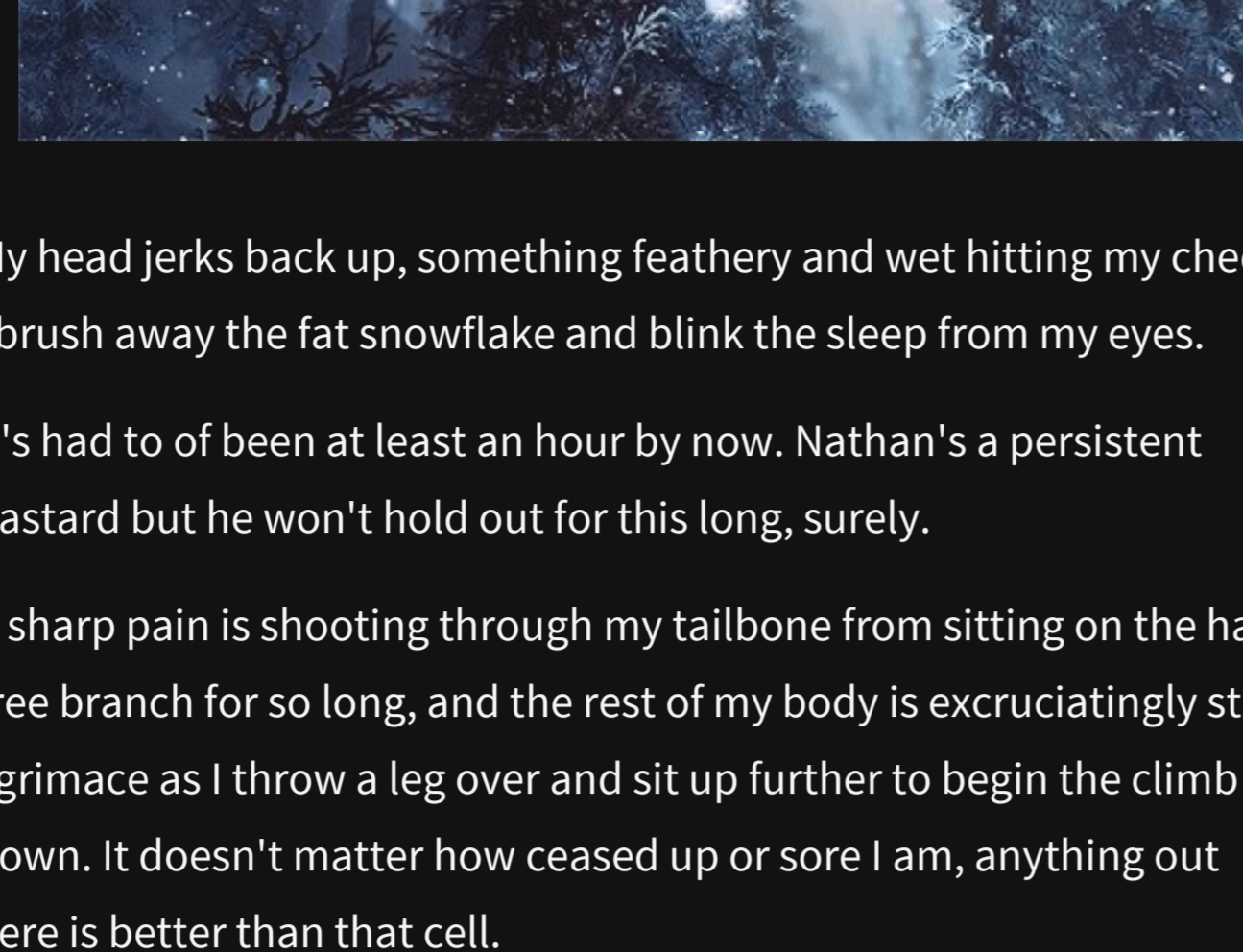


08 | Name Games



My head jerks back up, something feathery and wet hitting my cheek. I brush away the fat snowflake and blink the sleep from my eyes.

It's had to of been at least an hour by now. Nathan's a persistent bastard but he won't hold out for this long, surely.

A sharp pain is shooting through my tailbone from sitting on the hard tree branch for so long, and the rest of my body is excruciatingly sti . I grimace as I throw a leg over and sit up further to begin the climb down. It doesn't matter how ceased up or sore I am, anything out here is better than that cell.

