

One - Kate

I'm in a thicket, huddled on the ground, shivering even as sweat pours off me. I look down at my fingers digging into the dirt, and I can barely find the energy to make a fist.

I stretch out my hands and scowl because they *are* still hands. And I scowl because that's better than weeping, which is what I want to do. My arms shake, and it's no longer from the chill of a damp May afternoon. As ice clamps my gut, I squeeze my eyes shut, willing myself to stop this nonsense.

Except it isn't nonsense. It is, for me, life or death. The life I want versus the death of everything I envision for my future.

Growing up, I wished for only one thing—with every birthday candle, every four-leaf clover, every wishing-well coin. Make me a werewolf.

My dad's a werewolf. Mom is, too, which is almost unheard of when the genes are passed from father to son. Mom and Dad are both bitten werewolves, so no one knew what that meant for their children. They got their answer—and I got my wish—when my twin brother, Logan, and I had our first shift at the age of eight, a full decade earlier than hereditary werewolves. We were something different, something special and new. It was every fairy tale come true. Now, eight years later . . .

I swallow so hard my throat aches. I sink my fingers into the night-damp soil and imagine fur sprouting across my knuckles, my nails thickening to claws. I've done it hundreds of times. Focus, and make it happen. That's how it works. That's how it has always worked.

Tendons pop on the back of my hands . . . and nothing more. No hair. No nails. Just human hands clawing at the ground.

In the past six months, I've only been able to Change four times. That's dangerous. Pack

wolves shift forms at least twice a month to avoid that pesky little problem of sprouting fangs in algebra class. The full-moon thing is bullshit, but we do need to Change monthly or Nature forces it, and if she forces it, the transformation isn't safe—not for us or anyone around us.

“Kate?” a voice calls. “You out here?”

As Logan's footsteps thump closer, I grab my clothing. I'm yanking on my sneakers when our dog, Atalanta, pushes her nose into my thicket and whines.

“Someone went for a walk and forgot her,” Logan says. His footsteps stop. “Where are you?”

I slip out and walk around the thicket as casually as I can. Logan's still in his school uniform. The pant legs show a half inch of sock while the polo shirt strains over his shoulders and biceps despite the fact Mom bought it new this term. A year ago, Logan and I could share clothing. Now he can share Dad's. Not that he does, of course—my brother is decidedly more fashion conscious than our father.

As for me, I inherited Mom's build, which means I didn't wear a bra until I was fifteen, and I still need a belt to hold my jeans up because my hips sure as hell aren't doing the job. I also inherited her height, and I love that.

I bend to scratch Atalanta's ears. “Sorry, girl. I meant to take you, but I got distracted.”

Logan nods absently. Speaking of distracted . . .

At one time, he'd have realized something was wrong just from the sound of my breathing. We shared a womb together. He knows me better than anyone. Lately, though, that's changed, and now I'm wiping dirt from my hands while pretending I only went for a late-afternoon stroll, and he doesn't even seem to notice.

“Mom needs to talk to us,” he says.

“Mom stuff or Alpha stuff?” I ask.

He shrugs, already returning to the house. As I watch him go, I have to stifle the urge to run after him, blurt out what’s happening to me, how frightened I am.

Atalanta nudges my hand, whining. I rub her head and hurry after Logan.

My mood lightens as we near the house. It’s like running through a thunderstorm and spotting shelter ahead. That thunderstorm is my life right now, the feeling of everything beating down so hard I can barely lift my head to look where I’m going. No matter what’s happening out here, though, Stonehaven is shelter. It’s Mom and Dad and Jeremy and a reminder of just how damned good my life has been, how good it still is, really.

Stonehaven is a huge stone house surrounded by acres of forest, the perfect home for werewolves. The Danvers family has always lived here, and they’ve always been werewolves. I’m a Danvers by name. After Dad was bitten as a kid, Jeremy Danvers raised him. When Jeremy became Alpha, Dad became Pack enforcer, a job he kept after Alpha-hood passed to our mom.

