

Chapter 2

Peter

The smell of fire woke me up.

I snapped my eyes open, afraid that the inn I had been staying at had somehow been burning down with me inside of it. But, when I opened my eyelids, sunlight beamed down on me and stung my eyes like a swarm of angry bees. It also didn't help that I felt like someone caved my head in with a hammer.

"Fuck," I groaned, as I shut my eyes to keep the sun from blinding me.

What happened last night? I remembered going to the tavern for my usual nightly drink, but nothing after that. Did I pass out in some alley? If that was the case, there probably wasn't any money left in my purse, either from me spending it all on drinks or because I was robbed. It didn't matter, though. I still had plenty of gold leftover in my room.

Right. Now I just need to stand up and start walking.

I ordered my legs to lift me up, but, to my disappointment, they didn't move.

Shit. I must have drunk more than I thought.

To help my legs in their time of weakness, I tried to move my arms down to push me off the ground. Yet, they didn't work, either.

What the hell?

I dared to slowly open my eyes, making sure that they were adjusting to the bright sun while I continued to open them. It was then that I noticed the fire, sparkling to my left side with rich orange flames. And there, just on the other side of the fire, was a gray wolf that leaned against a tree, reading a leather-bound book, which had a dull red color. I couldn't make out his face, since he had shoved it into the pages of his book, but I was able to see the clothes that he wore. He was dressed in a dark green tunic and a cloak that was of the same color. His trousers, however, were black and poured into brown boots that had been scuffed by dirt.

Then, the memory of what had happened the night before returned and stung worse than a slap to the face. I remembered eyeing him from across the tavern and inviting him back to my room. After that, I didn't really remember what we talked about, but somehow I knew that we ended up in the forest alone where he...

No.

Fear washed over me as I looked down at my bound arms and legs to realize that the memory was true. My breathing quickened and my heart raced. There was nothing I could do.

Goddamn it! Did I tell him who I was? Shit. I can't remember! Maybe I didn't tell him. Yeah. Maybe he's just some crazy guy who gets off on murdering people in the woods! Great...

"Hey," I said, weakly.

With a flick of his ears, my captor peeked over his dusty old book to blankly stare at me. His left eye was ocean blue and the right was as brown as fresh mud. Now that I could see his face, I guessed that he was around twenty-three years old. "I see you're finally awake,"

I tried to push my arms and legs against the rope to free myself. "Jesus. Aren't you clever? Now, how about untying me?"

The wolf blinked and shook his head. "I don't think so,"

Without much success, I continued to try and snap free from the ropes. "Come on! I'll give you head if that's what you want! That's why you left the tavern with me, right?"

"No,"

Fuck. "Then why?"

After lowering the book down to his lap, the wolf tilted his head and watched my eyes to see if I was lying. "You were really *that* drunk?"

"What?"

"You told me who you are,"

My mouth suddenly felt like someone had poured sand into it. Did I really give myself away? I couldn't remember if I did or not. "Well, if you know who I am, you must know about the reward,"

"Yes," the wolf said.

Instead of biting his head off for playing coy with me, I tried a more convincing approach. "If you let me go, I can tell you exactly where my father's treasury is. You can take all you want! And I guarantee you'll get ten times as much gold,"

The wolf was silent.

"Come on," I urged him with a smile, "just think about it! You could be the guy who robs King Gannish! Men will envy you. Women will want you. Or the other way around, if you swing that way,"

Across from me, the wolf shut his book and held it in his right hand as he stood up. "Do I seem like an idiot?"

"Christ, no!" I lied. "You managed to capture me without anyone seeing you! You're smart! Hell. I'm the one tied up here, so you're definitely smarter than me,"

The wolf didn't move. All he did was continue to stare down at me as though I were an ant he had stepped on. "Let's say I let you go. Even if you actually tell me where your father's treasury is, I suspect you won't tell me the location of all his sentries. So, I get shot full of arrows and don't get any gold,"

Damn it. He actually wasn't an idiot. "I guess you'll just have to take my word for it,"

He grunted displeasingly and removed a knapsack from his back. The wolf then gently set the bag on the ground and placed his raggedy book inside, just before putting the knapsack on himself once more.

When he closed his knapsack and hung it against his back, the wolf moved towards me and bent down to untie my legs.

