

Wolfless, Fateful Encounters

Chapter 1

Rue

Thwack, thwack, thwack-thwack! My fist collides with the bag repeatedly, relieving my built-up anger. I'd spent all day dealing with my stepmother and her gang of bitches, which led to the angry tension throughout my body. My wolf chomped at the bit to use my fine-tuned warrior skills just to end the chaos my stepmother created with one quick slice of a silver knife, but my father loved her, and I couldn't imagine breaking his heart again. The depression he fell into after my mother died was almost too much for me to witness again. So no, I would beat this sandbag until it burst, and hopefully, by then, my anger would be less, and I wouldn't be tempted to choke the life out of her.

My wolf muted its grumblings to alert me that I was no longer alone. I glanced over to see my step-sister Cassie meandering around the bench where my gym bag rested.

"Ruetie-Tootie!" Cassie sing-songed the ridiculous nickname she gave me. I hated being called a silly name but tolerated it because of Dad. I'd put up with a lot if it meant avoiding the dark, depressive days.

"Hey, Cassie." I hit the bag a few more times, then turned to her.

"I'm surprised you're here." She flicked her eyes around the space. Her facial muscles twitch with the strain not to turn her nose up in disgust.

"I'm more surprised you're here," I reply, chuckling. Cassie was never one for slumming it. She preferred the high-end yoga studio near our house. Tony's tiny rundown gym that barely made ends meet was slumming it according to her standards. I loved the authenticity and the wealth of MMA experience the athletes that were members here had. Tony himself had won more championships than I could list off.

"Yes, Father sent me to fetch you. Mother is having a fit about a luncheon going wrong or something." She waved her manicured hand around dismissively.

I sighed in frustration. I walked over to the bench and looked for my water bottle. I knew I had packed it. I pulled the top item out of the bag, moving it over to sit on the bench. My water bottle caught my eye. It was on the bench, but I did not remember taking it out yet. I grabbed it, turning the bottle around between my hands. My wolf growled so loudly inside my mind that I almost dropped my water bottle.

"Are you okay, ruetie-tootie?" Cassie's face showed concern, but her eyes danced with amusement. I nodded, taking a deep gulp of my water. I hadn't realized how thirsty I had

been, so I took another giant swig. "So, are you going to hang out here until I'm done working out?"

"No, Father dearest wanted you home now to sort through the situation." Cassie huffed, scanning the gym with disgust again.

"Well, I'm going to finish—" my phone rang out, interrupting me. I quickly snatched up my phone, as the ringtone was my best friend Jessica's. We grew up side by side, as our families were long-standing pack members. The only difference was my father being the Alpha of the Blood Red pack. This made me the future Luna of this pack, as my father had no sons. When you are the Heir, people treat you differently. Some kiss your ass like you are the goddess's gift to the world while stabbing you in the back. Others are outright cruel and snub their noses at your presence. However, Jessica never treated me differently. She never had an ulterior motive, and we had similar interests or struggles, so it was easy to connect. Those reasons alone made her my best friend. I swiped to answer the call, "Hey, Bestie! How's it shakin'?"

"Oh! Thank goddess, you answered!" Jessica sobbed.

"Jess? What's wrong?" my throat tightened in panic.

"Rue! Help! I've been kidnapped!" Jessica whisper-yelled into the phone. My stomach dropped with worry, but my wolf calmed me by getting my protective instincts to kick in.

"What? Where are you? I'll come to you!" I immediately gathered my stuff and started walking toward the door. The line disconnected, but a second later, a message came through.

Westford Hotel Rm 886

"Rue, where are you going?" Cassie demanded, struggling to keep up with me in her tall heels. I ignored her, jumping into my jeep and peeling out onto the main road. It usually takes at least 45 minutes to get to the Westford Hotel from where my gym was, but I managed to make it in 30 minutes by breaking too many traffic laws. I parked, tossed my keys to the valet, and sprinted across the lobby floor. My stomach felt queasy, and my head began to throb. I shook my head a few times to try to clear the slow haze creeping into the bones of my body. I called out to my wolf, knowing I would need her Abilities and strength in a fight, "Etty."

there was no reponse. I tried again, "Answer me, Bisclavret!"