My claws scrape into the bark as I slide down the trunk of the tree, groaning deeply as soon as my feet hit the ground and gravity becomes more of a reality. Giant flakes of snow float down around me, landing in my hair and sticking to my clothes as I stretch. The atmosphere has darkened, the sky turning a dreary grey.

Maybe he went back to his daddy with his tail tucked.

No more than a whole five seconds later and the loud snap of a stick snapping comes from the direction I had.

Of course. Daddy would be mad if he went back. And we can't have that, can we?

He won't leave me alone. Nathan may be a pompous ass, but he's a persistent one.

It becomes clear to me what my options are. I either stay here and get thrown back in that hellhole, or I leave. The only way I escape is if I start walking now and never turn back.

But there's nowhere to go. I'm oblivious to the world outside of Visari. I know that there's other tribal packs: Oarca, Bastieel, and Talonia. But I don't know their customs. I don't know their people or their land or their way of life. Everything is foreign beyond here.

Another sound, like a body pushing through vegetation, is closer now. Panic starts to set in, the tingling in my limbs urging them to take action.

He's getting closer. Quickly, undeniably, and terrifyingly closer.

I run. I run for all my miserable, wasted life is worth without any fucking idea where I'm going to. I just run.

Twigs snap at my ankles and my bare feet are yet again cold and pained on the frozen ground. But I'm not stopping. I don't care if I leave a trail of blood in my path.

It irks me that I can't shi , since four legs are infinitely faster than two. But shi ing now would be like sounding the alarm for him to come find me. For whatever reason, a werewolf can sense whenever another one shi s nearby. It's a strange feeling, like a presence over your shoulder except the presence comes from the shi ing wolf's location.

The next thing I know my shoulder is being plowed into the hard ground as a giant furry mass hits me from behind. I can feel the skin being scraped o my arm and elbow and the bloody wounds being filled with dirt and snow.

My jaw is slammed shut in the process. My teeth clamp down involuntarily on my tongue, sending tears to my eyes.

I don't even register the pain. Instead my attention goes to what's standing over me and pinning my back against the ground. And it's not Nathan's light grey wolf, either.

It's that giant, nightmarish monster I saw right before my pack was taken over. The one that drug me into the woods a paradox of gentle canines at the back of my neck. I never got a good look then, only a few glimpses through bleary, barely conscious eyes.

Now I have a good look, gaping up at it as it looks back with searing eyes.

I'm unable to move, staring petrified. I jerk when he moves his muzzle closer to my cheek. He smells it first, and then nudges the loose tendrils of hair aside with his cold nose.

A drop of blood slides down my face, leaving a warm, sticky trail all the way to my jaw. I realize there's a numb burning there, like a claw scratched into my cheek. I must have done it during the fall and not even noticed.

He starts to lick the wound, his so canine tongue acting as a painkiller. The blood is wiped away and the burn starts to die out.

Once satisfied, he starts sni ing elsewhere, as of searching for my wounds. He makes a low growling sound when his nose stops just above my collarbone.

Right overtop of the two red stains; the stains made my Nathan's broken fingers.

Just as suddenly as he'd flatten me to the ground, he hurriedly steps o . For a split second, I think there's a flash of red in his eyes. But when I look again, it's gone.

As he turns away from me, I take the opportunity to stand up.

His wolf is a sight to cower at. Supernatural wolves by default are abnormally large, but there's something more looming about this one that I just can't explain. Even in a standing position he still casts a shadow over me.

When he turns back to me there's a subtle flash of light within his irises, followed by a quiet rumbling in his chest. Then he jerks his head in the direction of the village, staring me down with a threatening gaze. It's like he's accusing me of something.

He's angry with me. But why?

Then I realize. This is technically his pack now. And now he's caught me running away from it.

I wring my hands together nervously in front of my stomach. My heart is beating so loud that there's no way he can't hear it. But it's not from the adrenaline of the chase this time; it's from fear.

What will he do to me?

All the warnings I've heard whispered, all the craze, all the terror everyone has had for this wolf all pops into my head. What will he do? Judging by the stories, the possibilities are endless.

I take timid step backward.

A horrifyingly enraged snarl rips from his lips as soon as I do.

This radiance of power and aggression that he gives o , it's so strong that I can hardly control myself.

For the first time in my life, my instincts are telling me to cower. I just want to lay down and cover my head with my hands and hope for the best.

