



Chapter Four | I Made the Right Choice

---POV Julie---

{One day Prior}

The smell of the mat and the shouts of the instructors brought me peace. It allowed my mind to center. "Miss.Julie?" A small child raced up to me and plowed into my legs. I was teaching the younger children today, but I stepped away just for a minute to get a workout in. My junior was supposed to be watching them. I cut him a glare and he shrugged. He was one of the younger warriors in rotation with the guard of the Red Moon Pack. This may be the modern age, but there are still wild wolves and other packs the town needs to protect themselves from. With that, they take pride in keeping a solid group of soldiers ready and prepared to ght.

The best part, you don't need to be a werewolf to become a warrior. It was one of my favorite things about the pack. There weren't many of us humans sacrificing our lives out here, but I volunteered. It allowed me to utilize what I was good at and I even got to work in the dojo on my off hours from the rm. I wouldn't trade the life I've built now for the world. Not only that, but it's also safe here. It's where I feel like I belong.

"Sorry Jules, she didn't want to talk to me." He called, pulling me back to the present. The grin on his face made my eyes roll. I don't know why they bring him to work with the kids when he has no aptitude towards childcare.

I leaned down to her height and rubbed the tears from her eyes. "What happened sweetheart?" I cooed softly. She rubbed her little knuckles across her face and breathed heavily while incoherent mumbles came from her lips. "Breathe slowly. You can do it." I encouraged.

She looked at me before heeding my suggestion. "The bigger kids were being mean to me because I'm too little. Why don't they like me. I'm good!" She shouted and I smiled, ruing her curled brown hair tightly styled in low hanging pig tails.

"No matter what, you are strong. No one should take that from you." I tucked my long black strands of hair that fell from my ponytail, behind my ears before standing to my full height and holding out my hand. "Shall we go teach them a lesson?" I asked with a giggle, and she beamed as she looked up at me.

"Yeah!" She squealed happily before grabbing my hand and racing over to the mats where the other kids continued to practice.

Shortly after she pointed out the boys in question, I had one of them on my shoulder while he laughed through the spinning. "Okay, okay Miss.Julie! Okay, I'll be nicer." I laughed lightly and I placed him back on his feet. I got down to his level, making eye contact with him. He rubbed his nose and followed suit.

"Alright. Just this once, I will let you all off with a warning, but never forget, there is always someone bigger than you and you must respect those who are smaller than you too. No one deserves to get picked on for something they cannot control. Deal?" I asked, holding out my hand.

"Deal, Miss.Julie." He hummed before shaking my hand and racing off to the girl, hopefully to apologize. However, I had something more pressing to do.

"Momma!" Two boys shouted at the doorway, inging their bags to one side and kicking off their shoes. They raced up to me on the mat after bowing on the edge of the cushioned square out of respect. I smiled and held out my arms to them. One after the other they slammed into my legs for a hug.

"Hello my lovely boys!" I called happily and kissed them both on the top of their heads.

They both laughed at the affection and the youngest of the two, Duncan, snuggled in further so I picked him up, resting his body on my side while my oldest, Dedrick – or Ricky for short – stood tall and took a deep breath. "Are you done for the day? We nished tutoring the alphas daughter so...um.... We were wondering if we could go to the mall today?" He asked.

I looked at the clock and it was around four in the afternoon. On Saturdays, while I'm at the dojo completing training classes for those who are interested, the boys tutor little Daisy; Nia and Kevin's daughter. She's around four and the Alpha wanted her to get an early start. Duncan and Ricky were more than happy to help. "Did you nish your homework?" I asked.

"Yes momma." Ricky added racing to his bag and pulling the papers out of it. I followed close behind and was ready for inspection when he thrusted the papers my way. I looked at the answers while Duncan rested his head on my shoulder. From what I can see, all the answers were correct. I guess going to college with twins on my hips rubbed off on the little munchkins. I'm sure they could gure out Calculus if I gave them enough time to.

"Alright, alright. Let me go get changed and I'll take you to the mall." I put Duncan back on his feet and he grabbed his bag, pulling out a couple pieces of blank paper and a pencil while Ricky went back to the mats. I turned to the class and clapped my hands three times, getting the attention of the group. "Thank you all for working so hard today. I hope you learned the next three steps to your forms we will be testing you on for your next belt! Please nish up the last twenty minutes with Mr.Cody and then you are all free to go. Please contact your parents as well."

"Yes, Miss.Julie!" They all called, and I raced over to the employee locker rooms to get ready for my time with my boys. During the seven years of surviving as a single mother, I pushed myself to nish college at a new university closer to Red Moon a few years after I gave birth. I still cannot believe that was completed a short six months after I was told they even existed. I didn't even have the time to really think about what that meant. What it means to be a mother.

Then, I focused even harder and made it through Law school in only two years. It was many years of sacrice, but all I knew was...I couldn't go back home. I tried. I really tried to stay with them. Let my children know their family but...but it just wasn't safe. I don't know how I did it, but I have so many people in my corner to thank for pulling me out. For seeing me succeed.

I opened my own private practice so I could stay close to the pack and allow my children to enjoy both worlds. My practice is known all over the state and many come to our little town just to seek counsel from me. The world of human and the world of wolves. The doctors still aren't sure if both of them will carry the lycanthrope blood in their veins until they turn sixteen, but both children are already exhibiting signs of alpha blood of all things.