The moment my left leg was free, I kicked the wolf square in the cheek with the tip of my boot. He twisted his head to the side in shock while I quickly bent my legs to try and stand. But, as I began to try shifting my weight over onto my legs, the wolf clasped a warm hand over my forehead and slammed my head against the ground. My ears began to ring, both from the pain and from the ale I drank the night before. The wolf continued to press down with overpowering strength that kept me from being able to stand up, or even move. My legs were too far away to give him

another kick to the face and both of my arms were still tied together. His hand was still on my forehead, so I couldn't bite him, either. *Damn it.*

"Look," he snarled, "you can either make this very easy, or very difficult. The sooner we can get to your father, the sooner you'll never have to see me again. I don't know why you don't want to go back, but I don't care. I'm bringing you to him. You can runaway again after I drop you off for all I care! But, until I get the gold in my hands, you're stuck with me,"

"Fuck you!" I hissed at him and tried to move my head out from under his hand.

The wolf sighed and closed his eyes in frustration. "This is going to be a very long trip,"

He then reached down and pulled on the end of the rope that had tied my legs together, thus unraveling it. The wolf then began to tie it to the rope that circled around my wrists, forming a kind of leash.

The wolf walked a few steps away and held the end of his rope-leash firmly in one closed hand. He stopped walking and slowly turned his head to stare at me. "Come on," he ordered with a tug of his rope. "I waited all morning for you to wake up. It's noon now and I still haven't had a bath,"

Seeing now that I had no choice, I rose from the dirt and didn't try to hide my discontent behind a fake smile anymore. "Whatever,"

"That's the spirit," the wolf sarcastically added before tugging on the rope again.

After a few minutes of walking, I finally noticed the gear my captor had. On his back was the leather knapsack from earlier. Just beside the knapsack, though, there rested a quiver that had a bow tied to it by a piece of string. At the wolf's left side, just below his belt, there hung a sheathed thin sword that was next to a sheathed knife. On the opposite side of his belt, however, was an oddly shaped sack that was a little bigger than a fist. It couldn't have been a purse, since it was too narrow towards the bottom. I could also make out a flap, which was buttoned closed to the center of the material. *Wonder what that could be.*

Wait.

I glanced around us and saw nothing but trees, as well as some bushes. There was also a mixture of twigs, dirt and dead leaves that crunched beneath my boots. "Where the hell are we?"

"Hmm?" the wolf said as he looked over his shoulder.

"Where the hell are we? We're not even on the road!"

"Did you ever think there might be a reason for that?" he asked, as he moved his head forward again. I began to imagine him smiling as we kept walking. *Cocky bastard.*

"Well I sure as hell would like to hear it!" I said. "We're in the middle of nowhere and, for all I know, you probably think we're at Star Point!"

"Trust me," the wolf said, "we're nowhere near Star Point,"

I began to yell as loudly as I possibly could. "So why the fuck aren't we walking on the road?"

"You really don't get it, do you?" the wolf asked, seeming surprised.

"No! Please teach me, Oh Great Pain In My Ass! Show me the way to enlightenment!"

He tugged on the rope, nearly causing my wrists to burn from the friction. "Do you know what's on the road? Bandits, who'll rob you just for your boots, and rapists, who I'm sure would love to have a little royal body like yours,"

"So," I said, "you travel like this? You just stumble around through the woods until you get wherever you're going?"

"No," my kidnapper replied. "I typically travel on the road because I can defend myself. But trying to keep an eye on you is going to be a full time job without having to watch out for swords coming towards my throat,"

"Gee," I said, rolling my eyes and groaning, "thanks for the compliment, wolfy,"

"My name's Dante, by the way," the wolf said. "Sorry. I forgot to mention that earlier,"

"Nice to meet you," I said. "I'm Peter Gannish, the guy that's gonna kick you in the dick and run,"

Dante, surprisingly, chuckled at my threat. "We'll have to see about that,"

We walked through the woodland for a little while longer in silence, thankfully. As we trudged through the forest, I looked around in search of any sign of the main road, or some kind of landmark that would have told me where we were. Sadly, all I could see were trees, rocks and dust everywhere we went. Dante must have noticed that I was looking around because at one point he gave a slight tug on the rope around my hands. He didn't tug as hard as before, but it still was enough to stop my curious eyes from wandering any longer. *Damn him*. He was still probably smiling. I bet he enjoyed making me suffer. But he sure wouldn't be laughing when I bailed on his ass, whenever that would have been. It was only a matter of time before he let his guard down.

