

An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 11[1,121 words]

Chapter 11

Riley met the gamma outside the back of the pack house an hour after their meeting. She rubbed her temples, trying to ignore the nausea that rose in her stomach. She had felt fine through breakfast and the meeting, but the discomfort from the early morning had come back slowly over the last hour.

“Alright?”

She looked up to see Patrick coming towards her. He wasn't as tall as the alpha or the beta, but he was still

taller than Riley. He was wide and strong, wearing a pair of gray joggers and a white, long sleeve shirt that

stretched across his broad chest. He had dark brown hair and dark brown eyes. He raised an eyebrow as he stopped in front of her.

“Just tired.” She forced a small smile. “I just came off an assignment when I was sent here. I usually take a

week or two to regroup between assignments.”

“We appreciate you coming here so quickly, but no one would blame you if you wanted to take it easy for a day or two, especially after what happened last night.”

“I'd rather not waste time.” She looked up into his serious face. “I don't want to wait around for another

attack. The next one could be worse.”

“It really could be.” Patrick sighed heavily. “I really wish we could get this situation under control. People are

dying.”

He motioned for her to follow him and they walked towards the training academy. They passed over the

training grounds that included a full track and a field of sparring rings. Riley hadn't been able to see them

from Kent's window last night, so she looked around, taking in her surroundings. There were already several groups of warriors training and sparring on the fields. She spotted Max talking to a group of very young warriors, his face stern and serious.

Patrick led her into the academy. It was clean and bright inside. The walls were a white brick with pictures of warriors hung down the main hallway. The floors were covered in bright, white linoleum tiles that shone in the

fluorescent light.

"These are our facilities," Patrick explained as he started down the hall. "The first floor is an indoor track

facility and sparring arenas. We try to stay outside as long as the weather permits because you need to be prepared for adverse conditions, but winters are harsh here, so we have everything we need inside as well. The second floor has several weight rooms and the third floor has classrooms and a couple meeting rooms."

"What kind of classes do your warriors take?" She asked as they moved through the building to an elevator.

"Tactic, strategy, defense," he said as he punched the call button. "Think of whatever classes are offered at

the Werewolf Academy. We try our best to replicate it here. We want our warriors to be top notch."

"Did you go to the academy?"

"Yep." Patrick motioned for Riley to step in first as the doors slid open before he followed her. "I did, as did Max and Kent. But Kent had to leave the academy early because his dad died when he was nineteen. Max and I stayed to finish our training though. Kent used his father's beta and my dad as gamma until we came back."

1

1/3

<Chapter 11

+15 Poats >

“Had Kent decided to make Max his beta when he took over as alpha?” she asked curiously as they stepped out of the elevator. “Max told me he wasn’t born into the position.”

“No,” Patrick said as they headed down the hall, “but I wasn’t surprised when he did. Max was his best friend growing up and he has always been an exceptional warrior. And while Max may play the clown quite well, he’s actually extremely intelligent. Kent had suggested that I would be beta before he left the academy, but I wasn’t surprised when he changed his mind.”

“Were you upset about it?”

“No.” Patrick smiled as he glanced at her. “I was trained to be gamma and that’s what I am. I can’t be upset about that. Plus, Kent is my friend and my alpha. Whatever is best for him is best for my pack.”

Riley was pretty sure she liked Patrick too. He led her down a hallway past classrooms, some of which were in use until they reached a large room with a long table that ran down the middle. One wall was made up entirely of glass windows looking out on the training grounds below. On the opposite wall were several large tvs. Against another wall was a large white board calendar that showed the current dates with patrol

schedules for different warriors written out in various colors.

“This is our briefing room,” Patrick said as he closed the door behind her. “We use this to meet with our

patrols when we adjust schedules or need to make them aware of situations. It also houses our current

patrol schedule.” He motioned to the calendar on the wall.

“It’s very detailed.” She looked over the calendar. “Your whole operation is quite impressive. I go to a lot of

packs and this is one of the best.”

Patrick smiled, the pride showing in his eyes. “Kent was determined to improve things when he took over as

alpha. His dad was a good alpha, but he was very old school. After he passed, Kent wanted things

modernized. That’s when he had the old training hall demolished and replaced with our own academy. He got

even more intense about things after Lily died. He never wanted someone to get hurt again.”

“These attacks must be hard on him then,” she noted, looking at Patrick.

He frowned, his forehead creasing. “More than most probably realize.” He turned away from her, opening a cabinet to take some papers out.

Riley turned to look out the window for a moment, watching the warriors training on the field. The leaves in

the trees were starting to change colors, the leaves yellow, red and orange swaying gently in the wind. Her

head throbbed and she closed her eyes for a moment, hoping the pain would ease soon.

“Are you sure you’re alright?” She opened her eyes to see Patrick watching her.

“Yes,” she sighed. “But I wouldn’t say no to some aspirin if there’s any around.”

He nodded. “I’ll grab some and then I’ll walk you through the different patrol schedules we use. We’ve been trying to vary them some more to keep the rogues on their toes, but I would like some trained eyes to help me make them better.”

“Sure thing,” she said as he headed out of the room.

An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 12[787 words]

Chapter 12

The aspirin didn’t touch the headache and by lunch time, Riley felt terrible. Her whole body ached and she was beginning to wonder if she might be sick.

Patrick, for his part, had been nothing but helpful. He seemed to figure out that she wasn’t feeling well, but graciously avoided pointing it out any further. He answered her questions thoroughly and didn’t seem to mind that she was taking longer than normal to get through some of the paperwork.

After staring at the same page on rotation and patrols for ten minutes, she gave up and asked that they take

a break for lunch. Patrick led her back out of the academy and across the grounds where morning training

was just wrapping up.

With all the extra warriors from other packs and the council, the grounds were abuzz with people. She spotted Max in a serious conversation with an older looking warrior. Wesley was speaking to a group of

council warriors she recognized, his usual scowl in place.

“Gamma!” A warrior in one of the sparring rings waved his hand.

Patrick waved back before turning to Riley. “I need to go check in with a couple of my trainers. We can touch

base after lunch if you want to see anything this afternoon.”

Riley nodded. “Sure. That sounds good.”

Patrick headed off across the training grounds, leaving Riley alone. She continued watching the warriors

move around the grounds for a moment before turning towards the pack house.

Riley collided with a wall of muscle, stumbling backwards as hands grabbed her elbows, keeping her steady.

The smell of sandalwood hit her before she even realized that it was the alpha she had collided with.

“Goddess, sorry,” exclaimed Kent as he steadied her. “I thought you saw me.”

Riley took a step back out of Kent’s grasp. He was wearing only a pair of gray athletic shorts and sneakers,

his black t-shirt slung over his shoulder. His bare chest glistened with sweat as she ran her eyes down his

body, taking in the well-defined muscles of his chest and abs. Raking her eyes back up to his face she saw

his black hair was a mess, falling across his forehead.

“I wasn’t paying attention,” Riley finally said, meeting his dark blue eyes.

“Clearly.” He smiled, his teeth gleaming. Riley’s heart nearly skipped a beat as his smile grew, a dimple

appearing in his right cheek. “How was your morning? Did you see everything you wanted?”

“I saw quite a bit but there’s still more. We decided to take a break for lunch.” Riley was finding it hard to stay

focused, her eyes roaming over Kent’s bare chest yet again.

“What did you think?” She could feel the heat of his gaze and looked up to see amusement dancing in his

eyes. “How about I put my shirt on so you’re not so distracted?”

She rolled her eyes even as her cheeks flushed. “Goddess, you must think highly of yourself.”

“Just making an observation.” He laughed as he pulled his shirt on.

She rolled her eyes again and turned towards the pack house. She was relieved to find that the fresh air and slight embarrassment had at least gotten rid of her pounding headache.

1/2

< Chapter 12

+15 Poets >

Kent fell into step beside her. “What did you think of what you saw this morning?”

“Your patrols and training program seem pretty top notch. I’ve seen a lot of packs and how they run things and yours are among the best.”

He smiled again, seeming pleased. “That’s great to hear. I owe most of it to Patrick though. He’s very detail-oriented and sees things most people would miss.”

“He seems like it. He was very helpful this morning.” She tried to ignore how Rose purred when Kent walked

close to them and how his arm occasionally brushed against hers, sending sparks through her.

“Pat’s great,” Kent confirmed. “I wouldn’t be able to run this pack without him or Max or Penny.” He opened

the back door of the pack house for her and they walked down the hallway to the dining room.

