

## Chapter 3

### Lauren's Point of View

I thought that after Nathan had told me he didn't want me, and that he wanted to have pups with another woman, that he'd keep his distance and leave me alone. I expected him to formally reject me, but I was wrong. The last few weeks have been terrible. Any time I see him, he's scowling at me, or he's following me out of the dining hall, or the gym, or even work to berate me.

Telling me that I disgust him or that he hates me. We never really talked before I found out that we were mates because he's three years older than me; he didn't go out of his way to be cruel. Not to me or anyone in our pack that I noticed. We all knew him to be cold, maybe a little cocky. It was common knowledge that he had big aspirations for our pack; to grow it and improve our reputation. He wants our pack to be known as the ercest and strongest.

I put on my dress and shoes and then make my way to my bathroom to do my makeup. I look in the mirror, and the stress of the last few weeks is evident on my face. I have circles under my eyes, and I just look washed out and tired. I haven't slept well since my 18th birthday.

I start to put on makeup, more makeup than I would usually put on, but I am required to be down at the party tonight. The party to welcome Blair, Nathan's ancé, to our pack. I had no plans on going, but Nathan stopped me outside of the kitchen this morning and ordered me to attend.

"You'll be punished if you disobey me," his deep voice ordered.

It hurts enough that he doesn't want me, but then for him to go out of his way to try and rub Blair's presence in my face just seems beyond cruel. Why would Moon Goddess pair us together?

I nish by swiping some tinted lip balm to my lips and taking one nal look. I'm just wearing a knee-length plain black dress, nothing fancy, and it doesn't show my body off at all. I just left my hair down straight, and aside from the makeup to cover up the damage from the last month, I look rather plain and hopefully unnoticeable; that's the plan, at least. I don't want anyone noticing me, and I want to be able to sneak out as early as possible without being too hard to spot or too easy to nd.

A month ago, I was looking for any opportunity to see Nathan. The pull to him was so strong that I would have begged him to give me a chance if I thought that it would have worked. Thankfully, it seemed pointless, and I didn't stoop that low. Slowly though, I am starting to resent him.

To hate him. He's cruel to me, and I didn't do anything wrong. He was supposed to be the one person that would protect me and my heart.

I was supposed to be by his side to care for him and to love him the way a mate should. But somehow, I seem to have gotten to the same place he has. My heart doesn't want him, and I hate him. My body and my heart are two different things, though. My body reacts to him, even though I wish it didn't.

Just as I'm nishing up, I hear a knock at the door, and I know it's my best friend, Sadie, coming to pick me up. Sadie went away for college, so I haven't seen her since she moved away two months ago. Sadie was so excited to hear that our future Luna' was having a welcome party that she made the trip home. I was too embarrassed to tell her that Nathan was my mate and that I disgusted him. I also told myself the last thing I needed was my best friend worrying about me when she was supposed to be focusing on her studies, but if I'm being honest with myself, I was really just embarrassed.

"Hey, Sadie! Wow, you look amazing!" I greet her and pull her into a hug. Her short silky purple dress hugs her body perfectly. Her blonde hair is curled and half up; she looks incredible.

"Hey! I missed you! Thank you!" She says as she wraps her arms around me.

She pulls back, "What's up with the hair and dress? You're not very dressed up," she notices.

"I'm just not really feeling up to going to this dinner, and I won't be staying long. I'm not staying for the cocktail meet and greet. I'm just going to go to the dinner," I explain, and she furrows her brows.

"Are you sick?" She asks, as she places the back of her hand on my forehead.

I playfully swat her hand away, "No, just not in a partying mood, I guess," which isn't a lie.

"You do look kind of tired, actually."

"Geez, thanks!" I chuckle.

That's just a nice way of saying I look like crap. It's true, but it kind of sucks to hear.

"You're always beautiful, and I'm not saying you look bad, just that you don't look like the same lively Lauren I left two months ago when I went away to school," she admits.

"I haven't been sleeping well. I'm exhausted, which is a good reason for me to leave early tonight to get to bed early."

She frowns. "I missed you, though," she whines.

"Let's go. I'm starving." I lie so that we can change the subject. I grab her hand and head down to the dining hall, which looks extra fancy tonight.

"I was surprised to hear that this was such a formal affair, considering this is just the introduction," Sadie muses. I wondered that myself, but I have a feeling it was all Nathan's idea. Just another way to rub in my face that he doesn't want me. If he hates me so much, why doesn't he reject me? I have been asking myself that a lot the last month. I keep expecting him to anytime he pulls me aside, but he doesn't.

When we walk into the dining hall, I can't help but steal a look at Nathan and Blair. She has blonde hair, and she's beautiful. I can't help but notice her hand on his arm while she speaks happily with him. I would imagine this is what being stabbed in the heart feels like. I suck in a deep breath. 'Get it together. He's an asshole, and he doesn't want you,'" I remind myself, over and over. I look away before he catches me looking. We take a seat, and I sit so my back is to the Alpha's table. I don't want to have to watch them all night.

Soon Nathan is asking for everyone's attention. Everyone faces him. I take a deep breath and turn my body to face him, but I refuse to look at him. I plant my eyes on the light fixture above him, and I force myself to block out his voice. I force myself to recite 'I'm okay. I will fall in love one day. Plenty of she-wolves have mates that aren't their fated mate. I'm okay.' I repeat over and over, and when I hear everyone clap, I follow suit and sit down with everyone.

