

The Unwanted Wolf

Chapter 5

I took a step back, letting go of Mark. “Wolfsbane?” We studied it growing up. It was extremely difficult to obtain, and there was a code that werewolves didn’t use it against other werewolves. It was mostly known to be used by wolf hunters, since they didn’t have any respect for werewolves. “How?” When would that have even happened. Mark’s frown deepened. “That’s what concerns me. Someone knows what you are and has directly targeted you.” His arm moved towards mine, but then he thought better of it and pulled it back to the side.

“I don’t even know who could have dosed me or when it would’ve happened.” I felt scared at this attack. If Mark hadn’t been in the alley when I had passed out...

“There’s more.” Mark hesitated before continuing. He probably didn’t want to overwhelm me even more. “When Doctor Zayla was analyzing your blood, she noticed some unusual markers in it.”

I knitted my eyebrows. “What does that mean?”

Mark bit his lip. “It seems like you may not be full werewolf. She thinks that’s the only reason you are still alive. The wolfsbane would’ve killed you otherwise.”

That didn’t make any sense. “But both of my parents are purebloods. I don’t understand.”

“We don’t either,” he said, running his fingers through his hair. “You smell like a pureblood to me. You even smell.” He cut himself off.

When he didn’t continue, I started feeling anxious. Was my smell the reason everyone rejected me? “Smell bad? Please just tell me. I can face the rejection if you don’t want to be around me. I have been rejected enough in my life.” I started feeling heated at the thought.

“No!” Mark instantly grabbed my hand. “In fact, it’s the opposite. You smell wonderful. You smell like my...” He hesitated, looking at the ground. Finally his eyes found mine and he continued. “You smell like my mate.”

“You’re crazy.” I didn’t even stop to think about the implications. I had never even thought about finding my mate. I couldn’t even

find a pack to accept me. I tried to pull my hand away, but he gripped it tighter.

“Am I? Surely you can feel it. The sparks when our hands touch? A wonderful smell when you’re near me? What about your wolf? Surely she feels something?”

I stopped resisting my grip. Is that what Shadow had been trying to tell me? What he was saying made sense. I felt more drawn to him than any other wolf, but it wasn’t this instant connection all of the stories made it seem like. Nothing was shouting mate to me, and I didn’t feel like I was in love with him. He was a stranger. I didn’t even know if I could trust him. “I guess. I don’t know. I haven’t really had a moment to think about it, being on the brink of death and all.” I laughed awkwardly.

Mark didn’t laugh back. “Look, I don’t want to pressure you into anything, but I don’t want to lose you before we have even gotten to know each other. I’m not asking you for forever, but I am asking you to give it a chance. I can help you figure out who is going after you and even help protect you. If you still want to go on your own, I understand.” He looked sad at the thought.

It was against my better judgment to say yes. I wasn’t afraid of the rejection of the pack this time. I was afraid that if everything Mark was saying was right, then I would get my hopes up. I was afraid of him changing his mind, coming to the same conclusion my own family did.

He can help us, Shadow echoed in my head.

“So let me get this all straight. I was feeling sick and weak and even passed out because someone poisoned me with wolfsbane. This is likely a hunter who has discovered my true identity. My blood also shows that I am not a purebred werewolf, which is further verified by the fact that I am still alive after taking a lethal dose of wolfsbane. On top of all of that, we are mates. Because of this you want me to give you a chance to help me figure out who is trying to kill me, figure out what I am, while giving us a chance to get to know each other so I can decide if pursuing you as my mate is worth it. That’s a lot.” I took a deep breath. I don’t know if this is worse or better than I was

Mark ran his fingers through his hair. “I know this is a lot, and you don’t trust me. I can’t prove any of this to you yet, but if you can give me a chance, I want to show you that you can trust me. I want to help.”

I searched his eyes for any sign he was lying. I felt drawn to him, and I wasn’t sure if it was in fact the mate bond or maybe I was tired

of completely relying on myself. Finally, I nodded my head. "Okay. I can do that." I really hoped I wasn't making a mistake.

All of the tension was released from Mark's body. "Great! You have no idea how happy I am to hear that. The first step would be to go to the pack house and talk to Doctor Zayla. She would be able to elaborate. We also need to discuss adding some security for your safety. You were targeted once. They will likely target you again. It might even be best if you moved into the pack house."

"Whoa." I put my hands up. "Slow down a little. That's a lot, and I don't feel comfortable moving in with you. I don't know you and your pack. And you don't know me. What if you decide I can't be trusted after spending more time with me?"

