

Wolfless, Fateful Encounters Chapter 5

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Rue

"Did you pack everything from your bookshelf?" I asked the bouncing tornado, sprinting in circles around my feet. I swear he never ran out of energy.

"Yes, mamma. I put all my books in the box. I need tape to close it," my son, Reece, yelled. I winced at the sound; loud noises were a massive trigger for me to become overwhelmed. I took a few deep breaths so I could talk to him calmly. It wasn't his fault I was so worried and stressed about this move, so there was no need to take it out on him.

"Okay, let's load up and head on your first big airplane ride!"

"I'm so excited!" Reece whisper-yelled. The twinkle in his icy blue eyes makes me wonder again if his biological father had the same arctic blue coloring. Pale blue eyes were rare even in the werewolf world, but jet-black hair paired with pale eyes was an anomaly. I kissed Reece's forehead and finished taping the last box. We made our way to the car, letting the primary mover know we were all packed and ready for them to take over. The movers would load up our stuff and drive it across the country, so Reece and I could take the easier route via airplane. The thought of a four-day cross-country road trip with a five-year-old terrified me. Nope. That was not something I was willing to do.

Reece jumped into the car and buckled himself into his booster. The forty-five-minute drive to LAX was filled with non-stop questions from my son. His wide eyes and gaping mouth didn't change the entire way through security, the walk to our gate, boarding, and the flight to New York. There were no direct flights into Jersey; even if there were, I would still go this route to avoid my family from finding out we were moving home. When I called my father to let him know of my pregnancy, he reminded me I was not a part of his pack. Whatever man I'd shackled up with was none of his business; he would never recognize my son as an heir.

As the plane descended, I began to point out various places and landmarks and tell Reece stories from my childhood. Before everything happened and my father disowned me, I had a decently happy childhood full of love. My mother was kind and loving, and my father adored us both. When she died, that kindness and love were ripped out of our fingers and replaced with a deep, hushed sadness. I sent a silent prayer to the moon goddess to let the drama of the past not affect my son.

"Momma! Look, there is a sign for pancakes!" Reece pulled on my hand, guiding me toward an ad for a pancake buffet place as we made our way down the terminal to baggage claim.

"Yeah, baby, when we get settled into the new place, we can go there. I once went with your grandpa, and we ate so many pancakes that he almost barfed while walking to the car." I smiled, sweeping his bangs out of his eyes. It was probably time for a haircut, but we both loved the little curls at the ends. I guided us to the baggage claim, scanning the overhead screens for our flight number.

"Momma, That man has a sign with your name!" Reece tugged on my hand, bouncing on the balls of his feet and pointing. I followed where he was pointing and studied the man. He wore dark jeans and a tight black t-shirt with shades pushed up into his sandy blonde hair. I sniffed the air and caught the slight scent of a wolf. I hadn't arranged for a pick, so dread settled into my stomach. Had my father sent him? The man's presence screamed hitman or bodyguard. I pulled Reece behind me before slowly approaching the man.

"Why do you have a sign with my name?" I asked sharply.

The man's brows knit together, "You're Rue Channing?"

I gripped my son's hand tighter, ensuring his safety and protection behind me. "It depends on who is asking."

"Sammy." The man stuck out his hand, "Second at the Dark Moon. Travis Conri sent me to pick you up."

I relaxed only a fraction, "Why would the heir send his second to pick up a lowly employee?"

Sammy shifted, clearly uncomfortable, "My Luna insisted on it due to the engagement circumstances and would like me to extend an invite to join the pack."

My mind raced. What engagement circumstances? I hadn't heard anything about this, but knowing my family, they could have promised my hand to someone without my knowledge. My father had never made my banishment public for fear of looking weak, and I remained silent because of my shame from that night. My son leaped out from behind me, "Momma, I'm hungry!"

"I know, baby." I nodded, still holding his hand tightly. I looked back at Sammy, "I need to get going. We have to meet the landlord in an hour."

Sammy sidestepped to block my path. I could see the mind link sparked in his eye color. "The invite would extend to your son as well as his father once everything is discussed."

I glared at the man. Clearly, Luna and Travis Conri didn't know I had a child or the circumstances behind Reece's birth. Sammy's eyes looked far away, indicating someone was communicating with him via Mindlink. I snapped my finger in

front of his face to recapture his attention, "Listen, It is just Reece and I. I have no idea what you are talking about regarding an engagement. I have no intention of marrying anyone at this time. I refuse to join your pack. I made arrangements for my son and me, so thank you, but no thank you."

I walked away to get our luggage, rental car, and my son out of the airport.

Travis

"Why are we in this limo at the airport in the middle of the day, Mother?" I ground out through my teeth. After spending all day yesterday getting Jessica set up in her new lifestyle, my patience was thin. The penthouse apartment was 5x the size of her house, yet she asked for more space-- a place with a pool. Which the apartment complex had. The two moving trucks full of shit took far too long to unpack, cutting into my work day. Which set me behind. Jessica flirted with me so much that I felt physically drained from deflecting her advances. When I asked questions about that night we shared, her answers were vague or purposely deflective. Jessica seems to misunderstand our situation as more than obligation, but no matter how often I explain it, she just giggles away.

Fucking infuriating.

"This is when the woman will be arriving." Mother had insisted that I needed to be present when one of the people working in the support staff of my new training camp and eventual center to specialize against rogue attacks arrived. The airport was a shit-show on a calm day and chaotic hell now. I sent my beta to retrieve the woman to avoid having to park. It would have taken twice as long to find a parking space, let alone leave the congested chaos.

"I'm so excited to meet Libby's daughter! When this engagement was first solidified after her death, I had my doubts about whether or not we wanted to honor it, but after you dragged your feet to claim a Luna, I knew this was the best option. From all the stories Libby told me before her death, I know this woman will perfectly match you." My mother chatted away.

"Seriously, Mother, I'm still hesitant to claim a woman I haven't even met as my Luna."

The mind link came in as Sammy told me he was currently talking to Rue Channing. I was curious why she used her mother's maiden name instead of using Alpha Sinner's last name. Most shifters want the power that comes with the lineage, but changing her last name would successfully take that privilege away. It was a strange thing to do in our world. I sat back and waited for Sammy to update me. Mother stared at me, "Has he found her yet?"

I nodded, "Yes."

Sir, we have a problem. She has a child, a boy about 5.

I internally sigh in relief. This would mean I didn't have to go through with a marriage as she was already mated.

"I hate to spoil your wedding plans, Mother, but she is a mother. So she has already paired off with someone else." I state.

My mother pouted, "This is why you should have met her six years ago!"

I linked with Sammy again and extended the invite to join my pack to her mate and their child.

Yes, *sir*. There was a long pause as he relayed the message, *Um.. she has no mate and has refused to be a part of the pack, sir. *

What do you mean refused? She should be honored. I growled—the irritation of the whole day shooting into my mind link. Mother grabbed my arm, making me focus on her again. "Sammy just told me she doesn't have a mate! We cannot let a single mother run around without the protection of our pack! Libby saved your life, so I will not let her daughter struggle."

I scrubbed my face and tried to reach out to Sammy again, but all he said was she refused and was gone. Another day wasted on this bullshit.