When I break into a run, Atalanta gives a happy bark and races after me. Logan calls “Hey!” and then bears down, footsteps thudding.

“Give it up,” I call back. “You might be stronger these days, Lo, but you aren’t faster. Never gonna be faster again.”

And, of course, as I say that, I stumble. I recover, but not before Logan grabs the back of my T-shirt.

“Cheat!” I call as I yank from his grip.

“Cheating is party A starting a race without informing party B.”

“Blah-blah-blah.”

The back door swings open. Mom sees us, smiles and leans against the doorframe to watch. She hasn't failed to notice the growing gulf between Logan and me. I tell myself this too shall pass, but it still hurts. Hurts me. Worries Mom. Yet the gulf isn't so wide that we can't still reach over it, racing across the yard like kids again.

Mom wears blue jeans, sneakers and an oversized plaid shirt with the sleeves rolled up. She's tugged her white-blond hair into a high ponytail. From across the yard, she could be mistaken for a teenager. Up close, you'd guess she was in her late thirties. She's actually fifty-one. Werewolves age slowly. Dad's six years older, and girls at my school still check him out, which is really gross.

I've always thought my mom looks like one of those mothers in TV ads where they cast from a pool of models but pick the most down-to-earth one. The girl next door rather than the supermodel. Dad's the supermodel, as much as he hates it. When he appears beside Mom, arms going around her waist, he's in his usual outfit: worn jeans, a plain white T-shirt, old sneakers, and a few days of beard scruff.

I skid to a stop, hand reaching to tag the doorframe. "Home!"

"Really, Kate?" Logan says. "How old are we? Five?"

"Hey, I wasn't racing myself there."

"I was humoring you."

"Yeah, yeah. Good excuse." I swat his shoulder as he walks past, and he tosses me a very Logan smile, his lips barely moving but his eyes twinkling.

"I'm glad to see you both in good moods," Mom says as they back into the house, Atlanta tumbling after them.

I slow and eye her. "Because whatever you have to say is totally going to ruin it?"

“I hope not.”

I slide a look Dad’s way. His expression is studiously neutral.

“Shit,” I mutter.

“Language, Kate,” Dad says.

I flip him the finger. He only grins. Growing up, I heard “Language, Kate” a lot, always from Mom. I wasn’t the only one relieved when she finally gave up. If Mom doesn’t call me on my language, Dad no longer has to watch his. Let’s just say I come by my profanity-propensity honestly.

We head into the study, site of all family conferences. Jeremy’s there, reading in his armchair. Without looking up, he lifts a hand in greeting. I high-five it. Logan just says, “Hey, Jer.”

Technically, Jeremy is our grandfather since he foster-raised Dad. We never called him that or thought of him like that. He’s just Jeremy, as much a part of our family as Mom or Dad.

I sit on the other armchair. Logan and Dad take the sofa. Mom stands by the fireplace, which means this is a “serious family discussion.”

Fuck.

“I know you two have a camping trip planned with Reese later this month, but there’s another opportunity that’s come up, which you may want to take advantage of. Paige is helping organize a youth leadership conference on behalf of the interracial council.”

“Summer camp?” I say.

“Youth conference.”

“My mistake. It’s a bunch of teenagers in a forest, sleeping in cabins and doing team-building exercises. That’s not like summer camp *at all*.”

“May I finish explaining, Kate?”

Her words are calm, but there’s steel in her eyes, a warning that if we are discussing the supernatural council, this is Pack business.

I mumble an apology.

“Yes,” Mom says, “I suspect there will be team-building exercises, but I’m sure the camping part would compensate for that.”

“They could provide an open bar, and it wouldn’t compensate for team-building exercises.”

“Good thing there’s no open bar then.” She looks my way. “There will be other kids, though. Supernaturals your age . . .”

