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I grab his shoulder and pull him down to me. With the latest growth spurt, I am back to being just taller than their elbows again. He looks at me a little surprised as I kiss him full on the lips in front of everyone. I guess I'm getting past being shy about public displays of affection. He stops what he's doing to wrap his arms around me and pick me up for better access. I laugh into his mouth. We keep it PG, but he kisses me several times before I pull away and ask if I can help him. He slides me down his body slowly.

"I would never turn down the chance to spend some one on one time with you, Baby." We get to work, and our combined effort makes digging out the trench only take about twenty minutes. We had to make it deep enough that they couldn't jump out, and wide enough that they couldn't climb, we'll see how smart they are though. This was actually a task Lil, Jena and I had to figure out at training. It can be done, and without magic. But if these guys think anything like their Alpha, they don't think outside the box very well.

"Alright, you got your moment. I want my good job kiss." Dakota whips me around and the other two laugh while the rest of our warriors put silver collars or wrist cuffs on the captured warriors and toss them into the trench. Lil was more aggressive than necessary, but she seems to be enjoying herself so I let it be.

He walks us away from the crowd and basically devours my face. I have to press against his chest with a good amount of force to extract myself from him. "Dakota, slow

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down!"

"I can't help it. It is so hot watching you take charge and put all of these losers in their place. I really, really want to take you home right now, but I know we have work to do, so you are just going to have to give me enough to tide me over." I laugh and kiss him again, which he takes full advantage of, then hands me over to Cam, I never hit the ground.

"You really are impressive, Love. We're never going to stop saying it." His kiss is just as hot but not as demanding as Dakota's. "We need to go check on the Northern border and Wyatt and Nathaniel."

"Someone should..."

"Don't even finish that sentence. We already told you we are not splitting up." Oliver puts his hand up to stop me as Cam's fingers tighten on my thighs. "In any other normal situation, you are right, we should split up so someone can meet Osiston when he comes for Brecc and Charlene and check the two other locations. It would also help to keep an Alpha aura on them, but this is not normal and you are not going to be out of our sight of any of us outside of the packhouse. Next topic."

"Well, that was final...and spoken like a true Alpha." I wink at him as I jump down from Cam's arms. "I guess you all are going to have to keep up." I take off, shifting mid run. I really want to know how fast we are, my wolves, their wolves. I can hear all the commotion in my head, but I can also turn the sound down, it's interesting. The fight is still going on on the Northern border, but it's not dire. It doesn't sound like they are actually trying to fight us, but if the point was to distract us for Alpha Brecc and Charlene,

then they should be done now. The fight is still going on though, that doesn't make any sense.

"Nathaniel. ANYthing at the main entrance?"

"Yes and No, Boss."

***"You are going to have to elaborate on that, Nathaniel. Not all of us are super geniuses that can read your mind."*

** Cam chimes in.

"There are no wolves or any people here, but there has definitely been movement. Patterns show that someone or something has been moving in and out using the same path for a while now. I can't tell from the drones if it is surveillance or if they have been bringing things in or taking things out. I really need to get close and get a first hand look."

"Absolutely not! We are not risking you for surveillance with flimsy information like that." I can't even imagine risking Nathaniel's life for something so stupid. He's become another brother to me. He doesn't need protection, something many of the Elite Warriors thought, since he is more quiet than any of them and really good with computers so he tends to be overwatch in a tent or vehicle playing home base. He is an amazing fighter and became our secret weapon on missions. We would use the stereotype to our advantage. 1

"Your Alpha has spoken." Dakota laughs. "I love how protective you are, Smalls."

I just giggle. I have always been protective. That's probably one of the first things I recognized about myself. That is one thing I can thank Kaley and her dad, and if I am being honest, my own dad, for during my youth and

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teen years.



We continue to run. My wolf is making comments about how we move, but I'm not really listening, I am just feeling. Feeling the breeze in our fur, feeling the dirt under our paws. I don't even have to think, our body just moves through the trees, we hit nothing and don't have to make decisions on which way to move to dodge or jump obstacles. We can just feel the forest, it's almost like it is talking to us through our connection to the ground and it feels wonderful. Warm and comforting, like a hug from Sierra when we first met. She didn't know me, but pulled me into her sphere of brightness and I couldn't pull away, didn't want to pull away.

We reach the Northern border in less than fifteen minutes. It would have been a forty five minute drive in the truck. That has to be a record. But, what I see when we get there is mayhem.

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There are bodies everywhere and it looks like the attacking wolves are just attacking no matter their state of injury. What the hell is going on? I don't care what my mates say, I take off aiming for a wolf that is trying to attack my brother from behind.

My wolf clamps down on his hind leg and whips her head back. I can feel the leg break in her jaw just before she releases him and we watch him fly fifty yards behind us. That should have been enough to put him out of commission for at least a day, but as we look back we can see him stumble to stand on his three remaining good legs, the fourth bent at an unnatural angle. His eyes are red and his gaze is focused on us.