It couldn't have been longer than half an hour later when my ears discovered a noise that came echoing through the woods. At first, it began as a distant hush and slowly grew into a loud roar. Before we left the safety of the trees and stepped out into a small open space, I saw it. *A river*. Once we were a few steps away from the currents, I noticed that it couldn't have been more than waist-deep for people of larger species.

I began to think that, if I could get the rope off of my wrists quickly enough, I would have been able to swim downriver to freedom. Unfortunately, I wasn't so lucky, since Dante went over to a tree and tied his end of the rope around the trunk.

After leaving me tied to the tree, Dante edged closer toward the water. He then began to strip himself of his knapsack and all of his weapons. The wolf soon loosened his belt and then tossed it to the side before unlacing his tunic, so he could slide it off of his chest. In the blink of an eye, his boots were kicked away and his trousers fell to his bare paws, right before they were all thrown to the side. Finally, Dante's thumbs crept into the waistband of his loincloth and drifted the clothing down his legs as he bent forward. He rose to toss the loincloth into the pile of his possessions and then waded into the cool water of the river.

Just before Dante had splashed into the water, I couldn't help but notice the muscles on his forearms and back. It was strange that I didn't notice them before.

Maybe his tunic and cloak were a little big from him, so they hid his strong build. What really caught my attention, though, were all of the red scars that were spread around his back, making it look almost like a mural after its been used by a drunk painter. He must have been in a lot of fights to get that many cuts, or maybe that was because he didn't wear any armor. My gaze also, I admit, fell south of his back and I admired his ass. It seemed to be very firm and was big enough for two handfuls, with plenty left over. Tragically, the moment was short-lived and the lower half of Dante's figure was hidden in the dark waters of the river. After entering the water, the wolf cupped his hands together and began to pour water over his head, which then rained down his rugged torso.

Now that my kidnapper's back was turned and I was able to stop myself from watching him bathe, I began to gnaw at the rope around my hands with my teeth. *Stupid mutt.* He hadn't tie my muzzle shut, probably because he thought my teeth weren't sharp as a canine's.

After a few bites later, the rope helplessly fell to the ground and my hands were free once again. When I stretched my arms out, beginning to be thankful, I looked over to see that Dante was still bathing in the stream with his back facing me. *Dumbass.*

I then turned and ran towards the woods, heading into the same direction Dante and I had just come from.

I didn't know where to go, or even where I was exactly at the moment. Still, I told myself that, as long as I headed in one direction, I was bound to find the main road or some kind of town. Either way, I needed to get as far away from Dante as I possibly could and hide.

As I made my way through some bushes, I began to nearly laugh at how the wolf had let his guard down so easily. To his credit, Dante did have a nice body and I wasn't soft below the belt when he was taking off his clothes. But he definitely wasn't very smart. I guess that's how it is for everybody, though. You can be smart and just average looking, or you can be as dumb as a rock and look like a god. *It's the world's way of being fair.*

Ahead, after sprinting for nearly an eternity, I saw an opening between a few trees that revealed the main road. *Yes!*

A sense of pride overcame me as I stepped out from the tree line and my boots crunched against the familiar gravel. Now all I had to do was head to the nearest town, get a room at an inn and hide for a couple of days.

I reached down and felt my purse inside my right pocket. It still seemed to have plenty of gold from the night before. Although, it was a shame that the rest of my money was back in Cainrin. But, I knew I couldn't go back to get it. That would probably be the first place Dante would go to look for me. *Oh well.* At least my purse seemed to have more than enough coins at the moment. Then again, I probably would have had to bribe the innkeeper of the next inn I stayed at and make him promise to not say anything if Dante came looking for me. If I were a fox or a wolf, it wouldn't have been a problem. There were plenty of those throughout Alpis. Now, if I were in the south, it certainly would have been easy to blend in. Otters tended to dwell in the Southern Kingdoms, mostly because the water was always warm and the winters were only a little breezy. Also, the Yurl War didn't make the North seem

like an ideal place to be, what with all the horror stories we heard about Capres' Kingdom.