The dining hall was loud and busy with so many warriors having finished their training at the same time. Leo

was sitting with a couple council warriors she recognized. He waved her over and she turned towards them when Kent caught her elbow, sending sparks up her arm.

“I’m going to eat with some of my warriors,” he said, leaning in to speak in her ear over the din of the room.

“Ok,” she replied, trying to ignore how close he was.

“I’ll catch you later,” he murmured, catching her gaze before walking away.

An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 13[2,028 words]

Chapter 13

“Who’s that?” Ryder asked as Kent stepped into line to grab food

“Who?” Kent pretended to not understand as he grabbed a plate and looked at the spread that Elva had put out today – cold cut sandwiches, pasta salad, chips, and fresh cut fruit.

“The woman you were talking to,” Ryder replied, loading pasta salad onto his plate. “Is she a new warrior?”

“A new advisor from the council.” Kent filled his plate, resisting the urge to glance over his shoulder to see

where Riley was. He had spent most of his morning thinking about her, unable to focus on his training

session. He couldn’t explain the relief that had washed over him when he spotted her walking with Patrick, or

why he had spent so much of his morning worrying if she was ok.

“When did she get here?” Ryder waited for Kent to finish filling his plate before they moved to a table. Fae and

Connor were already sitting down.

“Last night.” Kent slid into the table nodding to the other two warriors already sitting there.

Fae and Connor were two of Kent’s best trainers. He had grown up with them and had been there when they

discovered they were each others’ mates. Ryder was a new trainer, still young but very promising. He had yet

to find his mate and didn’t seem rushed about it. Kent was well aware of his reputation with the she-wolves,

but chose to ignore it as long as it didn’t negatively affect the pack.

“She’s hot,” Ryder commented, craning his neck to look at her across the room.

Pax snarled in Kent’s mind, causing Kent to grind his teeth slightly.

“Who are we talking about?” Fae asked, following Ryder’s gaze.

“The new advisor from the council,” Ryder replied.

“The woman with the gamma this morning?” Connor glanced up.

Kent nodded. “She got in last night. She’s going to work with Wesley to help figure out the rogue issue.”

“What’s she like?” Fae asked, turning her attention to Kent.

He shrugged, hoping he seemed nonchalant. “She was highly recommended by another alpha. She’s supposed to be the best.”

Ryder’s gaze snapped back to Kent. “That little girl? The best advisor?”

“Yes,” Kent replied, sounding sharper than he wanted. “She is a woman and even the commander of the

Werewolf Council says she is the best.”

Ryder raised an eyebrow. "Ok, Alpha. I was just surprised. I'm sure she's good."

"What are we talking about?" Max dropped into the seat across from Kent.

"The hot advisor from the council," Ryder replied quickly.

Kent clenched his fist, resisting the urge to sink it into Ryder's face.

"Riley," Max said calmly. "Please use her name."

"I'll call her whatever she wants." Ryder turned to look at her again. "Think she'll give me a shot?"

1/4

Chapter 13

+15 Points)

Kent felt his face turn hot, Pax snarling in his head. He opened his mouth to reply but Max gave him a stern.

look.

"I don't think she has time to waste on little boys like you," Max said lightly.

"Plus I think there are rules about council members fraternizing with pack members while on assignment,"

added Connor.

"What the council doesn't know won't hurt anyone." Ryder grinned as he turned back to his food.

"How was training today?" Max said quickly, giving Kent another warning glance.

Kent sighed in relief as the conversation finally moved away from Riley. He stole a glance across the room to see her talking to Leo, her face animated as they talked. She looked up, catching Kent's gaze across the room. She smiled and he suddenly felt a warmth spread across his chest as he smiled back. He turned back to find Fae watching him. He forced himself to focus on the conversation, fighting against the urge to look at

Riley again.

It was futile though. He found himself stealing glances at her whenever he thought no one was watching. He barely noticed when Ryder excused himself and had to ask Connor to

repeat his question twice before he could focus long enough to understand it. When Riley finally finished her lunch and left the room, it took

every ounce of willpower Kent had not to jump up and follow her right out.

“So, the new advisor,” Fae said, raising an eyebrow at Kent, “what’s she like?”

Kent shrugged his shoulders and put on what he hoped was his most nonchalant expression. “I don’t really

know her. She just got in last night.”

“But she’s certainly caught your eye,” Fae commented.

Kent felt his face heat up as he shook his head. “No! What... why would you say that?”

“Because you were watching her for almost all of lunch,” laughed Connor.

“And you looked like you wanted to rip Ryder’s throat out when he was talking about her.” Fae smirked at him.

Kent glanced helplessly at Max, who only made it worse by giving him an amused look.

“I think it’s great,” Fae commented, reaching out to touch his hand. “You’ve been alone too long. I think it

would be wonderful if you started dating again instead of slipping off every few months to see Iris. You could

find a sweet she-wolf and take a chosen mate.”

Kent rubbed his face with both of his hands. “I don’t need to date,” he managed to grind out. “I don’t need a

chosen mate.” It was the same thing he had been hearing from the elders for the last year.

Fae sighed, pulling her hand back. “I’m just saying you shouldn’t be held back by the past. You deserve to be

happy again.”

Kent couldn’t explain the lump that swelled in his throat. He hadn’t cried over Lilly in years. He clenched his teeth so hard that his forehead throbbed. Shoving back from the table, he ignored his friends’ protests as he stomped out of the dining hall, headed towards the elevator.

His head was swimming as he turned the corner into the main lobby of the packhouse and saw Riley standing by the elevator. Leaning against a wall, talking to her was Ryder. He stopped cold in his tracks, watching as she smiled at Ryder, nodding as he talked to her.

2/4

Fury rose in him as Pax snarled in his head. You need to claim our mate before someone else does!

He was almost across the lobby before he even realized that he was moving, his fists clenched tightly at his

side.

“There’s plenty to do after training,” Ryder was saying as Kent drew closer. “There’s a nice bar towards the center of town that a lot of us like to go to. We’re thinking about going out on Friday if you want to come with

us.”

”

“Miss Atwood has better things to do than go drinking with a bunch of pups,” Kent said sharply.

Ryder jumped slightly, turning to look at Kent. “Hey, Alpha,” he said with a tense smile. “I didn’t see you come over.” He glanced at Riley who was watching with a bemused expression. “I’m sure Riley can decide for

herself.”

Kent opened his mouth to reply but it was Riley who spoke first.

“I appreciate the offer,” she said, “but I’m discouraged from drinking or fraternizing with pack members when I’m on assignment.”

Ryder smiled ruefully. “Well, that’s a shame.” He glanced at Kent before taking a step back. “It was nice to

meet you, Riley. I’ll see you later, Alpha.”

“It was nice to meet you, too,” Riley said with a polite smile. Kent nodded his head and watched as Ryder disappeared down the corridor that led to the warriors’ wing.

“You can relax,” Riley muttered as she jabbed the button to the elevator. “I wouldn’t have done anything with

him.”

Kent stared at her for a moment, still trying to reign in his emotions. “I know that,” he finally said. “Doesn’t

mean he should have been bothering you.”

She rolled her eyes as the elevator doors slid open and she walked in. She turned to look at him, putting her hand against the opening to stop the doors from closing.

“Are you coming up?”

He stepped into the elevator and she took a step back. For the first time since she arrived, Kent suddenly realized how much bigger he was than her. She stepped back, leaning into the corner of the elevator as the doors closed. Her lips were pursed, her hazel eyes hard as she watched him. He could have guessed she was annoyed with him, even if he didn’t feel her emotion flowing through their bond.

“Are you going to hit the button?” She gestured to the buttons behind him, but Kent kept watching her, taking in the slope of her small nose, the small cleft in her chin.

She sighed, leaning around him to press the button.

It was her closeness that finally caused him to move. Her scent, vanilla and cloves, was overpowering. The thought of any wolf looking at her, desiring her, was unbearable. She was his.

He moved, blocking her into the corner of the elevator, grabbing her hips to pull her against him. She gasped, her head snapping up to look at him. He took advantage, burying his face into her neck and breathing in her

scent.

“f**k,” he whispered against her throat. “You smell so f*****g delicious.”

3/4

* Chapter 13

+15 Points >

Her hands slipped under his shirt, her fingers brushing lightly over his abs. The touch was enough to send tingles and sparks throughout his body and he felt his c**k start to thicken. He ran his mouth lightly along her throat, weaving his fingers into her hair to tilt her head back to give himself better access. She made a soft groan and his c**k went fully hard. He kissed her just under the ear, pushing his hips against her, desperate for friction.

