

# An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 41[ 1,220 words ]

## Chapter 41

Kent followed Lana down the hallway into a small exam room. Once the *door* was shut, she leaned against it, looking him up and down.

“How have you been feeling, Alpha?” she finally asked.

Kent raised an eyebrow. “What do you mean?”

“Have you been feeling sick like Riley?”

“No.” Kent leaned against the wall. “Why are you asking this?”

Lana rubbed her hands on her face. “It’s strange, isn’t it? If it is tied to the mate *bond*, why is she sick and you’re not? If this is somehow related to second chances or physical distance *or* something like that, you should both be sick.”

Kent chewed on the corner of his mouth. He hadn’t stopped to think about it like that.

“I’ve been more... anxious than normal, I guess,” Kent admitted.

“That’s to be expected,” Lana said with a shrug. “You’re last mate died. Your current mate has some unexplained health problems and isn’t forthcoming about them, so of course you’re anxious.”

She tapped her chin for a moment. “Do you know anything about Riley’s rejection?”

He frowned, looking at the brown and gray tiles on the floor. “I know bits and pieces, but not the whole story. She is insistent that she doesn’t want to talk about it.”

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“Maybe there is something I’m missing.” Lana sighed. “I don’t know. I don’t even know where to look for answers. Second chance mates are so rare that they’ve never been studied from a medical viewpoint.”

“Is she going to be ok?” Kent voiced the question that had been plaguing him.

Lana looked up at him, her eyebrows knitting together. “I don’t know. I hope so.”

He pushed his fists against his eyes and took a shuddering breath. All the fear, the worry and stress of the last week suddenly washed over him.

“I need her to be ok,” he whispered, his voice breaking on the last word.

Lana crossed the room quickly, placing a hand gently on his shoulder.

“Kent,” she said, using his first name for the first time in his memory, “I wish I could fix this for you. I really do.

“I don’t know what to do,” he admitted, his voice shaking as he finally moved his hands to look at Lana.

“Right now, what she needs is you. Even if she isn’t willing to admit that to herself.”

\*\*

It was dinner time when they finally arrived back at the pack house, so Kent had someone bring up food to the sitting room. There was a tray of meatball subs with side salads. It was much better than the dry toast and applesauce she had been choking down for two days. Riley listened while Kent went over the details of the alliance with New Dawn. As Leo had said, it was pretty standard as far as alliances go but it did lend

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+8 Points X

When Riley was done eating, Kent took her dishes and placed them back *on* the tray. He leaned back *on* the couch, turning to face her.

“What did Leo say at the hospital that upset you so much?” he asked.

“It doesn’t matter.” She leaned back, looking out the window for a minute.

“Yeah, it does.” He reached out to tuck a stray hair behind her ear. “You were really upset. I felt it.”

She didn’t look at him. “He was trying to convince me to accept our bond.”

There was a long pause before he softly asked, “And you got that upset?”

She signed, closing her eyes for a second. “No, it wasn’t exactly like that. It’s just...” She trailed off, opening her eyes to look at him. “I’d have to tell the council I have a mate. With you being an alpha, being your mate means I’d probably have to give up my position.

The council would probably decide I can't maintain my job as well as the responsibilities of being the luna of a pack."

She twisted her fingers, looking into his blue eyes. "You have to understand. I've worked so hard to be where I am. I was the unbacked candidate at the academy that everyone expected to fail. No one thought I could stick it out. I was so weak during that first year too, still recovering from my rejection. It took so much work to get where I am, to be called the best at what I do. I've worked too hard to lose it all now."

He looked down between them for a moment before looking up, his expression pained. "I don't want to take that away from you."

"I love what I do," she continued. "I had to rebuild myself from zero and I'm proud of who I am now. I almost gave up my dreams for a man once. That would have been the biggest regret of my life."

He turned to look out the window, his face pinched. She could feel his sadness through the bond and she

was mad at herself for it. She didn't want to hurt him, but she also needed him to understand.

"What happened with your previous mate?" he asked quietly after a moment.

"I already told you that." She closed her eyes, leaning her head back into the couch cushion. "He rejected me.

The alpha banished me. I went to the academy."

"There's *more* to that story," he challenged her gently, touching her arm.

She sighed, turning her head to look at him. "He made promises," she whispered. "Promises he never

intended *to keep*. He took advantage of the situation and my naivete."

"How long did you *know* he was your mate before he rejected you?"

She bit her lip, looking back at the window. The sun was almost down now. She could feel the tears stinging behind her eyes.

"It wasn't right away," Kent said quietly. "He didn't reject you outright, did he?"

"Why does it matter?"

“I just want to understand.” He took her hand gently in both of his. “Something happened to you. Something you don’t talk about.”

“It’s over. It happened. There’s no point in dwelling on things that can’t be changed. I’m not the girl I was back

then.”

“But those feelings don’t disappear, Riley.” He squeezed her hand in his. “Sometimes talking helps.”

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Points

She jerked her hand from his. “Nothing will change what happened,” she snapped, her face feeling hot. “No amount of talking will change anything.” She stood up. “I’m going to bed.”

“Please don’t go.” He jumped to his feet. “I’ll stop asking questions. I’m not trying to upset you.”

“I’m tired. I want to lay down.” Really she just wanted to get away from this man who brought up feelings and memories that were better left in the past.

“You’re supposed to stay close to me?” he pointed out.

“I’m just sleeping.” She started walking towards the door. “I’ll be fine.”

“Do me a favor?”

She stopped in the doorway, looking back at him.

“Leave your door unlocked. I’d feel better knowing I can get to you if *you* start to get sick in the night.”

She wanted to tell him no. She wanted to tell him to stay away from her. Instead she *nodded*.

“Good night, Riley.”

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## An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 42[ 1,311 words ]

Kent dreamt about Lily again. She was standing near the ravine that she loved so much, wind and rain whipping her long black hair around her. He yelled her name but she didn't look at him, just kept staring into the ravine. He tried to reach her, but every step he took seemed to cause him *to* go backwards for some reason He started running but it only took him further and further away from her.

He woke in a panic, his heart felt like it was going to beat out of his chest. He shucked the blankets off,

trying to catch his breath.

Mate, Pax said softly. *It's mate.*

Kent took a deep breath, realizing that Pax was right. The panic he was feeling wasn't his own. It was Riley's.

He was out of the room without a second thought, praying she had left her door unlocked like he had asked.

He knew he had the spare key in his office, but he didn't want to waste time looking for it. He didn't even think

about the fact that all he was wearing was a pair of pajama pants. When he grasped her doorknob, he breathed a sigh of release as it opened easily.

She was thrashing in her bed, her brown hair a halo around her head.

"Paul!" she yelled. "Paul! Come back! Help! Please! Paul!"

"Riley!" Kent said, hurrying over to the bed.

She continued thrashing, yelling for Paul.

Kent grabbed her arms to shake her away, yelling her name again. Her hazel eyes flew open wide. She gasped, trying to swing up to fight him off. He tightened his grip, pinning her to the bed.

“Stop!” he cried. “It’s me. Calm down. I won’t hurt you.”

“Kent,” she gasped. She relaxed back into the bed, but her whole body trembled. He could see the sheen of sweat across her forehead. He reached up and gently pushed the hair out of her face.

“You’re shaking,” he whispered.

“What are *you* doing here?” She pushed his hands away, wiping her own forehead.

“You were yelling and screaming,” he explained. “I woke up to feeling your panic through the bond.”

“It was just a dream,” she whispered, closing her eyes for a moment.

He couldn’t help but ask, “Who is Paul?”

“What?” She opened her eyes again.

“You were screaming his name,” he said. “You kept yelling for him to come back, to help you.”

She cringed. “Paul was my previous mate.”

His eyes widened slightly. “You were dreaming about him.”

“I’ve been dreaming about him a lot since I got here,” she admitted.

