

15 | A Different Breed

Riot lingers claustrophobically behind me as I lead the way back to the cabin. He isn't touching me, except for his hot breath tickling my shoulder. I bite my tongue.

He's not stable. He's been struggling far worse than what I realized. If I want him to trust me, then I'm sure as hell not going to push him away.

We walk through the front door that was slammed open. He frowns when his eyes land on the couch. One end is propped in the wall, drywall powder dusting it white.

"We'll worry about it later," I say, going around him to jerk the door handle out of yet another hole in the wall. I shut it and lock it. "You should sleep."

I take in his weary appearance. The circles are still under his eyes, the whites of which look bloodshot and glassy at best. His coppery hair is messier than usual, going in all directions and teased by rough fingers running through it too frequently.

He looks like shit, but somehow, he still manages to look more attractive than any other being. It irks me.

I half expect him to argue, but instead he nods tiredly. I take his wrist and lead him up the stairs without any complaints. Once in his room, I walk him over to the bed. As soon as he sits down I go to the dressers, rummaging through them.

I return to his side, holding out a pair of boxers and dark grey sweatpants. While I wait for him to take them I keep my vision busy in a hardcore stare on the furthest wall.

"I couldn't find the shirts. Hope this is okay," I say, trying anything to get rid of the awkward silence.

He mumbles a quick 'it's fine,' before he takes the clothes and stands up. I turn my back to him as he puts them on. The bed dips so low, signaling for me to look again.

He's laying face down in the pillow, his elbows sprawled out to the sides. His back is sculpted just like the rest of his body: defined shoulder blades and prominent muscles.

My roaming eyes stop dead when they land on a point of interest—a black insignia burned into the base of his neck. The ink depicts the head of a snarling dire wolf: the symbol of the packless.

Centuries ago, even in primal times, wolves kept to packs—the same packs which are still alive today. But there were some wolves, feral ones, who didn't. They were dire wolves, said to have different genetics than the rest of us. A different supernatural breed of werewolf.

As society evolved, the dire wolves were looked down upon. They were feared because they were wild and savage, so they started being hunted. Eventually the population started dying out. A petition was passed on a thin thread in hopes to spare some of those who acted more civil.

The few that were spared were branded with the dire wolf insignia, so nobody would forget what they were. And any of those who reproduced would pass on to their offspring both the brand and the reputation that it came with.

But that was ancient history. It was assumed long ago that they had went extinct. That the last of them had finally died out.

Now as I stare at one in the flesh—the flesh of my mate—that all changes.

Riot Sydney is the descendent of a dire wolf.

Aimee was right.

A different breed of werewolf.

My hand had been lingering over him, itching with the desire to run my fingers over his skin. I pull it back quickly and step away.

"Um, goodnight," I rush out, my mind so blurred that I can't even begin to think. I close the door behind me, hoping he doesn't notice my hurry as I hasten down the hall toward my own room.

This shouldn't change anything, but it does. That symbol is a large part of his past. A dark part at that. A part so potentially full of secrets that it seems toxic.

It makes me realize how little I actually know about him. My only prior knowledge of him is that he's an infamous tyrant in exile. Now I find out that it gets even more despicable?

I burrow into the blankets of "my" bed, wrapping them loosely around me. I shouldn't be tired since I've slept so much lately, but the mental exhaustion is wearing me down. I stare at the sheets blankly until my eyes start to burn. It's not until I finally blink myself out of the trance that I realize I'm pressing my sleeve against my nose and mouth. Inhaling Riot's scent as I fall asleep in a daze.

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When I wake up in the middle of the night there's no scratching in the hall. No tormented sounds or jingling of the door knob. It unnerves me more than when it was there.

Crawling out of bed as if I'd never been asleep, I tread lightly down the hall to Riot's door. I hesitate, my hand hovering over the knob.

There's an aching pain in my chest, telling me that he's hurting. It takes all of my effort to hold back a whimper from my wolf. And even then it's not enough. The sad, pathetic sound leaks out.

The door is yanked open, making me jolt. I manage to catch only a glimpse of a figure standing there before arms wrap around me and pull me inside.

He pushes me against the door as it clicks shut, trapping me between it and his warm body. The burning hot skin of his torso melts through my t-shirt as he presses against me.

His head dips down, nuzzling his face in the crook of my neck. He breathes in deeply, dragging his nose across my skin. Despite the heat radiating from his body, I shiver.

