

## Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Dance in the rain

Sunlight cuts through the little spaces between the trees and shrubs, reaching the earth in small patches of b\*\*\*ery yellow. Birds chirp in their nests, preparing for the day's work.

Birds. They're like omegas in a sense. Working from dawn till dusk just to keep going.

But birds don't have to answer to stupid seniors. They don't get forced into submission in the name of duties. They don't get stuck with bosses on the name of a pack— in the name of family.

I yawn as I push myself up from my sleeping bag. Rubbing my tired eyes, I look around. The fire had died down at some point in the night. Luke's luggage sits by one tree, near it, I see a tall figure leaning against the bark.

Luke looks over his shoulder and catches me sitting. His eyes have slight shadows under them, but otherwise, he looks as alert as always, holding the map in his hand.

"I was wondering if I'd have to wake you up as always," He states, going towards his bags

I roll my eyes "Good morning to you too,"

"About fifteen steps in the south, there's a small lake," He ignores my comment and puts the map back inside one of his bags "you can freshen up, and then we'll get going."

With a nod, I excuse myself to find this lake. Soon enough, I finish washing myself and my hair. By the time I reach the campsite again, Luke has removed every trace that anyone was ever here. Hell, even the soot from the fire we made is gone.

He tosses me an apple before gesturing me to follow him behind.

"Hey Luke," I ask after I'd finished my food "Didn't we have some Royal werewolves or something?"

"We did," Luke nods "But after the vampire wars, they were no more. And I wouldn't say that was a bad thing."

I raise an eyebrow "Why?"

Wouldn't it have been better that way? Then this ridiculous compet\*\*ion wouldn't even exist.

Jackson's hollow brown eyes flash in my mind. I shake my head. Get a grip, Elise. Whatever happened, happened.

"Being a royal doesn't mean you're going to be a good leader," Luke's deep voice brings me out of my thoughts

"Besides, the Royals held too much of their animalistic tendencies. Short tempers, too aggressive, unbearably bossy. The list goes on forever."

"Sounds like you," I mutter to myself

"What did you say?"

"Nothing," I flash him a sweet smile "But then, why this competition? Why not just vote for the Alpha supreme?"

"This isn't just a bloody game, Hazel," Luke says, glancing at me from the corner of his eyes "It's a test. War strategies, survival skills, management, and partnership. Whoever's the best at it will rightfully hold the authority over our race."

I nodded, absorbing the information. Who knew? This is quite sensible. But then...

"And if someone cheats?" I ask. Blood coming from bullet holes.

Luke shrugs his shoulders "Cheating can only get you so far."

I nod, not voicing the doubts in my mind. I focus on the pa\*\*ing greenery, the tall trees with old vines hanging from thick branches, roots plunging up and down in the earth. My eyes travel to the sky, clouds start filling the blue canvas with a muddy grey.

Someone grabs my arm.

I snap my head towards Luke. He's still as a statue, he glances at me with stormy blue hues. Don't move, they seem to say. His other hand lowers to put his bags on the forest floor before pulling out a shiny metallic thing from the

the waistband of his jeans.

Luke lets go of my arm and takes a few steps towards the shrubs nearby. I swallow the panic rising in my throat, my heart pounds in my ears. Luke looks over the wide leaves and then lets out an inaudible sigh, his shoulders slouch with the movement.

"What is it?" I ask, already moving forward to see

Luke steps aside and I look past the shrubs, feeling the tension in my own shoulders release.

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A deer family.

The fawn looks so young, its weak legs wobbling. Its parents graze the grass nearby, keeping an eye on their young one. I feel my lips tug upwards in a smile.

“Don’t tell me,” Luke says from my left

“What?” I raise an eyebrow

“I’m not going to hunt them,”

“What?”

Luke gives me a passive look “A werewolf smiling at a deer family. I’ve seen that many times.”

Blood rushes to my face. Partially from anger and partially from embarrassment.

“I wasn’t thinking that!” I narrow my eyes “And even if I had been thinking about hunting them, I wouldn’t ask you to do it for me.”

“Hazel?” Luke raises his brows “Do you think you could’ve managed on your own even without your werewolf abilities?”

I huff and cross my arms, giving him a steely glare.

“Of course I could,” I say confidently “I can do everything on my own.”

Luke leans forward, observing me with inquisitive blue eyes. I hold his stormy gaze, from my peripheral, I see him raise a hand and move it towards my face.

He flicks a finger at my forehead.

More from surprise than from pain, I lose my footing and fall on my behind.

“Ouch!” I rub my forehead. Damn, that hurts!

I glare at Luke, my glare intensifies when I see his lips tugging upward in an infuriating smirk.

“Forget it, Hazel.” He shakes his head, mirth leaking in his voice

Luke starts walking and I quickly get up, following behind.

“You’re such a jerk!” I jab a finger at his arm “You caught me off guard!”

“If you can’t take a flick to your forehead, how can you hunt?” Luke asks

Swallowing back a snarky reply, I retort to ignoring the jerk. We walk on silently, save for the sounds of the forest.

I wasn’t even thinking of hunting that adorable dear family! It had been his dark mind that started this conversation!

How can being flicked on the forehead be related to hunting?

Something wet drops on my head. Blinking out of my thought, I look up at the dark sky. Thick droplets of rainfall are down, each carrying at least a cup of water in it.

“Damn it,” Luke quickly folds the map and puts it away. Does this man ever look at anything but that damned piece of paper? How can he keep looking at it and not trip?

Droplets turn to splatters and soon enough, we’re forced to stop our walk and take shelter under a huge ash tree.

“Just perfect,” Luke murmurs to himself, furrowing his brows as he looks at the sky

Thunder roars, as if telling him to s\*\*\* it up.