A chance for new friends, that’s what she means. My best friend moved overseas last year, and I haven’t replaced her. Mom might also be hinting about boys. I broke up with my boyfriend a few months ago. I definitely haven’t replaced him, and I’m in no rush to try. First serious boyfriend, first serious romantic humiliation.

“I’m good,” I say, sinking into my chair.

Mom allows herself one soft sigh before getting back on track with, “The conference is to help foster relations between the supernatural races, which is particularly important for werewolves.”

“Because other supernaturals hate our guts?” I say.

“They don’t hate us,” Logan says. “They don’t know us, and they fear us, which makes them nervous. That’s why something like this could be important. However”—he clears his throat and looks at Mom—“if you want us to go, obviously we will, but that does mean skipping the camping trip . . .”

“Which we’ve been planning for months,” I say. “We can’t reschedule it. Maddie’s having a

baby this summer. She can't go camping later, and Reese will want to be with her, and Noah sure as hell won't take me and Logan on his own."

Reese and Noah are Pack brothers. Reese's mate, Maddie, is also Pack—her dad's a werewolf, and while she can't Change forms, Mom rightly decided that shouldn't exclude her from full Pack membership.

"This trip is really important to them," I say.

The emphasis on *them* doesn't fool Mom. She only says, "And I'm sure they could manage without you. They are adults."

"I want to go," I say. "Please."

Logan adds, "While I can certainly see the advantage of the conference, if given the choice, I'd also prefer the camping trip. We *have* been planning it for months. It is, of course, up to you, Mom."

She looks to Jeremy, who doesn't even glance up from his book as he says, "I am not getting involved in this."

Mom mock-scowls at him. "Then why are you here?"

Jeremy arches one brow. "I believe I was here first, enjoying a few peaceful moments when chaos descended."

"*Will* you offer an opinion?" Mom asks.

"Certainly. My opinion is that I am very glad I will be in France with Jaime that week, so if you do insist on them attending the conference, I will be spared the Kate-erwauling that will doubtless ensue. I endured quite enough of that with her father. Kindergarten, elementary school, high school, college, grad school . . . Grumbling and stomping and snarling about why it had to take place in the presence of other people."

“Still a valid point,” Dad says. “But yeah, I was a pain in the ass back then.”

“Back then?” Logan arches a brow in a perfect imitation of Jeremy. “Wasn’t it just last month that you grumbled and stomped and snarled about going to New York to give a lecture . . . that you *agreed* to give.”

“I agreed to a class of thirty, not three hundred.”

Logan’s lips twitch in a smile. “Imagine if that got out. The most feared werewolf in the country can be laid low by the prospect of interacting with strangers.”

Dad twists fast, grabbing for Logan’s arm. Logan dodges and swings to his feet. When Dad tries again, they end up locked together. Dad flexes, testing his hold, considering the possibility of still throwing Logan over his shoulder. He could do it, but not nearly as easily—or gracefully—as he once could.

“Shit,” Dad murmurs.

“Yes,” Jeremy says, gaze on his book. “One day soon, Clay, you’re going to try that and find *yourself* flying onto the sofa, instead. Your son is growing up fast.”

“Nah,” I say. “Dad’s just growing old fast.”

Dad spins on me.

I stay on the chair, lounging back. “Try it, old man.”

Dad takes one slow step toward me, his eyes glittering. I tense, ready for the attack, grinning in anticipation.

“Do I need to kick you out of the room?” Mom says.

“Yes, Kate,” Dad says as he stops short, “behave yourself.”

“I’d *like* to be kicked out of the room,” I say. “But I think she meant you.”

“Never.” Dad feints left, grabs Mom and drops back onto the sofa, plunking her on his lap.

“Continue.”

Mom only rolls her eyes before turning to us. “I am willing to reconsider the youth conference.”

I slump in the chair. “Thank God.”

A hard look has me straightening.

“I wasn’t sold on the idea,” she says. “If I had been, Logan would be going. If you chose not to join him, Kate, that would be your decision, one that tells the world which of my children aspires to a leadership role . . . and which does not.”

