Chapter 32

After a pretty quiet breakfast, everyone leaves Seth and I to spend the day together while they make their plan for the evening.

"Albert will meet you at 6 pm in your suite," Dad tells me. "I'm not sure he knows how to get to the furthest cave, but I'm sure you do."

"Yes, I do." I tell my dad with a giggle and he just rolls his eyes. "I'll be ready at 6."

Seth and I find ourselves alone and we head outside to the garden. "What do you like to do when you're not working?" he asks me.

"Honestly, I very rarely find myself not working." I tell him with a shrug. "I'm either cooking, planning, working in the garden, or researching. What about you?"

"I can't tell you the last time I've had time to myself," he says with a laugh. "My dad has been unusually generous with how much he's let me slack off since I met you. It's honestly been nice to just be with you and not have to worry about everything for a bit."

I nod at him in understanding. "I like to read, but I don't have a ton of time so it takes me forever to finish a book. The book usually ends up being about cooking, too."

"Things turned bad so quickly last night that I didn't get to tell you how good the dinner was. It truly was delicious, though." he says and it makes me happy to know that he liked it.

"Thanks," I tell him with a smile. "It wasn't much, I was worried about my finger. But it made me feel good to be able to do something myself."

"You got dressed on your own this morning." He says to me, "I was waiting to see if I could feel you struggling through the bond but you didn't, and you look amazing."

"Thank you," I tell him, a blush spreading across my cheeks from his compliment. "I am starting to feel less helpless, and that makes me feel better."

Seth chuckles, "I wasn't prepared for just how independent you are. It still surprises me, and how fearless you are. You're the only person, other than my dad, who hasn't backed down from me when I'm angry. Honestly, it was very sexy."

"I knew you wouldn't hurt me, so it was easy to yell at you." I tell him with a sly smile.

We sit in the garden talking for a few hours, just getting to know each other better. It was honestly needed as we've been moving so quickly because of the bond, we haven't really gotten to actually know each other. It's nice, just being with each other outside, and not just lying in bed. We're close enough to calm the effects of the bond, but far enough we are able to think more clearly.

"Can I make you dinner again tonight?" I ask him.

"I'd love that, but I don't want you to hurt your hand," he says, gently taking my injured hand in his.

"The medicine has been helping a lot." I tell him, trying to reassure him and thankful that he cares enough to consider that. "It makes me happy to be able to cook for you."

Seth smiles at me, a genuine smile on his beautiful face that makes my heart skip a beat. "That would be wonderful. I'll be there if you need any help."

"You cook?" I ask him, thinking I've learned something new about him.

"Oh, no. Absolutely not." He says with a chuckle. "I can follow directions, though."

I shake my head at him. He has no clue how to cook, but he cares enough about me to offer to help. "What's your favorite dessert?"

"Chocolate chip cookies" he informs me, without missing a beat.

I'm surprised at how quickly he answered me. "Really?"

"Yes, really. It's my absolute favorite food." He says, so seriously.

I smile brightly at him, and the thought that the fancy pants future king likes something so simple. "I just happen to make the best chocolate chip cookies in the whole wolf kingdom."

"Is that so?" he asks with a playful smile, pulling me into his lap.

"Oh yes, it is." I tell him, laying my head on his shoulder. "If we head to the kitchen now, I'll have time to make some and prove it."

Seth quickly stands, dumping me out of his lap, but also catching me and pulling me close to him. "I can't wait to be the judge."

We head back to the pack house and I go to the kitchen, grabbing things I need and loading up Seth's arms and my own and taking them across the hall. I get to work on a marinade for the salmon and get that into the fridge. I turn to start on the cookies for Seth and glance over at him to find him sitting on the couch reading a book he found on a shelf. He looks so content right now and relaxed, he almost looks younger.

I start making the dough, whisking and mixing. It's taking me much longer than it usually would, but I'm being hindered by my hand a bit. I get the dough rolled out and place it in the refrigerator to chill. I turn around to ask Seth if he wants a drink but when I see him I realize he's sound asleep on the couch, feet still propped up on the coffee table, book now laying on his chest. I take a moment to admire just how absolutely, breathtakingly beautiful he really is. Maybe this was the goddess's way of making it up to me for my broken wolf.

I open a bottle of wine, pour myself a glass and go curl up on the couch next to him with a book of my own until it's time to put the cookies in to bake. I read, and bake, and cook, enjoying having my mate near in a moment that just feels normal for a change. As I'm working on cooking dinner, I feel Seth come up behind me and wrap his arms around me.

"How long did I sleep?" he asks gruffly.