With a sigh, Luke sits down beside me, our backs against the tree. For a few moments, awkward silence stretches between us. Well, I don’t know about him, But it’s awkward for me.

Alright, that’s it. I’ve reached my capacity of being awkward.

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I clap my hands cheerfully and turn to face Luke “Lets,”

“No.”

“Perfect,” I flash him a smile “I’ll do all the talking.”

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“Why me?” Luke looks up at the sky “Why did this have to happen to me?”

I give him the stink eye “Well if you don’t talk, someone has to.”

"Two hours," Luke gives me a look "For two hours you've been continuously eating up my mind. Do you ever shut up?"

"Please," I roll my eyes "If I ever shut up, you'll miss it."

"I'm not mad."

"I'm sure you're not," I pat him on the arm "anyways, did I tell about that one time when Carlos and I pranked

Darcie as ghosts and she started thinking she'd gone nuts? Well, it started because she—

Something warm presses against my lips. A finger to be precise.

"Not another word," Luke narrows his eyes "I don't care if you tore all of Darcie's dresses, or if she went mad, or if the world caught fire. Just shut up."

I puff up my cheeks like a blowfish and turn my face away from him. Luke heaves a sigh of relief and pulls out the soon-forsaken map again. Goddess, does he ever get tired of looking at it?

Minutes melt into hours but the rain only gets harsher. I think of mom, Carlos, Angelina, and Morgan. I think of what I'll do after I'm free of the pack. Finally tired of thinking, I glance at the wrist\*\*ch Luke was wearing. It was already well past night.

Luke is still relentlessly working. Calculating the days it'll take us to finish, marking different routes, calculating our food supply.

"Don't you ever get tired of working?" I ask, pulling my knees to my chest

"No," Luke says, not taking his eyes off the little notebook he was writing on. How the hell can he see in such dim light?

"Why is this hunt so important to you?" I ask softly

Luke stops writing, I sense the tension in the air, held by a silence like delicate gla\*\*. Luke puts back his notebook and pen.

"Why is leaving the pack so important to you?" he asks me

"Well," I avert my eyes, looking at the falling rain "I don't necessarily want to leave the pack. I just want... respect,

freedom. If that means leaving, so be it."

“Similarly,” Luke says “I want peace.”

“Winning will give you peace?”

“Yes.”

I open my mouth to ask how so? But then close it. All of us have our reasons and whatever his reason may be,

I’ll respect his drive. In the falling rain, under a tree that didn’t provide many shelters, in the dead of the night, I feel a little window open in my heart. Maybe Luke and I aren’t so different after all.

We’re both working for things in ways that might seem strange to others, but make sense to us.

I stand up from my place, aware of Luke’s gaze on me. I grin at him and offer him a hand.

“Come dance in the rain with me.”

Luke looks at my hand as if I’ve laid the moon out on my palm. Then he looks at my face, his own unreadable.

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“No way in hell am I doing that.”

With a shrug, I withdraw my hand. I leave the shelter of the tree and a gasp escapes my mouth when rain falls on me like a bucket of ice water. As a werewolf, though our senses are heightened, so is our resilience. No rain has given me goosebumps ever before.

I look over my shoulder at Luke “It’s a golden chance.”

“I’m good,” he says plainly

I turn around and start walking backward with my face at him “Oh come on, it’s fu—

Words evaporate on my tongue as my squeal interrupts me. My feet slip on the muddy ground and I fall face first

in a ditch.

Not a moment later, I hear booming laughter. Sudden, unexpectedly cackling. I wipe the mud off my face, my wide eyes on the unbelievable sight in front of me. Luke Winters, the most monotonous, stern person alive is laughing.

“You’re such an a\*\*hole,” I say despite my smile

“That was gold,” Luke says, his laughter coming to an end

I take a fist full of mud and throw it at him, my aim is amazing because it catches him straight in the face.

A laugh bubbles past my lips as I stare at his stunned face, mud dripping from it in ugly bits. Luke wipes his face, his features hard as stone before he storms towards me.

“Luke, back off,” I hurriedly stand up and take a step back, a ridiculous grin on my face

“Why?” He asks “I thought you wanted me to come to enjoy the weather.”

He lunges for me, I step away just in time, another laugh escapes me. Not even a moment later, a warm hand grabs my arm and pulls me back. Luke’s other arm wraps around me, holding me prisoner.

“You really can’t be a hunter,” He says

We’re standing so close, I can see every fleck of the storm in his eyes, ever-intense, slightly amused. His genes have done him good. Every angular line on his face is perfect, though hardened by experience. Under his subtle tan, I can see little scars across his skin, telling stories he never would. Even in the chilling rain, the warmth of his body radiates to mine.

Luke leans forward, but this time, my heart hammers hard against my chest, the air around us suddenly warm and heavy.

“But you make a good enough prey,” His warm breath fans my face, making a shiver race down my spine

“You know how the game ends, Hazel.” Luke says, his own eyes flickering across my face before they meet mine again “Now I’m going to kill you.”

My eyes widen and I stare at his dead serious face, lost for words.

Then his lips twitch upward.

“You a\*\*hole!” I punch him hard across the chest but Luke simply lets me go

“You thought I’d kill you?” He says nonchalantly as he goes back to the tree

“Well, No, but,” I hear a small chuckle and glare at his back

We both sit down in our previous spots but I glare at Luke again. He ruffles my hair, the action so sudden and strange my expression falters.

“You’re too paranoid for your good,” he says with a shake of his head

When he meets my eyes again, I see something other than a storm of thoughts, something like... acceptance? His next words prove me right.

“But you’re alright, Hazel.”

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