Wind brushed against my cheeks and rushed through my whiskers as I hurried down the road. It might have been a few miles before the next town, but I didn't let that thought stop me and I pushed my already aching legs to keep moving towards my freedom. I had to get away from that stupid wolf. And, as I recalled the memory of his blue and brown eyes, my legs began to run faster.

Arms suddenly wrapped themselves around my chest and I was tackled to the ground by a tremendous weight. I slammed against the gravel road, landing on my side, and began trying to wriggle free.

"Goddamn it!" I screamed. "Let me go!"

"Screaming ain't gonna help you, little brat," a voice chuckled into my ear.

My fur bristled in terror at the realization that the voice did not belong to Dante.

I inhaled deeply through my nose and caught a scent of feline. To prove what my nose had smelled, I turned my head and saw a flash of muddy orange fur mixed with black stripes. *Tiger.*

My eyes also caught two sets of legs standing just behind my attacker and I. Then, my mind wandered back to what Dante had told me. *Do you know what's on the road? Bandits, who'll rob you just for your boots, and rapists, who I'm sure would love to have a little royal body like yours.*

The memory caused me struggle even more in the tiger's hold. Yet, all of my efforts seemed to be useless. In fact, the three strangers began to laugh at my desperateness.

When the tiger stood up, still clasping me against his chest, I hovered over the road and began to thrash my legs around. He then turned and I was able to see a tall horse that loomed overhead, who was accompanied by a weasel that was the same height as me. I was uncertain about the tiger, but both of his companions' clothes were absolutely filthy. Their trousers were covered in a blanket of dirt, while their tunics had a series of holes and cuts on them. Meanwhile, the horse had a sword sheathed at his side, while the weasel only had a knife. Each of the men wore a single yellow armband, which was decorated with a blood-red hydra that roared its six or seven heads, on their left arms.

"Hold him down," the horse commanded with authority. "I get to fuck him first,"

I was dropped chest-first onto the ground and was held down by the tiger's firmly placed boot, which dug into the middle of my back.

"Bullshit!" the tiger snarled at his friend. "I didn't even get a turn on the last one!"

"She was about to get away," a third voice spoke, which I assumed belonged to the weasel. "It's not like we cock-blocked you on purpose,"

"I didn't even get a chance to pull my cock out before you slit her throat!" the tiger argued. "You didn't have to kill her. You could have just hit her over the head,"

"Fine," the horse gave in. "You can go first, Daniel. Just hurry before someone show's up,"

"Thank fuckin' Christ," Daniel said with relief.

I was then rolled over onto my back and came face-to-face with Daniel as he stood over me. I noticed that his clothes were just as dirty as his friends' and that he also wore the yellow armband on his left arm. My eyes glanced at the sheathed sword he had on his belt, which was much bigger than the horse's.

Before I could crawl away, the horse and weasel came to hold me down. The horse tightly held my left arm against the ground and the weasel grabbed my right.

After his friends had me pinned down, Daniel ripped off both of my boots and tossed them over his shoulder. I barely heard them hit the ground before Daniel began clawing at my belt buckle. A moment later, cool air blew against my thighs as Daniel pulled my trousers down my squirming legs.

As Daniel pulled my trousers around my paws, I managed to kick him right in his jaw. The claws on my paws managed to leave him with a few scratches that already began to bleed.

"Motherfucker!" Daniel cursed, as he took a step back and felt his face with a careful hand. He then looked down at me, while I lay helpless on the ground, wearing only my tunic and my loincloth. "Just for that, I'm gonna fuck you twice as hard,"

The tiger used his strong hands to continue pulling down my trousers and kept his face far away from my paws.

I flayed my legs around, trying my best to keep my trousers on. It didn't help. Daniel quickly removed my trousers and threw them just to the left in the dirt. He then bent over once more to wedge his fingers between the waistband of my loincloth and my fur.

I shivered at the icy touch of his fingers. "Stop!" I screamed. "Let me go! I-I'll give you all my gold if you just stop!"

The tiger didn't pull down my loincloth, so I assumed that he was going to let me go. My hopes were then dashed by a menacing smile that crept across his muzzle. "We were gonna take your gold anyways, after we fucked you and killed you,"

Sunlight revealed my soft sheath as Daniel ripped my loincloth down and over my legs.

