

# Submission is Not My Style – Chapter 9

My paws pound against the damp forest floor, my bag clenched between my teeth as I push myself forward. The cold night air whips through my thick fur, but I barely feel it. I've been running for over an hour—maybe two. Time has become a blur, just like the trees rushing past me. My lungs burn, my limbs ache, but I don't stop. Not until I know I'm truly free.

I never had a real bond with the Red Night Pack, but still, something inside me shifts, like a thread snapping. I can't feel her anymore. My mother. The last connection I had left behind.

A choked whimper escapes me, but I push the thought aside. I have to keep moving.

Normally, bounty hunting never leaves me this exhausted. I've chased criminals for miles without breaking a sweat, even when I wasn't sure where I was going. But this... this is different. My body betrays me. Maybe it's because I'm leaving behind the only home I've ever known, or maybe it's because, for the first time, I have nothing to fight against. Caspian, my only friend, promised to watch over my mother, but how much can a mere pack warrior do against my Beta father?

I shake my head, shoving the doubts away.

East. I have to keep heading east, just as my mother instructed.

When I finally spot the stream running through the forest, my heart leaps in relief. I'm on the right path so I push myself a little further, running until my legs scream in protest. Only when I'm sure no one has followed me and that I'm deep enough into the wilderness do I finally slow down.

Panting, I halt by the stream, lowering my bag to the ground. My throat is dry, my limbs trembling, but I don't drink the enchanted water as mother warned.

My body shifts, fur retracting, bones cracking as I transform back into my human form, my clothes still intact. I unzip the bag, searching for food or water, but all I find are my gold coins, extra clothes, and the small pouch containing the blue necklace. No food. No water.

"Great," I mutter, rubbing my face. I was in such a rush that I forgot the essentials. I need to find people—someone who can trade or help.

After walking deeper into the forest, my senses pick up a scent—smoke, sweat, and something foul. My feet carry me toward it, and soon, I find a hut tucked away in the shadows.

I push open the door, and the stench inside nearly makes me gag. The dimly lit room flickers with candlelight, and ten pairs of eyes snap toward me.

The rogues look like they haven't bathed in weeks—filthy clothes, tangled hair, and the sharp glint of hunger in their eyes. Men and women alike, rough and lean, watching me as if I'm fresh meat.

A burly man with a thick beard and a scar running across his cheek grins. "Well, well. What do we have here?"

A woman, equally filthy with greasy hair sticking to her face, sneers. "A lost little pup from a fancy pack?"

I ignore their glares and step forward. "I need food and water."

The group bursts into laughter. A man missing half his teeth leans against the wall, shaking his head. "Ain't nothing free here, sweetheart."

The bearded one crosses his arms. "You pay or you play." His eyes rake over me, and my skin crawls. "That pretty little face tells me you ain't got nothing but yourself to offer."

Heat rises to my cheeks, a mix of embarrassment and fury, but I force my expression to remain neutral. "I have gold."

Silence. Then, like hungry animals catching the scent of blood, their expressions shift. Greedy, intrigued.

"How much?" the scarred man asks.

I reach into my bag and pull out a single gold coin, holding it up between my fingers. "Is this enough?"

Their eyes glimmer with desire. The greasy-haired woman lunges forward, snatching the coin and biting down on it with yellowed teeth before nodding. "She's rich."

The bearded man waves a hand. "Give her the water."

A man in the corner, bald with a deep gash along his forehead, shoves a gallon of water toward me. "Drink up, princess."

Desperation makes me reckless. I grab the gallon and gulp greedily, the cool liquid rushing down my throat. But the moment it hits my stomach, something feels wrong.

The taste is off. Not quite water.

My vision blurs, my limbs growing sluggish. My heart slams against my ribs as realization dawns. I drop the gallon, and it clatters onto the dirt.

"No..." I stagger, knees buckling, hands clutching my stomach. "You... you gave me the enchanted water."

Laughter erupts around me, sharp and mocking.

"Damn right we did," the toothless man cackles.

Suddenly, a sharp pain explodes at the back of my head. My body lurches forward, and my hands instinctively shoot up to my skull. When I pull them away, they're slick with blood.

My bag is ripped from my grasp, and I hear the jingle of gold spilling onto the floor.

“No...” I choke out, reaching weakly, but my arms feel heavy.

