

Chapter 4

Edward

I ran through the thick forest like a kid on Christmas, searching for my prize, my beautiful perfect mate, Hope. She was just that, my hope, my joy. Her wolf was a beautiful blond color and full of mischief. We met at my first charity ball I hosted. It was my first big event as the Alpha King of the northern territory. That was a few years ago. I took over as Alpha King when I was just 18 years old, the youngest Alpha King to date. My father had been killed in battle, which was incredibly strange. He was one of the most powerful supernatural creatures on the planet, a Lycan, a blood born Alpha King Lycan. A Lycan was essentially a werewolf on steroids; bigger, faster, stronger, better senses. My father's death never made sense to me, but I needed to let it go, for now. His death took a toll on me and forced me to grow up faster than I would have liked, leaving little time to grieve.

Most kings passed down their title to their heir around the age of 30. I had 12 years of learning to make up for, many people doubted my ability. I had quite a few werewolves and Lycans trying to take my title by challenging me to a duel. Which made grieving even harder. I felt myself becoming cold and hard. But Hope was able to pull me from my pit of despair and give me a breath of fresh air. She was a year younger than me, we were 23 and 24 years old, approaching our 3-year marking anniversary. I planned on surprising her with a night away. Being King didn't come with much free time, though I could rely on my brother and Beta, Jackson. He was two years younger than I was and was also thrown unceremoniously into the title of Beta, my fault. He was the only person I trusted, not to mention having Alpha blood and being my brother, it only made sense. When the title was handed over to me, I made the very bold decision to release my father's entire staff. I couldn't take any chances if one of my father's men had betrayed him. I wasn't personally there when he was killed but nothing sat well about it.

"Where is your head at?" My mate asked, her wolf coming up beside me and rubbing herself against mine.

"Just lost in thought. Sorry love." I nipped back at her. I could sense her wolf purring in delight.

We continued our run, leaping over logs and splashing through the cold streams. I couldn't shake the nagging feeling in the back of my head. My wolf was just as agitated. My father's death was weighing in hard today.

"Hope, let's head home," I said.

"But we only just got out, please Edward, just a little bit longer, its been far too long since our wolves had the chance to run together." she pleaded.

She was right. It had been far too long. "Just a little while longer, I want to get back home soon, okay?"

She licked my face in approval, making my wolf Edmund and I swoon. I could never say no to her. We spent another half hour disturbing the tranquility of the forest with our banter and play before my restlessness won out and I decided it was time to get home.

"Times up, let's get back." I coaxed.

"Gotta catch me first" my mate said as she made a quick turn and bolted in the other direction. She knew how much my wolf loved the chase. She was up to no good. On any other day I would have been ecstatic, but not today.

"Hope lets go, I have a nagging feeling" I linked her, swiftly changing direction to catch up with her. Hope was fast, but I was faster. Gotta love Alpha genes.

"Party pooper!" She retorted.

I could just barely see her blond fur ahead of me but I was gaining on her fast. She came to an abrupt stop ahead of me, and that was when my world came crashing down. There was a gure standing in front of Hope and before I knew it I could feel her fear and her pain and then our mate bond being severed. My wolf reseeded mid-stride, my now naked human form tumbling through the forest gasping for air, feeling as though a silver blade was tearing through my chest. I looked up through my pain and saw two gures standing before her body, one clearly smelled like a werewolf, the other I didn't recognize. Their faces were covered and they wore long black robes with hoods. Just as soon as they arrived, they left, to where I didn't know, but it was as if they vanished into thin air. But they weren't my biggest concern at the moment. I crawled to my mate with what little strength I had, the severed bond taking its toll.

"Hope!" I cried, scooping up her limp body into my arms. "Baby please be okay, please come back to me!" She had a long gash along her throat and blood was pooling out. I vainly tried to stop the bleeding and let out a distress howl. Four warriors immediately responded, followed by the rumbling of paws approaching. "Help! She needs help!" I begged. I was surrounded by my warriors, their faces only confirming my worst fear. Hope was gone.

3 days later

I sat in the old cathedral staring at the stained glass that was over 100 years old. I wonder how they did that back then? I know it's a bitch to have them cleaned. We have a special company that comes out and removes all the panels and transports them to a cleaning facility, only to bring them back and have them reinstalled. What a pain.

"Alpha?"

The stained glass is nice and everything, but at what cost? So much work for colored glass. Old colored glass.

"King Edward?"

It wasn't ever super reliable all the time since it was so old. It needed extra care in the winter. How the hell did they do it back then?

"Brother!"

I broke from my trance to see my brother, Beta Jackson, standing before me with an expectant look. I looked around to see a multitude of eyes staring at me.

"Brother, it's time", Jackson spoke softly. He was wearing the same black suit as last time. The same suite he wore to our father's funeral.

