

A Beta Before an Alpha

Chapter 1

Lauren's Point of View

I can't stop replaying the scene from that day a month ago in my head. I'm lying in bed with the covers over my head. I wish it were just a nightmare, but it's not. This is my reality. Last month on my 18th Birthday, I was in the packhouse cafeteria kitchen getting breakfast with my brother Julien, before work, at the pack's daycare. Just as we were sitting down, I heard a growl rip through the room. We both quickly turned, and to my surprise, I saw Nathan - the Alpha. Nathan's large muscular body was tense. He looked so mad but also sexy.

Why haven't I noticed him like this before? He was always handsome, but now I feel more drawn to him. His big blue eyes are beautiful, although they look angry. It suddenly dawns on me that he's looking at me. Our eyes are locked. He's angry, and he's looking at me? Why?

His jaw is clenched. Then suddenly, I catch the most intoxicating scent; it's so sweet. I start to hear the word 'Mate' repeatedly in my head. Wait, what? Is Nathan my mate? I can't believe this! I move to stand up, so I can get to him, but he shakes his head, with disgust all over his face, and walks away.

The air is suddenly stolen from my lungs. I can't breathe, and all of my energy is gone. I collapse into my chair. "What is it? What's going on?" Julien asks, worry all over his face. I open my mouth, but nothing comes out. My body starts to shake, and my vision gets spotty. I feel dizzy and like my brain isn't getting enough oxygen.

Julien gets on his knees and tries to instruct me to breathe. I'm trying to listen. I don't want to feel like this, and I definitely do not want a scene, but it feels like my body is completely out of my control. The black spots slowly take over my vision until I lose all consciousness.

I open my eyes, and I'm in Julien's arms, and he's yelling at someone.

"Julien?" I croak. He looks down at me, and relief washes over him.

"Lauren, are you okay? What happened?" he asks. I look around, and I'm in the hospital wing, and nurses are surrounding us.

"I don't know?" I rasp, but as soon as the words leave my mouth, I instantly remember. I remember the events that led me to the full-on panic attack, resulting in me fainting. My chest feels tight, and all I want to do is get out of here and make it to my room, where I can fall apart without everyone knowing and watching. I'll muster up every bit of strength I have; just make it there, I tell myself.

I wiggle out of Julien's arms. "I'm okay. I'm just feeling tired. I think I'm a little under the weather. I just need to go to bed and rest," I assure Julien and the medical staff surrounding me.

"Let us at least check your vitals," a Doctor asks.

"I'm really ne. I'd just like to go get some rest; I'll come back if I feel worse," I assure them and start to leave.

Julien is hot on my trail. "Lauren, what the hell?" he asks. "In my room," I whisper yell.

I keep my head down, and we speed walk to my bedroom. As soon as my bedroom door closes, the oodgates are open, and I'm sobbing uncontrollably. Before Julien can even ask me what's going on or why I'm crying, I spill.

"I found... my mate... and ... he didn't... want... me," I sob.

"Who? When?" he asks, brows furrowed. I explained what had taken place in the cafeteria earlier, and Julien is pissed. To say Julien is a protective older brother is an understatement. Julien is one of the top warriors in our pack, and he's never been afraid to use his strength to protect me or stick up for me. He could never win against our Alpha, though, so the last thing I want is him getting himself hurt, or worse, because of his protective instincts.

"Promise me you won't say anything to him!" I demand. Julien stares at me intently.

"I can't promise that. I can promise I won't say anything yet. Hopefully, this is a misunderstanding, and you both will sort through this... quickly." He agrees and pulls me into a hug.

The next three days were spent in my room crying, feeling anxious and feeling pain like I never have before. I had been calling in sick at work. On day 4, Julien stopped by with breakfast.

"Eat, and then shower and put on some workout clothes. You love the gym, and you've always exercised to deal with stress, so why not now?" He asks.

"You can't hold up in here for the rest of your life. You need to start living. Plus, maybe this was just a misunderstanding, and if it was, great you can both move on, and if it wasn't... well, then you still need to move in. You can't live like this forever," Julien explains.