Duncan is a little more...docile out of the two of them, but who can blame him. With a brother like Ricky, it's quite the challenge to hold your own. However, Ricky isn't being bossy or rude to his brother. No, he's protecting him. We didn't always have all the nice things we cherish now, and I hope they never forget that. I hope they will always be there for each other. Keep each other safe when I can't. I shivered as the suds grazed over my body and the horrid ashback shot through my mind. The memories that also contributed to my abandonment of the human world while I desperately clung to the supernatural instead.

Where it was safe. Ironic...I know.

I stepped in the shower, doing my best not to spiral. I still don't know who the father is and after all this time, I don't care who they are. I am ne on my own and I've done quite well for myself. I have my own business, my own house and two healthy boys that I cherish more than anything in the world. I may be just a human, but I will protect my pups. No matter what.

I cut off the shower water and dried off quickly before tossing on a tank top that shows my mid drift and some leggings along with a pair of black Uggs and a black sweatshirt I modied last summer, cutting majority of the torso so the hem falls right below my bust. I shook my hair out in the mirror and tossed on some mascara, eye liner and a bit of foundation just to brighten up my face. I may act like Wonder Woman, but even I can look exhausted every now and again. Grabbing my due from my locker, I made sure I had what I needed and pulled out my small purse for the mall outing.

"Okay Ricky and Duncan, I'm ready to head out." I called, emerging from the locker rooms. Cody was mopping up the mats and I walked around to meet my kids. Ricky was putting away his gloves and pulling the tape from his hands while Duncan was nishing off his drawing. It was a beautiful work of art. A small bird resting on a tree branch with a layered sky backdrop. My mouth drops as I look up to see what he was drawing. The same bird standing next to their nest high in the tree outside the window of the dojo. How does he do that?! I know I'm not an artist in any land, but my little Duncan really has the eye for detail.

I leaned over and continued to watch him draw. "He's really good, right momma?" Ricky asked.

"Extraordinary. Both my boys are one of a kind." I called happily, pulling Duncan from his nishing touches. He stacked the papers and quickly shoved them in his bag before slinging it over his shoulder.

"Ready momma?" He asked and I nodded, taking their hands, and heading out to my car.

"See you next week Cody!" I called over my shoulder and he waved back. "Don't forget to lock up."

"You got it Jules!" He shouted as the door closed behind us. Duncan and Ricky raced over to my Audi SQ5, and I hit the button on my key fob to open the doors. They hopped into the back seat, and I ran up to climb into the front after tossing my due in the trunk.

The ride to the mall was quick and the adventure that followed was even better. The arcade was almost empty, so Ricky and Duncan raced from game to game while I gladly kept the token cards full. We ordered the cheesiest pepperoni pizza at the parlor next door before walking out of the mall with giggles on our lips and pizza in our tummies. "Thanks momma, that was too much fun!" Duncan called happily while his backpack bounced up and down on his back. He enjoyed skipping next to me, but I know he'd be crushed if his picture was ruined in the aftermath.

"Now Duncan, let's keep it to a walk while we are in the parking lot, okay?" I asked as I tightened my grip on his hand. He nodded once and slowed to a walk.

Perfect timing too. We passed by some cones and caution tape, but I wasn't too sure why it was there. That exit seemed ne when we came in. I decided to take the stairs up to our car, and I was not expecting to nd what we saw. A huge crowd of people were huddled around what looked to be a white tarp in the middle of the aisle. I was happy that my 5'9 frame allowed me to see over many of the bystanders. The main problem still stands though.

This didn't look good and...my car was on the other side of the scene.

There were cops everywhere and voices were talking over each other as the crowd began to speculate. What I didn't expect were my kids to race off towards the thick of it. I chased after them, but I was too late.

I could only grab one.

"Anyone in this parking garage is not allowed in or out until we nd the culprit! The exits have been blocked off to any vehicles that may attempt to leave without permission. We will take each of you to the side to ask some questions. If you are innocent, you have nothing to worry about. Thank you!" One of the ocers called to the crowd now beyond frustrated by the delay. More people started to congregate on this oor, and I gured we weren't the only oor that wasn't allowed to leave. This parking structure is four oors high! This could take all night! However, I was not expecting what happened next. Duncan decided to walk up to the cop at the epicenter and tug on his pant leg. "Excuse me, ocer."

Oh no. The man spun around, not expecting a little boy to be pulling on his pant leg. "What's up, kid? Did you lose your, parents in the crowd?" He asked kindly and I sighed in relief. At least he wasn't rude about Duncan's intrusion on the scene.

"I –" I tried to chime in while holding Ricky's hand, but Duncan cut me off almost immediately.

"Sir, I know who the murderer is!" He shouted and the disgruntled conversations around me completely halted. I stared at Duncan's short brown hair and content look in his eye while he resituated his white short sleeved polo shirt over his light blue pants.

The ocer looked up and we locked eyes. His brows furrowed and I shook my head, mouthing the word, sorry, on my lips. He cleared his throat and looked down at Duncan. "Oh really?" He squatted down to his level and glanced back up at me before turning his full attention to Duncan. "Can you tell me what you saw?" He asked. Was he feeding into this? I mean it was cute, but I don't want my baby to get in the way.

Duncan giggled and shook his head. "I didn't see the crime take place. I was eating yummy pizza! However, from the crowd here, it was an easy guess." Oh lanta! This wasn't a game of 'I spy! This is an actual murder investigation. No matter how cute his little green eyes were, I cannot allow this to continue. Before I could take another step, he raised his hand and pointed into the crowd. "The murderer is that woman wearing the navy-blue baseball cap." He declared like we were playing a game of Guess Who.

I love my sons, I really do, but what did Duncan just get himself into?!