Once my loincloth was off and I lay on the ground half-naked, Daniel grinned in pride. He then stood up and began to unfasten his belt. "I've never fucked an otter before. Should be interesting,"

When his belt was off, Daniel practically jumped out of his boots, trousers and loincloth from being so damn giddy. After tossing his clothes away, Daniel stepped towards me with a mile-wide grin and a hard cock that was almost as big. "Like what you see?" he mocked the obvious terror in my wide eyes. "Doesn't matter, I guess. Either way, it's going up your ass,"

Daniel lowered himself onto his knees and held my legs at his sides so that I couldn't kick him in the face again. I kept trying to fight my way free, but he and his friends showed no signs of releasing me, no matter how much I struggled.

Finally, the tiger was in place and I could feel the tip of his cock teasing my ass. He looked down at me and began to smile like someone who eyes a Christmas dinner that was finally ready to eat. In that moment, he owned me and we both knew it.

"Hurry the hell up, man!" the horse blurted out. "I still want my turn,"

"Yeah," the weasel chimed in. "It's been days since I had a fuck!"

Daniel didn't seem to pay his friends much mind and kept his brown hungry eyes on me. "You have to savor it. If you go too fast, it's over too quick. But, the more they struggle, the better to fuck they are,"

"Now," Daniel said and slapped both of my thighs with his hands, "let's start,"

This was it. I closed my eyes and bit my tongue to keep myself from crying. If I cried, or even screamed, I knew Daniel would only enjoy himself even more. After all, he was a brute that enjoyed raping defenseless people out in the woods. I wasn't going to give him the satisfaction. Even if every muscle in my body begged me to try and fight him, I wouldn't do it. Daniel would only enjoy my sorrow. To him, it would be like watching a play. The fact that he was going to kill and rob me also didn't seem to cause much conflict with his conscience, if he even had one.

My hands closed and my fingers dug into my fur. If there was a God, I begged that He would make my suffering quick and my death even quicker. My arms and legs then began to tremble as the many possibilities of my imminent fate ran through my head.

"Didn't I tell you there were rapists?" a voice came.

I opened my eyes to see Daniel, whose eyes widened in surprise, rise and turn to face the newcomer. After Daniel had stood up, I was able to see through the space between his legs. Not more than a few paces away, Dante stood in the middle of the road with the sunlight bouncing off his dripping wet fur, which spilled water down onto his tunic and cloak.

"Go away!" Daniel shouted at Dante. "This is our fuck. Get your own!"

"Help!" I screamed. It was odd, at first, to beg the very same person that had kidnapped me to now save me, but it was better than the alternative that Daniel had in mind.

Dante's eyes shifted and caught sight me, just before they refocused on the half-naked tiger that stood before him. He showed no sign of leaving. "Let the otter go and I'll let you walk away,"

Daniel's tail flicked and he laughed. "You must not be able to count! Three against one ain't much of a fight,"

"Three, huh?" Dante said and drew silent for a moment. "Perfect,"

Without another word, Dante lowered his right arm to his side and opened the mysterious sack on the right side of his belt. He drew something out of it and held it with his right hand towards the sky. I wasn't able to see what it was, at first, from where I was laying. But, a ray of sunlight flicked off of the metallic object and I immediately realized what it was that Dante was holding. *A gun.*

Daniel didn't seem to comprehend the situation. After all, not many people in Alpis had guns. "What?" he said. "Are you gonna smack me around with that? How's about I show you what a real weapon looks like,"

The tiger stepped over to his pile of clothes and then unsheathed his sharpened sword. "This," Daniel announced, as he loosely held the drawn sword out with one arm for Dante to see, "is a man's weapon. I even cut right through a whore's skull with it once. It was like choppin' an onion. 'Course, onions don't bleed,"

Dante gazed at the sword for a moment and then looked back at Daniel.
“What did she do?”

“Who? The whore?”

Dante nodded.

Daniel scoffed and his tail rose with pride. “She opened her fat fucking mouth and talked back. Cunt should’ve known her place,”

“What did she say?” Dante asked.

At first, Daniel was silent. He then sighed, probably because of Dante’s lack of fear, and answered, “She wanted to charge me for another hour, even though I only went a few minutes over,”

Silence passed between them both for a brief moment.