Still, she remained silent. What was going on? My wolf never remained silent like this. I stepped onto the elevator, pressing the button for the 8th floor. I didn't have time right this second to determine why Etty wasn't responding. I'd have to save Jess on my own. A grey border clouded my vision, and I tried to blink it away. I glanced around and

realized I was alone in the elevator. Suddenly, my stomach lurched, and pain squeezed down on my heart like a vice grip.

"Fuck!" I seethed between clenched teeth. My vision became blurry. The grey, hazy border grows with every breath I take. I grabbed onto the railing for support. What the fuck was happening to me! I dry heaved as the pain continued to spread from my stomach and heart throughout my torso. The doors opened, and I barely registered people as their gasps and whispers echoed in the elevator. I couldn't react as I felt something pull tight across my chest before an agonizing snap caused my body to jerk violently. I fell to my knees. A sob escaped a moment before the doors opened again. Through a grey fog, I identified the eighth floor. With willpower alone, I pulled myself off the floor and stumbled down the hall, counting each room
856...862...873..879...882...886.

That was the one! I closed my eyes and focused all my strength on moving my jello hand to the handle. I missed it three times because my vision warped the direction and distance. I felt like I was on a tilt-a-whirl and wouldn't stop spinning. On the fourth attempt, I connected, pushed down, and, luckily, the door swung open. A faint alarm in the deep recesses of my clouded brain sounded. Were hotel rooms typically left unlocked? I enter the room on lead feet, trying to adjust to sudden dim lighting. A deep, commanding growl shook my being all the way to my bones and made liquid heat pool from my core. A robust and massive hand grabbed my arm, sending fire down my skin from its touch. A whimper escaped between my lips before darkness overtook me.

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A bright light pierced through the overwhelming darkness. I attempted to pry my heavy eyelids open, but the moment they cracked, I was confronted with blinding sunlight and an excruciating headache. Pain engulfed my whole body. Fractured memories returned as I took stock of my surroundings. I called out to my wolf, begging and pleading for her to respond. Tears burned the back of my eyes, but I refused to allow them to fall. I forced my body into motion, finding that I was naked. I lay in a huge bed tangled in soft white sheets. I slowly pulled myself from the sheets, feeling the pain's epicenter. I choked on more sobs as I stared down at my body, covered in minor bruises and bite marks. I couldn't hold in the sobs any longer once the sheets revealed the bloody spots between my legs. I pulled myself from the bed and silently found my clothes. Some pieces were torn or destroyed, so I grabbed a man's dress shirt off the floor. It would have to do even if the thought of its owner made my skin crawl. A necklace jingled around my wrist, and I clutched it for dear life.

I staggered out of the hotel room in a complete daze. I had to find Jess! If my fate had been to be brutally raped, I could only imagine what her kidnappers would do to her. A gasp snapped my head up, and I ignored the massive pain that shot down my spine. My eyes focused on Jessica, who was a few feet from me. I scanned her body for injury but only found her arm and arm with Cassie.

"Thank the Goddess," I whispered, thrilled she was safe. Did Cassie find her in time? Wait. How would Cassie have known to come here? I certainly didn't tell her when I was rushing to get here.

"Oh my goddess, Rue, I didn't think you would actually go through with it!" Jessica's tone sounded shocked but her lips were turned up in wicked glee. I stopped, dumbfounded. Cassie giggled and it was then I noticed her phone camera pointed at me.

"Wow Ruetie-tootie! I can't believe you forced Jess to set up a hook-up in a hotel with some random stranger! The Alpha's daughter is sleeping with just anyone! What shame you bring to our family."

Cassie's tone doesn't match the sinister expression they both wore.

I placed my hand against the wall to steady myself, trying to process her words. "No, Jess was kidnapped, and I came to save her."

"I was never kidnapped! You called asking me to set up a call-boy here," Jess replied. "Don't lie and twist things. You know this is wrong."

"But--"

"I can't believe you would just let anyone rutt you like some common whore." Jessica whined, "I thought you were better than this. Who is going to want you now?"

Cassie stepped up to me, sticking the phone close to my face. I was humiliated, "Aren't you supposed to be the strongest warrior?" She paused, then spit at my feet, ending the recording on her phone. "Now you're just a slut."

I shoved her away from me, sobbing and wanting nothing more than to go home. This was the worst night of my life. I was raped, and they recorded my reaction the morning after. Yesterday's events connected, and I began to understand precisely what happened. Those two had played me and set me up. But for what purpose?