I squirm at that. Logan and I aren’t competing for Alpha-hood. We’d co-lead before we’d fight one another. I *do* want to be Alpha someday. I just don’t think it requires “youth leadership” conferences. Mom’s right, though. Sending Logan alone would also send a message to the entire supernatural world.

“If Logan goes, I go,” I say.

“Good. But I won’t insist on it this summer, because I see some advantage to waiting. Let Paige work out the kinks of the conference’s inaugural year before the Pack sends its delegates. Fair?”

Logan and I both nod, and I send up a heartfelt prayer that the conference implodes, that it’s a complete and utter disaster that ensures there will never be a year two.

One can only hope.

Two - Kate

Two weeks later, we're camping with Reese, Maddie and Noah . . . and I'm right back where I'd been that day in our forest. Well, not literally there—we're in the Allegheny National Forest—but I'm figuratively in the same spot, struggling to Change. And literally in the same position, on all fours, butt-naked in a thicket, snarling at my fingers, hoping I can shame them into sprouting fur.

Beyond my thicket, paws pad over hard earth. I lie flat on my stomach, swathed in darkness and shadow, but the footfalls continue straight to my hiding spot, as if I'm doing jumping jacks under the park lights.

A silver blond muzzle pushes into the thicket. The brown nose twitches. Jaws open, revealing inch-long fangs. Then eyes appear, a blue as bright as my own. Logan tilts his head, the question as clear as spoken words.

What's taking you so long, Kate?

I snarl. He withdraws with a snort and plunks down to wait.

I growl under my breath, telling him to move farther away. He lifts his furry ass and transplants it exactly six inches.

After a few minutes, Logan heaves to his feet. He doesn't sneak a look at my thicket. My brother is the model of patience. I wish he weren't. I wish he'd call me on my bullshit, confront me and make me talk. I want to tell him I'm having trouble Changing. Tell him how much it scares me. Yet to confess my fears is to give them a voice, make them real somehow.

A distant howl cuts through the night. Noah's getting annoyed. He wants to run, *now*.

So do I, Noah. So do I.

I close my eyes and imagine sluicing through the long grass. Feeling the wind cut through

my fur. Hearing every tiny creature shriek and scamper out of my path. Listening to the drum roll of my Pack brothers' paws as they race behind me. I might be half Reese's age, but he won't challenge me for the front position. I'll take it, and I'll fly, drunk on exhilaration and adrenaline . . .

My skin ripples. Muscles shift below it, and for a second, I think I'm actually running. Then I realize the muscles are stretching and bunching of their own accord as my skin prickles, hairs sprouting.

I don't look down at my hands to check. I close my eyes and lift onto all fours and put my hands and feet into position, head lowered. When the first jolt of sheer agony hits—like blades ripping through my body—it's as if this has never happened before, and I'm caught off guard, stifling a scream.

This too shall pass. This too shall pass.

It's like getting a tooth drilled. Well, okay, I presume it's like that because when I get a filling or a needle or stitches and the doctor says, "This is going to hurt," I almost laugh. A needle piercing my skin? Try having your entire body ripped apart and put back together twice a month.

What I mean, though, is that it's all temporary pain. You grit your teeth and tell yourself this too shall pass.

It does. Waves of agony roll over me, so bad that I almost pass out, and then I'm standing there, panting and shaking, my legs barely able to support my body weight. *Four* legs, ending in paws, just as they should.

I exhale in relief as I look down at those yellow paws. Unlike other werewolves, Logan and I still see in color. Yellow is a weird shade for a wolf, but our fur is the same color as our hair.

Mine is Dad's gold, and my brother has Mom's silver blond. One advantage to yellow fur is that, if I'm spotted, I'm mistaken for a dog. Don't ask me how I know that. All-caps rule number one: DO NOT BE SEEN. But, yeah, it happens, for some more than others, and it's probably a good thing I'm blessed with golden retriever fur.

