

Chapter 42

“Seth,” I whisper, breathlessly, completely in awe of what he was able to do. “You fixed it.”

I continue to bend my finger again and again. I look at Seth and beam at him. “You fixed it!” I tell him again, this time with a giggle.

“It’s really fixed?” he asks me cautiously and I nod rapidly.

I don’t say anything, I just hold my hand directly in front of his face and make a fist, then open my hand wide. I look again and the scar that was there is even lighter than a few seconds ago. I can’t help the giggles that come from me as they erupt into laughter.

Seth looks me in the eyes and smiles at me, stepping forward and wrapping me in a tight embrace. “How do you feel?”

“It feels fine. There’s no pain at all!” I tell him.

He moves so he can see me, still holding my arms. “That’s not what I asked. How are YOU feeling?”

“I’m so happy, Seth,” I tell him with a smile. “It’s fixed!”

“I want you, Molly,” he tells me seriously. “You’re my mate. I want to mark you because you’re the most perfect wolf, made for me. I don’t care if you have a wolf, or magic, or if you’re the perfect queen. I care how you make me feel. I care that you’re the only person not afraid of me when I’m angry and I care that you see me as your protector. I care that you fit perfectly in my arms and you snuggle into me when you’re asleep.

If you really want to wait for me to mark you, it’s OK. I will. But I want to mark you so that you are completely, wholly mine, and not because of anything else.”

His words and the conviction behind them take me aback slightly and I wrap my arms around him, holding him tightly. I don’t say any words. What can one even say after that? I just nod against his chest and he squeezes me tightly, kissing the top of my head.

After a moment, he pulls back and I let go. He bends down, grabbing his clothes and gets dressed, sitting next to me to put on his shoes.

“I’m going to go grab your shoes and socks. I want to go ahead and have you show me the spot. Is there anything else that you need?” he asks and I just shake my head. “I’ll be back in a moment,” he says and places a quick kiss on my lips before jogging off.

It’s pretty early to be going, but he’s probably trying to get me there before I have a chance to talk myself out of it. This is right though, I know it is. I sit on the log, waiting for Seth.

“This is it, little wolf. He’s a good man, he loves me.” I tell her, not sure if she can even hear me, or my thoughts. I start to feel nervous. What if I’m not good enough? What if he’s disappointed? I take a deep breath and look around, trying to find something to distract myself from these thoughts. I listen and hear a woodpecker and look around, trying to find it, trying to pay attention only to the bird.

I can’t find the bird, and it’s probably for the best, because my previous thoughts are now forgotten. I turn to look behind me, looking high and low when I hear a twig snap and it scares me. I turn back around quickly and see Seth holding my shoes, now with a backpack on his back. He walks forward to me, a giant smile plastered across his beautiful face and he kneels before me, but I shake my head and hold my hands out. He looks confused for a moment, and I just bend my fingers in his face and smile at him.

He hands me the shoes and socks and I put them on, tying each one and smiling as I do. “I did it,” I say quietly and he leans forward and kisses my head. He gently takes me by the hand, this time my no-longer-injured left hand, but waits for us to lead us. We start walking and after a few yards, Seth releases my hands and walks over to a tree, breaking a branch.

“What the hell are you doing?” I ask him, confused as to why he’s breaking trees.

“I’m marking the path to make sure we can get back later. It will be dark and I just want to be safe.” he says like it’s the most obvious thing ever.

“Seth, I can get us back. Please don’t hurt the trees.” I say with a roll of my eyes as I turn to continue walking.

Seth takes a few long steps and catches back up to me, but it doesn’t go unnoticed the times he gets left behind because he’s marking another tree. We make our way through the pines and cedars where the maple trees are and I can’t help but smile.

“What’s made you so happy?” he asks, wrapping his arm around my middle and pulling my backwards into him, leaning down to kiss my cheek.

I giggle at his actions and point at the trees. “They’re sugar maple trees. Benjamin said there are some rogues around that would teach me to make syrup!”

“Oh, Molly,” he says, kissing my cheek again. “I love you so much.”

It’s hard not to smile at him. He’s more happy and carefree than I think he’s been since we met and he makes me so happy to be around. “I love you, too,” I say to him, turning in his arms and wrapping my arms around his neck, pulling him down to kiss him.

He deepens the kiss and pulls me impossibly close to him so that my entire body is against him. He slips his tongue into my mouth and gently walks me backwards until I’m up against a tree and he continues to kiss me. After a moment, he pulls his lips away and rests his forehead on mine, breathless.