He opened his mouth to tell her that he had been dreaming of Lily often too, but thought better of it. Instead,

he closed his mouth and swallowed hard. She was fine now. He didn’t want to make her uncomfortable

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“I should go back to bed,” he said finally.

“Can you stay for a minute?” she whispered.

His eyebrows and his heart lifted slightly. “If you want me to.”

She nodded. “Just for a few minutes.”

### **Ports**

He tried to hide his smile as she scooted across the bed to make space for him. He caught a glimpse of the short pajama shorts and cami she was wearing. He tried to ignore the flush of heat that ran through him. He crawled in, wrapping his arm around her waist and pulling her against him. She buried her head into his side and he leaned his head down, breathing in her scent.

“Don’t get any ideas,” she whispered.

“I wouldn’t dare,” he half-laughed.

“And you leave when I fall asleep.”

“Anything you want, babe.”

She burrowed even tighter into his side, resting a hand on his chest, right over his heart. He wondered if she could feel how fiercely it was beating right then. He laid there quietly, listening to the *sound* of her breathing

even out.

The last thought he remembered having before he fell asleep was how he hoped he could hold her every night

like this.

Riley woke up feeling warm and safe. She shifted slightly and felt strong arms tighten around her waist, holding her back securely to a hard, muscled chest. She stilled. Clearly Kent had not returned to his own bed last night. She momentarily considered pushing him away, but also couldn’t bear the idea of not having him close. So, against her better judgement, she snuggled into his embrace.

*This is nice, Rose said. I could get used to this.*

You’re back. Relief washed through Riley at hearing Rose’s voice again.

Yes, Rose replied. Now *could you please mark Kent so I can talk to Pax.*

And now I’m wondering *why I missed you.*

Rose huffed but said nothing else.

She snuggled further back into Kent but froze when her bottom came in contact with the ridge of his

erection.

Kent shifted behind her and she held still, hoping she hadn't woken him. He shifted again, raising a hand to move the hair off the back of her neck. He softly kissed the nape of her neck, sending a shiver down her

neck, spine and right to her core. When he did it again, a second rush of heat went right through her and she could smell her arousal in the air. He ran his hand down her side, pulling her hips back and pushing his erection against her with a faint moan. He drug his teeth from her neck to her shoulder, nipping the skin softly. She moaned softly, leaning back into him. His hand moved up, sliding under her cami, pushing the fabric up. Sparks ran through her as he touched her skin, his fingers grazing over her breast, her n\*\*\*\*\*s hardening at

his touch.

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18 Ports

She arched into his touch as he palmed her breast, his teeth catching her earlobe. Her body felt like it was on fire. He ran his fingers back down her stomach, slipping them into her panties. He drug a finger along her seam, parting her just enough to lightly flick over her clit.

She moaned as electricity shot through her, her body jolting slightly at the contact.

"f\*\*k, Riley," Kent groaned into her ear.

It was his voice, deep and guttural, that suddenly brought her back to reality.

What was she doing?

She jolted away from him, her body shuddering at the sudden loss of contact. She scrambled to the edge of

the bed, turning to look at him. His eyes were hazy with lust as he reached for her.

"What are you doing?" she said accusingly as she slipped out of bed, adjusting her clothes.

He smiled, his blue eyes flashing vividly. “Just enjoying the moment.” His voice sounded rough and hoarse.

“I was asleep,” she said.

He laughed, his head tipping back. She couldn’t help but look bobbing up and down.

the arch of his throat, his Adam’s apple

“No you weren’t. You’d been awake for several minutes, just enjoying being in my arms.”

She blushed and took a step away from the bed. “Why didn’t you say anything?”

He kept smiling. “I think actions speak louder than words.”

She took another step away.

His smile slipped a little. “Where are you going?”

“Away from *you*,” she snapped. “We can’t do this.”

“Why not?” he asked with a shrug.

“No.” She chewed her lip *for* a moment. “That’s a slippery slope. I remember it well.”

He tilted his head, the smile disappearing completely as he considered her.

“I’m going to take a shower,” she said after an awkward moment of silence, taking another step backwards.

“Is that an invitation?” He winked, his smile back.

“Oh my Goddess,” she cried, “get *out* of my room!”

She ran to the bathroom, ignoring his laughter that trailed after her.

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**An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 43[  
1,786 words ]**

569

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18 Points

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Kent laid in Riley's bed for a few minutes after she slammed the bathroom door shut, replaying the events of the morning. What did she mean? A slippery slope?

*She's scared*, Pax muttered. She's always a little scared of us.

Kent frowned. That was true, but why?

He finally rolled out of the bed, deciding it would be best to be out of the room before she came back out. He reached up to scratch his chin when he froze. His index finger smelled of her s\*x, right where he had touched her. He could almost feel the way she had arched into his touch.

He huffed. He was hard again. He adjusted himself and headed to his room.

After some manual relief in the shower, Kent brushed his hair back from his face and threw on a pair of gray joggers and a black sweatshirt. He ambled down to the sitting room and sat on the arm of the *couch*, looking out the window.

He smelled her before he heard her. He turned to see Riley standing in the doorway of the room, her long hair pulled back into a loose braid, wearing a pair of olive green leggings and a deep purple top that made her hazel eyes seem brighter.

Kent stood up, smiling as he watched her.

"Was that a refreshing shower?"

She rolled her eyes. "You were supposed to leave when I fell asleep."

"I guess I fell asleep too." He shrugged. "If you recall, I hadn't gotten a lot of sleep when I was rushing back to

you."

"You could have left once you woke up."

He smiled, taking two steps towards her to close the distance.

“And why would I do that? I finally had my beautiful mate in my arms.” He noted the way she shuddered at those words. “And I wouldn’t have wanted to wake you, with as sick as you’ve been.” He raised an eyebrow. But do tell, why *didn’t you move* away from me when you woke up?”

She raised her face to him, her lips pressed into a thin line. “I was comfortable.”

“I bet you were.” He grabbed her wrist and pulled her flush against him. He splayed his other hand across the small of her back, leaning down to kiss her neck.

She gasped at the contact, which only encouraged him. He began to trail open mouth kisses along her jaw.

“Am I interrupting?”

Kent tore away from Riley and turned to see Penny standing a few steps away in the hallway, clearly watching them. Riley and Kent immediately took another step away from each other, causing Penny to laugh. “So what’s the deal with you two?” Penny asked, still laughing. “Like everyone seems to know but me, and

that’s not fair. I should be in on the secret.”

Kent had honestly forgotten that Penny didn’t know about them. He glanced at Riley and she shrugged in a

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way that said, Might as well.

“Riley is my second chance mate,” Kent said finally with a sigh

Penny’s hands flew to her mouth. “Are you serious?! A second chance is amazing. This is such a blessing!”

She looked between the two of them, the smile suddenly disappearing, her eyes narrowing “But why doesn’t everyone know? Are you two even marked?”

Riley rolled her shoulders uncomfortably. “We’re not making a decision about accepting the mate bond right now. Kent is also my second chance and I... have some hesitations.”

Penny’s brows raised. “Whatever I walked in on didn’t look like hesitations to me.”

Kent couldn’t help but laugh. Riley glared at him.

“Just let it go,” Kent said to Penny, trying to suppress another laugh. “What did you need?”

“Max said the new warriors will be here on Monday. I was looking at accommodations and wanted your approval.”

He glanced at the page she had offered him. The space was getting tight around her, but she had managed to find rooms for all of the new warriors coming in.

“Looks good to me,” he said after a moment, handing the paper back.

Penny nodded before turning towards Riley. “I’m glad you’re out of the hospital. I hope you’re feeling better.”

Riley smiled. “I am. Thank you.”

After breakfast, Kent had taken Riley to the hospital for a check up with Lana, who was amazed by Riley’s recovery. She could offer no solutions long term for this mystery illness other than to tell Riley to stay close

to Kent.

