

Sofia Grey

Whiteout



A Snowdonia Wolves vignette

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Jake's cellphone had been stubbornly silent for the past two hours, but he still picked it up and glared at the screen as though it might burst to life on his touch.

Nothing. Where *was* she? He knew where Lillian was *supposed* to be, but since most of Europe had been hit with a sudden and severe arctic blast, she could be anywhere between Zurich and Milan. Their last contact had been over twenty-four hours ago, an all too brief and crackly phone call from a crowded airport terminal. Her flight had been cancelled and her team were rescheduling their travel arrangements.

He stood and paced around his workshop. Again. Lillian was a dedicated professional and she'd make every attempt to break through the storm to get to her next venue. She was probably on a train, or in the back of a limo. He knew there were lots of tunnels if she travelled by road, so it was feasible that she had no cellphone signal... but he still worried. His inner wolf scratched at him and gave a mournful howl.

"I know," he murmured. "I feel the same."

Where had she been last night? He picked up a sheaf of invoices and flicked through them, not seeing any of the details. The last time he'd entered her dreams was two nights ago. They'd walked through a quiet wooded glade, holding hands and admiring the wildlife. Jake had called a robin to sit on his fist and produced some crumbs to feed it, while Lillian had watched, entranced. He remembered the way the sunlight caught her hair, the red curls sparking like embers in a fire, and how it looked when spread across his pillow.

He looked at his cellphone again, on the pretext of checking the time. Four in the afternoon. Even taking the slight time difference into account, she wouldn't be heading for bed anytime soon. He had time to run off some of his tension, let his wolf out for a while.

Tugging his t-shirt over his head, he toed off his sneakers, snapped open his jeans and shoved them down his legs. Shifting to wolf form, he shook himself, stretched each leg in turn and then trotted out of the workshop and into the snow. It had snowed here too, but he was used to the harsh Welsh winters and as Pack Alpha he knew every inch of his territory, whether it was visible or not.

He ran flat out through the forest and up the side of the mountain closest to his home. His sides were heaving when he finally sat on an exposed crag to survey the

world below. Would he ever persuade Lillian to be his Mate? She'd needed more time, but he worried that spending so many weeks apart would put even more strain on their fragile, developing relationship. The sun had set completely now and Jake crunched slowly over the packed snow and ice as he made his way back down the mountain, lost in thought. His wolf was tired at least, even if the man still buzzed with tense energy.

Padding back across the frozen meadow, Jake caught sight of lights outside his house. A car. Fear spiked in his gut. He'd only left his cellphone for an hour, please God nothing had happened while he was out.

He covered the remaining distance in seconds and shifted during the final steps, to stand naked and gasping for breath, uncaring of the cold. His young cousin Sasha rolled down the car window and grinned at him.

"Got a message for you, Cuz. Your Mate phoned me when she couldn't reach you."

He'd missed her. Jake would kick himself later for that. For now, he wanted to know if she was okay.

"Well?" He snapped the word, his wolf very much in control.

Sasha made a point of looking at his wristwatch. "She said to meet her in around an hour, and that was forty five minutes ago. So..."

Relief burst through him and he fought to keep the beaming grin from his face. Aww, fuck it. Sasha knew how much Lillian meant to him. He stuck his hand through the open window and ruffled his cousin's hair. "Thanks, Sash. Appreciate it. I'll return the favour for you sometime." He turned to lope back into the house, then paused and glanced over his shoulder. "Sash," he called, and waited until he made eye contact. "You do know Julia's telling everyone she wants to Mate with you?" The alarm on Sasha's face was comical. "Should I tell her you're interested?" It was no secret that Jake's efficient admin assistant was deep in lust with Sasha, a longing that seemed very one-sided.

"No. Way." Sasha pointed a furious finger at him. "Don't even think of it, Jakey."

"Just saying it as I see it." Jake laughed, his world suddenly feeling right again. "Got to go, little cousin. Thanks."

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Dressed again, Jake sprawled across the fireside rug and made himself comfortable, eyes closed. His wolf paced inside him, anxious and excited at the same time. Any minute now, and he'd see his beloved Lillian. As soon as she fell asleep, he'd be able to enter her dream.

A dozen questions buzzed inside his brain, but he reined them in. She'd be here. Wherever she was.

Moments later, like an old TV set flickering to life, he saw an unfamiliar room. Heavy, dark wood furniture dominated the space, but there on a narrow bed lay his Mate. She smiled at him, tiredness visible on her already pale face. Even her bright curls seemed to have lost some of their bounce. "*Cariad*." He sank onto the bed next to her and buried one hand in her hair, the other cupping her cheek.

"Hello, Jake. I thought I was never going to catch up with you." She nuzzled against him and yawned. He wouldn't have long before she fell into deep sleep and he could no longer follow her.

"I'm glad you caught Sasha. I worried about you."

Lillian's smile filled his body with warmth and his cock responded, hard and hungry for her. He adjusted himself slightly, and then gazed at her, drinking in her weary appearance. "I've been awake for close to thirty six hours, Jake, but we'll make the Milan gig tomorrow. I couldn't spend another minute on the bus we hired, so we stopped at the first ski lodge that had vacancies. This part of Europe is suffering a whiteout and they had some last minute cancellations." Another yawn racked her body and Jake gathered her into his arms. He wanted to talk to her, to kiss her and strengthen their bond even further, but his instincts surged. Right now, he just needed to touch her.

"Sleep, Cariad. Phone me when you can, and we'll talk some more when you're rested."

"Uh huh." He felt the tension leaving her arms and he dropped a tender kiss on her forehead. Her eyelids were drooping, her body wilting as she drifted into deep sleep, but then she roused herself. "I knew this was the right place to stop. Soon as I saw the name."

He tucked an escaping curl behind her ear, following it with a kiss. "Why was that?"

Her smile felt like the sun coming out from behind clouds. "I'm staying at Lupo Nero." She squeezed him close. "Black Wolf Lodge."

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