He's right. I'm so full of self-loathing, even though I know I don't deserve this. I wolf down my eggs and bacon, and then Julien and I agree to meet at the gym in 40 minutes. I have time to shower and get dressed in some workout clothes.

After my shower, I find myself staring into my mirror, looking at my reaction. I can't help but want to pick apart my appearance in the mirror. My chestnut hair had never bothered me before. In fact, I always liked the reddish-brown hue, but maybe Nathan doesn't like it? I have hazel eyes and soft features, and my body is toned. My boobs aren't huge, but they're not tiny.

My ass is bigger than I would like, maybe that's it? Maybe Nathan wants the stick gure body? Or huge boobs? Maybe he likes blondes? Or red hair? Blue eyes? Green eyes? I'm average height at 5'4"; maybe he wants a tall mate? I remember his face; he was so disgusted. What is it he is so repulsed by? I'm not a warrior; maybe he wanted a strong Luna? It's killing me.

I need to know. What's wrong with me? I need to ask him. So I can at least understand what it is and if there is anything I can do. I never thought my fated mate would want to change me or that I wouldn't be good enough for him. I thought I would be created perfectly for him. I also never thought I would want to change myself for someone. This doesn't feel right.

Julien was right; working out was just what I needed. I still feel like my world is falling apart around me, but I feel a little stronger right now. I've always seen myself as strong, and I stand my ground, but it seems like I am not myself when it comes to Nathan.

I'm the worst version of myself. I thought it was supposed to be the opposite with mates? We stayed at the gym for two hours. We did plenty of working out, but we also had moments of just talking through my thoughts and Julien reassuring me that I'm enough. My self-condence took a real hit through this whole thing, but Julien is the best big brother and one of my best friends.

Julien and I left the gym separately because Julien had to make it to a warrior training class. I made my way back to the packhouse to get cleaned up, and then I needed to visit my Mom. Apparently, she was starting to worry about me because I'd locked myself in my room for the last few days. I told my Mom that I was sick, and she believed it.

Julien told her he would bring me my meals so that she wouldn't come over, but apparently, she's really starting to worry. She mentioned to Julien this morning that she would come and check on me today. I am deep in thought, thinking about whether I should tell my Mom about what's really going on in my life when the sound of a growl pulls me back to reality. I look up, and to my surprise, Nathan is in front of me, alone. I stop mid-stride and freeze.

He's just a few feet away from me, and being this close; his heavenly scent lls my lungs. Even just smelling him feels good. Our eyes are locked, and he looks so mad again. His body is tense, and his hands are clenched. Part of me wants to just throw caution to the wind and touch him. I want to touch him so badly.

I take one step closer, and he takes a quick step backwards. "W-what is it? Why don't you want me?" I ask, trying to sound as strong as possible, but my voice cracked, and I know my emotions are written all over my face.

"I don't want a mate. I don't want you," the way his face had disgust etched so deeply when he said, "I don't want you," did not go unnoticed.

"Why?" I ask. Even though my heart is breaking, and part of me knows I should walk away at this point, I can't.

"Fated mates just make Alpha's weaker. I am going to control this pack the way I see t, and I don't need a fated mate to make me weak and lose sight of my goals. I've agreed to a match with Alpha Roy's daughter, of Blue Moon. I'll keep my head screwed on, and our pups will be strong with both parents having Alpha blood running through their veins," he admits.

Hearing him talk about being with someone else and having pups with her physically hurt. I felt my chest tightening, and I could feel the tears threatening to fall. I won't let him see me cry, though. I took a quick step forward, and somehow my legs seemed to be unstable, and I tripped over my own feet. I felt his strong hand grab my arm roughly and jolt me up.

"Watch where you're walking," he growls.

I couldn't help but just stare at him. The feeling of his hand on my wrist sent sparks all the way up my arm. He yanked his hand back and stomped off. It wasn't a misunderstanding like Julien hoped; he really doesn't want me. At that moment, it felt so nal. I won't have my mate. At that moment, I knew I had to tell my mother everything.