With no choice but to follow *Kent* around, she accompanied for his morning training session with some of his

top-tier warriors. She got into the sparring ring, taking on a couple of his warriors, while Kent worked with a

couple others.

By the end of the training session, Riley was feeling really good. Kent had walked away to check on some other training sessions while Riley sat in the grass talking to a couple warriors. When the last warrior headed to lunch, Riley got up and walked towards the trees, enjoying the smell of the damp earth.

“You shouldn’t go too far,” Kent called from behind her, weaving between the trees. “I need to know where you are”

She turned to look at him. “I usually have some time before I get sick.”

“Still, the woods are full of rogues and you’re not at full strength if you’re not by me. I’d prefer you don’t wander too far”

She wanted to argue, but she knew he was right. She frowned as he drew even with her.

“I just wish I knew how to make this illness better,” she said after a minute. “I can’t go around stuck to your side for the rest of my life.”

“I don’t know,” said Kent with a shrug of his shoulder, “that doesn’t sound too bad to me.”

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She rolled her eyes. “Sure it does.”

He took a step closer to her, forcing her to tilt her head back to meet his eyes. “I could think of a few ways we could get closer, if you want.”

“You’re impossible,” she huffed, causing him to laugh.

“How about that run?”

She raised her brows. “What run?”

“Remember, when you ran the perimeter with Patrick? You agreed that we would let our wolves have a run together.”

Yes! Rose howled gleefully in her head.

“Sure,” Riley muttered.

She found a spot out of sight of Kent to pull off her clothes and shift. This *time her* shift felt normal, not at all like it had the other day. Rose shook her fur out, stretching, before weaving through the trees to find a huge jet black wolf standing where Kent had been.

*Pax is amazing*, Rose said as she approached him.

Riley had to agree. He was massive and his fur was slick and shiny. Rose walked up to him, nuzzling against him. Pax returned her affection before Rose turned and ran, glancing behind her to make *sure* he was following. Pax nipped at her feet playfully as they ran, eventually overtaking her and leading her through the trees. At one point Pax turned suddenly, bowling into Rose and knocking into a pile of leaves. Riley sat back and watched the two of them play, feeling Rose’s joy at finally meeting her mate.

They eventually stopped at a small stream and lapped up some water before Pax laid down. Rose curled up next to him, Pax licking her nose

*I wish I could talk to him*, Rose murmured.

Riley could feel her longing and it hurt. She knew that Rose wanted her mate desperately and Riley worried at what keeping them apart might do *to* her. Through the bond she could also feel longing, though she wondered if it was Pax’s or Kent’s or both.

After a while, Pax pushed Rose to her feet and they ran back through the woods to the spot where they had shifted before. Riley took over again, shifting back and putting on her clothes.

*It was wonderful to meet him*, Rose said quietly, even *if we can't talk yet*. I never even got to meet Aries.

Riley sat down on the ground, pulling on her shoes. She remembered asking Paul to let their wolves run together, but he had insisted it was a terrible idea, that Rose and Aries wouldn't control themselves.

"You ok?" She looked up to see Kent, tentatively looking around the tree.

"Just thinking"

"What about?" He held out his hands and she took them, allowing him to pull her to her feet.

"Rose never got to run with her **last** mate. Paul wouldn't let them meet."

He stood there for a moment looking at her, his expression indecipherable before he stepped forward, closing the space in between them. His smell swirled around her and she leaned forward, resting her head on his chest and wrapping her arms around his waist. He gently returned her embrace, burying his face into her hair.

3/4

Rose purred in her mind and Riley suddenly felt a sense of peace that she hadn't known in a long, long time

After a minute, Kent sighed *I hate to end this moment, but I have a meeting with Max, Penny and Patrick need to take a shower and get something to eat.*"

Riley nodded into his chest. "It's ok."

She took a step back and Kent reached out to grab her hand, leading her through the trees. Once they cleared the tree line, he dropped her hand and they walked side by side.

"What's your meeting about? Riley asked to make conversation.

Kent was strangely silent for a moment. "We just need to discuss some important pack stuff"

Is it about what the rogues are after?" She tried her best to sound nonchalant.

Kent glanced at her. "What makes you ask that?"

She shrugged. "Lucky guess."

He stopped, grabbing her elbow to pull her up short. His eyes were narrowed as he considered her for a moment.

"Maybe," Riley said casually, "you should assure your beta that I'm not trying to make problems for him."

Kent closed his eyes, cringing slightly. "You overheard us the other night, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did." She turned and started walking towards the pack house again. Kent fell into step with her again.

"I didn't mean to," she explained. "I woke up and you weren't in the room. I was walking to the door when I heard you guys talking in the hallway."

Kent ran a hand through his hair, looking at her again. "Just trust me, ok? I'm going to try to make him see sense."

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## **An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 44[ 1,024 words ]**

Kent felt restless. After he and Riley had a rather quiet lunch, they had gone to take separate showers. He checked on her before he went to his office. She had been working on reports at the desk in her room and

assured him that she felt fine.

When he walked into his office, they were already waiting for him. Patrick was in one of the armchairs. Penny and Max sat on the couch, Max's arm around her shoulder. Kent looked at them, the three people who knew him better than anyone else, his three closest friends who had seen him through some of the worst events of

his life.

He took a deep breath, sinking into the armchair beside Patrick.

“Max said you wanted to talk about the rogue issue,” Penny prompted.

Kent nodded. “Riley has already figured out that we know what the rogues are after. I explained that I needed to talk to the others involved before telling her, but I strongly believe that we *need* to tell the council reps

what we know.”

Patrick steeped his fingers in front of him. “I agree.”

Kent looked in surprise at Patrick, who shrugged.

“We’re no closer to solving this problem,” he said. “The council can’t do anything when they don’t know the

true depth of the problem.”

Penny looked at Max. “What do you think?”

Kent winced slightly at the pleading note in her voice, Penny had been the one who had brought food to him everyday for weeks after Lily died. She was the one who used to sit in the chair in his room, talking about nonsense for hours just to fill the silence. He wouldn’t have made it through his grief without her, and it always cut him to hear pain in her voice.

Max looked at Penny and then over at Patrick and Max.

“I’m not willing to take the risk. If we tell them, this could be devastating for my family. You know what could

happen.”

“But the pack is bigger than just your family,” Patrick pointed out. “We have to focus on what is best for the

pack.”

“That’s easy for you to say,” Max retorted, “when you’re not the one who will pay the price.”

Kent pinched the bridge of his nose. “But Pat’s right. We have to think about the pack.”

“I did this for you,” Max snapped, leaning forward to glare at Kent. “Penny and I did everything to protect you. I never even asked for any of this, but like hell will I let my family suffer for it.”

Kent flinched back in his chair as though he had been smacked, his chest tightening.

“That’s not fair,” Patrick cut in. “You can’t place the blame solely on Kent for this.”

“I’m not,” Max replied curtly, “I’m just stating facts. We’re in this position because we made a decision together four years ago, a decision that was made to protect our alpha. I would expect that same protection

to be leant back to me.”

1/3

+8 Points >

“Max,” Penny said softly, putting her hand on his arm, “you’re being too harsh on him.” Max stared at her for a moment before sighing, dropping his head into his hands. “What if we don’t tell everyone from the council?” Kent suggested, swallowing hard. “What if we only told Riley?”

“We might as well just tell the council,” Max replied, dropping his hands. “I like Riley. She seems like a good person, but she also is here to do a job. A job that she is apparently the best at. She didn’t get to be the best by keeping secrets.”

“But she’s Kent’s mate, right?” said Penny. “She’s going to be our luna. We can trust her, right?”

Max looked at Penny for a moment. “Has he told you everything? Has he told you about how she isn’t even sure she wants to accept him?”

Penny frowned. “Riley said something, but she didn’t go into details.”