The woman sneers, kicking my bag aside. “Dumb little brat.”

The bearded man crouches beside me, grabbing a fistful of my hair, forcing me to look up at him. “You really thought you could survive out here?” He clicks his tongue mockingly. “You’re nothing but a spoiled pup playing runaway.”

The others snicker and murmur amongst themselves.

“Better run back to your pack before you get yourself killed, little princess,” another man taunts. “You won’t last a day in the real world.”

My vision swims, my body unresponsive. Their laughter rings in my ears, cruel and sharp.

I thought I was free. Thought I could survive.

But now, I’m helpless.

And these rogues just made it painfully clear—I don’t belong here, and I might not even live to see another sunrise.

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I wake up to silence.

The hut is empty, the stale air thick with the lingering scent of sweat, dirt, and betrayal. My body aches, my skull still throbbing from where they struck me, but that pain is nothing compared to the fire burning inside my chest.

They took my gold.

I close my eyes, inhaling deeply, trying to steady my shaking hands. A part of me wants to let them go—to take advantage of the fact that they left me behind with their food and water. I could eat, drink, and regain my strength before moving on. But then the memory of the small pouch with the blue necklace my mother had given me resurfaces.

Fuck.

It’s the only thing I have left from my past, the only clue that could give me answers when I finally reach the witch’s hut. And those filthy bastards took it—along with my gold.

A slow exhale escapes my lips, but inside, I am seething.

“They messed with the wrong person.” My voice is a whisper in the empty hut, my hands balling into fists. “I might have been dumb, but I’m not weak. It’s my strength that’s kept me alive this long.”

Without hesitation, I shift into my wolf. My bones snap and reshape, my fur bursting through my skin as my senses sharpen. My nose picks up their scent immediately—a disgusting mix of unwashed bodies, stale alcohol, and desperation. They aren't far. I can track them. They think they've gotten away.

They're wrong.

I tear through the forest, my paws pounding against the earth, my breath steady despite the adrenaline rushing through my veins. The scent is getting stronger, so strong it almost makes me want to gag. That means I'm close.

Then I hear them.

Not just the rogues—but others. Their voices are deep, commanding, and ice-cold.

I slow, slipping into the shadows of the trees, shifting back into my human form. My bare feet press against the dirt as I crouch behind a thick tree, peering through the dense foliage.

The rogues are surrounded.

At least fifteen warriors stand in a semi-circle around them, their faces painted with black tattoos that make them look even more menacing than their towering frames and deadly expressions already do. Their armor is dark, their weapons gleaming under the faint sunlight filtering through the trees.

They don't look like ordinary warriors.

They look like executioners.

One of them—a massive man with scars running down his arms and a cruel smirk curling his lips—steps forward, holding my bag of gold in one hand like it weighs nothing.

"You're a bunch of filthy thieves," he sneers, his voice dripping with disgust. "Tell me, where did you get this?"

"It—it's ours!" one of the rogues stammers, the man with a patchy beard and missing teeth. "A gift! We didn't steal it, we swear!"

I scoff quietly. Liars.

The warrior's smirk vanishes. In a blur of movement, he unsheathes his sword and swings.

The rogue doesn't even have time to scream before his head is severed from his body. It falls to the ground with a sickening thud and rolls—straight to my feet.

A gasp escapes my lips before I can stop it.

Silence. The warriors freeze.

The remaining rogues break into panicked cries. “W-We lied! It’s not ours! We stole it! It belongs to someone else!”

My stomach lurches as all the warriors slowly turn toward me, their piercing eyes locking onto my trembling form.

The female rogue with yellow teeth now pale as death, raises a shaking finger and points directly at me. “T-That’s the owner of the bag.”

The warrior who beheaded the rogue steps toward me, his boots crunching against the fallen leaves. My breath catches as he stops just inches away, towering over me, his dark eyes cold and merciless.

“You are trespassing on Blood Fang territory,” he says, his voice a slow, dangerous drawl. “That means you have two choices: bow and identify yourself... or we paint these trees with your blood.”

Blood Fang.

As in Alpha Jack’s pack?

My mother’s voice echoes in my head, sharp and urgent: Whatever you do, never set foot on their land, Kali.

Oh no.

I am so fucking screwed. And yet... my wolf is howling with excitement, clawing to be set free.