

Chapter 15

The enforcers gave Marlot space as he stormed through the precinct.

It could be the snarl on his face, caused by a mix of pain and anger, or the terror scent from the moose he dragged along. He crossed the room, barely paused to look at the screens showing the inside of interrogations rooms, and continued to the closest empty one. He forced the moose into the chair and slammed the door shut, making him jump.

Marlot plotted down in the facing chair and studied the moose. The male was good; he had to give him that. He looked scared, acted scared, even smelled scared. Marlot hadn't thought anyone could fool him after passing his cross-species scent recognition class.

"You can drop the act," Marlot said, "it's just the two of us."

The moose didn't. He glanced at the door, eyes remaining wide, pupils large. Maybe he kept up the act because of the camera? Marlot didn't care, he'd get his answers.

"Radima Vicious," he said, placing his pad on the table, her picture on it. "Thirty-five, unmated. Supervisor at Pelt's Construction. Did you know her?"

The moose's shake of the head was almost imperceptible. At least he was done acting too scared to cooperate.

"Why her then?"

The moose's expression was uncomprehending.

"Why did you pick her," Marlot elaborated, feeling like an idiot for explaining when the male was just playing him. "What was it about her? Did you have an altercation? Did she feel threatening to you? She was a predator, after all. They all were." He added, watching for the moose's reaction.

Confusion. "I?" he swallowed. "She stalked me."

"Like I said, she was a predator, we do that."

"Why am I here?" the moose looked around, almost as if he was only now realizing he was in an interrogation room. Was he going to try to play the victim?

"You know why you're here," Marlot stated. "Why did you run?" He demanded.

"She stalked me. I didn't want to die."

"After you killed her!"

The moose jumped.

"You ran after you killed her!"

"You." His eyes grew wide again, pupils dilating to the point no color was left. "You're a predator, I didn't want you to eat me."

"If I was going to eat you," Marlot snarled. "We wouldn't be here."

"I didn't know that!" the moose was up chair clattering. He looked around, searching for some escape.

Marlot used his curiosity at trying to figure how the male did it to keep from standing, from growling. He left him pace. How did he smell scared? How did he act like he was about to charge the door in an attempt to break through it? The antlers had

withstood hitting a brick wall, so maybe he could.

“Sit down.”

The moose kept pacing. The ear flick indicated he'd heard him, that he was ignoring him. A show of force? That he wouldn't be ordered around? Was that hunter behavior? Ruxul had been headstrong, he certainly had made sure they knew he couldn't be ordered into anything, but he couldn't remember reading anything about that kind of behavior. It must have something to do with the fact hunters weren't usually brought in for questioning. They ended up dead, and the psychologist could only look at what they had done and extrapolate. Were they broken from birth? Was it a defect that occurred after an accident, was it whim?

“I said sit down!”

The moose jumped. A perfect scare response, looked for an escape again, before regaining just enough control to pick up the chair and sit.

“You ran because you think you aren't done,” Marlot said. “Every text on people like you says that. You have something to do, that's part of what drives you. You're acting scared now because you hope I'll think you really are some innocent prey, caught up in something they can't understand. Maybe the fear's real, after all, I doubt you planned on being caught. Maybe that's how it seems so real. It is, just not about what you telling it is.” Marlot smiled. “That's it, isn't it? You were put in a situation where you had to react, and everything has been thrown out of your control. You people love control, don't you?”

The moose stared at him, the fear growing thicker in the room.

Marlot grinned at him and leaned back in his chair. “Let me tell you what happened. You'd planned to keep Radima in her house like the others, but you didn't realize it had been a while since he'd hunted. She was out of food. You figured, okay, no big deal. Kill her while she naps, bring her back, same as before by the time I show up, right? You took down a badger already. Just how much tougher can a wolverine be? You didn't realize I'd figured out you were just mailing me the cards using the envelopes from the Bureau. That I'd give up wasting time with the Bureau tech and go to her house immediately. I'll give you that, I never noticed you there.”

The moose had the gall to still act confused, but Marlot swallowed his anger. He wasn't done, there was more he needed to know, then he could end this, the recording would show Trembor he'd done this the right way.

“Why send me the cards? Why goad me into looking into this? What did I ever do to you?” he growled. “Did you want to brag? What? You're better than we are because you took down ten of us before I caught you? What, you think we believe we're immune to predation? And had to be reminded no one's safe? Well, I have news for you. We know. We know the slightest mistake means we can be someone else's meal. No one is above predation. Absolutely no one.”

The moose stared at him, shaking, ready to bolt—looking ready to bolt, Marlot reminded himself. He ground his teeth. He was so done with this act of it. He slammed his hand on the metal table.

“Why?” he yelled.

The moose was up, the chair hitting the wall, him in the corner, back against the wall.

The Time Marlot stood too, “Why the fuck did you drag me into this sick game of yours?” he screamed, hands on the table. Making sure not to move, because he didn’t trust himself not to rip that male’s throat open before he had his answer. “What did I ever do to you? I know I never gloated, I didn’t stalk you. So what the fuck me?”

The elk shook and part of Marlot realized that to anyone looking it would look like he was the aggressor. Even the scents would support it, he was raging, the moose was terrified. Marlot didn’t let that stop him. This only worked if he didn’t break the moose. Once he got him to admit why he was doing this, all of this would make sense.

“Why are you killing predators and leaving them to rot?” he yelled. “What did we ever do to you?”

The moose’s breathing gaming hard. He was hyperventilating? How long could he maintain that? If he fell unconscious, all that would be there was the recording, the one that showed how out-of-control Marlot was.

He swallowed his anger and stepped away from the table, keeping it between them like he’d do with someone he wanted to feel safe. From where he stood he noticed the camera, its angle, the corner the moose was in. Had he planned it?

He let out a breath, did his best to ignore the fear smell telling him the moose was ripe to become meat. “You’re in the camera’s blind spot,” he said softly. He didn’t care how good the male was, there was no way he knew how the interrogation rooms were set up in their entirety. “If you keep your voice low, it won’t hear what you say. Just tell me why you did it. I don’t care about bringing you to justice, tell me and you walk out of here. I’ll tell them I had the wrong male. You can even go back to taunting me.”

The moose whimpered. “I—” Marlot leaned in, he’d finally have it. “I didn’t—”

“No!” Marlot let the table stop him. “Don’t you fucking pull that on me. Wolverine! Coyote! Jaguar! Badger! Tiger! Bear! Leopard! Wolf! Cougar! Those are the predators you killed and left to rot! You’re going to tell me why or I am going to gut you! Have there been others? Did you torment some other RI, or am I special?”

The moose slid down, crying.

Marlot jumped over the table. “You don’t fucking get to do this.” He grabbed him by the collar and pulled him up, the pain flaring, but his anger keeping it in check. “You killed all of that! You don’t get to play prey and make me the monster! If you want this to end, you tell me why; then I’ll eat you and end this properly! Talk!”

The moose’s eyes rolled back in his head.

Marlot slammed him against the wall. “Don’t you fucking try it! I know it’s an act!”

The door slammed open. “What the fuck are you doing?” Bahamel yelled.

He ignored her, growling at the moose. He wasn’t getting out of this. He was going to talk.

A hand grabbed Marlot by the back of the jacket and pull him away hard enough

his feet left the ground. “You’re coming with me to my office and explaining yourself, wolf.”