She groaned, her hands running up his chest as she willingly tilted her head back. He trailed kisses along her throat, enjoying the taste of her skin he used the hand on her hip to pull her harder against him.

The elevator dinged as the doors slid open.

The sound jolted Kent back to reality. He jerked his head to stare at the open door in surprise. In that moment of surprise, Riley darted out of his grasp and into the hall. He quickly followed after her.

Had he just been ready to claim his mate in an elevator?

She stood a few paces down the hall, a look of shock written over her features. Kent felt his chest tighten. This same woman had just told him last night how she didn't want to feel trapped into a bond and he promised he wouldn't do that. Now, not even a day later, he had just pinned her in the elevator and tried to have his way.

He felt the horror of that wash over him.

"I'm..." He swallowed hard, running a hand forcefully through his hair. "I'm so -"

"Don't," she said quickly, taking a small step back. "Don't apologize."

He stared at her for a second. "I shouldn't have..." He took a deep breath, looking at the ceiling.

"Stop." Her voice sounded strained, her face reddening. "It's not that. I just... forgot, you know. What... how

powerful it is the mate bond, I mean."

-

He nodded, not trusting himself to speak.

"You didn't do anything wrong," she continued. "I mean..." She took another step backwards. "I wanted that." She grimaced and shook her head. "I mean, I didn't - but I did at the same time."

"I'm sorry. I just -" Kent started, but she cut him off again.

"Don't apologize." She took another step back. "You didn't do anything wrong. Let's just..." She took another step back, glancing over her shoulder. "We can just pretend that didn't happen, ok?"

“Yeah,” he said quickly, grateful for a chance to end this whole awkward conversation. “We can do that.”

She nodded. “Great. Perfect. Bye.”

With that she turned on her heel and fled down the hall, leaving Kent to stare after her.

An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 14[2,103 words]

Chapter 14

Riley stayed in her room longer than she planned. Leo was waiting to train with her, but she didn't want to venture out in the hall until she was sure that Kent was gone. Her whole body hummed from their interaction in the elevator. She could barely explain what happened, but when he pinned her in the corner, she had felt powerless. She could still feel his lips against her skin, still imagine the warmth of his abs under her hands. He could have had his way with her in that elevator and she would have gladly consented to all it.

That thought scared her. One touch and suddenly she was putty. She had gone through all of that with Paul and she knew how dangerous that could be.

Once she was changed into her workout clothes and had worked up the nerve to open the door, Riley ventured downstairs. When she walked out the back door of the packhouse to the training grounds, she saw Leo talking to Patrick.

“Feeling better?” Patrick asked as she drew even with them.

“Much better,” she said. “Lunch helped a lot.”

“Everything ok?” Leo c****d his head to the side.

“Yeah.” Riley shrugged. “I'm just run down, I think. Between the back to back assignments and then the excitement of last night, I'm just exhausted.”

Leo frowned. “Are you sure you feel up to training?”

She nodded. “Definitely. It helps with the stress.”

Leo shrugged. "Ok, then. I invited Patrick to join us since he missed out on the training this morning. I hope you don't mind."

"Of course not."

They headed down to the track, doing a few laps to warm up before stretching. By the time they were warmed up, Riley's head was starting to hurt again. She tried to stay focused on the training, channeling her energy into her sprints before they moved onto sparring. She sparred with Leo first, but she felt sluggish. She managed to pin him, but it took more effort than usual.

"You really are tired," Leo said as he climbed to his feet.

Riley nodded as she took a drink of water.

"That was tired?" Patrick raised an eyebrow, looking between the two of them. "That was pretty impressive

sparring."

"She can do better," Leo replied, wiping his chest with the shirt he had just pulled off.

"Seriously?" Patrick scoffed. "If she's that good, she can take down the alpha."

"She could," Leo said with a shrug. "She's the best for a reason."

Riley smiled slightly, catching Leo's gaze. He had always been her biggest supporter, especially during her first year at the academy when most people had been sure she would fail. He had always believed in her.

"Do you feel up to sparring with me?" Patrick asked, looking at Riley.

1/4

< Chapter 14

+15 Points >

She nodded, even though her body felt sore and heavy. She knew she wasn't going to do too well, but she

also didn't want to turn down a spar with a new partner. She liked getting as much practice with different opponents as possible. She felt it was one of the reasons why she was so good – she was used to many different styles of fighting.

Riley walked in the ring, watching Patrick pull his shirt off. His chest was broad and his muscles rippled as he walked into the ring. She saw the mark on his right collarbone, meaning he had a mate. Mates typically marked each other on the right side, close to where the collarbone met the neck.

She got into her position and circled slowly, waiting to see if he would make the first move. Clearly Patrick

was practical when it came to sparring and he waited, smirking as they continued to circle.

Finally she lunged, but she was slower than normal. Patrick dodged her and swung, his elbow connecting

with her side. She reeled away, ignoring the sting as she tried to reorient herself.

Patrick didn't give her any time though. He was lunging quickly, catching her around the middle and taking

her down hard on the mat. She rolled quickly, throwing force into her hips to roll him over. She was on top of

him momentarily but he bucked under her and she toppled to the side.

She scrambled to her feet, sweat pouring off her brow as she quickly turned to see the gamma was back on his feet. He grinned at her as he got into his ready position again, clearly enjoying the fight. He lunged again and she dodged, dropping low to knock his foot out from under him with a hard kick. He went down on one

knee and she leapt on his back, wrapping an arm around his throat. She was too slow though and he

managed to get his hand around her forearm before she could tighten her grip, and he swung her over his

shoulder.

She hit the ground hard enough to knock the air out of her and Patrick was on top of her in a second, nipping

at her neck.

"Got you," he panted as he leaned back, bracing a hand on each side of her shoulders, smiling.

Patrick rolled off her and climbed to his feet, offering her his hand. She took it, allowing herself to be pulled to her feet. As she stood she felt a strange prickle on the back of her neck and turned to see Kent standing a little ways off, watching them.

“You really are worn out,” Leo said from where he sat on the ground outside the ring. “I can’t remember the last time I saw you go that slow.”

“You can’t be serious?” Patrick took a drink of water, wiping sweat off his forehead. “That was a good fight.”

“It was,” Riley agreed softly.

“No it wasn’t,” Leo scoffed.

“Stop.” She glared at him, trying to ignore the weight of Kent’s gaze on her.

“He shouldn’t have been able to take you down that easily.” Leo narrowed his eyes.

“I’m a damn good fighter,” Patrick exclaimed, turning to look at Leo.

Riley looked over at Kent again. He still hadn’t moved. She really wished he would go away. It was bad

enough that she was having a rough day training, she didn’t need him witnessing it. Her mind went back to the elevator and she grit her teeth, trying to push the memories away.

“Riley?”

2/4

Chapter 14

She turned to find both Patrick and Leo looking at her, clearly waiting on a response. “I’m sorry. I wasn’t

listening.” She glanced back over her shoulder at Kent and Patrick followed her gaze.

“How long has he been standing there?” Patrick asked.

“I don’t know,” she muttered.

+15 Points >

“Come over here,” Patrick hollered, making Riley cringe. She really wished he would go away. She didn’t need

him over here, messing with her emotions.

Kent hesitated for a moment before slowly walking over to them. He looked at her as he came closer, the

corners of his mouth pulled down into a frown. He was wearing a pair of khaki pants and black polo, his

black hair brushed neatly off to the side, much different than the last time she had seen him. She bit her lip,

taking a few steps away from him towards Leo.

Leo looked at her as he walked closer, his expression bemused. He raised an eyebrow but she subtly shook

her head.

“That was a good fight,” Kent said as he stopped near Patrick, his scent wafting to the breeze.

“I thought so,” Patrick said with an eye roll, “but Leo insists that she is off her game.”

“Really?” Kent raised an eyebrow, looking at her. “That seemed like a pretty solid fight. You came pretty close to taking him down.”

She frowned at him, feeling a surge of annoyance. “I’m a good fighter. I could take you down.”

He smirked at her. “I doubt that. No one takes me down. If you can’t take Pat down, you can’t touch me.”

She felt her cheeks redden, gritting her teeth. Suddenly she remembered the day she told Paul that she

wanted to still go to the academy, the way he had scoffed at her. You’ll never be stronger than a man. Don’t

waste the effort, he had said to her. She had felt smaller than an ant that day, believing every word he had

said to her.

