

The Unwanted Wolf by EverEri Chapter 1

Chapter 1

Thave been alone ever since I was sixteen. I was cast away from my family, rejected for reasons I could never understand. I was a loving daughter, good at school, and had plenty of friends. On the day of my sixteenth birthday, my father gave me one look, and that was all it took. I was given one thousand dollars, a single bag to pack my clothes in, and told that if I ever showed my face to the pack

again, I wouldn't live to see another day.

I didn't understand it. Werewolves stuck together, especially in a world where humans hunted our kind for fun. I was a good daughter, a good werewolf, but apparently I had done something so terrible that even my own family rejected me. They never even bothered to explain to me what I had done so wrong. Instead of celebrating a momentous time in my life with balloons, cake, and friends, I stood all alone at a bus stop with silent tears streaming down my face.

It had been almost five years since that day, and I, Adira Lyna, had become an expert at being alone. With the money I was given, traveled to another city with no known wolf packs and did what I had to in order to survive.

lie in bed a week before my 21st birthday, not wanting to get up. The weather predicted rain today, and I felt lethargic and heavy. If I had a choice, I would lie in bed all day, waiting for the sunshine. At last, I had no choice but to get up and get ready for work. I couldn't afford to skip a day and lose out on a bigger paycheck. Slowly I sat up and started getting ready for work. My apartment was small but comfortable. My bed shared a space with the living room and served as my couch as well. The kitchen and bathrooms were separate

areas. If I ever had friends over, I would likely be embarrassed by the small space, but that would require me to actually have friends.

I moved around, grabbing my apron and pulling my hair into a ponytail. It felt darker than usual in the room, so I pulled the curtains open, revealing a dark and gloomy sky. It wasn't raining yet, but the clouds were threatening a downpour. I tucked my umbrella into my backpack, pulled on my light jacket, and dashed out the door. I was running a little late due to not wanting to get out of bed, which meant I would be running part way to work.

I jogged down the flights of stairs and pushed the door open, instantly being hit with a wave of cold. Fall had finally greeted us. I lived on the third floor of a run down apartment complex, which could be exhausting at the end of a long day, but I couldn't complain too much. It was within my budget, and I was able to walk to work, saving on transportation costs. I half jogged to the coffee shop I worked at, anxious that I was going to be late. I was sure the manager wouldn't care if I was a few minutes late, since I was typically early, but I had this overwhelming need to be perfect. I despised the idea of being even a moment late.

Dashing into the alleyway, I made my way to the employee entrance. The door was

already unlocked, which meant I wasn't the first one there. I hurried in, but then I slowed down as I got to the breakroom. My lungs ached a little, but I did what I could to make my breathing seem normal. I didn't want anyone to notice that I was a little out of breath. I went to my locker, still trying to get my breathing under control and put my jacket and bag into the locker.

"Look, you don't have to run to work all of the time," Lana said from right behind me, making me jump. Lana was my manager and the coffee shop owner. She was the only other person who ever beat me to work. It was typically a coin flip on who was here first.

"I don't know what you're talking about." My voice was still a little strained. The cold weather was making it more difficult to recover.

"Okay hun. If you want to pretend you didn't rush here, I'm not going to push it, but we both know the truth." Lana started heading to her office.

I smiled to myself. I had been working here for almost three years, and Lana knew me well. She also knew not to push me on these matters. I closed my locker and started heading to the main shop area. "I'm going to start prepping everything," I called out to Lana.

"Okay hun. I'll send the others to help once they get in." Lana's voice was a little muffled from her office.

I made my way to the front and started pulling the chairs off the tops of the tables and then set them down nicely. I glanced at my watch. We only had about twenty minutes before the customers would start pouring in to get their boost for work. I turned on all of the machines after setting up all of the tables, and that's when I started hearing voices from the breakroom.

"How is she here early every time? I just don't get it."