I swivel my ears. I don't hear better as a wolf, because I hear really, really well as a human. What my ears pick up, not surprisingly, is the distant sound of Noah grumbling. I chuff. Outside my thicket, Logan glances back. I push my muzzle through as he stands.

Seeing my brother, I don't know how anyone can mistake us for dogs. We look like wolves. We retain our human mass, which makes him a huge wolf, ghost white in the darkness, sleek furred and muscular.

When I step out of my thicket, Logan greets me with a welcoming snuffle. I pull away and then surprise-pounce. Which would work better with any werewolf who wasn't my twin brother. Logan anticipates the pounce and feints out of the way, then twists and leaps at me. And *I'm* ready for that leap. I duck and race around him so fast I swear I hear his vertebrae crackle as he spins to keep an eye on me.

Then I launch myself at him. I'm airborne, and he's diving, hitting the ground in a roll, expecting me to fumble when my target vanishes. But I wasn't jumping at him—I was jumping over him. With one massive bound, I clear him, hit the ground and keep running.

It takes Logan a moment to recover from the fake-out and come after me. As I race over the open ground, Noah yips somewhere to my left. I expect to feel the thunder of paws vibrating through the ground. When I don't, my jaws stretch in a wolf-grin. Noah and Reese are going to try their own brand of subterfuge: the sneak attack. I veer right, out of their path.

From behind me comes a light *thump-thump* of paws, my brother flying over the ground to

catch up. I bear down, my ears flat, muzzle slicing through the wind. Scents whip past. Earth and pine and the musk of a distant deer, tantalizing me. I don't slow. We can hunt later. Right now, I want to run, to feel the ground beneath my paws, the wind in my fur, my brother at my back.

The last is as important as the rest. Whatever problems Logan and I are having, we shed them with our human forms. Out here, the rest of the world falls away, and it's just us. It feels as it always has, and I'm happy. I've managed to Change, and I'm with my brother, and I am so happy.

There's forest ahead. That'll slow me down, but it also adds the challenge of an obstacle course. I leap over a dead tree and weave through thick brush while trying to gauge whether Logan is far enough back for me to hide and pounce. Otherwise, we'll hide together and wait for Reese and Noah.

I slit my eyes and swivel my ears to listen. Logan had to slow down in the forest, and I grin at that. I might have a slight advantage in speed, but I have an even greater one in agility, his growth spurt having left him with a body he can't quite operate yet. Behind me, there's a thump and a yelp, as if he cut a corner too sharp and plowed into a tree.

I grin and nimbly swerve behind an outcropping of rock. Ahead, I see the perfect cover—the deadfall of a massive evergreen. I'll hunker behind it, and when Logan vaults over, I'll tackle him.

Getting up speed for my own leap, I'm running full out when I catch a scent, and my brain screams a WTF at air-raid-siren frequency.

Werewolf. I smell werewolf.

A werewolf I don't recognize.

I twist, as if I can abort midflight. A dark shape lunges at me from behind the deadfall. I

catch one glimpse of a massive, grizzled wolf before jaws clamp around my throat.

Three - Logan

Kate runs into the forest. Of course she does. I grumble deep in my throat, but it's feigned annoyance only. At least she's playing with me instead of running away from me.

I used to follow. She'd get in her moods, and I'd go after her, standing between Kate and the world—interpreter, mediator, buffer. But a moat stretches between us these days, and I can't seem to build a bridge. I'm not even sure I try.

That isn't like me at all. I'm the calm one, the logical one, the easygoing one. Or I used to be. These days, there's the me I used to be, the me I'm becoming, and the me that others see, and none of them are who I *want* to be, and I'm not even sure who *that* is.

Right now, though, I'm chasing my sister into the forest, and it's like being children again. Nothing matters except this game, which by the way, I am totally going to win. Even if she has run into the forest, knowing it puts me at a disadvantage.

