



## Chapter 159

Alpha lifts his head to take in our surroundings. The forest isn't too dense here. There's enough space for the kids to run and play without too many obstacles. I can see why they chose it. We can also hear water. There's a small river about a half a mile from us. If she got close to that it will disrupt tracking her by smell. Then, if Kennedy is right and the girl likes to climb, we have a whole other issue. I know a good stretch of the river is surrounded by trees that canopy over it. If the child is good at climbing, she may have crossed the river without realizing and be further than we think.

We have been searching for a couple hours and I don't know if I should be impressed or annoyed with Kennedy's ability to teach these kids how to mask their scent. We have been going slow, but not quietly. It is making my skin crawl to be thrashing through the woods instead of more stealthily, but if the child really doesn't know we are looking for her, the noise can alert her.

"Ryker! Alpha!" Kennedy shouts at us. "I found something."

How did she find something? We haven't been able to scent the girl at all and we have seen nothing else to even indicate she passed this way. Kennedy has been on a mission though. She clearly trained tracking more than she let on. 1

Alpha walks up next to her, listening to her explain to Todd what she is seeing. She's had a running commentary for him the whole time.

"...bent like this, you can see someone small moved this way. If it was higher, then we could assume an adult and I would have Bennet or Ryker go ahead of us." She looks over her shoulder, gives us a smile and damn I am a sucker for this girl. 1



“How do you know it was her?” Todd breaks our connection, but I can’t even be jealous. I am also curious about her logic.

“See the leaf just past?” Todd looks to where she’s pointing and naturally so do Bennet and I. “It is bent in half, stepped on. The way it’s leaning means it wasn’t a wolf, and there aren’t many other animals in this forest big enough to do that. I can also see the imprint of her shoe right on the edge.” She moves forward and is pointing out details as she talks. 1

What I am most curious about is how she saw what could barely be considered a partial footprint from ten feet away with only human senses. As I move forward to get a better look, I see she’s right, it’s a child’s footprint. She’s small, so the barely there indentation could be easily missed by anyone not trained. Getting our nose about an inch from the ground, I can pick up the girl’s scent. It is mixed with cedar and pine and something else earthy. 1

“Did you teach them to change their scents as they travel?” I ask Kennedy, but Bennet and the rest of the team can hear as well.

“It’s something one of the older kids asked about a couple days ago. We had discussed testing out the theory the next time I could get a group of warriors to join us. Why?”

“I think tiny ears heard you. She might be testing you now. We have three different scents mixed with hers. But even I can only catch her scent just off the ground.”

Kennedy’s eyes go wide. Even she is surprised by this little girl. I’m going to have to watch this one. She’s going to be my next Greta without the traumatic beginning.

“Ryker, we have to find her. She shouldn’t be out this far, alone. And she



isn't responding to anyone. Can you try to link her again? Now that we aren't far from where she's been recently, maybe she'll respond."

She asked me, but turns and walks away like there was no question of me saying no to her request. I roll my eyes.

"What are you fussy about? It's not like you would tell her 'no.'" My wolf chides.