“But enough talking,” Daniel announced, as he moved into a battle stance.
“It’s time to fight like men,”

As he let out a roar and charged forward, Daniel lifted his sword into the air with two hands, ready to cut Dante down like a tree.

Dante, however, didn’t move. He only stood there, as if he was hypnotized by the tiger’s roar.

Then, when Dante was only a few steps out of Daniel’s reach, he lowered his right arm to point his gun at the tiger and released a booming echo into the forest.

Daniel collapsed and fell onto his knees. His sword clanked off to the side in the dirt after it had fallen from his loose hands, which now cupped his groin. “MY COCK! MY FUCKING COCK IS BLEEDING, YOU BASTARD!”

From where I lay, I saw waterfall of blood beginning to pour down between Daniel’s legs. The tiger also began to breathe heavily, while blood still persisted to trickle down his thighs and onto the ground beneath him.

“Shit!” the weasel cursed, as he released my arm and ran forward with an unsheathed knife.

He only made it a few steps passed Daniel’s clothes when Dante fired a second shot, pushing the weasel’s body back and causing him to fall onto the ground. As the weasel’s head hit the road, blood from where his forehead had once been sprayed onto the dirt beside him, where chunks of his missing skull lay as well.

Dante began to walk forward. The stallion then released my arm and slowly edged backwards.

Now that I was free, I hopped to my paws and scurried over towards Dante while I covered my sheath with both of my hands. As I walked by Daniel, I gave him a swift kick in the face. He cried out in pain and I turned to walk to Dante again. When I was finally standing at Dante’s side, I turned and witnessed what fate had in store for the stallion.

The horse raised his arms into the air. “Let me go. I’m just one guy. I couldn’t possibly hurt you,”

Dante motioned with his gun towards the yellow armband around the stallion’s arm. “That says otherwise,”

“What? This? This doesn’t mean anything,” the horse said, just before he tugged on the armband and ripped it off in one motion. “If you let me go, I’m gone. I won’t tell them about you. They’ll never even hear from me again,”

Dante gave the horse a hard look, not even glancing at the armband that fell in the dirt. "You're a terrible liar,"

Dante's third shot blasted through the horse's neck, causing the horse's throat to rip open and splatter red down his clothes. He gasped for air, only to cause his open throat to gush out even more blood and a few chunks of flesh, just before he fell backwards and lay still.

After putting his empty gun back into what I now realized was a holster, Dante drew his skinny sword and leisurely trotted towards Daniel. *Kinda sucks that guns only have three shots.*

Carelessly, when Dante had stopped to hover over Daniel, he placed the tip of his boot on Daniel's head and tilted the tiger's face up to look at him. Daniel's eyes seemed weary and dim, unlike how they had been a few mere moments ago. His gasps had also become shallow. He must have already lost a lot of blood.

For a moment, Dante stood there, gazing at the pathetic rapist in silence as he brought his boot back down to the ground.

"Aren't you gonna stick me with that sword?" Daniel said, in attempt to mock Dante.

Dante slightly tilted his head to the side and looked down at the tiger in judgment. "Seventh Circle," he whispered.

"The fuck's that?" Daniel sighed.

"Nothing important," Dante said and eased the tip of his sword into Daniel's neck, slowly pushing it further and further into the tiger as a tiny stream of blood came out.

At first, Daniel's eyes widened in shock and pain. Then, quietly, they became peaceful and his eyelids closed over them. It was a better death than he deserved.

Once Daniel's body fell over, Dante yanked his blade from the tiger's throat. He then turned to face me with his bloody sword still in hand. "Are you hurt?" he asked with sincerity.

I looked at him in confusion, still a little petrified by watching him so easily kill three men. "Um... No. I'm fine,"

"Good," Dante said, before walking over to wipe his sword clean with Daniel's tunic. "We'll have to hurry before someone else comes. If there are anymore Talth nearby, they heard those shots,"

I quickly threw on my clothes again and Dante watched me. I wasn't certain if he was just making sure I didn't run away again, or if he was checking me out. Then again, he never said if he was gay or not. *I'll have to ask later.*

As soon as I was fully clothed, Dante walked over to me, his thin sword now sheathed. "It'll probably be faster if you hold onto my back while I run,"

Before I could think of an argument, I had my arms wrapped around the wolf's neck and my head draped over his shoulder while he hurried through the forest, away from the bloody scene behind us.