"You're my mate. There's no chance of that." Mark sounded so confident, and it made butterflies churn in my stomach.

"Still. I have a life. I can't just drop everything. I appreciate your help, I really do, but I have been hurt too many times before. I can't just dive right into this." I could feel panic starting to build.

Mark frowned and took a step forward. "I'm sorry. I went at full speed. I'm just excited to have met you and terrified that someone might take you away before I have a chance to prove myself to you." He cupped my cheek. "We can move at your pace with a few exceptions. I don't think you should be left alone until we know more about who attacked you. Other than that, I will let you make the decisions."

I got lost in Mark's touch and eyes for a moment. With his hand on my cheek, I wanted to give him anything he asked for. Is this the feeling that came with finding a mate? It was both comforting and terrifying. Being able to fully rely on another person would be a weight off my shoulders, but I didn't want to get lost in someone.

I grabbed Mark's hand on my face and let my fingers linger a moment longer than intended. "Thank you." I moved his hand from my face, but I didn't let go. I didn't want to. Finally, I let him go. "Let's just take this step by step. I don't know if I can handle making too many decisions at once. This is a lot to process and figure out."

Mark nodded. "Okay, step one, let's go talk to Doctor Zayla. I think she would be able to help you understand some things a little better, and maybe you could provide some insight that would help her put all of the pieces together."

Mark held his hand out to me, and I hesitated to take it. A part of me wanted to grab his hand and run away with him forever, but

that part scared me. I knew that was the work of the mate bond, but I had been forced to use my logic over the years in order to survive. If I had relied on my emotions, I may have given up a long time ago. Being unwanted for so many years had an effect on a person's soul. It left them untrusting and alone. I didn't want to be like that. I didn't want to end up alone because of my fears from the past.

I grabbed Mark's hand and nodded, letting him lead the way. An instant feeling of comfort washed over me as Mark pulled me along. I had no logical reason to know this, but a part of me knew things would be okay if I had Mark by my side.

Mark led me to his car which was nearby. He opened the door for me, a foreign gesture to me, and then got into the driver's side. The car ride was silent at first. I wasn't sure if Mark was trying not to overwhelm me or if he just felt awkward around me. A part of me worried that he was already regretting his decision to help me.

"What made your pack move to this area?" I finally asked, breaking the tension.

Mark's jaw tightened at this question. I had a feeling I had hit a sensitive topic, but I also couldn't help admiring his beautiful jawline.

After a moment, Mark answered. "I suppose you deserve to know more about me as well. I don't like talking about it much, if I'm being honest. We had trouble in our previous pack. We ended up breaking up into two packs since nothing could be properly decided. We tried to split the territory as well, but after a while, I realized that would never work. My pack members were getting hurt in fights with the other pack. I thought it would be best to leave and establish a new territory before things got worse."

"That's awfully protective of you." I wanted to ask more questions, but I left it at that. I figured the more I asked about his past, the more he would ask about mine. I wasn't ready to admit everything to him yet. I feared that if I told him my own parents realized I wasn't good enough that it would make him come to the same conclusion faster. I recognized the area as we got closer to the pack house, but this time I was taking in more of the details than when I was running away. The houses were pretty spaced out in this area, which would be ideal for a house of werewolves that were hiding from humans. All of the houses were large in this area as well, borderline mansion sized. Any house here would have cost a lot of money. I supposed that was just one of the benefits of being in a pack. Money wasn't as much of a

worry since everyone in the pack worked together.

"We're here," Mark said, pulling me out of my thoughts.

I looked at the house that belonged to the driveway we were pulling in. It was without a doubt the largest house in the area, but it looked a little run down in comparison. I got out of the car and kept staring at the building in front of me. It was at least four stories tall.

"It needs some work," Mark said, stopping next to me. "We have only been here for a few weeks, but I plan to have this place spruced up more."

"It's amazing," I said. Even though I could see the areas that needed work, the building was still absolutely gorgeous. It was an old Victorian style with dark wood. Large birch trees surrounded the building. The leaves were starting to change color to match with approaching fall season. "Do you own this?"

Mark nodded. "Yes. When we decided to move, I looked around for something that would not only fit the pack but also allow us to grow. I want us to be able to make a home as we grow stronger."

"How many wolves are in your pack?" Most packs were fairly small these days. It was easier to stay hidden with a smaller number of wolves. Humans got suspicious if there were too many wolves running around.

"Currently thirteen. This house could fit up to thirty comfortably," Mark explained. He held out his hand to me again. "Shall we go inside and get you some answers?"