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My heart sank hearing my coworkers' conversation. I knew they didn't like me much, but it still hurt a little hearing their words. I leaned against the counter and took a deep breath. I couldn't let them see me without a smile when they eventually joined me. I couldn't

let them know that I felt tired. I had to come across as the perfect employee or risk giving them more ammo than they already had against me.

Crystal and Haley sauntered into the room, in no rush at all. We only had ten minutes before we would be bombarded with orders and people in a hurry. They didn't seem to care.

"Crystal, can you put out the cream and sugar, and Haley, can you start the pots of dark and medium roasts?" I always delegated the morning tasks or else those two never actually started helping. That was probably why they didn't like me much. They would rather talk

about the cute boys in their classes. They were both college freshmen, young and naive to the world. Their parents still paid for everything for them, so they didn't really need this job. It was just for "life experience."

“Sure thing.” Crystal rolled her eyes as she got started, but I pretended like I didn’t see it. I wasn’t actually their manager, but thankfully they still listened to me.

Two minutes before open, Lana exited her office with the keys to the front door in her hand. “Ready girls?”

“Ready as I’ll ever be,” Haley said, straightening her apron.

I nodded, putting on my best customer service smile. It felt more strained than usual today. Lana opened the doors, letting in the line of customers already outside the door. Let the battle begin.

There was barely a moment to breathe as one customer came in after another. By 10:30am, I felt like I was ready to collapse. Even Lana hopped behind the counter to help make drinks and take orders for a while with how busy it was. When it finally started to slow down, I took the opportunity to run to the bathroom. After I was done, I stood over the sink and looked at my reflection for the first time all morning. My eyes were sunken in, and I looked paler than usual. Was I getting sick? I didn’t get sick, but I didn’t look great. I splashed water over my face and prepared myself to push through the rest of the day. I couldn’t afford to go home.

As I left the bathroom, I heard Crystal and Haley whispering to each other behind the counter.

“Did you see his eyes?” Crystal said, glancing over to a table.

“I know! I would love those eyes staring into me as he-”

I cleared my throat as I made my way behind the counter. It was inappropriate for them to be talking about customers that way. My

presence did exactly as I expected. They stopped talking, giving me a dirty look.

“She’s no fun,” Crystal said under her breath. They didn’t know that I could hear everything they said, no matter how much they hushed their volume. It was one of the perks of being a wolf. Although sometimes I wish my heightened senses didn’t catch everything they said. It was hurtful at times.

I grabbed a towel and started wiping down some spills on the counter while waiting for the next customer. Haley finished making a drink and called out to the customer. “Mark!” She set the drink at the pick up station and lingered for longer than usual. Was this the customer they were whispering about earlier?

My curiosity got the best of me, and I glanced over to the man walking towards the counter. My heart skipped a beat as I made contact with his piercing blue eyes. I couldn’t look away as he stared directly at me. He picked up his drink and completely ignored the words Haley was trying to say to him. He also didn’t touch the napkin Haley had scribbled her digits on.

“No thanks,” he said in a voice that shook me to my core. It was deeper than I had expected, and I couldn’t move.

He still held my eyes captive as he picked up his drink and took a sip. I couldn’t look away either. This man was not human. He was a werewolf, and his presence was completely overwhelming. I had never come into contact with another wolf who emanated so much power before. He had to be an alpha, a strong one at that. I couldn’t even breathe.

“Adira? Adira?” Lana waved her hand in front of my face, finally catching my attention. I heard the deep chuckle from the wolf, which rocked me a little. I finally broke eye contact and looked at Lana. “Oh yeah? Sorry. What’s up?”

Lana squinted at me. “Can you come to my office for a minute?”

I followed her into her office, but as I walked away I could feel the man’s eyes following me. It caused a shiver down my spine. He probably knew I was a wolf just like him. I just hoped he would leave me alone.

Lana shut her office door once I was inside. Suddenly I was focused on my situation again, and my heart started pounding against my chest. I hated getting in trouble.