My *advantage* is that I know what she'll do next: hide. She'll find something to leap over, and I'm supposed to think she jumped *past* it when—ah-ha!—she's actually hiding behind the obstacle, ready to attack.

The question is which obstacle she'll—

I run into a tree. Literally run into it, muzzle first, pain exploding through my skull.

I'd been darting around the birch. Well, my *mind* had been darting around it, expecting my body to obey the instruction, but that doesn't work nearly as well as it used to. In a year, I shot up four inches and put on thirty pounds. That weight is muscle, so I shouldn't complain.

Everyone said it would happen, as it had for my father, who went from “runt of the litter” to “Pack enforcer” in a few years. But I'm *not* my dad, a fact that is getting increasingly harder to make anyone understand.

Operating my new body is like playing a familiar video game with a new controller. Just when I think I've gotten the hang of it, I let my mind drift and, bam, run nose-first into a tree.

There's also a moment where I actually have to fight the impulse to attack the tree. I might even growl at it, baring my fangs, fur rising on my back.

You think you can get away with that, Mr. Birch? Think again.

I lower my head and lift a front paw to rub behind my ear, as if I can smack the thought from my head. I know what the problem is. That little thing called testosterone that can make guys circle each other like apes, a split second from beating their chests. But I'm not one of those guys. Or I never used to be. And now . . . ? Yet another of those things that makes me look in the mirror and say, "Who the hell are you?"

I mock-glower at the birch and roll my eyes. Then I remember that Kate is getting farther away every second I commune with trees.

I expect she'll have gone into hiding already. Serves me right for getting distracted. But then I see her heading for a downed evergreen, a massive one that'll make a perfect hiding spot.

When a blur of dark brown fur bursts from behind the fallen tree, I give a wolf-grin. Noah got to Kate's hiding spot first and—

And that is not Noah. Our Pack brother is smaller than me, and this wolf is huge.

Their bodies collide. The wolf's jaws clamp around my sister's neck. I let out a strangled cry of rage and terror. Then I run full-out, my heart pounding so hard I can't hear anything. They've gone down on the other side of the fallen tree, my sister and the mutt dropping in a flurry of snarls and yelps and flashing teeth, and all I can see are his jaws around my her throat.

I'm almost there when Kate rears up, a flash of gold against the darkness. She's twisting and snapping. I smell blood, and that wave hits again, a roiling ball of blinding rage and gut-

wrenching panic.

I fly over the fallen tree and crash into the mutt. I've built up too much momentum, and I tumble right over him, landing on my back. I'm up in a heartbeat, whipping around to face him. Kate's on her feet, and there's blood smeared across her neck ruff, but I don't see the wound. She snaps and snarls, fur on her back rising, ears flat. With the mutt caught between us, I do the same.

When he jumped on Kate, he'd seemed twice her size. He isn't a whole lot bigger than me, though, and the surprise of that is like an electric shock, a reminder that I'm still seeing the world with the eyes of a smaller wolf.

He's old, his dark fur grizzled. Which doesn't mean he's an easy match for me or Kate alone. In our world, age means experience, and I'd never make the mistake of looking at an aging wolf like this and thinking, "I can take him." Between the two of us, though? My heart isn't pounding nearly as hard as it was a minute ago.

The mutt should see the two of us and start subtly staking out his escape route. Deep puncture marks on his foreleg drip blood, and he's favoring his other legs. Yet he stands his ground, and his eyes glitter in anticipation. When I inhale, I can't detect even the faintest whiff of fear.

Kate's eyes narrow, and I know she's dismissing him as a fool. An aging mutt who doesn't realize he's confronting the Alpha's children.

But he *must* know that. There are only two female werewolves. If the one standing in front of him isn't the Alpha, it must be her daughter, which means this mutt understands exactly who he's facing.

Yet he is not afraid.

The hairs on my neck rise. Something is very wrong here.