### Nathan's point of view

Lauren came in here, and I didn't even see her look at Blair or me. Does she not care? She is sitting with her back to me. Why doesn't she care? I was expecting more out of her than this. I know I don't want a fated mate. I don't want to be weak; I want to be strong and erce, and she'd just have too much power over me if I gave into it. Still, I have a deep desire for her, and I want to hurt her as much as possible. It's my defence mechanism.

Fuck, even in that plain dress, I see the contour of her hips and her round ass. She looks good. f\*\*k! She'll make me weak and soft, and I'd never be able to accomplish everything I have planned for this pack. Plus, she's weak. She trains in the gym a lot, but she doesn't ght at all. She works at the daycare with babies and toddlers. She isn't what I need for a Luna. I need to hurt her, so she knows she's nothing to me. She's nothing to me. I just need to keep reminding myself of that.

She won't look at me, but I know how to make her. "Can I get everyone's attention?" I say as we stand, with Blair's hand in mine. I look straight to Lauren. I want to see her face when she sees us hold hands. She's facing me, but she's looking up at the ceiling. She might not want to look at me, but she'll hear me.

"It's is my great honour to introduce to you my ancé, Blair Roy, daughter of Alpha Shep Roy, from Blue Moon. I have asked Blair to be my mate and Luna," I say loudly, trying to make everyone feel like I'm proud to have her. Lauren's face didn't falter at all.

"Not only is Blair wonderful, but she also has strong Alpha blood running through her veins, and soon enough, so will our pups," I add. Still nothing from Lauren. What the hell?

"I couldn't ask for a better mate and a better Luna for all of you. I know you all will love her. Her Luna ceremony will be held on the next full moon in two weeks from now," I add—still nothing.

"Thank you!" I add.

Everyone starts clapping, and I pull Blair into a kiss. She's eager, so it'll help sell it even more. As soon as I pulled away from Blair, I looked to Lauren, but she was sitting back in her seat, with her back turned to me. Everyone is seated. Has she forgotten about me already? Or is she just getting better at hiding her emotions? She was so obvious with her feeling at rst; it was gratifying. It made me feel like I was sticking to my plan, and it was working. The plan I've always had, reject my fated mate.

Dinner is served, and I'm so consumed with thoughts about Lauren that I basically ignored Blair. I was constantly rubbing my back, or arm, or nuzzling into me. Nuzzling into me? Like WTF? It's dinner time. I wonder what it would feel like if Lauren nuzzled me? I hate her so much for doing this to me. I've never hated anyone more in my entire life.

I remember when she tripped a few weeks ago, and my hand went out to catch her; the sparks were far more intense than I had imagined they would be. I should have let her fall. Part of me wants to have her body, just once, just to see what it would feel like. If I rage f\*\*\*\*d her, maybe I could get her out of my head? Maybe she would despise me even more then?

Our dishes are taken, and light music comes on while champagne is being distributed. People are getting up and starting to socialize.

"Should we make the rounds, and you can introduce me to everyone important?" Blair asks excitedly. I nod, and she wraps her arm around mine. I start introducing Blair to people, and then I see Lauren grab two champagne utes. She downs one, then the other. For her to be downing alcohol, this must be getting to her. I can't help the smile on my face. I see her start to walk towards the exit. Oh no!

"Jake, would you please look after Blair for a minute? Alpha business," I say rmlly to my Beta.

"Of course!" I quickly exit the same door Lauren did. I don't see her; she must be moving fast. I start running toward her sweet oral scent. I soon see her speed walking down the hallway close to her room.

"Stop!" I growl. She pauses mid-step and turns to look at me.

### Lauren's point of view

I'm rushing to my room to get away from the party. The last thing I need is for him to introduce her to me. He would too... he hates me.

"Stop!" A deep voice growls.

I stop and slowly turn around. I know it's him. Why can't he just leave me alone?

"What is it, Alpha?" I ask, looking to the oor, and he continues stalking towards me.

"Don't you think it's extremely disrespectful to your future Luna that you're leaving her welcoming party without even introducing yourself to her?" He asks, anger laced in every word. In this moment, I've had enough. I can't live like this anymore. I stand tall and look him in the eye. I'm so tired of this.

"Why are you doing this? If you don't want me, ne. Why do you need to try and hurt me even more?" I can feel the tears threatening to fall, but I'm trying my hardest to stay strong. He looks at me stunned, obviously surprised by my sudden burst of strength and condence.

"I hate you so much, I can't help myself," he seethed.

"Why haven't you rejected me then?"

He doesn't respond. He just continues to look at me with disgust.

"Well, let me do it then. I Lauren Crane, reject you..." His eyes are wide, and if looks could kill, I would be 6 feet under right now. "...Nathan Matheson of Claw Moon," I say, and I feel a shooting pain through my chest. I see Nathan brace himself against the wall, too, so he must have felt it as well. I turn and run to my room. As soon as my door is shut, the tears start to fall. I text my mother right away,

Me: Please come to my room. I just rejected Nathan.

Mom: On my way.