“We need to keep going before I mark you here, and the moon isn’t even up yet.” he says, and all I can bring myself to do is nod. If he marked me here and now, I wouldn’t be mad. He releases me and takes my hand, waiting for me to lead us on. We continue to walk when we come upon the clearing and I squeeze his hand, stopping as we reach the meadow.

I thought this was the most beautiful place ever this morning when the sky was blue and the sun was shining, but I was wrong. The sun is setting and the sky is painted with pinks and oranges. THIS is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen.

“Molly, this is amazing.” Seth says, placing his arm across my shoulders and pulling me to his side. “It’s almost as beautiful as you.”

His comment makes me blush furiously and I’m sure I’m the same color as the sky. I look up at him and he’s looking at the sunset in awe. “This… this is the meadow from my dreams,” I tell him, unsure if he’ll be bothered by that fact.

“Really?!” he asks me, almost in disbelief.

“Yeah,” I begin. “When we got here this morning I realized. It’s exactly the same, except for the boulder.” I tell him and begin walking towards it. He follows me, not saying anything.

He bends down to look at the faded paint on it and smiles as he runs across the part with my name painted on. “Andrew. Your brother?”

“Yeah, Benjamin said we used to come here all the time and play. They actually buried him here, at the boulder. He said he wanted him to be somewhere that made him happy,” I tell him, my voice barely a whisper.

He looks up at me, his eyes glistening. “Thank you for bringing me here, for sharing this place with me,” he says as stands up and kisses my forehead.

“Benjamin said he thought my wolf had been trying to tell me things. Like about how Altair licking my finger would fix it,” I tell him and he nods. “I think she wants us to be on the other side of the creek, that’s where she was stuck. And I was always barefoot, which makes sense now, knowing I’m supposed to be touching the ground.”

“Is there anything else?” he asks me and I shake my head at him.

“I spent most of today thinking about it. I couldn’t think of anything else that could be a clue,” I tell him, but look down at the ground. “I’m worried I missed something.”

“If you did, you did,” he says and takes my hands in his. “You’re going to officially be mine, and the rest will just be a bonus.” he tells me and I just nod in response. Seth takes me by the hand and guides me to sit on the rock with him.

“If this works, the moment I mark you, you become a royal,” he begins to tell me and I chew on my lip from being nervous. “Every wolf in the kingdom will feel it and be able to mind link you. I’m worried about how overwhelming it will be for you because you’ve only ever been able to link with your dad, and more recently, your brother. You’ve never needed to block any of them.”

“I didn’t realize,” I tell him, becoming more and more scared of becoming royal.

“I know. We haven’t really talked about it much, but I need you to be prepared for it so it doesn’t overwhelm you. You know how it feels when your dad links you?” he asks and I nod. “Go ahead and tell him hi. He’s expecting it.”

Hi

Hey, Kiddo. Seth teaching you about mind links?

Yeah. Did he talk to you?

He did. I’m just going to read you a story until he teaches you to block me out. I love you.

I love you.

With that, my dad started reading something from a book about war strategy- possibly the dullest thing ever. Seth moves to stand behind me and places his hands on my shoulders.

“Do you hear him?” he asks and I nod. “Good. Close your eyes and focus on where it’s coming from. Do you feel the thread to him?”

I reach in my mind and don’t really feel anything at first. I just hear my dad like always. But I think about how he said it- focus on where. I try again and then I can feel it, like it’s in a section. I get what he’s saying now and I nod.

“Good. Now, imagine bending the thread so it can’t reach you.” he says.

“It’s not really a thread. It’s like he’s in a box.” I tell him, confused about what to do.

Seth gently squeezes my shoulders. “That’s fine, Love. Just close it.”

I keep my eyes closed and focus on my dad’s voice reading the most boring thing ever. I imagine flipping the box but that doesn’t do anything. I try imagining closing the box with a lid and suddenly, it’s quiet. I smile, proud of my accomplishment. “I did it!”

“Good, Love,” he says, kissing my head and releasing me, walking around to stand in front of me. “My mom told me that was the worst part of being marked because she wasn’t prepared. I don’t want that for you. When it happens, just close them, just like you did him. Shut everyone out, everyone. Eventually, you’ll be able to keep a line to certain people open but for tonight, don’t let anyone in.”

“Thank you,” I tell him. “Your mom’s right. That sounds like it would be absolutely terrible.”

“Do you have any questions? About becoming a royal, or just anything you want to know before I mark you?” he asks.

I chew my lip nervously. “Will it hurt?” I whisper to him.

“I’ll do everything I can to make sure it doesn’t. I don’t want you in any pain,” he says and I nod.

“Alright,” he tells me with a wicked grin on his face. “The sun is almost completely gone. Time to get you across the creek” he says, picking me up and throwing me over his shoulder with a laugh.