Past his shoulder I can see that his bed is in a mess. The sheets are twisted and sprawled everywhere, pillows strewn across the floor. His fingers dig into my wrists with a death grip.

"You haven't slept?" I barely get the words out, my breathing shallow. His head rocks back and forth on my shoulder, answering 'no.'

"Stay," he murmurs against my hair. That single word makes my heart flutter. I can't quite tell if it's a plea or a command. Either way, I nod silently.

He steps back and walks to the bed. I follow, crawling into the opposite side of the bed. My back faces him, about two feet of distance separating us.

A few minutes pass of staring at the back of my eyelids, fully awake. My fingertips worry at the material of my shirt as I try to relax.

A low growl behind me makes me stiffen. It stops with a sudden, louder note. The bed dips and the sheets rustle as Riot tosses and turns, smaller frustrated growls coming from him.

I tingle with the instinct to comfort him.

Why am I so bad at this?

Taking a deep breath, I roll over to face him. His hands are pressed against his face, his elbows sticking up in the air.

I banish that two feet between us, sidling up to him and throwing my arm across his exposed stomach. I use the side of his chest as a pillow, warm tingles shooting through my cheek.

He tenses beneath my touch. Right when I brace myself to be shoved over, a large arm drapes across my back. It pulls me closer against him.

I wait for the tension in his body to dissipate, but it never does. His muscles stay rigid, making it the equivalent of hugging a thermal stone statue. I frown against his side and let out a long sigh, the hot air only blowing back in my face.

As if sensing my aggravation, a hand comes up to brush my hair behind my shoulder. Tentatively, he touches my ear, taking the thick metal piece pierced into the cartilage between his fingertips.

"Visari," he states, playing gently with the metallic green ring.

Every werewolf has a dilation ring in the top of their ear. The color dilates a pack's affiliation, each color symbolizing a different pack. The rings are wide, around three millimeters thick, and made with an unbendable steel. Once it goes in your ear as a newborn, it never comes out.

I nod against his chest, mumbling a soft "yes."

He's quiet for a couple of seconds. "Go to sleep."

That's the last thing either of us say before the silence takes place for the rest of the night. About an hour in, and I feel Riot relax beside me. A small smile cracks my lips as I close my eyes.

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A long, satisfying groan leaves me as I stretch my arms above my head, waking up. My eyes open to an empty bed, Riot's lingering scent the only proof that I didn't sleep alone.

Not thinking much of it, I get up and enter the bathroom. The air is hot with steam and heavy with the smell of body wash, signaling that he was here recently.

Dismissing it, I wonder back into his room to look through the dressers, once again scraping together a pair of clothes with sheer guessing of the drawers. Taking my newfound outfit back into the black marble themed bathroom, I quickly strip down.

Just as expected, the water is already hot when I turn the shower on.

I take my sweet time in there, letting the pleasant stream massage my back. Somehow, my mind drifts to Nathan.

Today is the day I would've married him against my will. The day I would've turned into a puppet at the end of his strings. But instead I'm here, in a cabin I don't know the location of, trying to teach the meaning of the mate bond to an exiled tyrant.

Oddly enough, I'm grateful for the change of fate.

A er stepping out of the shower and taking a towel from the cabinet, I begin drying off. The plush fabric is so soft against my skin, encouraging me to take my time. When I stand up from drying my legs, I come face to face with myself in the mirror above the pristine sink.

My blonde hair, naturally highlighted with darker streaks, lays in wet, straight strands reaching down to my navel. Realizing how exposed I am, my hands raise the towel up in front of me, covering my stomach from view. Shifting my gaze up from there, it lands on the reflection of the metallic green ring, a convenient distraction.

Visari, the word comes to mind.

My pack. Just the name comforts me with a feeling of nostalgia. Even if a good portion of my memories are painful, that's not the land's fault. It was Alpha Andre's and his egotistical son's. It makes me wonder if I'll ever step foot on that territory ever again. I have no idea where I am. Even if I could go back, would I even want to?

A series of banging through the walls catches my attention. I hold my breath on a whim, listening as it gets more frantic.

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So some of my original concepts were introduced in this chapter; the ear rings and the whole dire wolf thing. It's the little things like that that make me love this world I made so much lol.

Please feel free to share your thoughts :)

Thanks for reading!

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