

## Chapter 0283

I start to doze off, but can't quite find sleep. I have no idea how long we have been driving at this point, but my butt is numb, even in these cushy leather seats. Mina is out like a light next to me, but I can't seem to get Nickolas' words out of my head.

'I have a bad feeling about this mission, I have since it started.' I know that I trust my wolf's instincts, Osiston is the same way. I know we train so hard to get better and be reliable, but out in the real world, trusting your gut can sometimes mean the difference between coming home alive or dying on the battlefield. If his gut says this whole thing is going to go wrong, it probably will and we need to be ready for that.

I know he's great at what he does, it's why he has been in and out of Elite training since I have been here. He never misses a whole day, but he is constantly being pulled for information and insight. Osiston is the same, he's just scheduled with us only once a week, maybe every other week if he's on something important for Alpha Reggie.

We finally pull to a stop near a few other SUV's that look exactly like this one. So at least we weren't the only ones who drove in. That would have been helpful information for my bad mood when we started this journey. I fight another eye roll.

Mina stirs awake now that the constant hum of the car has stopped. We both stay silent climbing out of the same side, staying as close together as possible. We follow Nickolas silently to a cluster of tents set up military camp style literally in the middle of nowhere.

"Wh..." Mina starts to ask a question, but Nickolas just shakes his head and looks at both of us, giving a silent instruction not to talk for now.

We walk towards the largest tent and head in while Nickolas holds the flap open for us. It is not what I expected at all.

The outside looks just like a giant canvas tent you would see in an old war movie, but inside it looks like a computer nerd's wet dream. There are tables everywhere covered in computer screens. Some look like they are running themselves as words scroll down, others are clearly camera feeds. There are only a couple of people here though. There's no way the two of them monitor all of this.

They seem to be watching buildings and sidewalks, but I don't recognize any of the locations from anything I've seen here on the Royal pack lands, but I haven't been very far either. I'm lost in thought, checking out all of the camera feeds, my brain trying to memorize notable landmarks so I know where camera angles are when they finally send us out when there's a tap on my shoulder.

I look over and Nickolas has a small smirk on his face, then

he rolls his eyes and tilts his head wanting me to follow. It's the first sign of humor I've seen in a while from him and at all today.

We walk behind a row of computers and come to a stop. Nickolas reaches to a portable keypad nestled in the mess of cords on the table behind the computers and punches in a quick code. It was too quick for me to get the whole thing but it's five or six digits and the first three are 769.

As soon as the code is in I hear a thunk and Nickolas reaches down to pull open a trapdoor, just sitting there in the ground. What?

The hydraulic hinges make the six inch thick hunk of metal pull up like it weighs no more than a piece of paper. Nickolas ducks and starts walking down the metal steps, so we follow. As soon as we get to the bottom he hits another button and the trap door shuts with a small hiss and we are plunged into darkness for a second.

My breath catches. This is just like when Kaley had her goons take me out to be whipped. I was pulled into that dark closet and had a bag thrown over my head, instant darkness. I can feel my breathing pick up and my heart is racing. I know this is different, but the panic is fighting to come out. My wolf is trying to calm me down too, but it sounds like she's trying to talk to me through water. I can't understand and she's getting further away.

"Hey. HEY! Breathe Midge, you have to get control, now!" I

feel a grip on my shoulders, they are strong and demanding, but they don't hurt me. "Take a deep breath and open your eyes." The deep, gruff voice is softer now with a hint of concern. "What was that Midge?"

I open my eyes and look at Nickolas and he reminds me of Sam a bit when he's this close. I blink a few times and just shake my head. "I'm good, I'm good. I just wasn't expecting that." I try to step out of his reach, but he won't let me go and he's bent down to get eye level with me.

"Have you talked to anyone?"

"Huh?!"

"Have you talked to anyone, professional I mean, about what has happened to you?"

"Umm..." I look around for anything else to talk about. This is not what I want to discuss at all right now.

"You know we all have to go through evaluations after every mission, right? You're going to have to talk to someone to make sure that sh\*t..." He points at the door. "Doesn't happen on a mission."

I close my eyes and nod. What else was I supposed to do? If it's required, it's required and I will probably get benched from every mission from here on out. But, I will not be sidelined yet. I look past him.

"Where to now, boss?" When he says nothing, I look him



dead in the eyes.

"So, that's how it's going to be, huh? You know I have to report that." He takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly, rubbing his hands over his face then turns. "Let's go."

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## Chapter 0284

We walk in silence through the rest of the short hallway. It seems to be dark gray metal with I beams reinforcing the walls and ceilings every ten feet or so. I definitely get Batman vibes walking in the corridor. I don't know what to expect at this point, but I'm not sure if I'm more excited or afraid of spy gadgets popping up out of the ground like in the movies. I really need to not let my imagination run away with me, but it's hard with no information to work with and Nickolas still isn't talking to us, just silently walking.

Nickolas takes us through a heavy metal door that has one handle on the outside, but several levers and handles on the inside. This place was meant to keep people out. We walk into a room that is still the drab gray metal, but there is a dim blue light illuminating the whole space. It seems to be coming from the additional screens, but also the walls too.