“Let’s fight again, Pat,” she said, tearing her gaze from Kent to look at the gamma. She was suddenly feeling

better, her annoyance with Kent clearly giving her a second wind. Kent raised his eyebrows but didn't say

anything.

"Are you sure?" Patrick said with a smile. "I thought you were 'run down'?"

"I'm fine," she snapped, walking into the ring.

Patrick shrugged and followed her, getting into his ready position as she did. This time Riley waited, sure

Patrick would feel confident enough to make the first move. He did too, lunging at her from the right. But she

was ready, dodging him and landing a sharp blow on his back. He reeled away from her with a sharp hiss.

They continued moving, lunging and dodging for several minutes. The smile slipped from Patrick's face,

replaced by a concentrated look. She managed to catch him under the arm, flipping him onto his back. He

moved away, rolling to his knees before she could get on top of him. Riley moved to land a kick on his chest

but he caught her ankle, twisting until she hit the ground hard. She struck out with her other leg, connecting with stomach. Patrick let out a hard grunt as she scrambled to her feet.

She got into her ready position as Patrick did the same, his mouth set in a thin line as they started to circle

each other again. Riley lunged, feinting right before she went left, landing a solid blow that sent him stumbling sideways. She took advantage of the moment, hitting him while he was still off balance and he toppled to the ground. She was on him before he could react, nipping at his throat.

3/4

© Chapter 14

"Got you," she panted, resting a hand on his shoulder as she moved to sit up.

+15 Pnts >

She felt a surge of jealousy through the mate bond that made her grit her teeth. It was the same feeling from when she was talking to the young warrior at the elevator. She did her best to ignore it as she rolled off the gamma and got to her feet. She kept her eyes focused on Patrick, refusing to look at the alpha.

“s**t,” Patrick said as he took the hand she offered to him, climbing to his feet. “You weren’t kidding. You really were feeling off the first time.”

“Thanks,” Riley murmured, casting a glance over at Kent. He was watching the two of them with dark eyes,

his jaw hard, his arms folded across his chest.

“I’d pay money to see you spar with Kent,” Patrick quipped, grabbing his water bottle. “It would be nice to see someone actually land him on his ass for once.”

“That won’t happen,” Kent said softly, looking at Riley. “She can’t touch me.”

Riley c****d her head to the side. “You seem awfully full of yourself.”

“No one takes me down.”

She smirked at him. “I could without trying.”

His eyes darkened even more. “Then we can spar right now.”

Patrick and Leo froze, looking between Kent and Riley.

“You’re not dressed to spar,” Riley said with a dismissive wave of her hand.

“That shouldn’t matter to you,” he retorted. “It’ll give you an advantage. You’ll need it.”

“I’ve taken down enough big-headed alphas, I don’t need an advantage.” She felt her fists clench at her sides

as she glared at him.

“You just don’t want to spar with me because you know you’ll lose,” he said with a humorless smirk.

“f**k you.” She took a step towards him but Leo was in between them in a flash.

“Hey, Ri,” Leo said, grabbing her shoulder, “let’s go check out the weight room in the academy.”

“Good idea,” Patrick said, walking towards Kent. “I need to talk to Alpha about something anyway. Go check

out the weight room. We just had it updated last year.”

Riley was about to argue, but Leo’s grasp tightened almost painfully as he steered her away from Kent and Patrick. She glanced over her shoulder to see Kent watching her as Patrick tried to direct him towards the

packhouse.

An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 15[1,165 words]

Chapter 15

“What the actual f**k, Kent?” Patrick said once Riley was out of earshot.

Kent watched her back as Leo continued to pull her towards the training building. The blood was rushing in his ears, his fists clenched at his side. He kept picturing her, straddling Patrick’s waist, her lips near his throat. Logically, he knew they were sparring. He also knew that she had been incredible. He had never seen anyone move as fast as she did.

“Goddess,” Patrick was saying, “even if she wasn’t your mate, she would still be a guest at our pack. A guest from the f*****g Werewolf Council. Couldn’t you at least stop being such an ass for just a minute?”

Kent blinked, focusing his gaze on his gamma. “I’m not an ass.”

Patrick rolled his eyes. “Yes you are.” He sighed, turning to pick up his shirt and water bottle. “Most days I can deal with it, but she doesn’t deserve that.”

Kent frowned, a feeling an embarrassment washing over him as he replayed how he had spoken. He had watched his incredible mate spar his best warrior and win. Then he had insulted her... because he didn’t like her touching someone else, even in the most platonic of ways.

“She didn’t want me to come over,” he said suddenly, not sure why he was admitting that to Patrick. “She was annoyed when she saw me. She was annoyed that you called me over.”

“Of course she was,” Patrick scoffed. “She had just lost a spar and turned to find her mate watching her.”

Kent’s eyes widened slightly. “I didn’t think of it like that.”

“That’s because you don’t think, asshole.” Patrick shoved his shoulder, pointing him towards the packhouse.

“I was going to the training center,” Kent pointed out. “I need to check patrol schedules.”

“I already did that this morning,” Patrick said, pushing Kent’s shoulder. “And I’m not letting you go near the training center while she’s in it.”

Kent frowned as he turned back towards the packhouse. “I don’t need to avoid her.”

“You do right now.” Patrick threw his shirt over his shoulder as they walked. “You’re never going to win her over if you keep acting like a dickhead.”

“I don’t even know if I want to win her over,” Kent countered. “I’m not even sure I want to have another mate.”

“You do,” Patrick said simply. “You’re just too stubborn to admit it. I’ve known you my whole life, Kent. Lily drove you up a f*****g wall before you found out she was your mate. You two used to fight and argue all the time. Goddess knows I would beg her to stay at home just so I didn’t have to listen to the two of you yelling at

one another.”

Kent smiled slightly, remembering Lily as a kid and how easy it had been to get under her skin.

“Of course the Goddess would see it fitting to give you an equally stubborn mate as the last time,” Patrick continued. “But you don’t have to insult her fighting skills like that. She must hear it from all the alphas she meets and now she has to hear it from her own mate. You don’t need to act like such an insecure asshole.”

Kent stopped outside the back door and turned towards Patrick. “I’m not acting insecure. I just know how good of a fighter I am. Lily used to pretend she could beat me too, but she never could.”

1/3

“You are acting insecure,” Patrick insisted, rolling his eyes. “Lily claiming she could beat you never bothered you because we all knew she couldn’t. But Riley claiming she could beat you is upsetting you because she might actually be able to do it.”

Kent scoffed. “Unlikely. No one has beat me since I was nineteen.”

Patrick shook his head. “You’re such a stubborn ass sometimes. And I say that as your friend.” He glanced across the field and then back to Kent. “But your mate seems like a good person. I’ve spent the morning with her and seen how hard she works, how she’s focused on helping on our pack. I’ve sparred with her and seen how strong she is. Even if you don’t want her as a mate, she doesn’t really deserve to be spoken to like that.”

Kent frowned, clenching and unclenching his fists at his sides as Patrick turned and walked into the pack

house.

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Leo didn’t loosen his grip until they were actually inside the training academy. He led her up the stairs to the second floor and into one of the weight rooms. Riley had to admit, it was a pretty impressive room, set up with some of the latest equipment. Fortunately there was no one there this afternoon, so Riley had her pick of where to start. She headed towards the squat rack, stopping midway to rub her temples. Her headache

was coming back with a vengeance.

“You’re still tired, aren’t you?” Leo said, watching her.

She shrugged. “Yeah, I suppose I am.”

“Where the hell did you find the energy to take the gamma down? That was a f*****g impressive spar by the

way.”

She smiled slightly. “Kent just pissed me off when he said I couldn’t take him down if I couldn’t take Pat down. Anger can be pretty powerful fuel. I should know. I ran on that alone for my whole first year at the

academy.”

“Why did it piss you off so much?” Leo grabbed a weight to put on the bar. “You know you can win against the gamma. You can win against the alpha too. Why let it bother you like that? He was just being a macho alpha

like they always are.”

She frowned, pausing from loading her own weight. “I just don’t need another mate who tries to tell me all the

once. I can't do it again."

things I can't do. I went through th

Leo stared at her for a moment. "Why did I never know you had a mate before? We've been best friends since

the academy. I'm surprised you never said anything."

"It doesn't matter." She went back to loading her weights.

"It does matter," Leo said, taking a step towards her. "Being rejected is actually a pretty f*****g big deal, Ri.