Patrick looked at Kent. “How are things going between you and her? She was with you all morning.”

Kent stared at Patrick, not sure how to answer that question. How were things between him and Riley? He thought about her curled up against him this morning. He thought about their wolves running through the forest earlier, about holding her against his chest after she admitted that Paul had never let their wolves

meet.

“Listen, Kent.”

He looked up to see Max watching him.

“You’re my best friend. I trust you more than anyone in the world, but I can’t risk my family. Once she accepts you and is really going to be our luna, then we can tell her.”

Kent stared at Max for a long minute. “I can’t just make her accept me. I can’t just force her to be in a relationship with me.”

“I’m not expecting you to,” Max replied, shaking his head. “I know you wouldn’t do that. Do you think there is a chance she is going to accept you?”

“Yes,” Kent said quickly, mostly because he wanted to believe it.

“Do you think she’s going to accept you soon?”

Kent thought about yesterday at the hospital, at the look of relief that had crossed Riley’s face when he walked into the room. He thought about how she had asked him to stay with her last night, tucked into his side like she belonged there.

“I think things are going well with us right now. I think...” He paused, unsure. “I think there’s a good chance it will happen.”

Max nodded. “If she accepts you, then we can tell her.”

the/arm

Kent drummed his fingers on the arm of the chair. “Let me tell her myself when it’s time, ok? If you don’t phrase things right, Riley will misinterpret them. She’ll know I’m not lying to her when I explain things, ok?”

Everyone nodded in agreement.

After they all left, Kent walked over to one of the windows, staring down at the training grounds. Afternoon groups of beginning and mid-level warriors were in session, but Kent barely noticed them.

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Chapter 45

Chapter 45

**An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 45[  
1,687 words ]**

Riley was working on a preliminary report, trying to ignore the headache that was setting in when her phone rang. She grabbed and cringed at the name that flashed across the screen.

“Hello, Jake,” she said, answering it quickly before she could think twice about it.

“Hi Riley,” the alpha of New Dawn said smoothly. “It’s been a while.”

She closed her eyes, leaning back in the chair. “What do you need?”

“I missed your voice.”

She rolled her eyes. “I’m sure you have plenty of women to talk to.”

“Maybe,” he laughed. “Heard you’re out at Red Moon right now. How’s that going?”

“It’s fine.”

“The alpha there is a real piece of work. First rate asshole.”

Riley frowned. “Then why did you ally with him?”

“Because he has good warriors. If anything ever happens here and I need reinforcements, I want his warriors.”

“Well, he really needs your help right,” she forced herself to say calmly. “Things are pretty bad here.”

“Yeah,” he muttered, “it did sound like a real s\*\*t situation with all those rogues. I don’t blame him at all for trying to get more warriors there. But you know, for a second, I didn’t think he would agree to the alliance.”

This caught Riley’s attention. “Why?”

“Because *he* was being such an asshole. I couldn’t say a f\*\*\*\*\*g word without that guy looking like he was going to shift and rip my throat out. I’m pretty sure his eyes are always black.”

“They’re blue,” *she* replied without thinking.

“What?”

She hesitated. “His eyes *are* blue.”

“Oh.” There was a long pause. “Are you f\*\*\*\*\*g him?”

“No,” she said quickly.

“You are,” he scoffed. “That is such a strange thing to say. Is that why he was being such an ass? He’s f\*\*\*\*\*g you and he got jealous because I tasted *you* first.”

“You’re disgusting, you dickhead,” she snarled. “And I’m not sleeping with him. Also, why the hell would you tell him that we had s\*x? Who the hell does that?”

He laughed softly. “You’re a terrible liar, sweetheart. And don’t get all mad at me for telling him about you. You’re the one who apparently sleeps with all the unmated alpha you run into. Maybe you’re hoping to become a luna someday.”

“f\*\*k you, Jake,” she snapped

“But you already did, baby,” he laughed.

1/4

Chapter 45

She hung up, her ears ringing with the sound of his laughter. She put the phone on the table and stood up, pacing across the room, trying to drag in deep breaths to calm herself down.

There was a knock at the door, but she didn’t go to open it. She knew it was Kent and she was not in the

mood to see him. She sunk down on the foot of the bed, closing her eyes when she heard the door crack

open.

“Are you ok?” he asked, peering in at her.

She opened her eyes, seeing the concern on his face. He must have felt her anger.

“Jake is a prick,” she muttered.

“I knew that.” The corner of his mouth twitched up. “Any particular reason you bring it up?”

“He called me.” She shook her head. “I shouldn’t have answered.”

“What did he say?” Kent stepped into the room, shutting the *door* behind him.

“Nothing worth repeating,” she muttered. “Just being a d\*\*k because he can.”

“Still don’t know what you saw in him.” Kent leaned against the closed *door*, watching her.

“You know, I’m not so sure anymore either.” She shook her head. “I don’t want to talk about him anymore.

How did your conversation go?”

He ran a hand through his hair, a gesture she was learning he did when he was uncomfortable.

“Not great,” he muttered.

“Are you going to tell me what the rogues are after?”

He pursed his lips for a second, staring across the room.

“It’s complicated, Riley,” he finally said with a heavy sigh.

“Kent, seriously,” she said, causing him to turn around to look at her. “You have to tell me. This is not just

about some secret. This is about the safety of your whole pack. I *need* to know so I can help you protect this

pack.”

He stared at her, frowning, unmoving.

“Are you going to tell me?”

He continued staring at her, his expression unchanging.

“Speak,” she snapped, standing up. “Tell me something.”

He took a step closer to her and she felt something through the bond. It was an emotion that she couldn’t quite place.

“It’s just....” He raked his hand through his hair. “Give me more time, please. A couple more days at least.”

“What happens when there’s another attack?” she asked, furrowing her brow. “What happens when people get hurt because you are hellbent on protecting Max? Is he worth that risk?”

“Yes.” There was no hesitation, which took Riley by surprise. He looked at her. “You don’t get it. Max is the one person who has never let me down. He has always been there for me, through everything awful that has happened in my life. I won’t go against what he wants when it comes to this.”

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She bit her lip. She hadn’t truly anticipated that answer. She looked out the window for a moment, thinking.

“Riley,” Kent said, taking a step towards her, “please just give it some time. He will see reason soon enough. I’ll keep talking to him.”

She looked back at him. “You’re my mate. We’re not supposed to keep secrets from one another.”

He raised an eyebrow. “Yeah, you’re really one to talk about that.”

She sighed. “Yeah, I know. I screwed up, but we’re being honest with each other right? Because mate’s don’t have secrets, right?”

He narrowed his eyes. “Does that mean you’re accepting me?”

She hesitated. She had kind of walked right into that. “We have to deal with the rogue issue because we make a decision about our relationship. And we can’t deal with the rogue issue if you don’t tell me what the

rogues are after.”

He took another step closer to her, so close she could touch him if she wanted – which she did want. Very

much so.

“You need me,” he breathed. “Remember? You get sick without me. That has to be a sign from the Goddess,

right? You’re supposed to be with me.” He reached out, cupping her cheek.

She instinctively leaned into his hand, savoring the feeling of the sparks. He leaned forward, kissing her

forehead. She reached up, running her hands over his chest to his shoulders. He kissed her cheek before

catching her lips with his.

She felt fireworks as he kissed her. She leaned against him, wrapping her arms around his neck to deepen

the kiss. He pushed his tongue against her lips and she opened her mouth for him, savoring his taste. He

wrapped a hand around her thigh, hitching her leg up as he pulled her tighter against him. He grabbed her

bottom, lifting her so she could wrap her legs around his hips. She moaned into his mouth as he moved to

the bed, laying her gently down.

He leaned over her, her legs still around his hips, his erection rubbing her core through their clothes. She

moaned as he moved to kissing her throat. She grabbed the hem of his shirt, lifting it over his head. He slid

his hands under her shirt, his fingers grazing the lace of her bra over her breasts.

