



Chapter 160

"It's not that. I hate how much I like it when she's bossy." He laughs as we follow and try to reach out to Emily again.

I know her parents are out here, they are better suited to tracking her by proximity. A parent can feel their child's presence, but they have no idea. Something is blocking her, which is what worries me more. I can't tell if she's hurt or not, but I know she's still alive. I'm worried about how Kennedy will take this if we find the girl seriously injured and hanging on for life. Bennet and I have been working through worst case possibilities and what we might have to do to keep Kennedy calm.

"RYKER!" She screams and we are running. We catch up to her and Todd looking over the edge of a small ravine. "I know why none of you could track her right." She points and my wolf looks down. "It's a patch of wolfsbane."

"A patch is an understatement." Bennet's wolf looks at me. He's not wrong. It is a football field sized area of the plant. The ravine is a fissure in the otherwise flat surface of the forest. 2

"I think I can get down there safely from right over here. There are plenty of places to get hand and footholds." Kennedy is already in action again. This time I can't just let her do her thing. I shift and grab her, pulling her back to my chest. 1

"Hold on mate. You cannot just shimmy down there. It's too dangerous. Now we can see her, I can hear her heartbeat, she's alive. Let's come up with a plan that gets everyone out of here without injury or poisoning."

"Ryker, she's barely breathing." She turns and whispers at me and I can hear the terror in her voice for the first time. She was able to stuff it while searching, but she's close to breaking now. "The wolfsbane won't



affect me, it makes sense for me to go get her.”

“No! We don't know what else or who else is down there. We have been blasting through this forest for a while, giving any rogue or other enemy time to use her as bait.” 2

“Well, I'm not letting you go down there to get weakened, funny enough, for the same reasons. So what do we do? And if you don't have a better plan in the next minute, I'm going down after her. She's too little and sensitive to the poison. We need to get to her now. And we need you at full strength if there is anyone else out there waiting for us to go get her.” She places her hands on my chest and I can feel us both relax. I thought she was seeking comfort, right up until she pushes me away and moves towards the ledge she pointed out earlier. She was calming me down, not the other way around.

“Ken...” I start, but she's back on her mission. 1

“I am going to need a rope or harness of some kind. I won't be able to carry her and climb back up. I'm going to work with the assumption that she's too weak to hang on all by herself. Bennet, have Greta tie something up for me. We need a pack doctor here to assess her for anything major. I'm going to need a change of clothes when I get back up. I don't want to spread any of the poison that may rub off when I get her.”

“Ken...”

She spins to face me again. “Ryker, I'm going down there, you are staying here. Get your head out of your ass and help or stay out of the way.” She turns and continues to give directions.

“If you don't mark her today, I will force you!” My wolf blurts hungrily. Based on the pull in my abdomen, he won't get much of a fight out of me. 2