You can't pretend like it didn't happen."

"I'm not pretending it never happened." She rolled her shoulders. "It's just that it happened and it's over. There's no reason to keep going over it again."

"What was he like? Your previous mate?"

She sighed. "Really, Leo? I don't want to talk about it. I was young and stupid. I met him on my eighteenth birthday. He was an asshole and he made his choice, and his choice wasn't me. Can we just drop it?" She

2

looked up to see Leo watching her, his lips pulled into a thin line. "Please?"

He sighed and nodded. "Yeah, sure. Let's just lift."

An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 16[1,340 words]

Chapter 16

Riley felt terrible. Her head was pounding, her whole body ached and she felt like she was going to throw up. Even Rose was oddly quiet, especially after spending the better part of the last evening berating Riley for upsetting their mate. Riley had opted to skip breakfast and by a stroke of luck made it out of the packhouse without seeing Kent. She had made her way to the training academy where she found Patrick. He had set her

up in the same conference room as yesterday to continue looking at reports, but she had all but given up by

mid-morning.

Riley looked up at the sound of the door opening. Patrick paused a step into the room, his forehead creasing

as he stared at her.

“No offense, but you look like shit.”

“Yeah, I feel like s**t too,” she muttered.

“How about you take a break?” Patrick crossed the room and shut the laptop in front of her. “The reports won’t go anywhere.”

She nodded, grimacing as a sharp pain cut through her head. “Yeah, that’s a good idea. I’m just so rundown.”

Patrick grabbed the laptop and stored it in the cabinet it had come from. Riley went to stand up and the

world suddenly tilted sideways. She would have fallen had Patrick not caught her elbow.

“Maybe you should see a doctor,” he said as she regained her balance.

“I’d rather not.” She gripped the table tightly as she waited for the dizziness to pass. “The council will pull me

if they think I can’t handle the stress.”

“Are you even sure this is stress?” He stepped back, slowly letting go of her arm.

“What else could it be?” Riley slowly started moving towards the door.

“Um... an illness. You are a normal wolf. Everyone gets sick sometimes.”

“I don’t get sick.” That wasn’t exactly true. She didn’t get sick often.

“Right, sure.” The sarcasm was obvious in his voice.

She shot him a dirty look as she reached the door. “It’s just stress.”

He rolled his eyes and followed after her. “I could ask my mate to stop by and see you when she gets back

from work.”

“Your mate?”

He nodded. “Lana. She’s a doctor at the pack hospital. She wouldn’t mind seeing you this evening.”

She shook her head. “I don’t want Kent to see her. Then he’ll think I’m sick.”

Patrick turned to face her as they reached the elevator. “Well, you are sick, first of all. Second, Kent will figure

out you’re sick if he hasn’t already. Mates can sense that kind of thing. Third, why would it matter if he knows you’re sick? It’s not abnormal for people to get sick.”

She stared at the closed elevator doors for a moment. “I just don’t want him to know. He doesn’t need any more reason to doubt my ability.”

1/3

< Chapter 16

Patrick frowned as the doors opened. “What do you mean? He doesn’t doubt your ability.”

“He sure did yesterday,” she muttered.

He sighed. “That was just Kent being an ass. He gets like that sometimes. He doesn’t like people insinuating that they’re stronger than him. His dad put a lot of shitty ideas in his head when he was a kid. You shouldn’t take it personally.”

Riley leaned against the back wall of the elevator, closing her eyes. She had no interest in explaining to the gamma why Kent’s actions bothered her so much.

They walked slowly across the grounds, Riley doing her best to look like she wasn’t about to pass out. Patrick walked a little too close, clearly ready to catch her if she did actually fall. She felt a sense of relief as they entered the packhouse.

“Will you see Lana tomorrow if you don’t feel better?” Patrick said as they walked across the lobby.

Riley sighed. “Sure, but I think I just need to get some rest and I’ll be fine.”

She punched the call button for the elevator before turning back to Patrick. “I should be fine from here.”

“Maybe,” he said with a shrug, “but I’ll feel better taking you the whole way up.”

She wanted to argue but the elevator doors opened at the same time Kent walked through the front doors of the packhouse. Patrick followed her into the elevator, clearly not seeing his alpha as the doors slid close. She was grateful for that as she leaned against the wall of the elevator. Patrick probably would have insisted on waiting on Kent and he was the last person she wanted to see.

“Let me know if you need anything,” Patrick said once they reached her room. “I could ask Lana to come up

this evening if you’d prefer.”

“I’ll be fine.” She waved off his concern. “I’m just going to lay down for an hour or so before lunch. I’m sure

this will pass soon.”

He sighed, a flash of annoyance crossing his face. “Ok, fine. If you’re sure, I’ll leave you be.”

She heard the elevator ding and bid a quick goodbye to Patrick before Kent came into view. She quickly shut

the door and leaned against it, listening to the muffled conversation as Kent found Patrick in the hallway. She

couldn’t make out what was being said, but after a moment the voices disappeared and she released the

breath she didn’t even know she was holding.

I don’t know why you’re avoiding him, Rose complained. He’s our mate. We’re supposed to want to be with him.

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Kent couldn’t explain the annoyance that flashed through him when he saw Patrick get in the elevator with

Riley. By the time he finally got to the fifth floor, Pax was raging in his mind about men around their mate. He

headed quickly towards Riley’s room only to find Patrick walking away from it.

“What are you doing?” Kent snapped.

Patrick raised an eyebrow. “I was making sure Riley made it to her room.”

“Why?” Kent knew his tone was too sharp but he couldn’t seem to change it.

“Because she said she’s feeling run down and she seemed really off. I wanted to make sure she was ok.”

Kent felt the rage fade out of him. Of course Patrick wasn’t doing anything wrong.

2/3

Chapter 16

“Is she alright?” Kent felt the worry spike through him.

+15 Points >

Patrick grabbed his elbow and turned him away from Riley’s room. “I’m not sure, but she insists she is. She

says she just needs to get some sleep.”

“I should go check on her.” Kent went to turn back towards the door but Patrick tightened his grip.

“You shouldn’t.”

Kent stared at his gamma for a moment. “What?”

Patrick frowned and tugged his arm, motioning towards the office. Kent threw one last look towards Riley’s

door before following him.

“What?” Kent asked again, once the door was shut.

“She said she doesn’t want you to have any more reasons to doubt her ability.”

Kent’s eyebrows shot up. “What? Why would she say that?”

Patrick sighed, rubbing his forehead. “I told you that you were an ass yesterday. You insulted her sparring abilities yesterday and it seems that she took that rather personally.”

“I...” Kent didn’t know what he was going to say. He found himself just staring at Patrick, at a loss for words.

“You need to apologize,” Patrick said after a moment. “Let her know that wasn’t what you meant yesterday.”

Kent nodded. “Of course.” He looked towards the office door.

“Not now,” Patrick said, as though reading his thoughts. “Let her rest now. You can talk to her once she’s up.”

Kent nodded and Patrick turned towards the door. He stopped before opening the door and looked back at

Kent.

“You know, very few wolves get a second chance like this,” he said quietly. “I know you loved my sister. I know these last few years have been hard on you. But don’t screw this up, Kent. Don’t ruin this because you’re afraid to move on.”

An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 17[1,276 words]

Chapter 17

Riley woke up to the sound of knocking on her door. Her whole body throbbed in pain and her chest felt like something was trying to break out of it. She grabbed her head, groaning as she sat up. The room was dark for some reason, only a dim light from the window guiding her as she mustered the energy to stand up.

“Riley?”

Of course it was him. She tried to ignore the concern that laced his voice as she forced herself to walk to the

door and unlock it. She pulled it open and looked up into his gorgeous face. His ocean blue eyes were filled with worry as he scanned her up and down.

“Are you ok?” he asked softly. “I was trying to let you rest, but I can tell you’re not feeling well.”

She took a deep breath, leaning towards him slightly, enjoying his scent. It seemed to help soothe the pain

that radiated through her body.

“Just worn down,” she murmured, leaning against the door frame. “I just needed to rest a little before lunch.”

“Riley?” He raised an eyebrow. “It’s almost eight in the evening.”

“No,” she scoffed, turning to look at the window behind her. The sun was gone, the dim light in the room was

coming from the moon. How did she sleep that long?

“You slept through lunch and dinner. Patrick told me to let you rest, but I was getting worried.” He rubbed his

chin and she heard the soft scratch of his stubble. She was filled with an urge to reach out and touch his

chin herself just to see what it felt like.