He kissed her mouth again, biting her bottom lip. She slid her hands down his chest and stomach, enjoying

the way his muscles flexed under her fingers. Finally her hand found the waistband of his joggers, pushing

them down.

“\*\*\*” he gasped, grabbing her hands with one of his, stopping her before they got too low. He used the other

to keep himself braced over her. He looked between them for a moment before looking back at her face.”

What are we doing?”

She swallowed. The answer seemed kind of obvious to her. “Well, I thought we were going to have s\*x, but

now I'm not sure.”

He swallowed hard. “What do you want?”

“Umm...” She bit her lip. “Is that not clear?”

He shook his head. “No, I mean, with us. You and me. Do you want to be with me?”

She felt her body stiffen at the question, squirming slightly under him. He released her hand and pushed

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< Chapter 45

away, leaving her cold on the bed as he stood up. He hitched his pants back up as he looked at her.

“What do you want?” he repeated, his voice hoarse, a vein in his forehead sticking out prominently.

“Kent,” she whispered, sitting up, adjusting her shirt. “I... I don't know.”

+8 Points

He shook his head. “I can't. I can't do this with you unless you know what you want.” He ran a hand down his face. “You said it yourself this morning. It's a slippery slope. And you need to be sure. You need to know what you want because I sure as hell know what I want.”

“I... I...,” she stammered.

He held up a hand, stopping her. “You need to figure out where you are with this and what you want. I can't do

this. I won't do this. I won't make you feel forced into this.”

“What are you saying?” Her mouth felt dry as she wrapped her arms around her.

“I need space,” he said, looking at her. “I never want you to say I pushed you into this *bond* when you weren't ready, but this is f\*\*\*\*\*g hard for me. This f\*\*\*\*\*g hurts. I just need space.”

“I'm sorry,” she whispered.

“No.” He shook his head fiercely. “Don’t f\*\*\*\*\*g apologize. It’s not your fault. I just... I need to go.”

And he did go.

It was all so abrupt that it left her feeling confused and hurt and frustrated. She stared at the closed door, trying to figure out what just happened

1

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## An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 46[ 1,349 words ]

### Chapter 46

Kent stayed away from Riley for the rest of the day. He felt like a complete ass, knowing that she was feeling sick without him nearby, but he was unable to bring himself to go back to her room.

His conversation with Max played over and over. Max wanted her to accept him before he told her everything. It would have been so simple to just let things progress with Riley in her bedroom. It was next to miraculous that he had been able to pull away when he did.

He had suddenly understood what she meant about a slippery slope. He had assumed that she had some type of relationship with her previous mate, and something had occurred that hurt her deeply. She had said things that led Kent to believe her last mate was controlling and didn’t let her do things she wanted to. That’s why she wasn’t willing to rush into anything with him.

And he wasn’t going to push her. He didn’t want her to feel forced or trapped with him. That would spell doom for them long term.

Kent forced himself to stay away, going to the training academy, letting Pax blow off steam in the woods and

staying in the dining hall until it closed. By the time he had returned to his floor, he could feel her illness

through the bond. He tried to ignore it, despite Pax pleading with him to go check on her. He showered and

threw on a pair of pajama pants and a gray shirt, laying down in bed.

He wasn't sure how long he laid there, feeling her struggle through the bond before he finally broke. It wasn't

like her illness was her fault. She had no control over it.

He grabbed his pillow and a spare blanket from the closet and marched down to her room. She didn't answer

when *he* knocked, but she had left the door unlocked for him again.

"Riley," *he* said, stepping into the room. She didn't answer as he shut the door. He could barely make out the

outline of her buried under the blankets on her bed. But he was positive she was awake.

"I know you're not asleep," he sighed.

She poked her head out of the blankets to look at him. "What?"

"I don't want to leave you alone," he admitted. "I know you're feeling pretty sick right now."

She watched him, not saying anything.

"I'll sleep in here on the floor," he said as he started walking forward. "Hopefully just being nearby will help with your symptoms."

He threw his pillow on the floor and laid down, tossing the blanket over himself. Despite the soft carpeting, it was not the most comfortable place to sleep. But he had experienced worse, so he threw his arm over his face and tried to focus on his breathing.

"You don't have to sleep on the floor," she whispered, looking over the edge of the bed at him.

"I'm not getting in that bed again," he muttered.

“But I feel bad that you’re sleeping on the floor. That can’t be comfortable.”

“I’ll be fine. I will not get in that bed.” His words were sharp and clipped, even though he didn’t mean to sound

1/3

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like that.

+8 Points

Riley didn’t argue further. He heard her roll over. After a moment, a surge of loneliness came over him, a deep sadness that he immediately knew wasn’t his own. He tried to ignore it, tried to suppress the guilt he felt because he knew it was his fault. He tried to take deep breaths, to focus on falling asleep.

But it was useless.

“Stop,” he snapped from the floor.

He heard her shift. “Stop what? I’m not doing anything.”

“Stop feeling that way,” he grumbled, fully aware that he sounded like a first rate jerk.

She shifted again. “I’m not feeling anything. I’m just trying to sleep.”

Lie.

no befor

He laid there for another minute before he gave up. Neither of them was *going to sleep like* this. He walked

around the bed, throwing his pillow down and laid down next to her, *conscious to* leave plenty of space. He

threw his arm over his face the same way he had on the floor.

“Feel better now?” he muttered.

She curled up in the blanket again, not saying anything.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered after several minutes.

He pulled his arm away from his eyes, but didn't look at her. He couldn't understand why she kept saying sorry for things that weren't her fault.

"What are you apologizing for now?" he snapped.

She rolled over and looked at him, but he kept his gaze firmly on the ceiling.

"Everything," she whispered. "For letting myself get carried away earlier. For leading you on. For not being

what you needed."

Her voice cracked on the last word and he turned his head sharply to look at her. In the dim light he could

just make out the tears in her eyes. She immediately rolled away from him, rolling inward on herself as

though to protect herself.

Now he really felt like an asshole.

"Hey," he said quietly, "come here."

She didn't move, keeping her back to him. He reached out to pull gently on her shoulder, but she didn't budge. Finally he scooted across the bed until he was close enough to pull her against him, her back flush against his chest like it had been in the morning. He wrapped his arms around her tightly.

"You've done nothing wrong," he whispered in her ear. "This is complicated and that's not your fault. You're not leading me on. You've never made it a secret to me how conflicted you've felt. If anything, I feel like I should apologize. I feel like I'm putting pressure on you and that's not fair to you. I want you to be able to make your own decision."

She twisted in his grasp so she was facing him. He could see the tear tracks and reached up, gently wiping her face.

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Chapter 46

"You're too good to me," she whispered.

He frowned. "Why do you say that?"

She bit her lip for a moment before speaking.

“Paul used to tell me how much worse I made his life sometimes. He would tell me how uncomplicated things were before he met me, how having a mate wasn’t worth all the stress he felt.”

“I think we’ve established that he was terrible,” Kent commented.

She smiled meekly. “He was. Whenever I did something he didn’t like, he would get so mad at me. He would

scream and call me names and throw things.”

Kent froze, watching her. It had never occurred to him that things might have *been* that bad. He had heard of men out there who mistreated their mates, but he could never fathom it. He had loved Lily too much to bear the idea of her hurting, let alone to be the one who hurt her.

Suddenly another thought occurred to him.

“Did he hit you?”

Riley didn’t answer. Instead she buried her face into his chest, her breath coming out as a shudder.

“I’ll f\*\*\*\*\*g kill him,” he breathed, wrapping his arms around her, pulling her tightly against him as though he could protect her from her past. “What was the name of your old pack? I’ll go there tomorrow.”

He felt her smile slightly into his chest. “Stop it.”

