

Wolfless, Fateful Encounters Chapter 3

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Travis

I stared out the floor-to-ceiling window of my pack house, overlooking the landscape of New Jersey. I loved the view from here; it made me feel like I was on top of the world. My father had chosen his Packhouse location very well. It was on the city's edge with trails that led into the dwindling wilderness, yet still close enough that the skyscraper didn't stick out. A majority of our pack lives here, but the top three floors are dedicated to the Alpha and his family. My office was explicitly designed to state power and influence to anyone who stepped foot in here, from the marbled floors to the mahogany bookshelves filled with leather-bound classic and informative literature. A drink cart in the corner contained only the most expensive, trendy, and classy alcohol—nothing but the best for our influential pack.

Tonight, the cart will be used a lot. The scotch I nursed did little to soothe my foul mood. For six long years, I'd searched everywhere, using every resource at my disposal as the heir to the Dark Moon pack, for the woman who would not leave my thoughts. Our encounter had been so brief, yet the events that unfolded left an imprint on my soul. I had one taste of her one night so long ago and craved more.

For six fucking years, the enchantress has escaped my clutches. She has somehow become a ghost, haunting my dreams. I finished the glass of scotch before returning to my desk. Knee-deep in the work I oversaw for the pack on behalf of my father, the Alpha of the Dark Moon pack, I wouldn't return to my soft king-sized bed anytime soon—a fact my wolf grumbled at as he demanded freedom. I knew I was pushing the limits of my body and mind, but everything needed to get done. I, too, would love to take off into the woods for a few days, but that wasn't in the schedule as the heir. There are too many meetings to attend and too many fires to put out to be able to run wild.

The paperwork to solidify my engagement to the Blood Red Alpha's daughter taunted me just as it had since the moment I made my promise. When I was younger, I had been helpless against the feral beasts who raided my family's home and taunted me that my death was imminent. As a child, I had no hope, let alone the ability to defend myself against the vile rogues. Before any of the creatures could make a move, the previous Luna of Blood Red's pack saved me. That rogue attack long ago, which cost her life in the process, was the cause of my obligations. It was my first lesson on how life could be so cruel to the innocents, and I vowed to myself I would never again be so weak.

I held the woman in my lap as blood soaked into my pants and deep into my soul. Her shallow breaths fading had terrified me for years after. On her deathbed, Luna insisted

that I marry her daughter and stake claim on the Alpha position as payment for her sacrifice. She repeatedly told me how perfect her daughter was, and when the other members of the packs found us, her pleas stole the last of her breath.

It was already decided that I would take over after my father was done; however, this engagement gave me the security I would need when I rose to power. My mother, the Dark Night Luna, was thrilled with this arrangement. So, the two Alphas agreed upon the engagement between us. Although the agreement stands, we both had to be of marriage age.

That coming of age had been so long ago, and the night I traveled to their territory was when I met the enchantress. In order to get the courage to fulfill my promise to both Lunas, I drank my weight in booze. I hadn't intended to drink so much, but every time I stood to go to the Packhouse, I lost my nerve. I had never met the girl, and I wasn't sure I wanted to be with a woman I was forced to marry. It was easy as a child to make promises to a dying woman because I didn't know the ramifications of that promise.

Arranged marriages were a thing of ancient times and not a tradition I wanted to resurrect, but Luna and my mother were sure we would make the perfect team. They believed that Luna's daughter was my soulmate. It still baffled me that two women could know the outcome of two strangers' hearts so far into the future, but that sentiment had never faltered in my mother's mind. After drinking myself into a stupor, I decided it was best to go to my room and sleep it off before meeting my future wife and mate.

I showered and slung a towel around my waist to head out of the bathroom to my suitcase in the corner of the main room. What awaited me was the most enticing she-wolf I'd ever encountered. The enchantress stumbled through the door into my dim room, and the only thing I could see was the raven hair braiding down her back, covering her pale cheeks. When I growled at her to leave, she leaned into me with a sweet, submissive whimper that kickstarted my alpha desire.

It was like all my natural instincts kicked into high gear when her wolf responded immediately. With each kiss, touch, and moan, we moved our bodies in a perfect rhythm as if we had known each other's souls over many lifetimes. I took her, being egged on by the sweet sounds she made and her wolf fully submitting to mine in an explosion of ecstasy. We both went tumbling over the edge together and fell asleep in one tangled, sweaty mess.

I was abruptly awoken by a mind link informing me of urgent pack matters that needed me back on my own territory. I groggily got up and stared down at the back of the woman's head. I hadn't imagined her raven hair, but when I saw what I'd done to her body, I knew I needed to take responsibility. We needed a serious conversation, so I removed my heir amulet from around my neck and placed it in her hand. I would take care of the pack matters quickly and then return to her side to discuss our next steps.

I watched her shoulders rise and fall with her steady breaths. As if under a spell, I ran my fingertips along her bare shoulder, sweeping her silky hair away from her skin. I nuzzled my nose along her neck to the small spot behind her ear, where our scents were the strongest, but I smelled nothing. It had puzzled me then and still left me with so many questions.

When I returned to the hotel way later, there was no trace of the girl. The security cameras had been removed, and no one could track down my necklace. I'd traced down all leads for six years and still found nothing. She was a wisp of a memory, and no one had ever heard of a she-wolf with no scent. If it weren't for my missing amulet, I would wonder if The whole thing was a dream. I refilled my glass of scotch, wishing for the millionth time that I remembered her face, name, or something about her that I could use to find her.

I reread the paperwork and knew it was time to put my feelings aside and complete this engagement before heading to the training camp. I had spent months putting together this camp, bringing in the most talented instructors for specialized Rogue countermeasure training. No one else knew that I still felt the weight of Luna's death on my hands due to my weakness. I strolled over to the window once more, staring out over my territory and wondering if my people were safe, happy, and protected from the dark underbelly of the werewolf world.

I finished off the amber liquid and let my longing feelings float through the glass out over the open landscape, silently calling to the enchantress to return to me. To appear before me to prevent me from having to marry a woman I'd never met. A soft knock forced me to turn my head toward my office door. My beta stepped through the doorway with a slight smirk on his face, "Yo, Travis, you look like shit!"

I grinned at my childhood friend and Beta Sammy, "Yeah, sorry, man. I had to borrow your face for a bit."

"Hardy-har." Sammy rolled his eyes. This brotherly banter never happened in the presence of others, so I was grateful when it happened. So many of my pack were too terrified to go against me. Sammy looked a little apprehensive, "So I've got some information to report."

I raised an eyebrow at him and chuckled, "Alright, spit it out."

Sammy met my eyes directly, holding up a folder and saying, "We found the necklace."

My heart momentarily stopped beating as I wondered if this was another false lead. "Where?"

"It's a pawn shop. Your necklace was sold to them by a woman, and I've got her address."

"We go in the morning," I growled, more than ready to face off with the enchantress. Sammy nodded, knowing the disappointment I'd felt so many times before.