She balled her fist at her side instead.

“I asked them to set a plate of food aside for you,” Kent said softly, bringing her focus back to his eyes. “I can

run down and heat it up for you if you want.”

Food did sound good. Now that she was up and moving, she was starting to feel better. Maybe the sleep had

helped.

“Sure,” she said, “that would be nice.”

He smiled slightly. “I’ll bring it up to the sitting room. Give me like ten minutes.”

After he left, she shuffled into the bathroom, grimacing at the sight of herself in the mirror. Her hair was

sticking up almost every which way, looking like a family of racoons had recently taken up residence there.

She grabbed her hairbrush and started working the tangles out, slicking it back into a ponytail.

I can’t believe you let our mate see us like this, Rose lamented.

Probably for the best. The less attractive we are, the better. Nice to see you're feeling better too.

She could feel Rose's annoyance but she shut her out as she slipped on her sneakers and headed into the

sitting room. She sunk into an oversized armchair, leaning her head back to look at the ceiling.

She smelled Kent before he said anything. He handed her a plate of warm food and sat down on the couch

next to her armchair.

"Thanks," she said, taking a bite.

1/3

<Chapter 17

Kent ran his fingers up the arm of the couch, his forehead wrinkled. "Are you sure you're ok?"

She nodded. "I'm actually feeling a lot better now. I think the sleep was good."

+15 Points >

He nodded, looking away for a moment. With a heavy sigh, he turned back towards her. "There's something I wanted to say."

She froze mid-bite, the fork lingering half between the plate and her mouth as she turned to look at him.

He looked at her for a moment. "I'm sorry..." He paused, running a hand through his hair in obvious discomfort. "About yesterday and what I said to you. I was being a jerk."

She frowned. "Did Patrick talk to you?"

"Yes," he admitted, "twice actually. He chastised me right after it happened and then again this morning." He sighed. "He was right though. I was just being a d**k. You didn't deserve that. I saw you spar. You're an excellent fighter and I didn't mean to diminish you or your abilities."

She watched him for a moment. "Patrick said you acted like that because your dad put a lot of shitty ideas in your head."

Kent flinched as though he had been struck. He looked across the room before looking back. "I guess you could say that. My relationship with my dad was complicated."

She nodded. "I get that. My dad wasn't the greatest either."

Kent ran his fingers over the arm of the couch again. "Regardless, I was wrong to suggest you weren't good enough to spar with me. And I really am sorry."

She could feel the sincerity in his apology and it made a small part of her soften. She smiled slightly at him, before turning back to her food, unsure of how to respond.

See, Rose chided, he's a nice guy.

Paul used to apologize too, Riley reminded them both. And it was true. Paul would act like a d**k and apologize over and over. He'd bring her flowers and gifts and pretend that it would never happen again. Until it did. Because it always happened again.

"Did you find anything of interest in the reports?" Kent asked, breaking Riley out of her thoughts.

"I didn't make it through all of them honestly. I might just wait until Penny has them all ready so that I can go through them all at once. I'd prefer to start as far back as I can."

"That makes sense." He turned his head to watch her. She ate quietly, trying to ignore how good Kent smelled sitting so close to her. She forced herself not to look in his direction, even though her body and wolf begged her to do so. She reminded herself of Paul, of all the promises that he didn't keep, all the apologies he never really meant anyway. Reminding herself that mates were not the fairy tales she had been promised as a child.

"Any thoughts about what you would like to do tomorrow?" he asked as she leaned forward to place her

empty plate on the table.

She sighed, leaning back and draping her arms over the sides of the chair. "I have a couple thoughts, but it will depend on how I feel in the morning." She closed her eyes to avoid looking at him.

"Are you sure you're feeling ok? Our hospital is good. You could get checked out."

2/3

Chapter 17

“I’m fine,” she snapped. “It’s just stress. There’s a lot that’s happened in the last couple days. I just needed a break. I’m feeling much better.”

She could feel his eyes on her without looking. “You should take care of yourself. If you need another day or so, I understand.”

“I’ll be fine,” she assured him, keeping her eyes closed,

She felt sparks erupt on her arm as Kent reached out to trail his fingers up the bare skin of her forearm. She jerked her arm away as though it burned, opening her eyes and sitting upright.

She felt his hurt surge through the bond and hazarded a glance at him. He was no longer looking at her, but rather staring out the window in front of him, his jaw clenched. She watched a muscle in his cheek jump.

“I should go to bed,” she said after a moment.

“You should,” he agreed tersely, not looking at her. “I’ll see you in the morning.”

“Good night, Kent.” She felt bad as she stood up. She briefly considered apologizing, but decided against it,

leaving the room quickly.

An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 18[1,282 words]

Chapter 18

Kent slept terribly. He blamed Riley as he tossed and turned throughout the night. Part of it was her subtle rejections of him. It was clear that she didn’t want him around. From the moment she had seen him watching her spar, he could sense how much she wanted to get away from him. It was part of the reason he had been so short tempered that day. Then she had avoided him the day before. She barely tolerated being in his presence for twenty minutes while she ate and she jumped like he had hit when he had reached out to touch her.

As if that wasn't enough to keep him awake, she clearly did not feel better like she pretended. Even though she had seemed much better while eating dinner, he had awoken in the middle of the night sensing her

discomfort through the bond. He had done his best to block her out, but it was still difficult.

Pax didn't help either. He spent the night lamenting their mate and worrying obsessively about her. He had begged and pleaded with Kent to go check on her, Kent remained resolute. She clearly did not want him around. He wasn't going to push it and he certainly wasn't pushing it at 2am.

Now he had forced himself through a hot shower, hoping it would be enough to keep him awake until he could find coffee. He stepped into the hall, grimacing as her scent of vanilla and cloves filled his nostrils. Of

course the whole floor had to smell like her now.

He ignored his desire to go see if she was in her room and took the elevator downstairs. He walked into the dining room and saw her right away. She was sitting at a table by herself, staring listlessly at the dry toast on her plate. He watched her for a moment and felt himself soften. She clearly didn't feel well. He wondered

what it would take to get her to see a doctor.

He filled his plate at the buffet table and grabbed a cup of hot coffee before turning around. Riley was staring openly at him. When he met her gaze her cheeks flushed at being caught and she turned away quickly.

"Did you sleep well?" Kent asked as he approached her table, sliding into the seat beside her.

"Yep," she replied, "like a log."

It was a lie and judging by the look on her face, she was challenging him to call her on it. Lily used to do that to him all the time. The memory of it almost made him smile. He took a sip of his coffee, watching her turn

back to her food.

"I've arranged for everyone to meet in my office this morning," he said after a moment. "I want to discuss sending some scouts out to get a better look at that encampment. Then I figured you could decide what else you want to see while Penny finishes the reports. She said they should be ready by this afternoon at the

latest."

“That sounds good.” Riley pushed her plate away from her and stood suddenly, taking him by surprise. “I’ll

meet you upstairs.”

Kent reached out, lightly catching her wrist. “You don’t have to rush off.”

She jerked her arm away the same way she had the night before, as though his touch hurt. He clenched his teeth, pulling his arm away into his lap. He looked at her face and found her gaze tense, her expression

bordering on pained.

“Fine,” he muttered, turning away from her. “I’ll see you upstairs.”

1/3

Riley felt like a total b***h. And Rose kept telling Riley she had acted like a total b***h, which didn’t help anything. She hadn’t meant to hurt his feelings by leaving so abruptly, but being around him was proving to be difficult. It wasn’t as easy as she expected to control her emotions around him. One touch and she felt like she was swooning. She would not get swept up in a mate bond again, not knowing the risks.

She waited in the sitting room until she heard the others arriving. When she walked into the office, she took a

seat in the armchair farthest from Kent’s desk, something he clearly noticed. He watched her with dark eyes,

his mouth a thin line and his nostrils flaring.

“The encampment on the northwestern border appears to be growing,” Patrick said once everyone was there.

“I think we really need to send scouts out to look at numbers and determine the threat they pose to us.”

“We know they pose a threat,” Max said from his spot on the couch. “Why do we need to send wolves out just

to verify what we already know?”

“We need to verify numbers,” Wesley replied. “We know there’s a camp there, but how many of those wolves

are fighters? What if it’s a camp of old women and children?”

All three ranked members of the pack winced. A resounding silence filled the room.