“I’m serious.” He gently lifted her chin so he could see her face. “I’ll beat the s\*\*t out of him. Who the hell thinks they *can* treat anyone that way, let alone their own mate?”

“It was nine *years ago*,” she whispered.

“I don’t f\*\*\*\*\*g care.” He leaned in *to* kiss her on the tip of the nose. “I’ll still punch him and see how much he

likes it.”

She smiled slightly again and it made a warmth bloom in Kent’s chest.

“I would never hurt you,” he whispered.

“I know that.”

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3/3

## An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 47[ 1,384 words ]

Riley woke up the next morning with her face pressed into the side of Kent's chest. She took a deep breath, letting his scent fill her senses for a moment before she stretched out, her legs sliding against his. She lifted her head to see him staring at the ceiling with his hands behind his head.

"Good morning," he said softly, looking at her.

"How long have you been awake?" She rolled onto her back and rubbed her eyes.

"About half an hour. I didn't want to wake you." He rolled onto his side so he could look at her. "Can I ask you

a question?"

"I suppose." She looked at him warily. She couldn't decide if it was a good idea *to* tell him about Paul last

night. She had been feeling small and weak and had let that information slip out, but now she was terrified of

revisiting that conversation.

"What was the name of your last pack?"

"Still going to go there today?" She raised an eyebrow, trying to sound light.

He gave her a small smile. "Still considering it."

“Rolling Dune.”

He shook his head. “Never heard of it.”

“It’s a fairly small pack out west.”

“Hmmm.” He sighed, rubbing his face. “I need to get up. Pat mindlinked about fifteen minutes ago. He got a

new scouting report and he wants to meet.” A wrinkle appeared between his eyes.

“Was it a bad report?” she asked, reaching out to smooth the wrinkle with her thumb.

“I don’t know. Pat seemed stressed by what he found out and he isn’t one to overreact. So if he’s worried it

makes me worried.”

She nodded, moving her hand *to* cup his cheek. His stubble scratched at the palm of her hand. He bit his lip as he watched her and she used her thumb to tug his lip from between his teeth before tracing it gently.

He pulled her hand down from his face, placing it on the bed between them. “I meant what I said yesterday.” he said quietly. “You need to figure out what you want. I don’t want you to ever say you felt pressured into a relationship with me. Especially after what you told me last night. We need some space so you can make

your own decision.”

She felt her cheeks redden, her throat thick. She knew he wasn’t rejecting her, but it certainly felt like a rejection as she rolled away from him. She looked at the ceiling for a moment before sighing.

“How are we supposed to have space if I literally can’t be away from you without getting sick?” she finally

asked.

“Yeah,” he sighed, sitting up, “that is a complication. We’ll figure it out. Let’s get breakfast and hear the report. “With that he rolled out of bed and headed out the door towards his own room.

*I wish you would make up your mind,* Rose muttered.

< Chapter 47

\*\*

+8 Points

Only Scott came this time to give the scouting report. Riley couldn't help but notice that he looked exhausted. He had dark bags under his eyes and a healing scratch that ran up his forearm. His cheeks were covered in the shadow of beard as he rubbed his cheek, waiting for everyone to get situated.

Riley sat in an armchair close to the desk where Kent was sitting. Leo and Wesley were also in armchairs while Patrick and Max sat on the couch with Scott.

"We're positive they are recruiting," Scott said once Kent motioned for him to speak. "We've noticed at least five new rogues arriving in the last two days. We also think they are trying to scout our area as well and count the extra warriors, but our patrols are scaring them back."

Patrick nodded. "We should change up patrol schedules and *routes* again, just to keep them off."

"That would be wise," Scott agreed, scratching the back of his neck. "We're pretty sure they're being led by a woman."

"A woman?" Leo raised an eyebrow.

"Yeah," Scott said heavily. "She is a bit... deranged, for a lack of a better word. She's somewhat violent and we saw her attack a weaker rogue. I wouldn't be surprised to hear he died from her attack. It was pretty vicious."

"Have you gotten any clues as to why they might be attacking the pack or what they're *looking* for?" Wesley

asked, steepling his fingers in front of him.

Scott shook his head. "No idea. The little bits that we hear are nonsensical. We're not close enough to pick

up whole conversations."

"You shouldn't get too close," Max murmured, staring at the floor. "Don't put yourselves at risk right now. We

need to plan a strong defense.”

Once Scott was dismissed, a silence settled in the room while everyone thought over what had been said.

Leo was the one to speak first. “Do you have any ideas what the rogues might be after?” He was looking at

Kent.

“No.” Kent shook his head, lying.

Riley watched Kent for a moment, biting her lip. He wasn’t meeting her gaze and she debated calling him out.

She looked over to see Max watching her intently. She raised an eyebrow and he looked away, his cheeks reddening as his jaw clenched.

“It’s been two weeks since the last attack,” Leo said, unaware of Kent’s discomfort. “That one was pretty

brutal. I imagine the next one will be worse. We need to expect it any time.”

“I’ll rotate the patrol schedules again,” Patrick said, glancing at his watch. “The warriors will meet in twenty minutes. I need to get down to make the change this morning.”

“I’ll go with you,” Max muttered, rubbing the back of his neck.

“Before we go,” Patrick said, looking at Kent, “the elders have requested an update on the rogue attacks and

our new alliance.”

Kent nodded. “Of course. I can meet with them this afternoon. I’ll call to arrange the meeting.” He looked at Riley. “You should come so they can be introduced to the new advisor from the Council.”

2/3

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“Or you could introduce her as your mate?” Max said.

+ Points

Riley looked at Max, almost expecting his usual playful expression, but instead he was quite *serious* as he

looked at Kent.

“Don’t push it,” Kent muttered, his jaw clenching slightly. “You and Pat go meet with the warriors. I’ll let you know the time for the meeting as soon as I have it set.”

Max didn’t say anything else, only nodding before he and Patrick stood *to go*.

“I’m helping with the civilian training today,” Leo said, standing up as well. “I should head down.”

“I’ll come,” Wesley said. “With Riley here, my workload is cut in half.”

“Happy to help,” Riley muttered as they left. She watched the *door* shut before turning to look at Kent. “Are you going to tell me what the rogues are after?”

He frowned at her. “We’ve been over this.”

“We have, but that doesn’t change that you are putting your whole pack at risk to protect your beta.”

“Please just trust me on this,” he pleaded softly. “Once I tell you, you’ll understand why this is so important.”

She looked at him for a long moment before standing up. “If Wes and Leo find out that you are lying, this could come back badly on me. They’ve already stuck their necks out for me by keeping this whole mate thing a secret from the council. If they realize you’ve been lying, they’ll know I had to be aware of it.”

“They won’t find out I’ve been lying.” He sounded so sure that she almost believed him.

She sighed, moving towards the door. “I have work to do. I need to finish some reports and email the

commander.“.

“You could work here,” Kent offered.

“Is that wise?” She turned to look at him. “I thought you wanted space.”

He rubbed his chin *for* a moment. “I’m just suggesting you work here. Not have s\*x. You’ll get sick if you

aren’t near me.”

She sighed. He was right, even if she was kind of annoyed with him at the moment.

“Fine. I’ll get my stuff and be back in a few.”

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## An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 48[ 1,649 words ]

Chapter 48

Riley was used to meeting pack elders. It was often a part of her job. Pack elders were important to a pack as they helped provide advice and guidance for alphas as well as keep an alpha in check if he abused his power. They were elected by the pack as a whole and were supposed to represent all pack members. Most packs had five elders and they were frequently some of the older members of the pack, those that the members felt confident had the wisdom and experience to provide guidance.

Elders were crucial in a time of crisis for a pack, which is why Riley was so experienced with these meetings. She dressed nicely, wearing a pair of charcoal gray pants and a dark purple blouse. She curled her long hair and brushed on a light layer of makeup. She was just putting on a pair of black ballet flats when Kent knocked on her bedroom door. She opened it to find Kent dressed in a pair of black dress pants and a button up blue shirt that matched his eyes perfectly. He didn’t wear a tie, his shirt open at the collar. His black hair was neatly brushed and his jaw was freshly shaven.

