

Wolfless, Fateful Encounters Chapter 6

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Rue

The location where the training camp was being held was huge. I felt like I was on a tiny college campus with numerous buildings and different arenas. I had to find the check-in location, but the printed map I gripped in my fingers was absolutely useless. I was already feeling on edge after dropping Reece off at his new school; now I was lost. According to the orientation packet, student assistants must check in at the main entrance with the other students. I would be paid to assist the two instructors per class with equipment, drills, and as a sparring partner when needed. It was the perfect way to help with the program, get paid enough to scrap by, and stay under the radar.

"Hello! I don't think you're supposed to be here," a voice called out from down the hall.

"Oh, thank the goddess!" I let out a relieved sigh, walking toward the figure at the end of the hall. "I'm so lost, and I couldn't find anyone."

The voice chuckled, "Yeah, it's easy to get lost here."

As I approached, the woman smiled. Her brown hair and rosy freckled cheeks were adorable. "I had a map printed, but it's useless."

She glanced at the paper I was holding up and rolled her eyes. "Ugh, one of the previous admins sent out the incorrect map to half the trainees attending, so that is why that map is useless. Here, I'll walk you to the training grounds."

I followed the woman as she made a this-way gesture with her hand. I was so grateful I'd run into someone; otherwise, I would have been walking around forever trying to escape this labyrinth with the incorrect map. "I'm Rue, by the way. Thanks for saving me."

"Emma," she replied. Emma was thin but athletically built. Her buzzed undercut brown hair stuck up in the back and was braided tightly into four rows before being tied into a short ponytail at the end. Emma wore some mascara and eyeliner, which fit perfectly with her athletic pants and tank top. She glanced back at me with a friendly smile, "So, what pack are you from?"

"Originally from the Red Moon, but I've been living on the West Coast for a while." I tried to hide the shame and guilt, but I technically was a lone wolf after my banishment. This status complicated my interactions with other werewolves, as lone wolves tended to become rogues. So, I chose to be vague about my pack ties. It was one reason I'd avoided returning to the world of shifters for so long. I didn't have to explain my family situations to humans beyond the fact that I don't speak to my family.

"Sweet. I'm from a pack up north; we get hit by rogue attacks often, so my Alpha sent me down here to learn new techniques to defend our small pack." She chatted away. I relaxed into the conversation, loving that this is the first actual conversation I've had with another she-wolf in nearly six years. I had human mom-friends in L.A. We would chat while our kids played, but I wasn't as close to any of them as I had been with Jessica. My trust broke after Jessica and Cassie's betrayal, so getting close to any shifter left me anxious. Emma was also a student assistant, so we would be in a different group. I was disappointed but glad she would at least be a colleague. We continued to talk about the training schedule that had been sent out. We left the building and walked across a courtyard area.

Emma led me through another doorway, which opened to a very crowded hallway. My throat closed as the various scents and sounds echoed off the narrow walls. Emma continued down the hall and stopped at the end of what seemed to be a line. After a while of making small talk with Emma and moving with the line one person at a time, a nasal voice scoffed, "Is that girl even a wolf?"

I cringed, knowing this was exactly why I avoided these situations. In such close quarters, it was easy to tell my subtle differences. My lack of scent was a huge indicator that something was off, but no one should know my biggest secret. My wolf was gone.

Nasally voice's friend leaned over with a perfectly manicured hand, "I don't know, she doesn't have a scent at all."

Several other women sniffed the air, but they were right. I didn't have a scent since that terrible night. The only thing that I could think of after all these years was that Cassie put something in my water bottle that poisoned me. I researched for years what it could've been but came up short with my minimal resources.

Emma shifted closer to me, taking a deep breath but not saying anything when she confirmed what every other shifter was saying. Catty and rude remarks continued as I progressed up the line, so much for keeping my head down and staying off my family's radar. I was so close to the check-in that I didn't want to start anything. I ignored their cruel words and focused on the incoming table. This job was supposed to be a new beginning for Reece and me, so I didn't want to let their ignorant comments ruin anything.

I stepped up to the check-in table. A young man sat behind a table with a computer in front of him. He didn't glance up before asking me, "Name?"

"Rue Channing."

"Oh my goddess, what a lame name for a name she-wolf." The original woman mocked behind me. I bit into my lip, mentally repeating: I was not going to be violent today. If my years in MMA had taught me anything, it was how to have a thick skin and the discipline to let petty shit go.

Her friend laughed, "Again, are we even sure she is a wolf?"

"Enough!" A man's voice bellowed, and everyone stilled instantly. I recognized the commanding tone as someone who was an Alpha or Alpha heir. I, too, had this ability but hadn't used it in a long time. Even before everything happened, I didn't like commanding the people around me. A tall, muscular man stepped out of the office at the end of the hall and studied the scene before him. My knees went weak when his intense gaze swept over the crowd behind me. His fitted jeans hugged his toned thighs while his upper body stretched the dress shirt. His shaggy brown hair was touselled in a just-woke-up style. My fingers itched to brush away the silky strands sticking out, but I stopped myself. When his eyes landed on me, his brows were tugged low as he looked me up and down, "What did you say your name was?"

I could feel his dominance challenging me and trying to make me submit; however, as a fellow Alpha Heir, it was easy to resist. I met his scrutiny with my own, and the tension between us thickened as I replied, "Rue Channing."

"Ah, you are actually going to go this way toward the instructor meeting." He said.

"I was informed that student instructors were to check in with the other students."

The man smirks, instantly causing every panty in the hallway to be soaked, including my own. "Yes, they do. However, you were promoted to instructor assistant this morning, so you must head to the opening meeting."

There were gasps down the hall. I resisted the urge to shy away from this new development. He motioned with his hand for me to follow. I said a quick goodbye to Emma and followed the man out into a gathering of other werewolves.