



The Wolf Knows

Daxon Stormclaw POV

That wasn't a normal wolf. And that sure as hell wasn't the Elowen I thought I knew.

I stood there in the shadows, my heart still hammering like I'd just come out of a fight. My eyes burned, my skin buzzed, and my wolf was clawing at the inside of my skull like he wanted out. "Say it," he growled. "You saw her. You felt her."

No. I shoved the thought down. Shut it out. That wasn't her. It couldn't be. Her wolf was supposed to be brown. Small. Forgettable. Beta bred and raised by gammas. Wait, wasn't her father an Alpha? What the fuck. Not that... thing. That glowing, silver-tipped, snow drenched goddess she was bolting through the woods like moonlight in motion.

I ran a hand through my hair, pacing the edge of the forest like a man possessed. What the fuck is happening to me? "She's ours," my wolf snarled again, more insistent this time.

"Shut up, Talon," I snapped out loud, and instantly regretted saying his name where anyone could hear.

Talon. My wolf. He was older than me. Stronger than me. More sure of things than I ever wanted to be.

And right now, he was absolutely convinced that Elowen Skye Thorne, the

girl who tackled my sister and snarls like she wants to rip my throat out for existing, was our true mate. Fated. Bound.

No fucking way. I hopped into my jacked up pickup truck with ease and started the engine. "She's obnoxious," I muttered. "She doesn't listen. She never submits. She's chaos wrapped in attitude."

"She's ours."

"She's not!"

I slammed my palm into the steering wheel hard enough to make the horn blast. People turned to look.

I didn't care. My skin was crawling, my instincts were rioting, and worst of all... I could still smell her. That stupid scent, like wildflowers and storms and danger, was everywhere.

Talon growled low. "You're lying to yourself. You felt the bond start to stir."

"It didn't stir. It hiccupped. Glitched. Had a fucking seizure. That wasn't a bond. That was an accident."

"That was fate."

I punched the dash. Silence. Then Talon whispered something that chilled me deeper than any storm had ever managed. "You're scared of her."

That one hit too deep. Because he wasn't wrong. I wasn't scared of her strength. Or her mouth. Or the fact that she could take my sister down with

one hand.

I was scared of what she did to me.

I was scared of what it meant when I looked at her and felt something twist, something ancient and primal and permanent. If she were mine... everything would change.

And I wasn't ready to admit I wanted it. Not yet.

Elowen POV

I drove like a bat out of hell. Gravel spun behind my tires, punk rock blaring so loud it should've burst my eardrums, but it didn't do a damn thing to calm me down.

"That smug asshole," I growled, gripping the wheel tighter. "Following me. Cornering me. Acting like he's entitled to answers just because his dick has a crest."

Talon, his damn wolf, probably thought that smug little speech in the parking lot was sexy.

Well, guess what, Daxon Stormclaw? You're not the hero. You're the reason I need therapy. The road blurred past as the trees opened up to the gravel lane that led to my house, and Lyssira had been dead quiet the entire drive.

Which was weird. Suspicious. Unsettling. I narrowed my eyes. "What?"
Silence.

"Lyssi," I snapped. "You've been screaming about clawing faces all week, and now you've got nothing to say? After all that?"

She sighed. Sighed. What in the actual lunar hell? "I'm... thinking." I slammed on the brakes. The truck jerked to a stop on the shoulder.

"You don't think," I hissed. "You snarl, you threaten, you chew on intrusive thoughts like rawhide. So spit it out."

Another pause. Then, timidly...so soft I almost didn't hear it. "...I think he might be our mate."

The silence that followed was not peaceful. It was apocalyptic. "...What?"

"Just a whisper. A pull. When he grabbed us... when our eyes locked... it felt like fate was moving inside my bones."

"LYSSIRA."

"Don't yell at me, I didn't make the bond!!"

"HE IS A WALKING RED FLAG WITH A SIX-PACK. He treats us like we're some rabid mutt he stepped on!"

"Maybe that's his trauma talking."

"He tried to alpha command me in training last month."

"Okay, yes, that was toxic as hell, but... he smells really good."

I banged my head gently on the steering wheel. "No. Nope. Not doing this."

"We are not imprinting on a misogynistic royal prick with God complex energy and a jawline sharp enough to cut emotions."

"But what if he is?" she whispered. "What if he's ours?"

I started driving again. Fast and reckless. Like I could outrun fate if I just hit the gas hard enough. Because the idea of Daxon Stormclaw being my mate wasn't just inconvenient...it was the most terrifying thought I'd had all year.

By the time I got home, my blood pressure was still somewhere in the stratosphere.

Daxon fucking Stormclaw and my wolf's emotional betrayal had me on edge, and walking into the kitchen to find Maria and Eron already seated at the table did not help.

"Food's still warm," Maria said, not looking up from her tea. "Sit."

I muttered something that could've been thanks or a curse and dropped into the chair across from them. The scent of roasted venison and herb potatoes filled the room, but my stomach was still doing backflips. I poked at my plate.

Eron cleared his throat. "We heard about what happened today. With Vaela."

Here we go. I took a slow breath. "She tried to trip me during training. I didn't attack her. I walked away."

"That's not what people are saying," Maria said flatly.

My jaw clenched. "And what exactly are people saying this time? That I turned into a dragon and burned the gym down?"

Eron gave me a look. The one that said *watch your tone, girl.*

"Regardless," he said, "you need to be careful. The princesses are not your equals. Don't provoke them."

I stared at him, my fork frozen midair. "Did you just tell me not to provoke someone who's been bullying me since I was thirteen?"

Maria set down her cup. "It's not about fairness. It's about survival."

I shoved my chair back and stood. "Right. Of course. Keep your head down. Don't make waves. Pretend I'm not a threat even when I clearly am."

Eron raised an eyebrow. "Are you saying you are a threat?"

"I'm saying," I snapped, "that maybe I'm done pretending I'm not."

And with that, I turned and stormed upstairs, ignoring the sharp sting of tears that I refused to let fall. The shower helped. A little. The hot water hit like a blessing and a curse, soothing my sore muscles, calming the chaos in my head, but also making space for thoughts.

About Daxon. About Lyssira, still curled in the back of my mind, quiet and pensive like a predator waiting for something to snap. I dried off, threw on a worn tank top and sleep shorts, and crawled into bed. The room was dark except for the soft blue glow of the runes etched around my window.

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Peaceful. For now. I glanced at the glowing numbers on my nightstand clock. 10:30 PM. I stared. Swallowed. Holy shit. At midnight, I'd be eighteen.

Officially of age. Old enough to find my mate. Old enough to shift at full strength. Old enough to open the chest sitting in the corner of my room, like it was breathing.

Two hours until my life changed forever.

And I had no idea if I was ready for it.

Distant horizon

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I am enjoying this immensely!

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