Riley hesitated, her mouth going dry. Kent reached out, brushing a strand of hair back from her face, his touch sending a shot of heat right through her.

“You look beautiful,” he whispered. He took a step back, allowing her to step out into the hall.

“Where do you usually meet with your elders?” she asked, hoping her voice sounded somewhat normal.

“At the training academy,” he said, heading towards the elevator. “In one of our meeting rooms.”

As they walked across the grounds, Kent told Riley about the changes Patrick made with patrols and his thoughts about how to best utilize the incoming warriors. It was the most he had spoken to her since the morning. After she had brought her laptop in to work with him, he had been remarkably quiet. They had lunch together with Patrick and Leo before getting in a quick training session. Kent held true to maintaining his space from her throughout the day, but Riley couldn't decide if she found that to be kind of him or just plain

annoying.

Leo and Wesley met them just outside the training academy and they all went together to the third floor. Kent led them to the meeting room that Riley had visited with Patrick her first couple days in the pack. When they stepped in, Riley saw Max just inside the door talking to a woman with short gray hair and a man with dark

brown hair graying at the temples. Patrick was standing near the windows, clearly in deep discussion with a

man with whom he *bore* a striking resemblance. Another man and woman stood at the far wall.

Everyone fell silent as Kent walked in, turning to look at him.

"Thank you all for coming," Kent said as he took a seat at the head of the table. Max sat down on his right side and Patrick on his left. The five elders filled in the seats on either side of Patrick and Max while Leo, Wesley and Riley sat at the opposite end of the table.

"We appreciate you meeting with us so quickly," said the man Patrick had been speaking with. "I do want to hear the details of the new alliance, but first, please introduce us to the nearest visitor from the Council." The man turned to look at Riley. "I am Gideon Whare. I was the gamma for Alpha Kent's father. I am also Patrick's father."

"I am Zane Kendrick," said the man who had been speaking to Max. "I was the beta to the previous alpha."

The other three ran through their introductions. Alma, the woman who had been speaking to Max, was a

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+5 Points)

retired doctor and the oldest, longest serving elder for the pack. Jonna, a retired warrior turned teacher at the local elementary school. And Matt, the youngest and newest elder, was a recently retired warrior and head

trainer for the pack.

Riley quickly introduced herself, stating only that she had been asked to work in tandem with Wesley to help. problem-solve for the pack.

Kent quickly launched into the details of the alliance with New Dawn and the promise of more warriors arriving on Monday. Patrick and Max also explained some of the changes they were making to defenses. As far as elder meetings go, it seemed pretty standard.

Towards the end of the meeting, Zane turned towards Riley.

“What are your thoughts on the attacks?” he asked. “You have the freshest eyes on the situation. Any ideal

what is motivating the attacks?”

Riley glanced at Kent, realizing that even his elders were unaware of the *motive*. Clearly, this secret was kept

between the three ranked members.

“We’re still not sure,” she said calmly, silently cursing Kent for putting her in this *position*. “But it is clear that the rogues are after something. I’m hoping that the Alpha or Beta can remember something that might be of

importance.”

She could feel Kent’s annoyance with her through the bond but she kept her face impassive. She didn’t miss

the dark look Max gave her as the elders’ eyes turned towards Kent.

“We’ve been thinking about it and brainstorming,” Kent said coolly, “but we haven’t come up with a solid idea

yet.”

“Well, we’ll need to figure that out,” Jonna said.

After a few *more* minutes and some discussion among elders about what they might be wanting in the pack,

the meeting came to an end. Riley left with Wesley and Leo. Once outside, Wesley said a quick goodbye and

disappeared quickly.

“He’s desperate *to* get back to his mate,” Leo chuckled, watching Wesley disappear across the grounds. “I remember feeling like that when I first met Leah. Like I could never get enough of her.”

“Oh, I remember what *you* were like,” scoffed Riley. “I was Leah’s roommate that first year. It took two months

for you two to get Mated *Couple* housing, if I recall. I walked in far too many times on you trying to get

enough of her.”

Leo tipped his head back and laughed. “Yeah, I do recall you yelling at us once about finding somewhere else.

”

She shook her head, laughing softly. “I remember that feeling though. When I met my first mate, every time he wasn’t around it felt like I was going to crawl out of my skin if I didn’t see him soon.”

The smile disappeared off Leo’s face as he looked at her, his head tilting to the side. “Was it hard for you? Seeing Leah and I have a relationship so soon after your own rejection?”

She shrugged. “It stung when you first met, but honestly, I liked you both so much. I liked seeing how happy

you were.”

“What happened with your first mate?”

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+8 Points >

She sighed, looking up at the sky. “It’s a long story, Leo. But he had a chosen mate, a woman he had children with. He told me that he would find a way to be together, but he never actually meant that. He just wanted everything. A mate, his happy family, his position. I think he thought he would have it all.”

The door to the training academy opened and Riley knew who had just come out. She turned to see Kent, Patrick and Max approaching them.

“I’m going to head back to the pack house,” Leo said, drawing her gaze. “I promised Leah I would call before

dinner.”

“We’ll go with you,” Patrick said, motioning for Max to follow. Max cast Riley a worried *look* before reluctantly following Patrick and Leo.

“I thought the meeting went well,” Riley said to Kent after they had walked out *of* earshot.

“It did,” Kent said softly, looking at her. “Though I could have done without you trying to *put* Max and I on the

spot.”

She shrugged. “I honestly was surprised that the elders don’t know what you’re hiding.”

“The less people that know, the better.” Kent sighed, rubbing his forehead. “You’re not going to stop being difficult about this are you?”

“Nope.” She gave her head a firm shake.

Kent blew out a long breath, shaking his head slowly. “I’ll talk to Max again, for all the good I think it will do. But you could be a little less difficult.”

“I didn’t become the best by being easy-going,” she muttered. “I’m used to dealing with stubborn alphas.”

The ghost of a smile played on his lips as he took a step closer to her. “And is that what I am? A stubborn

alpha?”

She smirked. “That’s exactly what you are.”

He took another step, so close now that Riley had to tilt her head up to see his face. “And what do you do

with stubborn alphas?”

“You don’t want to know,” she whispered. He gently pushed her hair back from her face, causing her breath to

catch slightly as his eyes darkened.

“Alpha?”

Kent wheeled around. Standing in the doorway just outside the academy was Gideon, Zane and Alma. Kent took a step away from Riley as she put on what she hoped was a neutral expression.

“Might I have a word with you, Kent?” Zane said calmly, his eyes moving between Kent and Riley.

“Of course,” Kent said with a sharp nod. Zane motioned for Kent to follow him, leaving Riley with Gideon and

Alma,

“I should be off,” Alma said, a knowing smile on her face. “It was a pleasure to meet you, Miss Atwood. I do hope to see more of you.” She turned and headed off, leaving Riley alone with Gideon.

Comments

## An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 49[ 764 words ]

“How long have you worked for the Council Miss Atwood?” he asked, his voice quiet.

“Six years,” she replied. “And you can call me Riley.”

He nodded. “I assume, Riley, that there are rules about Council members getting involved with pack members

while on assignment.”

She felt her cheeks heat up. “Yes, sir. I’m sure you know that as well.’

He smiled slightly, looking remarkably like Patrick as he tilted his head to the side.

“So the rumor I’m hearing about and the alpha would be false?”

“What rumor?” She felt her body stiffen as Gideon regarded her for a *moment*.

“I’m told you were ill recently. Ill enough that you were taken to the hospital. I’m told that Alpha rushed home the moment he found out. That he came into the hospital in quite a state and later insisted on taking you to

the pack house with him.”