Riley could feel an emotion surge through the mate bond, but she couldn't place it right away. She looked at

Kent who was staring at his desk, his forehead creased.

"What?" Wesley said, raising his eyebrows. "What just happened? If we think the rogues are gathering there,

we need intel to prepare."

"No one is arguing that," Patrick finally said. "You just unknowingly hit a nerve." He rubbed his forehead,

blowing out a sigh. "The last time we went after a camp in that area was right after my sister was killed."

Riley felt a surge of sympathy as she looked at Kent again. She remembered how they had admitted to killing

those who were defenseless.

"Do you think there is a reason the rogues have chosen to gather in that particular area? Do you think there is

a connection?" she asked.

"We don't really know," Max answered, looking at his hands, "but we have wondered that."

She felt a weird uneasiness as she looked between the three ranked members. None of them met her gaze.

"I think you should send the scouts out," she said finally, leaning back in her chair. "I agree with Wesley. We

need the intel to prepare. You say the attacks are getting worse so we need to have the upperhand. No one is

suggesting attacking this encampment. We just need to determine the level of threat they pose."

"Send the scouts out," Kent said, looking at Max. "They're right. We need the intel. Max, you take care of

selecting the scouts and sending them out.”

“Yes, Alpha,” Max said, giving him a mock salute.

Kent ignored his beta and turned to Riley. “What do you need for today?”

“I’d like to run the border of the pack,” Riley said. “I’d like to get a feel for the terrain and look at your defenses.

“I can take you,” Patrick said,

2/3

< Chapter 18

“That sounds good,” Riley replied, nodding.

“I’ll go too,” Kent said quickly.

Riley looked at Kent for a long moment. “I’d prefer to just go with the gamma.”

“No,” Kent replied tersely, “I’ll go too.”

+15 Points >

“Alpha,” Patrick interrupted, drawing attention to himself, “is there anything else you need to discuss with the

rest of us today?”

Kent blinked at him for a moment. “No, I don’t think so.”

“Then I need to go look at some training schedules.” He stood up. “Riley, I’ll meet you on the training grounds

in half an hour.” She nodded. He turned to the other three men. “I’m sure you all have better things to do. Leave them to their argument.”

**An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 19[
1,130 words]**

Chapter 19

Riley watched helplessly as Patrick, Max, Leo and Wesley filed out of the room. Leo cast her worried glance but said nothing as he shut the door. She swallowed hard, turning to see Kent staring at the closed door.

Finally his gaze flickered to hers. "I'll go too."

"Goddess, Kent," she muttered, rubbing her forehead.

Please let him go, begged Rose. I want to meet Pax.

That's exactly why he can't go, Riley scolded. You won't control yourself around him.

She shook her head, blocking her wolf out again as she looked up at Kent. His mouth was set in a thin line,

his eyes black.

"You'd just prefer to spend more time alone with my gamma then?"

She rolled her eyes. "Are you jealous of him?"

"No," he snapped, but she knew he was lying.

"Kent, please," she sighed. "I really just don't want you there."

"I know," he snarled. "You've made that abundantly clear. You don't want me around you at all. You've been avoiding me for over a day. When I'm near you, you just want to bolt. You can't tolerate me touching you. Clearly you can't stand being around me."

Riley sat frozen as Kent spoke, his voice rising to the level of a yell by the end. She could feel his hurt surging through the mate bond. She bit her lip as he finally stopped, his face flushed red, his eyes black.

"I'm sorry," she finally said.

He blinked, seemingly surprised by her response. "What?"

"I'm sorry," she repeated. "You're not entirely wrong. I have been avoiding you. But it's not because I don't want to be around you. It's just..." She trailed off, glancing around the room.

Kent stood up and walked around his desk, leaning against the front. His eyes had returned to their normal

blue.

“What is it?” His voice was quieter as he watched her.

She sighed, looking back at him. “It’s hard being around you. It’s hard to control myself. I don’t think clearly when you are around. The other day in the elevator...” Her face flushed at the memory. She stood up, trying to shake off some of her nerves. “It’s too easy to get swept up in the mate bond, to give in to those feelings. When you touch me, the sparks are too much. I just don’t want to get caught up in all these feelings again.” She closed her eyes, pressing the heels of her hands into them.

He crossed the room and slowly took her wrists, removing her hands from her face. Riley looked up to see

Kent looking at her, his expression gentle.

“I didn’t think about it like that,” he said softly.

“Why would you?” she muttered, shaking her head. She looked down at where he still held her wrists. “You probably only have good memories of having a mate.”

1/3

< Chapter 19

+15 Points >

He ran his thumbs along the inside of her arms. “Mostly good, yes.” He let go of one of her wrists and caught her chin, raising her gaze to his. “You can tell me what happened with your last mate.”

She smiled sadly. “I know. I just don’t want to.”

He looked like he wanted to argue but slowly nodded. “Alright. But how about you just tell me if you need space instead of avoiding me altogether? I’ll respect that request.”

Riley felt a warmth spread across her chest. “Sure. I’ll do that.”

He let go of her chin and arm taking a step back. “About this morning, I would still prefer to go with you.”

“No, Kent.” She shook her head. “I would really prefer you not be there. My wolf can be... easily excited.”

No fair!

“I get that,” he said quickly. “I really do, but the attacks have been getting worse and I already lost a mate to rogues in those woods once. I’d just feel better if I were with you.”

She shook her head. “I’m more than capable of taking care of myself. I am a skilled warrior.”

“So was Lily!” he yelled suddenly, taking her by surprise. “She could handle herself quite well in a fight and it didn’t stop her from being killed.” His chest rose and fell quickly, his face flushed.

Riley stared at him, feeling his sadness and pain through the bond. She took a step closer, placing her hand gently on his chest. Tingles shot up her arm but his breathing slowed as he closed his eyes.

“I wasn’t trying to upset you,” she whispered.

“I’m sorry I yelled.” He opened his eyes slowly. “I just can’t handle that again. Losing her nearly killed me.” He bit his lip, his eyes shining. “I lost my mind when we found that camp of rogues. I killed every last one of them myself. Max and Patrick only watched. When it was all over, when I looked around and saw what I had done...” He gave a ragged gasp, his voice trembling. “There were women and an old man, people who couldn’t have fought me if they tried. And I killed every last one of them.”

She felt the same emotion as earlier, but this time she could place it. Regret.

“Kent,” she said softly, reaching up with her other hand to cup his cheek.

He pressed his face into her hand. “You asked if these attacks could be connected to what I did four years ago. And I know they are. I have no doubt that this is the Goddess punishing me for my actions.

She stroked her thumb along his jaw. “I don’t think these attacks are a punishment,” she said softly. “I think Patrick was right the other day when he said that grief can blind you. I can’t imagine what losing her did to you.” She slid her hand around his neck and pulled his head down to her shoulder. He wrapped his arms around her waist, burying his face into the crook of her neck. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders and waited for him to calm down. Once his breathing steadied, he slowly released her and they took a step

apart.

“I won’t go with you,” he whispered.

“Thank you.”

He nodded. “But can I ask for one thing?”

She hesitated. "I suppose it depends on what it is."

"Could we find a time for our wolves to run together? Pax is dying to meet Rose."

2/3

8. Chapter 19

Yes! cried Rose.

Riley smiled. "Sure. Rose wants to meet Pax too." She took a step back. "I should go get ready. Patrick will be

waiting."

Kent nodded. "Of course." He hesitated for a moment before taking a step forward to brush a soft kiss across her forehead. "Please be careful."

An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 20[1,984 words]

Chapter 20

Riley arrived at the training grounds wearing a pair of leggings and a lightweight blue shirt. The air was cool and some leaves had blown off the trees, blowing past her feet as she walked towards the sparring rings. Warriors were sparring, men and women alike, fighting and training. She watched for a moment, impressed by how well many of them fought.

"You ready?"

She turned to find Patrick in a pair of black shorts and a long sleeved black shirt behind her.

"Yes," she said, smiling. "My wolf is ready to stretch her legs. My last assignment wasn't a safe one so she

couldn't run much."

"Is the alpha joining us?" Patrick asked cautiously.

“No, he’s not.”

He raised an eyebrow but chose to not say anything. He motioned for her to follow him into the trees. They walked for a while until they were out of view of the training grounds.

“Our border goes about thirty miles in the trees in this direction. In some areas it’s more and in others less. Just follow me and you’ll see the trail as we go.” Riley nodded. “I’ll give you some space to shift.” He walked

away, disappearing between some trees.