Yet I don't. I stay standing, staring at the ground in front of me and fighting the urge to close my eyes. When he starts to move towards me, with his enormous paws crunching the leaves beneath them, I tense up even further.

He circles me, walking around until I can feel his presence behind me. Then his nose prods me between my shoulders blades, forcefully shoving me forward.

He's taking me back to the village. And back to that cretinous asshole. Fantastic.

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The entire way back he follows close behind— close enough for his hot breath to fan the back of my neck.

By the time we reach the the Alpha's cabin, which is assumedly his now, I feel like a prisoner. He escorts me right through the door, not o ering the chance to falter a single step. My cheek is bleeding again and a dampness is on my hairline that I can't decide between being moisture from his breath, nervous sweat, or werewolf slobber. I settle for not knowing.

I'm guided through the large living room with, up the stairs, and down the hallway. He prods me in the shoulder with his nose for the hundredth time, silently ordering me to stop in front of the door to the guest room from before.

Taking the hint, I open the door and enter.

He gestures into the room with his head closed, I walk further in, looking around. The door suddenly clicks silently, leaving me alone.

Now what? Does he expect me to do something here? Is he waiting for me to make a run for it again?

I sit down on the bed, sinking down in the plush comforter. I look at my lap, spacing out while mindlessly picking at the hem of my—his—shirt.

I'm still zoning out when the doorknob turns suddenly, making me jump in my own skin.

He's standing in the threshold of the door. My eyes go directly to what's in his hands.

"What are you doing?" I blurt out with a bit of a squeak. I swallow nervously, watching his every movement like a hawk.

He approaches me, a long, thick rope hanging in his grip.

"Hold out your hands," he orders, standing in front of me now.

"Are you serious? You're gonna tie me up now?" I ask with a skeptical laugh. This might not be the time to be laughing, but are you kidding me?

He growls loudly and suddenly, making me yank my arms up in a heartbeat and hold them out at his mercy.

He starts by tying my wrists together, then my hands while my fists are balled, making it impossible to spread my fingers, and henceforth impossible to use my claws. He ties the opposite end of the rope to the bedpost, giving me leeway to move around a bit but never leave. Just like a dog on a leash.

He avoids eye contact the whole time he works, making me wonder if it's possible that he feels somewhat guilty for this.

The lighting of his obsidian irises is doing the flickering thing again, like his wolf is trying to come out but he's fighting to restrain it.

Typically, a werewolf's eyes only turn black when his primal instincts are triggered. His have stayed dark, which means he's been on the edge of losing control to his wolf this entire time.

He starts towards the door and I suddenly feel the need to stop him. Like some part of me wants him to stay, if only for a few seconds longer.

"Are you at least gonna tell me your name?" I ask indifferently.

I know his name. I've heard it o of Alpha Andre's tongue. But something, some part of me, needs to hear it o his.

He pauses with his hand over the light switch, not bothering to turn around. Even beneath the fabric of his shirt I can see the taut muscles of his back tightening.

"Riot Sydney."

A few seconds pass as the name sinks in. Goosebumps rise on my skin and entire body prickles with alertness. I visualize the spelling of it in my head and repeat it various times.

He looks over his shoulder, not at me, but exposing the side of his face in my direction. "What's yours?"

I'm quiet for a while before answering, "Why should I tell you?"

I say it mostly to annoy him, but partially because I truly don't see a reason to tell him. He doesn't deserve that yet.

"Because I told you mine," he growls, something he seems to do a lot. His fingers grip the frame of the doorway harder, causing the wood to crack loudly.

"So? I didn't o er you a trade," I hu as I lay over on my side and squirm to get comfortable. Which is a challenging task when unable to spread my arms at all.

Once settled, I rest my head on the pillow and close my eyes.

"Goodnight," I say curtly.

It doesn't take long for the light to flip o and for the room to be bathed in darkness. Directly following that, the door slams aggressively closed.

Despite it, I can't find it in me to be scared anymore.

I lay there, fully ready to go to sleep, but something eats at my conscience.

In the push of my mind, I know that it's because he's angry with me. But I push that thought away.

I got the last word in and that's all that matters.

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Thoughts on Riot's intentions/emotions?

I don't really know what other questions to ask...

Thanks for reading!

✧

Oh yeah, I made a signature banner thing. Not sure how I feel about it.