Riley felt frozen as she stared at Gideon. His voice was calm and his face was impassive, but she could hear

a tone that made her uneasy.

“I asked my son about it and he made up some story about Kent being worried about it reflecting poorly on the pack if something were to happen to a Council worker. That’s rubbish and I know it. But I have always told Kent that you don’t s\*\*t where you eat. I know he’s had needs since my daughter was killed, but I would expect him to show a certain level of control when he is inside his own pack.”

Riley suddenly wondered why it didn’t occur to her that if Gideon was Patrick’s dad, he was also Lily’s. She realized now that the tone she heard in Gideon’s voice was one of protectiveness, for his son-in-law. She felt her expression soften.

“I understand what you’re saying, sir.”

“Good,” Gideon said with a nod. “Then I will trust you to do your job as expected. You are well respected at

the Council and I want to be able to share that opinion with everyone else.”

“Of course, sir.”

Gideon nodded again, giving her a tight smile. “Have a nice evening, Riley. I look forward to speaking with you again when this whole ordeal is over.”

He strode away, leaving Riley alone, clenching her fists at her side.

\*\*

Kent walked slowly with Zane to the far side of the training building where a small parking lot sat. Kent waited for Zane to speak, feeling like a child about to be chastised.

Zane finally stopped at the edge of the asphalt parking lot and turned to face Kent. He was only an inch shorter than Kent, but Kent still felt like the little kid that had to crane his neck to look into Zane’s face.

“What’s *going* on with the new advisor, Kent?” Zane asked softly.

“What do you mean?” Kent played dumb.

1/2

<Chapter 49

Points

Zane shook his head. “Don’t. I’ve known you since you were born, Kent. There are rumors going around the pack about you and her. So I’d like to know the truth.”

Kent hesitated. He wasn’t stupid. He had heard about the rumors, but he had dismissed them. There were always rumors about an alpha. It was just part of his job.

“There’s nothing going on with her,” he lied.

“So why did you go into the hospital screaming and shouting when she was sick?” Zane asked, c\*\*\*\*\*g his head to the side. “She hasn’t been by your side constantly since then?”

Kent frowned, looking away. “Why are we talking about this, Zane?”

“Because what you do affects your pack, Kent. “Zane put a hand on his shoulder, forcing *Kent* to look at him. “I don’t blame you for wanting to have a companion. It’s been four years since Lily died. I would be happy to see you move on and take a chosen mate, but messing around with a council advisor when your pack is under constant threat of attack isn’t the right thing to do now.”

Zane sighed and shook his head, dropping his hand from Kent’s shoulder. “We talked about this after your father died and you took over. An alpha shouldn’t mess around with she-wolves inside the pack. It’s too messy and complicated.”

“I’m not messing around with Riley.” Kent looked away from Zane.

“I might be getting older, but I’m not stupid, Kent. You need to think about what is best for your pack right

now.”

“I am,” Kent gritted out. “I’m always doing what’s best for my pack.”

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## An Unwanted Second Chance Ripped 50-[ 1,012 words ]

+8 Points 2

The rest of the week seemed to pass in some sort of quiet routine. They met each morning in Kent's office to discuss plans and hear any new scouting reports. Those scouting reports were proving to be the biggest concern. It was clear that the rogues on the northwestern border were increasing their numbers, and everyone was preparing for a potential attack. Scott and Jeremy had not been able to provide any further information on the woman they believed to be in charge, only that she seemed quite crazy.

After their meetings, Riley stayed in Kent's office, working on reports and responding to emails. Kent was generally there as well, though he sometimes came and went. They spent afternoon training with several groups of warriors. Kent had warriors rotate through training with Riley and he stayed nearby to her, but always far enough away that they had no reason to really talk.

Riley wanted to be frustrated by the limited conversation with Kent during the day, but she couldn't blame him. He had asked for space while she made up her mind, and she honestly appreciated that he wasn't trying to pressure her. Her conversation with Gideon also played in her head, helping her to stay away from him during the day.

It was bedtime and early morning that proved to be her favorite times of day, though she would never admit it. She couldn't spend the night away from Kent without getting sick and being plagued by nightmares, so he continued to spend his nights in her bed. It was the one place where he didn't put space between them and she often fell asleep with her head on his chest, listening to his heart. She really enjoyed waking up with him in the morning, cuddling next to him. Nothing more ever seemed to develop from those moments other than soft touches and quiet conversations.

That is, until Saturday.

Saturday morning Riley woke up on her side, facing Kent. He was still sleeping, his face slack and peaceful. She watched him for a moment, his breathing slow and steady. His

shirt had ridden up slightly, revealing the bottom part of his stomach, where the v of his abs disappeared into his pajama pants. She stared at that small sliver of skin on his abdomen until she finally reached out, running her fingers across his stomach.

“Careful,” *Kent* growled softly.

She looked up to see his eyes were barely open. “I thought you were asleep.” She slid her hand up his shirt a little, feeling the ripple of his muscles under her fingers.

“I was asleep,” he murmured. “But you’re waking me up.”

She smiled. “Sorry.”

He smiled back. “You don’t seem very sorry.” She trailed her fingers back down his abdomen, stopping at the waistband of his pants. “But you are playing with fire.”

“Is that what you have in there?” She curled her fingers under the elastic band. He grabbed her wrist quickly, rolling onto his back and pulling her halfway on top of him.

“Are you trying to find out?” he whispered. His blue eyes were hazy as he looked at her, licking his lip.

“Maybe I am.” She shifted, pushing the blanket away as she moved to straddle his waist, resting her hands on either side of his head as she leaned over him. His eyes widened slightly, his lips parted.

(Chapter 50

“Riley,” he whispered, the playfulness gone from his tone. “This is a bad idea.”

She leaned in, brushing her lips against his. “I don’t care,” she whispered.

He reached up, cupping her face between his hands.

\* Points >

“Riley, please,” he whispered and she felt her heart clench as she prepared herself to be rebuffed again. “We need... I mean... Oh, f\*\*k it,” he whispered, pulling her lips down to his in a crushing kiss.

He pushed his tongue into her mouth and she groaned, rolling her hips down and back. She felt the ridge of his erection against her core and moaned, grinding herself against him. He responded with enthusiasm, moving his hands from her face to her hips, pulling her against him.

He groaned, running his hands up her sides and pulling her cami off. He sat up slightly, catching one of her n\*\*\*\*s in his mouth and sucking gently. She gasped, burying her fingers into his thick black hair.

“f\*\*k,” Kent gasped, abruptly falling back into the pillows and stilling her hips with his hand. “Max won’t stop trying to mindlink. He usually isn’t like this.”

Riley nodded, trying to slow her heart rate as she watched his eyes glaze over. She looked down at his chest under her fingers, wondering at what point she had pushed his shirt up.

Finally his eyes came back into focus, staring at her sitting astride him. She watched his eyes dance down her body, to wear she still sat flush on him.

“Lana had the baby,” he said finally. “Penny and Max are waiting for me at the hospital to go see them.”

“Oh,” Riley managed to say, trying to swallow her disappointment. She went to slide off him and he grabbed her sides, stilling her.

“This kid has the worst possible timing,” he growled, running his hands over her stomach, causing her to shiver.

Finally he released her and she slid onto the bed, looking around for her shirt. Kent sat up, adjusting his clothes. He reached down and scooped her cami off the floor, passing it over to her. Once she had it back on,

he turned to look at *her*.

“Do you *want* to come with me?” he asked.

She raised her eyebrows in surprise. “Do you want me to?”

“Yes,” he said quickly. “*Of course.*”

“Will Patrick and Lana mind if I intrude on their time?”

He shook his head. “Not at all.”

When she hesitated, he reached out and grabbed her hand. “Please come. I want you there.”

She smiled slightly, squeezing his fingers. “Of course I’ll come.”

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