

## Chapter 4

"I saw Alpha Nathan on the way up here. He looks livid. I am really scared for you," my Mom says while wiping the tears from my face.

"I couldn't do it anymore. He went out of his way to hurt me, to rub it in my face that he didn't want me. I can't live like this anymore," I sob.

"I completely understand, honey. I didn't expect you to. I don't know how safe it is for you here right now," she explains.

"What will happen now that I rejected him? Will the mate bond be severed?" I ask.

"For the most part, for you anyways. On the next full moon, it will be completely severed. For Nathan, he'd have to accept your rejection, and then come next full moon, he would be fully severed from you as well," she explains.

"It's not safe for you here, Lo. You need to get far away from here. At least for a little while," my Mom explains, and I nod.

"Where do I go?"

"I think I might know someone that could help you. I used to work for her. Do you remember me talking about Peggy? She was like a second mother to me, back when I was your age. We were very close. She's a human, but she knew what I was. We were so close that I told her, and she accepted me. I have kept in touch over the phone throughout the years," she responds.

I've heard her mention Peggy before. She pulls out her phone and starts dialling. I hear a small knock on the door, and I'm lled with relief when I see it's Julien and Sadie. I mind-link them both about what happened tonight so I don't interrupt my Mom's phone call. This is a lot to take in for Sadie. She wasn't expecting me to nd my mate yet, let alone me rejecting him. My Mom gets off the phone,

"Peggy said you can stay with her. She owns a bar, and she said she could even use a waitress," she says. I feel so much relief at this revelation.

"Start packing; it's a long drive. It's 9 pm now. If you leave in half an hour, you could be around 7-8 am if you drive straight through."

My relief is suddenly replaced with panic. Can I really do this? I don't have time to think about it, though, thankfully.

"Julien, run down to get a Jerry can of gas and put it in the trunk of Lauren's car. Lauren might need it, driving through the night, she might have a hard time nding a gas station," She pauses.

"Sadie, can you run to the kitchen and pack some fruit and snacks with some water and energy drinks for her?" Mom asks. Sadie nods and leaves.

"You pack; I'll be back in a few minutes," my Mom instructs. I get changed into leggings and a comfy sweater, and then I grab my large suitcase and my small carry-on size bag. I put all my toiletries and makeup, electronics in that. Then I place as much clothing as I can in my big suitcase. I'm debating what clothing I should bring and what I should leave behind when my Mom quickly enters my room with her large suitcase.

"Take mine too. We don't know how long you'll be gone. I'm going to stay here and keep an eye on how Nathan takes this. If after the next full moon, the mate bond is broken, then you can come back," she says.

I nod, but I can't imagine ever being a part of this pack again. How can I accept him as my Alpha after everything? My Mom starts putting more clothes in her suitcase.

"Mom, I don't need to take pretty dresses. That's not a necessity," I remind her.

"If you can t it, you take it. Plus, you never know when you might NEED one."

It doesn't take us long, and I've got nearly all my clothes packed in these two large suitcases. I make room for a few sentimental items. A framed picture of my family before my Dad died a few years ago. A photo album, my small Jewellery box, which has a few items my Dad bought me growing up. A few books, a small stuffed bear that was mine since I was a kid, and my favourite pillow.

When Sadie and Julien get back to my room, Sadie is now tasked with nding Nathan, and keeping an eye on him, so she can mind link us if he starts coming our way. The plan is to sneak out without being seen.

"I'm coming with you," Julien states.

"No! I'm not getting you involved in this, too," I demand.

"If you try and come, I'm not going to go, Julien. I am not getting you involved in this, and I'm not having you risk your future in this pack because of me," I say rmly.

"Lauren, I don't want you driving off into the night all by yourself," he reasons.

"I totally get that. You want to protect me just as much as I want to protect you. Call me every hour, or even every half hour if you want."

He looks so torn, but I meant it when I said that I wouldn't leave if he came with me. He loves this pack, and I'm not ruining his future. He nally nods hesitantly.

"This is all the cash I have on me. I'll send some if you need more," Mom explains.

I look down at the envelope full of money. "Mom, No! You worked for this. How much is here? This looks like a lot of money!"

"I want you to have it. Don't argue with me, do you hear me? I have plenty in the bank; you know Daddy set me up well. This is all I have in cash on me right now, though; there's \$2000. It should tide you over for a little anyways," Mom explains.

I hate taking money from her, but I only started working full-time at the daycare four months ago, after I graduated high school. I saved most of my money for the down payment on my car, a 3-year-old little dark blue Chevy Malibu, but I still have a little saved.

"I have about \$1000 in my bank account too, Mom. I don't need to take all of this." I tried arguing with her, but she insisted.

When we make it down to my car, Julien loads my car up while I hug my Mom and say goodbye to her. I suddenly realize that I'm never coming back here. I can't face Nathan ever again. This sudden realization has me sobbing. Not for the loss of Nathan, but for the loss of my friends and family, my job, my home. Julien pulls me into a hug. We're so close, and I'm going to really miss him. I'll miss them both.

"Hey, this whole thing should be taken care of in a few weeks, after the full moon," he tries to comfort me. I force a small smile and nod.

"Snacks and drinks are in the passenger seat. Hook up your phone right away, so you can listen to music and answer my phone calls every hour," he instructs.

"I will; I love you guys. I'll miss you, but I'm going to be ne. Don't worry. I don't know if I'll be able to drive through, but If I pull over to sleep, I'll send you a text."

"Do not text your location, though, in case he takes our phones. Wait... If we ever text you something, and you want to verify it's us, ask the password. Our password will be ... Peggy," my Mom says. I

nod, give one nal hug to them, get into my car, and drive away. When I get to the border of the pack lands, I say words I never dreamed I would ever say.

"I Lauren Crane reject Claw Moon as my pack." As soon as the words leave my mouth, I hear a chilling howl. Nathan would have felt that I just rejected his pack as well. I speed off into the night.