Riley found a space out of sight and slipped her clothes off, stuffing them into the small bag she had brought

out. She allowed Rose to take over, feeling her bones crack and shift as her body changed shape. Riley was

surprised that the shift hurt more than normal, taking longer than it should. Once it was over, Rose stood up

and shook out her cream colored fur. She was a beautiful wolf, cream colored with light brown spots over her

back and tail.

Why was that shift more difficult? Riley asked.

I don’t know, Rose answered, scooping up the bag of Riley’s clothes in her mouth. Maybe whatever illness you

have is affecting me too.

Maybe. Riley sat back and watched Rose start to move through the trees to where they last saw Patrick. There was a large gray wolf with a black stripe down his back sitting on his haunches when Rose

approached. He picked up his own bag and took off, Rose following. The gamma’s wolf was fast, but Rose

was quick too and didn’t fall behind. The wind danced through her fur as she moved agilely over the rocks

and roots, following the clear path that marked the pack’s border. As they ran, Riley was surprised by the

vastness of the pack's territory. She was starting to see how easy it could be for rogues to come up on them.

They consistently passed well timed patrols of wolves working in groups of two to four. She knew from

talking to Patrick that the number of wolves on patrol had to do with the skill levels of warriors. More skilled

warriors ran in smaller groups than less skilled warriors. Finally they reached an area where a dry riverbed

ran down into a shallow ravine. Riley saw that the border of the pack stopped before the ravine, but the gamma's wolf veered off pack territory, weaving through the trees to climb the steep slope up to the top of the ravine. Rose carefully followed him, picking a path through the deep underbrush and rocky terrain. Finally they reached the top and the gray wolf motioned for Rose to stay before disappearing into the trees. Rose looked around, taking in the shallow gorge below where a powerful river must have flowed. The trees here

< Chapter 20

were thick and beautiful as their leaves changed colors.

+15 Points)

Rose turned her head at the sound of crunching leaves and Patrick, in his human form, wearing only his shorts and sneakers appeared. He sat down beside Rose and she stood up, carefully going into the trees and finding a spot to shift. The shift back to human was even more painful. Riley was grateful when it was over. She slipped her clothes on and carefully found her way back to where Patrick was sitting.

"Does it always take you that long to shift?" he asked as she sat down beside him.

"No." She rubbed her forehead. Her headache was back. "I'm still not feeling well and I think it's starting to

affect my wolf."

He furrowed his brow. "That's not typical for illnesses. Most human illnesses don't affect wolves."

"Yeah, I know." She sighed. "Let's not talk about it right now."

He frowned. "Fine, but we will talk about it." He reached into his bag, pulling out two bottles of water and several sandwiches. "I knew we'd be out past lunch so I grabbed us something to eat."

"Thanks."

They ate in a companionable silence for a few minutes, watching the wind shift the leaves through the trees.

"It's beautiful out here," Riley commented, taking a sip of her water.

"This is my favorite spot to come in the woods." Patrick looked wistfully into the trees. "Whenever Lily got upset when we were kids, she would come out here. She used to call it her peace." He smiled slightly at the memory. "After she was killed, I found myself coming out here more and more. Seems like the only spot I can think clearly some days."

"She was your sister, right?"

He nodded.

"And you were close, I take it?"

He nodded again. "I was only a year older than her. Our parents used to joke that we were twins born a year apart. Growing up we did almost everything together. She never wanted to be left behind when I was with

Max and Kent."

"Did she and Kent always get along well?" Riley asked curiously.

"No." Patrick laughed. "If anything, I always suspected that Lily had a crush on Max. She was competitive with Kent. Lily was a good fighter, stronger than most men. She could take me and Max down sometimes

when we sparred, but never Kent. She tried so hard though and he would taunt her every time she failed. She

would be spitting mad for days afterwards."

"Kent is a good fighter then?"

"The best. No one in the pack has been able to take him down. He's never lost a fight since he became alpha. His dad raised him with the phrase 'A strong Alpha makes a strong pack' so he has always pushed himself hard. He truly believes that and feels that the stronger he is, the better his whole pack will be for it."

“There’s truth to that,” Riley noted, “but it’s more than strength. There’s intelligence, fairness and so forth.”

Patrick nodded. “Kent is all those things. He’s a good alpha. Much better than his father in a lot of ways.”

“So what happened when Lily and Kent found out they were mates?”

2/4

<Chapter 20

Patrick smiled, staring out in the trees as though remembering. “Kent left at seventeen to train at the Werewolf Academy for three years, just like most alphas do. Lily wanted to go to the academy as well. She wanted to be an investigator at the Council. But Kent had to come back early after his father died. He didn’t finish his last year. Lily left the pack two days after her eighteenth birthday and three days before Kent came

back.”

“They just missed each other?”

He nodded. “She didn’t come home again for two years when her training was done. She had applied to the Council and was accepted to start training as an investigator. But she came home and found out Kent was

her mate.”

“So she didn’t go to the Council?” Riley looked at Patrick who shrugged.

“No, she didn’t. She always loved this pack and she loved Kent. She was happy here. She helped me train warriors and ran patrols and did all her duties as Luna. She loved what she did here.”

Riley gazed out over the ravine for a while, thinking about what Lily’s life must have been like and wondering

what Kent would be like if his mate hadn’t died.

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“What about you?” Patrick asked, breaking into her thoughts. “Would you have still insisted on going to the academy if your mate hadn’t rejected you?”

She winced, still remembering the way Paul scoffed at her desire to go to the academy. “I wanted to go, but he said it was a waste of time, that women shouldn’t be warriors. I suppose if we had stayed together, I

wouldn’t have gone. But I don’t think I would have been happy.”

Patrick looked at her for a long moment. “How long did you know he was your mate before he rejected you?”

She bit her lip, looking down at the water bottle in her hands. “Too long.”

He reached over, gently squeezing her wrist. “You’re an excellent warrior, so clearly he was an idiot.”

She smiled. “Thanks, Pat.”

“Lily would be happy that Kent got a second chance, you know.”

Riley looked up as he let go of her wrist. “What?”

He shrugged, glancing away and then back to her. “She wouldn’t want him to be alone forever. I know she

would be happy he found you.”

Riley felt her mouth go dry as she turned to look back across the ravine, her chest aching. She rolled her bottom lip between her teeth as his words rolled around in her head.

“I didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable,” he said quietly.

“You didn’t,” she said quickly. “It’s just this whole mate thing is still very new to me. I think it’s taking me a while to process things.”

“That’s understandable.” He took a sip of his water.

“What about your mate?”

He smiled, staring out into the trees. “She’s great. Smart, funny, beautiful. Everything I could want.”

Riley couldn’t help but smile as she watched Patrick. The love was clear on his face.

3/4

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“I’d love to meet her sometime,” Riley remarked.

“Yeah,” Patrick said looking back at her, “about that. You probably should meet her. You need to figure out

this illness.”

She rolled her eyes. “So we’re having this conversation now?”

“Yeah, we are. This is the third day you’ve been sick and it’s affecting your wolf. You need to get checked out. You said yesterday that you would see her if you weren’t better.”

Riley sighed. “I was feeling better last night, and during our meeting this morning. It’s really strange. It seems to come and go. There’s no real reason as to why. I really thought I was better last night.”

“I don’t pretend to know anything about medicine or illnesses,” Patrick said with a shrug. “That’s really Lana’s

specialty.”

She nodded. “Alright. I’ll see her.”

“Good.”

“But could we not tell Kent?”

Patrick frowned. “Why?”

She bit her lip for a moment. “He just seems like the type to... overreact.”

Patrick sighed. “Yeah, that’s him. But he still has probably figured out you’re sick. He would be able to sense

that through the bond.”

She shrugged. “I know, but I would rather he not know I’m seeing a doctor. Or how much this is affecting me.”

He pinched the bridge of his nose. “He’s your mate. You shouldn’t keep secrets from him. Plus, he’s my alpha.

I don’t keep secrets from him.”

“Listen,” Riley turned to face Patrick fully, “if it gets worse, I’ll talk to him. Just let me see your mate and see

what she says. Maybe it's nothing."

He sighed. "Fine. I'll ask her to stop by your room after she gets off her shift. But if Kent finds out I'm hiding this, he's going to lose his shit."

"Thanks." She let out the breath she didn't realize she was holding.

"Yeah, well, if the alpha finds out, I'm going to need you to jump in front of that silver bullet." He stood up. "I'll

shift first and then you can."