year until they find a better alternative."

Goddess. Every now and then I keep finding things out that make me realize how out of touch I really was from pack life.

Wait.

"Jon, that's a lot of money. First the new pack house then their income. How much are we talking here?" I asked.

I didn't know a lot about money. I made a few hundred dollars every now and then working part time in the human town near Eastern Claw but I never really had much to spend it for so everything was kept in a small savings account. My father gave me a small allowance for my expenses sometimes.

"Give or take, around fifteen million dollars." Jon sighed.

My jaw dropped.

"Jon, where are you going to get that money?" I hissed. "Your father's pouring all of the royal family's funds into this war. He's not going to allow that!"

Jon looked at me curiously, amused.

"I have money, Serena. A lot of it." Jon said, tilting his head smile at me. I looked at him suspiciously.

"You have money? How?" I asked. "I mean, I know you get a stipend as a prince but I doubt it's enough to cover fifteen million dollars."

"Investments." He shrugged nonchalantly. "The way humans do it. I initially wanted my own funds separate from the royal treasury and now, I have more than enough to cover this."

I stared at him disbelievingly.

"You have a lot of money?" I asked, still unconvinced.

"Don't you?" Jon asked.

Well that stunned me.

"Well, yeah, I have a few thousand saved in the bank." I said, sheepishly shrugging.

"Do you want more?"

"More what?"

"More money. I mean, it's our money now. I had your name added to my account on your first week here."

"You what?"

"Yeah..." He stopped abruptly. "I thought you knew...I mean, what have you been using for your expenses?"

"Sometimes there's random crumpled cash in your desk drawers."

"So you're the one that's been taking those? Well, looks like I owe Patrick an apology."

"Oops." He rolled his eyes.

"Anyway, whatever. I should've told you about this, it just slipped my mind what with all that's been going on. I'll get you a card as soon as I return."

Huh.

"So wait, I'm rich?"

"We're rich."

"No kidding." I scoffed. "Well for starters you owe me fifteen hundred dollars so I'm gonna need you to pay up."

"What? Why do I owe you?"

"The night of the claiming. You saw our betting pool and you led me to believe that you were going to claim someone."

"I did claim someone. I claimed you."

Wait a minute.

"B...b...but you said you met some females...and Erica..." I trailed off. "You were with her the whole time!"

Jon looked at me seriously, and suddenly, laughed.

"You bet that I was going to claim your cousin? For fifteen hundred dollars?" Jon roared in laughter.

Asshole!

"Shut up!" I shouted, hitting him with a pillow. "You deceived me! You're the worst! I can sue you for this...false representation or...something! Argh!"

Jon still hadn't stopped laughing.

"I hope the tribunal drags on your trial until eternity!"

"Nah, you'd miss me too much." Jon said, pulling me to him and raining kisses over my face. I resisted, playfully pushing him away but he was too strong.

"Oh my Goddess. I'm mated to a con man." I chuckled, growling playfully at him.

His eyes turned serious as he pinned me down on the bed, his hands shackling both my wrists above my head.

"You know...there is a way...for me to make it up to you..." He said, nuzzling my neck. My breath hitched.

"Y...yeah...fif...fifteen hundred dollars.... plus...interest..." I tried to stifle a moan as his chest pressed into mine. He gave my neck a playful lick as I instinctively wrapped my legs around his waist.

"Hmm...is that so..." He murmured, giving my neck and shoulders soft, butterfly kisses.

Goddess, this man was going to be the death of me.

Ah, to hell with it!

I kissed him gently as I tried to unbutton his jeans. I knew the scent of my arousal must be hanging thick in the air as I felt Jon's hardness poking me in the thigh. He was about to shuck off his jeans when the door suddenly opened.

"Jon, I need a copy of the summons to file WHOA NO! NO!" Patrick entered, screaming as he covered his eyes. "NO!"

"GET THE FUCK OUT!" Jon shouted.

"PATRICK WHAT THE HELL?" I screamed.

Patrick was still covering his eyes, causing him to stumble back. He managed to push the door close behind him. Jon growled and grabbed Patrick with one hand and the other opened the door.

"Wait what are you doing...AARGH JON!" Patrick shouted as Jon carelessly threw him out the door before slamming the door shut.

Jon looked at me, his eyes feral and dilated. Uh-oh. His wolf was close to the surface.

"Relax, he didn't see anything. I still have my shirt on." I rolled my eyes. That seemed to make him relax as he stalked over to the bed. He sighed and slumped down beside me on his stomach.

"You should probably give him what he needs." I chuckled, giving Jon a kiss on the cheek.

"His is the last face I want to see right now. Besides, I'm going to be gone for two days...wouldn't you rather..." He finished his statement by pulling me close and raining kisses on my neck.

I pushed myself away and groaned.

"Yes, but I understand that Patrick's need is more pressing. And your need is just...pressing on me..." I said, resisting the urge to moan. Jon chuckled and rolled on his back.

"Fine, but after I give Patrick the summons, can we resume?" He asked. I resisted the urge to swoon; he was like a puppy dog.

"As you wish." I winked.

--

King Armand, Queen Robin, Patrick, and I were all standing out in the driveway ready to bid Jon goodbye. His car was already up and running, and his bags were already in the bank.

I stood beside Patrick as Jon was embraced by his mother. King Armand then exchanged a few hushed words with him, to which Jon only responded with occasional nods and one-worded replies. After their talk, the King then led the Queen back inside the palace. Finally, Jon smiled and looked over to us.

"I still haven't forgiven you for earlier." Jon growled at Patrick. I blushed and looked down.

"Believe me, brother, I am going to need therapy to get that image out of my head." Patrick groaned.

"Don't burn the place down."