“Please have a seat.” Lana motioned towards the chair in front of her desk.

I sat down and instantly started playing with my finger nails. I felt like I couldn’t breathe.

“Lana, I’m sorry.” I went to say more, but she cut me off.

“Sorry for what?” She knitted her eyebrows together until her eyes went wide. “Oh for staring at that beauty? Oh please, you’re fine.

It’s okay to stare at eye candy every once in a while.” She laughed a little.

I smiled out of relief, but it still felt a little forced. I could feel small beads of sweat starting to gather on my forehead. Was Lana’s

office usually so hot? “So, uh, if I’m not in trouble, what did you want to talk about?”

“You have been working for me for a while now. Almost three years if I remember correctly. And you have been an exemplary employee the entire time. It’s about time I give you the official title to match the work you have done for me.” A grin pulled across her lips.

My breathing became a little shallow, and I was having a hard time concentrating on her words. “So you’re saying...?”

“I want to make you the manager of the store. This means you will have a copy of the keys and will be able to open or close without me around. Of course this would come with a pay raise and a few other responsibilities.” She paused, waiting for my reaction.

“That’s great news.” My words came out bland, but they shouldn’t have. A promotion would mean I wouldn’t have to kill myself by taking extra shifts. I would make more money and maybe I would even be able to get a better apartment.

“Are you okay?” Lana’s smile faded.

“I’m fine.” I couldn’t even fake a smile. My body felt weak, and my stomach was starting to churn.

“You don’t look fine. You should go home. We can discuss this when you are feeling better.” Her voice showed her concern.

“No, no, I can’t go home. I’m supposed to work a double shift.” My heart started to race.

“I need the money.”

“And I need healthy employees.” Lana’s voice was stern. “Go home. Your health is more important right now.”

I stood up, ready to protest, but the room felt like it was moving. “Maybe you’re right.” I didn’t want to go home. I hadn’t taken a sick

day since starting. As a wolf, my immune system was incredible. I never got sick, so what was going on? I took a deep breath to orient myself. "Tell Haley to make sure she-

"I know how to run my coffee shop." Lana laughed at this. "Don't worry, I can handle the babies. You just go home and get some sleep."

I nodded. I needed to save my energy for my walk home anyway. I got up and left her office. On my way out, I felt my eyes searching for the wolf without even thinking about it. I didn't see him anywhere, and my chest tightened a little. Of course he wouldn't stick around. Other werewolves never stuck around me, and that was probably for the best. I started making my way to the break room to grab my stuff. I didn't bother putting on my jacket, since I felt like I was burning up. Opening the door to the alley, I felt the cold fall air wash over me. For a moment, I felt like I could breathe again. I wiped my forehead, removing the sweat that had collected there. I didn't even realize just how much I was sweating. It felt like I had just come out of a furnace.

"Are you okay?" a deep voice asked from the end of the alley way.

I looked over and saw the piercing eyes from before. My heart started racing again. Who was this man, and why was he here? I was hoping he would've just left me alone, but part of me also felt relieved. I stared at the man unblinking.

He took a couple of steps forward. He seemed cautious in his movements. "You don't look okay. Maybe you should sit down?"

"I'm fine," I finally managed to stutter. I tried to take a step forward and felt woozy again. In a blink of an eye, he grabbed onto my arm to steady me. My entire nervous system was suddenly on fire, and I couldn't breathe.

I pulled my arm from his grip. "I don't know who you think you are, but you don't have to concern yourself with me." I wasn't used to being around other wolves anymore, and I didn't like that he was in my space touching me. I started to walk past him down the alley to head home.

A drip fell on my cheek, and I paused in my tracks, looking at the sky. It had been holding out all day, and of course it would start raining as soon as I had to walk home. The rain started getting stronger, so I thought it would be best to keep moving. I took another step and felt extremely light headed. I reached out for a wall to stabilize myself, and that's when things started going dark, and the world felt like it was falling.