

Chapter 3

The plane landed around 6pm the next evening. Riley's legs were stiff as she walked off the plane, her body already tired from all the traveling of her last assignment. She had barely slept the night before, staying up to read over the reports that the commander had forwarded from Wesley. She liked to be well prepared for an assignment, but she regretted her decision now. She was so tired her body felt heavy and she had gotten no sleep on the flight due to the screaming human child in the row behind her.

She walked slowly through the airport, her bookbag feeling heavy on her back.

I need to run, Rose, her wolf complained in her mind. Due to the disputes at Silver Streams, it hadn't been safe to run in wolf form that often, so Rose was starting to feel cooped up.

Once we get to the new pack, Riley told her. There seems to be a lot of woods there so you can run there.

Rose seemed to accept that answer as Riley reached the luggage carousel, watching it spin slowly. She was squeezed between a couple of humans, one talking animatedly about visiting a local bar. She felt relief at the sight of her suitcase, grabbing it quickly so she could head towards the exit.

As she grew closer to the airport doors, she caught a distinct scent and looked up, watching the people around her carefully.

Werewolves had a heightened sense of smell, making it easy for them to determine who was human, werewolf or some other type of supernatural being. Riley could smell the werewolf nearby before finally catching sight of a man watching her with curiosity. He was tall with messy blond hair and light brown eyes. He was lean and muscular, wearing a pair of faded blue jeans and a green t-shirt. He smiled slightly as she approached him.

"You must be Riley," he said as she got closer.
"Wesley told me what you looked like."

"I am," she replied, coming to a stop in front of him. "And you are?"

"Max Greene." He offered his hand. "I am the beta of Red Moon."

Riley shook his hand, tilting her head to the side. "The alpha sent his beta to retrieve someone from the airport."

Max grinned lopsidedly. "Only the best for the best."

She couldn't help but smile. The beta's demeanor was very easygoing. He reached to take her suitcase and she gave it over with a small thanks. He motioned for her to follow as he turned towards the door.

"It's a long drive to the pack. We might not make it there until after dinner time. I can stop somewhere along the way to pick you up something to eat. Is there anything you would like?"

The idea of fast food made Riley's stomach churn. "Thanks for the offer, but I'll be alright. I ate a snack on the plane. I'd rather just get to the pack."

Max nodded. "Alright, boss."

He led the way through the parking garage to a small, silver BMW. He loaded her suitcase while she got into the passenger seat. As he climbed into the driver seat, he passed her a bottle of water.

"Hydration is key, boss," he said when he caught her surprised expression. "Plus Penny insisted I take water for you. She also made me bring some granola bars in case you're hungry. Now, she didn't bother asking if I wanted anything." He chuckled slightly as he reversed out of the spot.

"Well, that was very considerate of me." Riley cracked open the bottle and took a sip. "Is Penny your mate?"

"Yep." He steered the car out of the garage.

"Best one there is if you ask me, but I might be a bit biased."

"Any kids?"

"Two boys. Alex and Evan. She wants a girl though. She's always talking about it."

"And what do you have to say about that?"

He shrugged. "I'm doing my part. The rest is up to Goddess."

Riley smiled, leaning back into her seat. She liked Max already. He had a way of making her feel relaxed and at ease, which few people seemed able to do anymore. Riley wasn't a particularly social person outside of her job. The only other people she really enjoyed being around were Leo and Leah.

"What about you?" Max asked after a moment of silence. "You have a mate?"

"No," Riley said quietly, looking out the window, watching the human city pass by. "I don't have one nor do I want one."

Max glanced at her quickly before returning his gaze to the road. If he had any thoughts about her lack of mate, he chose to keep them to himself. Riley looked out the window, watching the city fade away into the countryside.

"I'm told the pack is quite remote," she said after a few more minutes of silence.

"Yes," Max said. "About two hours away from the city. We don't have any packs that border our territory."

"What are your closest packs?"

"West Valley is the closest. It's right outside the city. Then there's New Moon, Opal Lake and New Sky."

"Are you allied with all of them?"

Commented [Ma1]:

He nodded. "They've all sent us warriors. We're fortunate for all the alliances right now." He paused for a moment. "Plus all the

council support."

Riley smirked. "I know most packs don't want Council intervention. You won't offend me if you say so."

He shrugged slightly. "I mean, I guess I wish we didn't need the help but we do."

"I was out at New Sky last year," Riley commented. "I had to arbitrate a dispute with the boundaries along a new established pack."

"Pine Valley."

"You heard of it?"

"I heard of the dispute. Pine Valley broke away from New Sky and there was bad blood between the two alphas. Alpha Brent at New

Sky told us that you handled the whole issue really well. He was impressed by you. That's what made Alpha Kent request your assistance."

"Really?"

"Yeah, Alpha wants the best for our pack. When he heard that you were the best, he wanted you."

"Does he realize I'm a woman?"

Max glanced at her confusedly. "Of course. Leo and Wesley told us about you. It doesn't matter though. Alpha doesn't care."

"Does your pack allow female warriors?"

"Of course. We don't have the numbers to turn away good warriors. Plus, if you can fight, why should it matter?"

"What is your alpha like?" She tried her best to sound nonchalant as she watched Max's face in the fading sunlight.

“Met some rough alphas in your travels?” Max chuckled, clearly seeing through her.

“A few.”

“Alpha is more progressive as far as alphas go, but again, we don’t have the numbers to be picky about pointless things. He doesn’t care about male or female, omega or gamma or kappa or what have you. He just wants people to do their jobs and do them well.”

She nodded. “That sounds like a good alpha.”

“He’s the best.” She noted the pride in Max’s voice. “What have you heard about him?”

She hesitated, debating how to respond. He clearly liked his alpha so she didn’t want to be insulting. “He’s strong. Runs a solid pack that produces good warriors. I’m told he’s blunt and direct.”

“Have they told you he’s a mean bastard?” Max said with a smile.

"Asshole was the word that was used, actually."

Max laughed. "I've heard that one too." He drove in silence for a moment before adding, "He's a good guy. He's been through a lot and it's made him hard in some ways, but he loves his pack and does his best."

Riley studied Max for a moment. "The two of you are close."

"Of course. He's my best friend." Max shook his head with a sigh. "I wasn't born into the beta position like most. Alpha's father had a beta but he never had children. I grew up the son of an omega. My father was a warrior but he died when I was a baby. I was raised by my mother. She worked in the packhouse kitchen so I grew up there. Alpha and I were best friends as kids. When his father died, the previous beta and gamma encouraged Alpha to pick someone he trusted, so he chose me."

"Not the gamma's son?"

"Not the gamma's son?"

"No, which surprised everyone except maybe Patrick, our gamma."

"So the gamma wasn't upset by his choice?"

"No." He scoffed softly, smiling at her again. "It takes a lot to upset Patrick. He's a good guy. He has always supported the alpha. He has always said that what is best for the alpha is best for our pack."

"Your pack sounds nice."

"It is," Max confirmed, his voice warm.

Riley leaned her head back, closing her eyes for a moment. The exhaustion of the last couple weeks was really catching up with her and she felt herself drifting off to sleep.

Chapter 4

Riley awoke with a jolt, gasping as she sat up