



## First Day Jitters

"Are you nervous, angel?" Finn asked Lily as he handed her a cup of coffee.

"A little bit," Lily admitted. "But it can't possibly be worse than Hood River High," she said with pursed lips, recalling the nightmare that was her old high school.

"I think it will be far better," Finn reassured her, kissing her forehead sweetly.

"Nicole introduced me to some of the werewolves in my year yesterday and they seem really nice," she told him with a smile. "Well most of them," she added, wincing at the memory of one of the girls rolling her eyes and scowling as Nicole made the introductions.

Lily didn't know what the girl's problem was, but at the end of the day not everyone would like her, and she knew that. Besides, all the others she met were friendly, and one of them had told Lily to find them in the cafeteria at lunch, so she hoped that was a good sign for how her senior year would pan out.

"What are your plans for the day?" Lily asked her mate, who was making scrambled eggs and bacon for the two of them.

"I'm going to go get the keys for the gym," he told her with a grin, his blue eyes sparkling with excitement. "Some of the equipment we ordered is ready as well, so it will be delivered today."

"That's awesome babe. Hopefully you guys will be able to get it up and running in no time," Lily replied. The paperwork and everything had finally gone through the previous day, so the owners contacted Finn, Greg and Damien and let them know they could move in when they were ready. Greg and Damien would be arriving in the next three days, so Finn would start the process of setting things up without them, but he seemed happy enough to do it.

"I'll be back here around six-thirty tonight," he told her. "Are you still up for making dinner tonight?" he asked.

"Yeah, of course," Lily enthused. She hadn't done much of the cooking, but she had wanted to do something special for him, so she was planning on making him one of his favorites, according to his mom at least—steak with a pepper sauce, roasted potatoes, asparagus and homemade chocolate pie for dessert.

"Sounds good, angel. I'm looking forward to it," Finn responded. "Oh, and before I forget, I promised the Luna that we would help her tomorrow evening with a few things. I could see she was stressed this morning, so I offered to help her and Drew."

"What do we need to do?" Lily asked him, smiling at how thoughtful her mate was.

"We just need to call a few neighboring packs and confirm that they'll be here in a month's time for a huge meeting that Luna Beth has planned."

"Sure, I can definitely help with that after school," Lily replied.

"Alright, let's eat and then I need to get a move on," Finn said as he plated up the breakfast he had made.

"Me too," Lily agreed, digging into the food. They had done training again, so they had to rush through their morning routine more so than usual.

After wolfing down her breakfast, Lily thanked Finn for the food and kissed him goodbye, leaving the apartment in a bit of a hurry. She was meant to be at the school twenty minutes early because she needed to go to the office and get her schedule and all that. Luckily, Gareld High School was only a ten-minute drive from the Crescent apartment building, so Lily pulled into the parking lot in her new car just in time.

There were plenty of students milling around before the bell rang, most of whom were humans, and when Lily nervously asked one of them where the office was, he gladly offered to walk her there. They made small talk while they walked, and Lily was happy to find out Derick was a senior as well—hopefully he would be in some of her classes.

"Do you mind if I ask you a question?" he asked hesitantly as they walked through the school hallway.

"Of course not," Lily replied with a smile.

"Are you engaged or married or something?" he asked, pointing to the emerald ring on her finger.

"Oh," Lily replied, having completely forgotten that a wedding-style ring might not really fit in at a high school, seeing as that in the human world she was considered too young to be married. "Yeah, my boyfriend and I got married about three months ago," she explained, not really lying because being bonded mates was the equivalent of human marriage.

"Wow, you two must really love each other," Derick said with wide eyes. "I couldn't even decide what I wanted for breakfast this morning, let alone who I want to spend the rest of my life with."

Lily giggled at his statement, loving that he hadn't judged her or thought she was crazy to be married so young. "I can't really explain it, but I know that there's no one else out there for me. Finn and I were just meant to be," she told him, unable to contain her smile.

"That's really cool," he replied. "My sister got married when she was nineteen and she and her husband have been happy as can be for the last few years," he told her, revealing the reason he was so understanding. "Okay, here's the office," he said, gesturing grandiosely to a pair of glass double doors.

"Thanks, Derrick," Lily said. "Hopefully I'll see you around during the day."

"I'm sure I will. Have a good first day, Lily," he replied, saluting her as she walked through the doors.

Lily was given her schedule and a map of the building to help her get around until she got used to the school. The school wasn't that big anyway, so she managed to find her classes without much trouble, and she was happy to find out that she shared most of her classes with the werewolves Nicole had introduced her to and some with Derrick as well, so she was never shy for company. The whole experience was kind of surreal and at times Lily honestly thought she would wake up and find that it was all just a dream. By the time the final bell rang, she was grinning from ear to ear and feeling like she was on cloud nine.

"Hey, Lily," Morgan, one of the werewolves who was in a few of Lily's classes, greeted her as she was opening her car door. "How was your first day?"

"Hey Morgan. It was great thanks," Lily replied. "Are you heading back to the Crescent?" she asked, using the shortened name that the pack seemed to use for the apartment building.

"Yeah, my bus leaves in a few minutes," Morgan explained, gesturing to the yellow bus idling in front of the school. "I usually get a lift from Georgia, but she had to stay late today for the debate team."

"Oh, I can give you a ride," Lily offered.

"Really?" the other werewolf asked with a grin. "That would be great."

"Yeah, of course," Lily responded. "Hop in."

Lily spent the ten minute drive back to the apartment building listening to Morgan chatter away about which teachers she liked and which ones he hated, chipping in once and a while, but otherwise happy to let the other girl do the talking. Lily had to start on the meal she had planned for Finn, so she and Morgan went their separate ways after they got to the building.

She immediately got to work on making the chocolate pie, making the pastry and letting it rest in the fridge while she started preparing the filling. By the time Finn got home, the pie was chilling in the fridge, the steak and potatoes were in the oven and all Lily had left to do was reheat the pepper sauce and fry the asparagus.

"Hey babe," Lily called out when she heard the front door open. "Dinner will be ready in ten minutes, but don't you want to wait in the living room until I'm done." Lily hadn't told him what she was making, and she wanted to keep it a surprise until it was all on the table.

"Sure, angel," he replied, sounding amused. "Can't wait."

Lily put the sauce on the stove to heat and fried the asparagus in a little bit of butter and oil, seasoning it with salt and pepper once it was done. She dished everything up onto two plates and placed them onto the already set and candle-lit dining room table. "Come through," she said to Finn, sticking her head into the living room to see he was sitting on the couch and scrolling through his phone.

At her words, he put his phone away and stood up with a big smile. "This looks amazing. You know you didn't have to do all this babe," he said when he saw what was on the dining room table.

"I know, but I wanted to," Lily told him, standing up on her toes to kiss him. "I wanted to show you how much you mean to me."

"I love you, angel," he whispered into her ear, pulling her into his arms—the place where she always felt at home and safe.

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In Portland:

"Is everything ready?" Alpha Erikson asked his Beta.

"Yes, Alpha. We've done what you asked, and we'll be ready to start the plan on schedule."

"And you've confirmed that the Crescent building is where Lily is staying?" he asked with narrowed eyes.

"Yes, Alpha," Beta Lawson said, swallowing nervously—he was now the longest lasting Beta that had served under Alpha Erikson, and he knew that any day might be his last.

"Good," the unhinged werewolf replied with a smirk. "It may take some time, but I'll have Lily here soon enough and then everything will be perfect."