



Chapter 10: Knotting

ARDEN

The chairs scraped against the pristine wooden floor as individuals faced their groups, the wide space alive with small chatter about gossip and future plans. Yet amidst the voices, I could distinctly hear the rapid beating of my own heart.

We found ourselves entrapped in an awkward silence. Cade was gazing out of the window, his thoughts drifting far beyond the classroom. Beside me, Rowan's eyes were glued to the side of my face, his intense stare making my cheeks flush. Meanwhile, Tessa acted engrossed by her laptop, completely immersed in whatever was displayed on the screen.

As the silence lingered, I pursed my lips, desperately searching for an opening statement that could ease the tension. Fortunately, the moment was shattered when Miss Loveson came to our group, her cheery demeanor breaking through the suffocating surroundings.

"Well, well... if this isn't an interesting team. Alpha Cade of the North, Alpha Rowan of the South, and two beautiful ladies," she greeted, a warm smile illuminating her face.

"Tessa and Arden," I quickly added, feeling the need to assert our presence. She turned to me with raised eyebrows, prompting me to clear my throat and repeat in a quieter voice, "I'm Arden, and she's Tessa."

Miss Loveson's smile broadened, though I noticed she still had a hint of surprise in her expression. "Alright, my apologies. I'll remember your names."

"Anyway," she continued, reverting to her enthusiastic tone, "choose your topic."



She handed me a small, colorful box while I turned to the rest of my groupmates. Tessa nodded in agreement, and I noticed Rowan's faint smile, while Cade remained fixated on the view outside the window.

With nervousness and excitement, I plunged my hand into the box and retrieved a piece of paper. As I read it, my breath caught in my throat. I turned to Miss Loveson with hopeful eyes, but she merely shook her head with an encouraging smile.

"Good luck!" she exclaimed, moving on to the next group.

I placed the piece of paper on the table between us.

Knotting.

My luck seemed to have deserted me. As anticipated, Rowan was rather pleased with the topic. "So, how do we start?" he asked, crossing his arms across his chest expectantly.

"Attention!" Miss Loveson called, capturing the room's focus once more. "I don't want a half-hearted presentation. All of you are in Elite for a reason, so prove it. Each group will ask the presenting team a question, and every wrong answer will be deducted from your score."

"To spice things up, I'll give a prize to the group with the highest score," she announced, stoking the competitive fire in the room. "You'll be exempt from the quiz, and plus points will be added under your name."

Murmurs swept through the classroom as wolves speculated on how best to claim the prize. I glanced at Tessa, hoping she would speak up, but she remained silently focused on her laptop.

Clearing my throat, I attempted to start a conversation. "So... what are we going to do first?"



Rowan leaned closer, a teasing smile on his lips as he scooted toward me. His thigh brushed against mine, and I instinctively pulled back, the heat of his skin sending a shiver straight up my spine. "You tell us, sweetheart. Do you want us to do a full-blown demonstration of it?"

My eyes widened in horror; before I could respond, Tessa's gaze darted to anything other than us. Just as I prepared to give him a piece of my mind, Cade intervened.

"Let's divide the parts," Cade said, his deep voice resonating through the room for the first time. There was authority in his tone, enough to make Rowan sit up a little straighter, arms crossed tightly before him.

"Choose a number," he said, locking eyes with me. My mouth fell open, momentarily at a loss. Cade clicked his tongue in impatience, muttering, "Incompetent," loud enough for us to hear.

"Here are the parts we need," Cade continued, tearing out a page from his notebook where he had been jotting down notes while Miss Loveson discussed our impending rewards. "Choose what you want to do. We'll merge our ideas after two days."

Rowan chuckled, glancing at Cade. "So, the rumors were right. You despise unnecessary rituals, huh?" But Cade remained unfazed.

"Fine by me, North Alpha. I'll take the third part," Rowan said, confidence radiating from him.

"I'll handle the first part," Tessa quietly volunteered.

I scanned the options and realized that only one remained.

"I'll do the second one," Cade said.

I couldn't help the small frown that spread across my forehead. "So,



what about me?"

Cade shrugged, grabbing his bag and slinging it over his shoulder. At that moment, like clockwork, the bell rang, signaling the end of class. He stood up abruptly, pushing his chair away. Annoyance surged in me as I witnessed his indifference.

There was no doubt about his competence. Tessa's assertions that he was smart and strong, embodying the essence of an Alpha, were quite obvious. Caden Callahan was undeniably the son of the North.

But he couldn't treat me like this. Before he could walk away, I reached out and grasped his wrist, stopping him in his tracks. The warmth of his skin beneath my palm sent a jolt through me, like touching fire and not wanting to let go.

Cade focused his gaze on the point of contact between us, his jaw tense. "I can't just do nothing," I insisted.

A deep breath escaped him as he forcefully removed my grip, his touch leaving my skin tingling. "Then find a way to contribute," he said before he turned and walked away, oblivious as I struggled with the rush of emotions he left behind.

"And let me tell you this," he said, walking closer to me, his fresh yet musky scent invading my senses. It was fresh, masculine, and strangely intoxicating.

I found it hard to breathe again as I glanced down at his lips.

He leaned down ever so slightly. My gaze wavered for a moment, but I kept the eye contact, not wanting to back down.

"Don't touch me." 