I gave him a curt nod and stood to my feet, which felt heavy with lead with each step I took. I approached my mate's casket, moving a piece of her blond hair behind her ear for the last time. I stroked her cheek, trying to commit her face to memory before I looked up to the priest and nodded. He went up to her casket, said a few words I'll never remember, and closed it. Jackson, William and Oliver, my Gamma and Delta respectively, and myself lifted her casket and began our journey to the far end of the gardens where we would bury Hope next to my father, and his father, and his father before. More words were said as she was lowered into her final resting place.

I sat there, feeling so numb, wondering where I had gone wrong. I had spent the past 3 days going over every minor detail. Our borders were tight, tighter than tight actually. There was nothing on any of the security cameras saying anyone got in, so was this an inside job? No, it couldn't be. I picked up the werewolf's scent, it was unmistakable. I went through each and every member of our pack to verify, we cross referenced and everything. What did that leave me with? More unanswered questions.

"Jackson" I called, knowing he was standing off in the distance to give me privacy, but close enough to be by my side if needed.

"Yes brother?" he asked as he approached me from behind.

"I want every pack in my kingdom brought here, young and old alike. Rogues also. Someone is bound to know something. If they refuse, they are disobeying direct orders from their king and will be sentenced to death." My voice was cool and deadly.

"Brother, there are thousands of packs in our kingdom, this could take years." My brother tried to reason.

"Then it takes years. I want the first pack brought in tomorrow. See that its done." I wasn't budging on this.

"Yes, Alpha." My brother answered. I knew he didn't approve when he used my title when it was just the two of us. He would understand once he found his mate.

1 month later....

I sat in my throne room vetting each and every pack member. No one knew anything. Most looked terrified. It wasn't often that a king requested- demanded, rather- their presence with virtually no notice. I didn't give out many details as to why. I'm sure most assume it had to do with Hopes' death. I didn't care what people thought of me at this point, love me or hate me. I really didn't care. All I knew was that I was out for blood.

Jackson had informed me that a number of packs had started to revolt, threatening war. What a joke. One of my Lycan men could easily take out ve of their werewolves at once. The biggest pack out there wouldn't even be able to stop my men. It would likely take every single pack across my entire kingdom to stand together to even have a miniscule of a chance. I trusted my warriors for war. Most packs are only trained for defense and border security. Which was ne, since I oversaw everything, and I ran a tight kingdom, there weren't many rogues, or uprisings, unlike my neighbors. Not to mention the aura I gave off could get everyone to submit with ease. But I didn't like to resort to an 'evil dictator' even though that is what most people see me as now. I liked to give my packs freedom to do as they please, so if they wanted to refuse or revolt, so be it.

I kept my process simple but effective. I had my men go and collect one pack at a time. They would bring family by family along to me where I would personally question them. To compensate for the inconvenience of the compliant packs, I also asked if they had any concerns or needs for their pack and if there had been anything out of the ordinary going on. I had an old orphanage in the kingdom that has thankfully been empty for some time now. I would let the packs stay the night in, offering them a meal and a place to sleep. Most packs were on the smaller side, a few hundred maybe. I had a list of every single person in my kingdom. I had each Alpha report to me on a regular basis with births and deaths. If something was amiss, I would nd out. An alpha werewolf would have to be as dumb as rocks to lie to me.

"Edward, that was the last of the Snow mountain pack," Jackson advised.

"Thank you. See that one of our men is sent there to investigate, and a female warrior too. There was a lot of unease among the she wolves. I take it the men there don't treat them especially well," I noted.

"Any leads?" He asked hopefully, as he did each and every time we nished with a pack.

Unfortunately, the only thing I keep coming across is alphas abusing their power in one way or another. There might need to be a mass exodus if this trend continues. I wouldn't tolerate abuse of anything.

"Nothing yet." I sighed, my wolf whining in my head.

I laid on my king-sized bed, trying to commit Hopes scent to memory. Goddess, I miss my beauty. I was shocked her death didn't kill me. I wish it had. I hated coming back to the palace to a rempy oor. Being King, I still had the clothes, her oor of the coming to myself. It was a terrible reminder of her. I held her entire, her photos, her scent. I don't think I could ever change a thing, but I also can't live like this. Maybe I would stay or maybe demo this oor and rebuild it. I wasn't sure. What I did know was aching in my chest seemed just as potent as the moment Hope died.

I had already been asked by quite a few bold Lycan women if I was interested in a chosen mate, it took everything in me to not spill their guts for such slander. My mate hadn't even been gone a month at the time. I knew it would only be a matter of time before the counsel and other ocials pushed me to choose another. I was still young, 24. Maybe I could buy some time. Throw myself into work so no one could say I would do better with a mate.

"I miss mate" My wolf Edmund whimpered.

"Me too, buddy, me too."