

Chapter 8: Choose Your Alpha

ARDEN

"How do they even know about such data?" I asked, furrowing my brows, my heart racing as a sense of vulnerability washed over me. How can they know who's a virgin or not?

"They collected the data during the entrance exam, remember?" Tessa replied, and I froze. The memory surged back—one of the questions had been about it.

"But others could lie," I countered, attempting to brush aside the gnawing fear.

"But they won't," Tessa insisted. "Virgins have a mark on their scent glands that sets them apart. The school can easily verify the truth."

"Isn't it... strange, though?" I asked, tugging my hair closer to my scent gland. The notion of hiding the mark for the entirety of the semester hung heavy in the air.

"It is strange," Tessa sighed. "But it's been this way since Mr. Winters took over as headmaster. He said it was an ode to the Moon Goddess, who symbolizes purity. A leader who can claim someone's purity is deemed worthy."

I exhaled a shaky breath. "But virgins aren't that rare, are they?"

"They are," Tessa replied, glancing at her own scent gland—now devoid of its marking. Each werewolf's mark represented their purity, unique to the individual. Mine was a swirling symbol of a storm, stark white against my skin.

"Since Elite accepts students over twenty, most who arrive here have



already met their mates by eighteen. Those who haven't usually explore their sexuality. You know how it is—wolves have an insatiable libido. It's in our nature."

I fell silent, processing her words. Tessa raised an eyebrow. "Arden? Are you alright?"

"Oh, yes," I chuckled nervously, though it felt forced.

"You just seem a bit on edge."

I sighed, tucking my jittery hands beneath the table. "It's just a lot to take in," I mumbled.

"I can only imagine," Tessa replied softly. "I was even worse when I learned all this from my sister."

So that was how she knew about the school. My situation was different; my brothers kept me in the dark.

"Anyway, who do you choose?" Tessa asked, pulling me from my thoughts.

"Hmm? We have to choose?"

Tessa nodded. "It's for our safety. Once we're divided into factions, things change. Being claimed gives you a buffer. No one crosses someone under the Alpha without consequences. Remember the Ivory Solstice? That's when we usually choose an Alpha to be under."

My stomach tightened. I thought of the looming ceremony, where each of us would have to declare allegiance to an Alpha.

"I didn't think we'd be forced to choose so soon," I murmured.



"Most already know who they're going to," Tessa said, resting her chin on her palm. "They choose their own factions. But it's not unusual to choose the strongest Alpha." Her voice lowered. "But it means pulling away from everything you know, which is why it's thought about really well."

"Are you considering Alpha Jaxon? He'd be the safest bet, especially since he is your True Alpha," she added.

"No!" The disgust in my tone was unmistakable. I was resolute in my decision to steer clear of Jaxon. Tessa blinked in surprise, but thankfully didn't pry further.

"Then what about Alpha Elias?"

My initial impression of him wasn't good already.

I shook my head, meeting her gaze. "What if you don't choose?"

Disbelief flashed in her eyes, finding the question amusing.

"What do you mean? That cannot be."

"What's truly at stake?" I murmured. "It's not like you'd be forbidden from graduating if you aren't tied to an Alpha."

She opened her mouth, hesitated, then closed it again. "You're... right."

I felt a wave of relief wash over me.

"But it won't be easy," she cautioned. "Elite is brutal enough to those deemed 'low.' Not belonging means you're practically asking to die. So, you should choose one, Arden. It'll be your best protection."



I hadn't slept well for the last couple of nights. Elite was far from what I had expected, and there were plenty of moments when I reconsidered my decision to come here. However, thinking about my parents' smug faces if I retracted my decision pulled me back each time.

"Are you ready for the first day of class?" Tessa asked, jolting me from my thoughts.

I turned to her and managed a small smile. "Yeah," I muttered. "I'm glad we have nearly all the same classes."

"Me too," Tessa chimed. "But wait, don't you have any friends in your faction?"

I froze at her question. She must have noticed my nerves, as she quickly deflected it. "Don't worry!" she exclaimed. "We're on the same page. The wolves from the South aren't too fond of me either."

"Weird," I said. "You're the most pleasant person I've ever met."

"Same here," Tessa smiled. "Let's stick together until the end. Are you ready to go?"

"Yup," I said, standing from my bed. She wrapped her arm around mine, and together we made our way to our first class—Pack Psychology & Bonding.

We boarded the bus, and I gazed out the window, a small smile appearing on my lips. That's right. There was nothing to worry about. For the next two years, I was determined to emerge as an Elite graduate. It didn't matter if I graduated at the top of my class; I wanted my school life to be as peaceful as possible.

Lay low. Blend in. Gain new knowledge and skills.



I had already been robbed of that in high school, always lingering in the shadow of my brothers. When I found out that Jaxon was my mate, I thought it would be easier, but it only became more complicated. I seemed to have a target on my back, and come to think of it, Jaxon hadn't done much to protect me after all. I should have broken up with that bastard sooner.

"Did you hear?" the passenger next to Tessa suddenly said, not even attempting to sound discreet.

"What?" her friend turned to her with a curious look.

"I heard from my friend, who has another friend in the school records department, and she said that a virgin is among us this year."

I froze, snapping my gaze to them. I had just vowed to have a peaceful life at this school, yet here we were.

"Has her identity been exposed?"

I listened to the two of them intently, my heart racing in my chest from pure nervousness.

"No," the original gossipier replied, making me internally sigh in relief.

"But I bet they're looking for her already. Since all of the True Alphas are here, it's only a matter of time before she is found."