"Here." Nickolas points us to a table where Osiston and three other warriors are sitting. I recognize all of them from our sparring classes, but none of them are ever there consistently. I guess this would be why. They are on a mission, no longer needing training, but attending to either stay in shape or to help with new recruits.

"Thank you for joining us, ladies. I'm hoping that your involvement will make this mission go a bit more quickly. We've been on this for a long time and have lost too many

to the cause. It needs to end sooner rather than later. And now innocence is being taken, that we cannot allow." The older of the two guys I only recognize by face. He's starting to gray around the ears and he has lines around his eyes from either squinting or smiling a lot. The rest of his dark hair is cut very short on the sides and back and only long enough to comb back on top. His build is average for most of the warriors I know. About six feet tall and probably has to walk through a standard door sideways because of his shoulder width. In this light I can't tell what color his eyes are, but they are dark and soulful, like he could see right through you.

"So we're just going to throw innocence right at them then?" Nickolas asks next to me. 1

"We have heard from your point of view on this enough, Nickolas. They have agreed to help and the decision stands."

"They agreed without all of the information. They are too young and eager to prove themselves. Of course they agreed."

Catching on the same time I did, Mina speaks up. "They are standing right here and clearly this isn't as formal as when we were asked to join this mission. You all might as well lay it out there. It is obvious that this mission is dangerous, that was made clear enough when we were volun-told to join this group. Might as well get out whatever it is that you

have a problem with Warrior Nickolas, since you seem to be the only one to voice a negative to us being here." She looks right at him, but my eyes are on Osiston who seems to be just as agitated as Nickolas. 1

"You are being set up and used as bait. Everyone who is for this bullsh\*t plan is hoping that since both of you excel at fighting and have outmaneuvered everyone in this room on your own and as a team that you will be able to get yourselves out of trouble when, not if, but when an attempt to kidnap you happens. There are too many variables that we can't account for, too much risk to your lives and those that will step in to help you."

I take a deep breath, it's basically what we thought. They have a lot of faith in our skills even though they have never been used in an actual battle situation. On that I agree with Nickolas, there are too many variables to think about, too many things that are out of our control. That's not a plan. I don't expect anything foolproof, there's no such thing, but having some kind of back up plan would be nice, but I don't think we even really have a plan to make a backup for.

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## Chapter 0285

I rub my eyes with both hands. "So what's the plan for tonight? We clearly aren't going to be the bait now. What can we do to make this suck less?" I look around the room. "What are we looking for, what is the recon? How can we prepare for being taken? Since that seems to be the end goal, right? For one or both of us to get taken so we can be tracked to wherever they are holding these girls."

"How are you so calm about this? No one should be okay with dangling pups, children, minors, whatever you want to be classified as, a treat for the bad guys to just come and get." Nickolas sounds offended at my questions.

I roll my eyes. "Human punching bag, remember? This is right up my alley. I am the scapegoat, the target and I have been my entire minorhood. So let's not act like being young should play a part here. The only effect it has is that the 'bad guys,'" I air quote. "Will more than likely underestimate us because of it."

"You are a f\*cking royal!" His voice is progressively getting louder, but no one moves to calm him down. "We would never send Xander out because of that fact alone!"

"I'm not high enough on the bracket for that to be a factor either. And everyone knows Xander, he can't be sent into any type of undercover situation. No one knows me, I am


just another girl on the street. I am also the right gender for the task." Why I am negotiating with him while the rest of these guys just watch is beyond me. "I'm not fighting for my spot as a sacrificial lamb, but I also understand the value we both have in this mission. Can we please just get to the recon stuff, since I don't think the bait part of this plan is the same as the info gathering." I look at him with pleading eyes. He needs to let this go for now. "What type of info are we looking for and how are we," I point between Mina and myself, "going to help you get it?"

Nickolas huffs and just stands there for a second, like he's lost in thought. He eventually pulls out chairs for us and takes a seat next to me.

"This is what we know so far..." Jorge starts talking point to several photos in front of us and flipping between three aerial shots of a forest.

There is so much information and yet nothing to work with. They know that the rogues are coming in and out of Canada. It appears that most of the traffic is coming from the northeast, which would make sense since they can use the Atlantic Ocean as a means of travel with very little issue. It is assumed that Nova Scotia is where the Rogue King has been operating from, but no one has proof. No one even knows who the Rogue King is or what he looks like. He's a phantom. 1

The best trackers that the Elite Warriors have followed the

trails of a couple girls as far as Bangor, but lost the scent after that in a more populated area. An area that is mostly humans, which could be a problem. They followed the river North and noticed they also went past the University of Maine, which is mostly human, but wolves attend too depending on what they want to study. It's also a great place to grab innocent girls only slightly older than Mina. 

The problem is the scent trail just disappears. Even with methodical investigation, by the best of the best trackers in all directions. It just doesn't make any sense. And there doesn't seem to be a pattern to the girls taken, other than the ones that they were able to track for a small amount of time were wolves. There has to be something else going on, no scent just stops and vanishes into thin air.

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