"This is a trap for us! Jena and I were supposed to see these wolves. They are possessed the same way the wolves holding us captive were. We didn't kill them when we escaped, just kept knocking them down long enough to get away. I think Tyler might have killed a couple though. He thinks we won't kill them again. They are too deep into the spell, their only way out is death and you are going to have to break their necks to free them." My voice cracks as I say the last words. I hate the idea of killing innocent wolves, even if they signed up thinking the Rogue King's mission is the best way, they didn't sign up to be sacrificed. I hope the Moon Goddess gives them a better life the next time around.

We dive in and I keep my mates in my peripherals at all times. As much as I scoff at them for their overprotectiveness, I can't help but be aware of their

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safety at all times too. I will never admit to keeping close enough to reach any of them in a single jump, they would never let me live it down that I wanted to be close to them.

Wolf after wolf goes down, but they were right, they just keep coming.

"Is this what took so long to attack? He was building up numbers against us?" Mateo asks.

***"More than likely." My dad grunts as a wolf barrels into his side, sending him and the wolf locked in his jaw sideways to the ground. "This is the attack to wear us out." He calls out casually breaking his opponent's neck and turning to handle the one who knocked him down. "They didn't expect the level of fighters we would have though, based on how little fighting experience they seem to possess. They also can't seem to differentiate the higher ranking targets versus the warriors. They are attacking whoever is closest to them. You would think if they were supposed to target our Alphas, they would have all gone after you four when you got here."

I am going to have to table the thoughts and emotions surrounding my dad having an actual conversation with me and calling me an Alpha out loud for the first time.

"So, you are telling us that the faster we get rid of these idiots, the faster we can take our mate home?" Dakota asks.

"Not really the thought I wanted in my head, man" My brother gripes and my dad huffs in acknowledgement.

"Deal asshole. Remember, my room was next to yours when you found your mate."

That is the last thing Dakota says before he jumps in and starts tearing wolves apart left and right. Cam, Oliver and I do the same staying close. It takes another two hours to get through the hordes of wolves that just continue to come out of the water. They finally stop crossing and we are able to wrap it up quickly. Our speed allowed the others to stop and watch the work being finished in moments, while they gathered and tended to wounds and minor injuries caused by the attacking wolves. Once the last attacking wolf was disposed of we all shifted to human form and joined in with the healing.

"Still no smell. I wonder if that is so we can't tell they are coming or if it keeps us from finding out which packs they are from or what." I'm thinking out loud as I move through helping dress wounds that will need a few hours to heal. We have all huddled close to go through what happened today.

"Probably a mixture of all of those things, Little One." I snap my head to the side and can't help the smile that spreads across my face.

"Osiston! When did you get here?" I ran for him and he scooped me up like the tiny person I still am compared to him. He gives me a hug and then sets me on the ground.

"Alphahood suits you, Little One. Though I thought you would maybe get a little bigger." He pats me on the head and I roll my eyes.

"You know I got bigger, jerk." I mutter. "But 'bigger' for me is nothing compared to you and my mates, who seem to also get bigger with each new thing that comes our way." I flap my hand at the three of them looking smug since they now stand taller than him, but only by an inch or so.

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His royal Alpha blood gives him more advantage than it ever gave or will give me.

"We have been scouring the lands around your pack and haven't found any sign of the Rogue King or Adrielle. The Alpha King and I have both been personally searching, hoping our heightened senses would help, but we have come up empty handed." Osiston explains once we are back at the packhouse, sitting around the table on the patio.

Elena and Gentry insisted on putting up barriers that would warn us of another attack so we could lighten the number of patrolling wolves to give them more time to rest and recover from today. They also helped the healers with salves and tonics that would speed up the healing process, just in case another attack came tonight, but none of us think that will happen. This was some sort of test and possibly a disposal. Kyle and my dad stayed to help with the first run of patrols and Brett and Osiston are on the next shift. Martha and Lenny made sure that we were all fed

"Do you really think he was trying to lessen his numbers?" Cam asks Osiston. "That doesn't make any sense if they were tied to the spell keeping him hidden."

"It is, if the spell works both ways?" Gentry starts and we all look at her confused. She smiles. "Not all magic is completely under the control of the caster. Think of it like giving a child a direction to clean their room, but nothing more specific than that. There are hundreds of ways to interpret the direction and a clever child will find a way to follow the direction while also not completing the task, if they want to be a pain in the butt. Depending how the cloaking spell was cast, maybe we are cloaked in a way

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from the Rogue King and he needed the attack today to get closer to us. This is something that Adrielle would have known and would have planned for, leading us to believe they are not working toward the exact same goal, but you are the object of both of their desires." She looks at me.

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