I smile, just enjoying being together. "I don't know, a couple of hours I think. Are you OK with an early dinner? I thought it would take me longer but once I got used to my hand it's been going well."

"An early dinner sounds great, Love. Do you need any help?" he asks.

"That's alright, I've got it." I tell him with a smile, happy to be doing what I love.

Seth goes to sit at a barstool behind me and it's nice having him here with me. "Are you ready for tonight?" he asks me.

"Yeah," I tell him, unsure how to feel about it. "I'm nervous, but excited."

"Molly, promise me you'll be careful," he says seriously, and I nod in response. "Listen to your gut. If something feels off, then get out quickly."

"I'll be careful," I tell him, turning around to look him in the eyes. "I promise. I remember her from when I was a kid. She seemed really nice. I honestly don't think I have anything to worry about."

"I know, Love. It's just hard that I can't go with you to protect you." He says, looking down at his hands. "I'm supposed to protect you, but she won't let me be there. It's concerning."

"It will all be fine. Maybe I'll come home tonight with a wolf." I tell him, smiling and unable to hide my excitement.

Seth stands up and walks back over to me, placing his hands on my shoulders. "Are you going to be ok if there's nothing she can do? I'm worried that she'll tell you your wolf is just stuck and I won't be there with you."

"I'll be ok, Seth." I tell him, placing my hands on his arms. "I didn't want to get too excited, but I just have a really good feeling about it."

"Whatever happens," he begins "I'll be right here," and places a sweet kiss on my lips.

We eat dinner, still just talking and learning more about each other. Seth attempts to help me clean up. It's clear that he's never washed a dish in his life, but he was willing to try. We decide to watch a movie, knowing that we're both growing nervous as it gets closer to time to leave. Seth pulls my feet into his lap and we curl up under a blanket, pretending to watch a movie that neither of us are paying attention to, both lost in our own thoughts.

"It's almost time, Love." He tells me and stands up, walking to my closet and returning with my hiking boots. "You're still sure about this?"

"Absolutely!" I tell him with a smile that I hope he finds comforting as he kneels down and helps me get my shoes on and tied.

He moves and sits on the coffee table right in front of me, taking both my hands in one of his and brushing a strand of hair behind my ear, then moving to cup my cheek. "I love you. Whatever happens, you're mine. Wolf or not, it doesn't change my feelings about you, it just changes how we handle things."

"I love you, too." I tell him and lean forward to kiss him. "Are YOU going to be OK while I'm gone?"

"Honestly, I'm probably going to be out of my mind with worry. But I'll manage." he tells me and his honesty is disarming. He seems to be taking the conversation with my dad this morning to heart, and I truly appreciate the effort. He's about to say something else but we're interrupted by a knock at the door.

"Just a moment," Seth calls out and he stands, gently pulling me up with him. He wraps his arms around me, his hands slipping under the edge of my shirt to find my skin and he takes in a deep breath, inhaling my scent.

I gently reach up and place my hands on his chest. "I'll be just fine. I love you." I tell him, running my hands slowly up and behind his neck. He leans down so I can reach him and I kiss him deeply, pouring all my emotions into this moment, knowing that it could be dangerous, but also feeling an overwhelming sense that this is the right thing for me to do.

"I love you so much, Molly." Seth says, breaking our kiss. I open my eyes and see that he's holding back tears.

"I'm going to be just fine, Seth. I can feel it in my soul." I say, giving him a small smile that he tries to return.

"You should go. I promise, I'll stay here and won't interfere unless I can feel you're injured through the bond." he tells me and kisses me one last time. "In a few hours you'll either have a wolf or I'll be marking you if you still want me to."

"I could get my wolf AND you still mark me, ya know?" I tell him and he chuckles.

"That's an option, too. Now go, so you won't be late." he says, releasing me and walking to the door, opening it to Albert, and surprisingly, both of our moms.

"We're here to babysit your mate" my mom tells me on seeing my confused face and I can't help but giggle as she walks in.

"Ready to go, Molly?" Albert asks me, but looking at Seth.

"Just let me grab my jacket and hat." I tell him and cross over to the rack, putting the jacket on.

Seth doesn't say a word, he just stands there looking at our moms as they come in and sit down and then back at Albert. He looks so nervous and it's so odd to see from this big, brave man.

"Don't worry, sir. I'll protect her, with my life if necessary." and Seth just nods once, not making a sound.

I walk over, jacket on and hat in hand ready to walk out when Seth reaches out and grabs my arm. I turn to look at him as he reaches down, taking the knit hat from my hands and pulling it onto my head, placing one last kiss on top and whispering "Good luck. I hope you find the answers you need."