

Flight

I lost him. The condensed version is that Reese Williams possessed an admirable blend of intelligence and humility, and I was accustomed to dealing with mutts who'd sooner cut off their balls than run from a woman.

Reese did exactly what I'd have done if pursued through a city core by a more experienced werewolf. He ran for the nearest populated place—a busy restaurant. While I waited at the back door, he must have darted out the front and swiped someone's cab. By the time I realized he was gone, it was too late to follow.

Now, an hour later, I was in a cab of my own, getting out at the Pittsburgh International Airport.

What led me here wasn't good old-fashioned legwork. Ever since the werewolves rejoined the supernatural council, our mutt tracking has gone high tech. We now have Paige Winterbourne, genius computer hacker, at our disposal.

We knew Reese had been using stolen credit cards, alternating between at least three. Paige had identified two and was tracking transactions.

I didn't even get a chance to tell her I'd lost him before she was calling to say he'd used a credit card at the airport. As for *where* he was going, that proved more problematic. Paige had access to all the major airline computers, but this was a small one she hadn't ever needed to crack. So I was back to leg and nose work.

"You're booked on a flight to Miami," Jeremy said as I got out of the cab, cell phone to my ear. "That will get you through security. But from the sounds of it, you've delivered your message. If he's refusing to listen, I'm not sure what you plan to do about that."

"I want to tell him what happened to Yuli Etxeberria. If that doesn't work, I'll hog-tie him and haul his ass someplace safe until he smartens up."

Silence as I walked through the doors. It lasted so long that, with anyone else, I'd have wondered if the line disconnected.

"You don't need to keep chasing him, Elena."

"Just one more day. The kids are okay, aren't they?"

"Yes, they're fine. Clay called an hour ago. His last meeting was canceled, so he can help with Reese."

"Great. He can catch up with me tomorrow, after he stops in there and sees the kids."

"While I'm sure he'd love to see them, right now he wants to get to you. As soon as you figure out where you're going, he'll meet up with you."

I didn't argue. It'd been two weeks since I'd seen Clay—longer than we'd been apart in years. I was so accustomed to having him around, that for two weeks I'd been unbalanced and off-kilter. And when it came to hunting Reese without my partner, I'd definitely been off my game.

"Etxeberria wasn't your fault, Elena," Jeremy said.

Ah, right to the crux of the matter, as usual.

“One more day,” I said. “Just give me—”

“I’ll give you all the time you need. You know that. Then once you’re done, take an extra night with Clay before you come back.”

We hadn’t intended to be apart so long. For Clay, even separate day trips were too much. That’s the wolf in him, wanting his mate nearby at all times. Most werewolves inherit the genes and don’t transform until their late teens, but Clay was bitten as a child, and that makes him more wolf than human.

Our separation had begun with a work trip for me that lasted longer than expected. In the meantime, Clay had left for Atlanta. I was supposed to stop overnight at home, then follow. Only that night, our darling three-year-old twins thought I’d gone out back for a “walk in the forest” and decided to follow . . . by jumping out a second-floor window.

While adult werewolves have super-human strength and reflexes, and could easily make that leap, we don’t get those secondary powers until puberty. As for whether those rules apply to the offspring of two werewolves, let’s just say we’re starting to think they don’t. The kids escaped with minor injuries: a twisted ankle for Logan and a sprained wrist for Kate, which meant no Atlanta trip for me.

Thus the two-week separation, now, thankfully, almost at an end.

Some airports are perfect for losing a tail. Take Minneapolis. With its endless corridors of shops and restaurants it rivals the nearby Mall of the Americas as a hellhole for the directionally challenged. Pittsburgh was not one of those airports.

By the time I entered the terminal, Reese had checked in and headed for his gate, but there wasn't far for him to go. I picked up my ticket and got my boarding pass. Two sets of escalators deposited travelers in a tiny pre-security square, bounded by a few shops. Reese's trail headed straight for the security checkpoint.

Once I was inside and off yet another escalator, it got trickier. I was in a rotunda of shops and restaurants with four arms leading to boarding gates. Still, the tidy layout meant there were a limited number of places for him to go. Even if I couldn't find his trail, I just needed to check all four halls and—

“Paging Chris Parker. Chris Parker, please report to gate C56.”

I smiled. Parker was one of the aliases Reese was using.

When I got to the gate, though, the waiting area was empty, the plane already loaded. Reese was at the counter, showing his boarding pass and ID to the attendant. She was taking a good look at them and he was struggling to stay calm, shifting and glancing around.

I shouldered my way through a throng checking the departure screens, then broke into a fast walk. The attendant was saying something to Reese. Questioning his fake ID? It looked a little off, didn't it? Better hold him for another minute, get someone to come and check it . . .

With a smile, she handed back his ID and boarding pass. Reese started down the long hall to his plane. I picked up my pace, but by the time I neared the desk, he was gone.

Gone *where*?

I glanced at the screen behind the attendant. It seemed to be stuck on the flight number and departure time, so I asked where the plane was headed.

“Anchorage.” She blinded me with a smile. “Anchorage, Alaska.”