My ears perk just in time to catch the soft crunch of dead leaves from a misplaced paw. I look over as another brown wolf slides from the undergrowth. The old wolf lunges at me, taking advantage of my inattention. Before I can swing around, Kate leaps and lands on his back, her teeth digging in as she flips him. They go down, rolling, and I'm running to help when the brown wolf charges.

I dodge out of his way and circle to fly at him. We collide, and he skids into the dirt. I manage to keep my footing, and I backpedal, leading him off while checking my sister. She's holding her own. I just need to get this other mutt away—

Brush rustles, and a lighter brown wolf appears. As he leaps in, Kate howls. She's backed off the old wolf, bloody froth dripping from her mouth as she throws back her head to call Reese and Noah. Summon them to help us.

I snarl her way, and even as I do, my brain screams, "What's that for?" Kate is doing the right thing. She isn't some helpless kid crying for the grown-ups to save her—she's a wolf calling to her Pack, as she is supposed to do, and any other time, I'd have beat her to it. Yet she does the "Logan" thing, and I do the "Kate" thing, getting pissy because I want to handle this myself, show what a badass I am.

I stand my ground, head lowered, growling as I assess. Three mutts. The two younger ones are smaller than the old wolf, but stronger, with none of his extra fat. The old one is on his feet, blood pouring from a cut over his eye.

Kate runs at the light brown wolf—the one closer to her. It takes everything in me not to snarl at her again, rage rising as if she's stealing my prey.

She hits the wolf before he hears her coming, and when the other one twists to look, I launch

myself at him. We lock together and roll, snapping and snarling. His teeth find my cheek, and his hind nails find my belly. I swing my head down, my jaws clamping on his throat.

It's the perfect hold, and as my teeth sink in, I realize I could kill him.

I have killed before but only deer, rabbits, and the other animals that keep a werewolf's predatory instinct from turning toward humans. But I have only fought mutts twice, and both were what Dad called kamikaze challenges—by those who value their lives so little and their reputations so much that they're willing to die fighting Clayton Danvers on the off chance they might actually win. Apparently, if they're desperate enough, Logan Danvers is a reasonable substitute.

On one of those occasions, I'd actually been *with* Dad, which my opponent didn't realize, and when he did, he reacted like a cartoon character, eyes bugging as he tore off. Dad caught him, beat him, and sent him off to deal with the humiliation of having the Pack enforcer declare him not worth killing.

The other time, I'd been with Mom, and the mutt seemed to think that wasn't a problem. She showed him his mistake, and he left in worse shape than Dad's quarry. The next day, Stonehaven rang with snarls of, "He's fifteen, Clay. How the hell do they think that's okay?"

Those mutts did think it was okay. The mutt under me thinks it's okay. I should show him why it isn't. Prove that I'm not a kid anymore. I'll be seventeen in three months, and if they treat me like a grown werewolf, then I should treat them the way a grown werewolf would.

My teeth sink in. When the mutt realizes I'm not playing, he bucks and yelps beneath me. I steel myself and force my jaws to close—

Something slams into my side. I twist, snarling, as I'm knocked off my prey. I chomp down, only to see my jaws wrapped around my sister's gold foreleg. I drop it fast and clamber to my

feet. She growls before turning to face off against the three mutts. I scramble beside her, and I'm struggling to focus, the memory of biting into her leg like a kick to my gut.

The mutts fan out as Kate and I stand shoulder to shoulder. She lifts one paw. I tense, thinking that's a sign she's going to charge, but she only lifts the paw and then sets it down again, barely touching the ground. Alarm slams through me.

How hard did I bite—?

I blink. Wait, did her leg just . . .

Keep your eyes on the mutts, Logan.

I'm trying, but Kate's leg looked as if it was pulsing. I peek again.

Her leg is definitely pulsing. The muscles contort as her paw lengthens and flattens and . . .

Her arm is shifting back to human.

I tear my gaze away. I need to do something, anything. A distraction. Get the mutts' attention before Kate—

She yelps, and her front leg gives way.

The wolves charge.