"Don't kill another Alpha."

Jon sighed before leaning in to embrace his brother.

"Take care of him for me." Jon told me, motioning to Patrick.

"Ouch. You wound me brother. Now I must go heal my heart...I hear the chef brought his daughter to work today." Patrick winked.

"The ladies of Lightwing will mourn the day you bring home a mate." I teased.

"Maybe when I'm sixty." He winked. "I'll leave you two now, wouldn't want to witness a repeat of earlier. Goodbye, brother." Patrick chortled as he went back inside the palace.

Now it was just us.

I bit my lip, feeling nervousness creep up on me. This was going to be the first time since our mating that we would be apart. I wondered if I was going to be treated differently? Did everyone just respect me because Jon was always nearby?

I knew I was going to miss him. Even though he would only be gone for two days, I know I would spend almost all that time wondering and thinking about him.

"How are we going to spend these nights apart?" Jon murmured, tucking in a stray curl beneath my ear.

"Do you only just miss me at night?" I teased. Jon chuckled and pulled me close.

"I'll be thinking of you a lot." Jon said. "I just realized...we haven't spent more than a day apart from each other ever since I claimed you."

So he did recognize the significance of this moment as well. I was glad that I wasn't the only one feeling sentimental. I was fine with being in this unrequited love situation as of the moment, but I knew it wouldn't be long until I'd yearn for Jon to feel the same way. I was actually surprised at how well I was keeping myself together.

"Maybe...maybe this will be good for us? Absence makes the heart grow fonder after all." I said, trying to lighten the mood.

"I don't need to be absent to know how much I care for you, Serena." Jon said.

"Then maybe this is the Goddess's way of saying we need space." I said. Yes, space. Heaven knows I'm going to need space to figure out how I can tell him I love him without pressuring him to feel the same way. He has enough pressure on his shoulders as it is.

I knew he didn't want a mate until after the war, which meant that his heart wasn't even close enough to being ready for love. Did I have to wait until after the war for him to start falling in love with me?

Jon was silent.

"Do you...need space, Serena?" Jon asked.

"What do you mean?" Nervously, I wrung my hands together.

"Do you need to figure some things out...without me?" Jon asked, his gray eyes looking deep into mine.

"What makes you say that?" I asked.

I hardly dared to believe he was wrestling with the same emotions as I was. If there was one thing all those romantic movies had taught me, it was never to expect that someone you have feelings for could have feelings for you. Even if he was sending you all the signs, you could never be too sure.

But this was Jon. Jon wasn't a character from a movie. Jon was...Jon.

"I've been thinking, about how there's still a human part to us. We have emotions, wants, and desires. And I have heard that feelings can be...confusing, especially when they involve...someone else." Jon said. I resisted the urge to laugh—Confusing! What an interesting choice of words.

Still, he had broached the subject so I needed to be brave.

"Are you confused about your feelings for me?" I asked. I licked my lips, looking down. Whatever his answer was, I knew it would open up space for a whole lot more uncertainty.

"Maybe." Jon admitted. "Maybe I can't think straight when I'm with you, and that's why I haven't been able to figure them out."

If he felt even an ounce of what I did whenever we touched, then I would be eternally grateful. Physically, I knew I had an effect on him, but emotionally, I did not know where exactly I stood.

Finally, I looked up at him and smiled.

"Then I guess this trip has come at an opportune time." I said.

"Serena...I care about you. A lot. You know that, right?" Jon asked.

In another life, those words would have broken my heart because I would have seen them as a pathetic substitute for I love you. But I knew Jon wasn't being cowardly or manipulative. I could see the honesty in his eyes. He did care for me; he has shown it more times than I could even count. But was he ready to transform that care into love?

Was I willing to wait until he did?

Yes. Most certainly, yes.

"Yes, Jon. Just know that whatever you need to figure out, whatever conclusions you may come to with regards to how you feel, I'll be here. I'll be here to welcome you home and I'll take all that you can give me." I said.

Was this what love meant? That even if he may not feel the same way towards me, I would still be happy with any sliver of affection and care that he could give to me?

"I'll be counting the hours until I can see you again." Jon murmured. He gathered me in his arms and gave me a tender kiss. I wrapped my arms around him as if he would disappear at any given moment.

"Good luck, Jon. Go get us some closure." I said. He nodded before making his way over to his car.

Despite myself, I began to cry. I knew this trip would be a defining moment. This trip to the tribunal would force him to look back to our relationship right from the very start—when he killed Alpha Theodore. I just hoped he would find some semblance of peace from it and we could move on with our lives.

In way, we were being haunted by Alpha Theodore's ghost and now was the time to face him. After this, the rest would be up to us.

Despite the onslaught of emotions ready to conquer my heart, I raced over to catch up to him. I caught him off guard, tugging him down as I claimed his lips in a fierce, passionate kiss. This kiss was needy, bruising, and frustrated. He coiled his arms around me tight and I pressed myself up against him. Finally, I detached myself and felt tears streaming down my eyes.

"I...I l..." Could I say it?

"I'll miss you." I finally said.

Coward.

Jon looked at me longingly before getting into his car. I wiped my tears away as he drove down the driveway and outside the gates. As soon as his car was out of sight, I let out a loose, ragged breath.

I did not look forward to sleeping alone on a cold bed.

A/N
Do you all hate me now? Sorry.

Good news! I've entered this story into the Watty's 2017. I know it's a long shot, but I am optimistic so I hope you'll support the story. Cross fingersS!

We made #33 in Werewolf! Yay! I don't know how the rankings work (the other stories next to mine have like thousands or even millions more reads, I think mine has the least reads among the top 50) but I am still so very happy!

Drop comments and votes! Much love.

Continue to next part