

Chapter 10

The Alpha's Mate Who Cried Wolf

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The following day, there is a knock on my locked door. I ignore

'Astrid, I know you're there. Please unlock the door, Ryker pleads. I don't want to hear his voice, so I lock myself in the

bathroom, run a bath, and stay there for as long as possible.

I put on a pair of jeans and the most oversized hoodie I can find. It almost touches my knees. I pull the hood over my

head. It makes me feel invisible like I'm able to hide from the world. It's an enormous sense of comfort.

On the twelfth knock on my door, Ryker is livid and enlists Mia's help.

'It's Mia, Astrid,' she says through the door. As sweet and bubbly as she is, I still want to be left alone.

'I brought you some lunch. I'll leave it at the door, she explains.

The last thing I want to do is eat food. I feel sick to the stomach thinking about how close I have become with Ryker. He

wants me, but I don't understand why. I get that I'm his mate, but he had already arranged to be mates with Vanessa.

Have I ever meant anything to him? Or has he been playing me and lying to me this whole time?

Exiting the bathroom via two gorgeous French doors, I sit on the balcony next to a large pot plant, hoping no one can

see me. I keep hearing the odd door-knock for the rest of the day

and continue to ignore it. Sometimes it's Ryker knocking. Sometimes it's other people. It hurts me every time to hear the

pain and the regret in his voice when he speaks.

Hayley knocks on the door when it's dinnertime.

'I brought you some dinner, Luna. I see your lunch is still here. Look, I know you're upset, Astrid, and I understand why,

but Ryker is so distressed we're struggling to keep him calm. We could use your help to calm him down before he

destroys the entire house.

Feeling a little guilty hearing that Ryker is tearing the place apart, I let out a heavy sigh, walked to the door, and unlocked

it. Hayley is holding a plate of food smiles at me.

'Luna. Thank you.'

'Thank you, Hayley. I'm not hungry. Can you show me where he is?' Hayley nods.

I follow her downstairs, where Ryker is growling and throwing a chair across the living room. The room is a complete

mess. I stand there with my arms crossed, unimpressed with the absolute mess he has made.

Ryker sniffs the air and spins

around to see me. He races over to me, relieved. I look away, not wanting to look at him.

‘Astrid! You’ve come out,’ he says, kneeling before me, clutching my hands. Everyone is watching us. Ryker has been

crying. He looks up at me with big puppy dog eyes, it’s endearing, and I’m struggling to stay mad at him.

‘Astrid, I never wanted Vanessa to be my mate or Luna. I’m twenty-two. The elders told me they would have to choose a

mate for me because I hadn’t found my fated mate yet,’ he explains.

‘Why didn’t you tell me that before?’ I ask.

I tried to, but you were upset and locked yourself in your room.’ He is looking down at the ground. I kneel on the floor, facing him.

I’m sorry. Had I known, I wouldn’t have locked myself in my room. I’m feeling guilty.

‘It’s okay. You’re out now. That’s all that matters.’ He smiles, holding my face and patting my cheeks with his thumbs.

‘I spoke to Vanessa and told her the agreement was off. I never agreed to any of it. The elders put it all in place, even

though I was against it. I know she has always had a crush on me, but I felt nothing for her, he explains.

'Vanessa will adjust to it in time,' Hayley reassures me.

I nod at Hayley

'How's your head?' He asks, both of us standing up.

'My head feels fine now, I say.

Join us for dinner,' Ryker says.

I'm exhausted. I'd rather sleep for the night, I say.

"You haven't eaten all day, though. Eat, and then you can go to bed,' he says. I nod, and we sit at the table where Alice

has placed assorted platters of food from which we can serve ourselves.

Sitting down at the table, Vanessa walks in, smiling.

She sits down at the table and scoops food onto an empty plate. My

fork hasn't even reached my mouth yet. I freeze with her presence, and everyone feels awkward.

'What is she doing here, eating dinner with us?' I ask Ryker.

'Don't you know? I live in this packhouse too, Vanessa says, with a sour look. My fork drops from my hand at her words

and clutters noisily down onto my plate.

'You have got to be kidding me,' I say.

'When the elders arranged for her to be Luna, they expected her to live here, Ryker explains.

I'm here with Ryker now, Vanessa. You don't need to be here anymore,' I say, smiling at her.

Mia smiles at my confidence, and Vanessa glares at her.

I heard along the grapevine that you might not even want to become the Luna or accept Alpha Ryker as your mate, she says. Ryker growls and glares at her. If looks could kill, his would.

‘That’s none of your business.’ I snap at her.

‘Well, it is my business because if you don’t accept Alpha Ryker within a certain time frame, the elders will still make

Alpha Ryker mark me as his mate and initiate me as the Luna of Shadow Crest,’ she says happily.

I growl at her words. Did I growl like a wolf again?

Everyone turns to stare at me, surprised at my reaction.

‘Would they make you do that?’ I ask him. Ryker thinks for a moment.

‘There is a possibility, but I’m sure it won’t come to that because you’re here now. I don’t see why we would have to rush

anything,’ Ryker says. Vanessa giggles.

‘I guess we’ll see what the elders prefer: your true mate who is weak and hasn’t met her wolf yet and knows nothing

about our world, or me: someone experienced and strong and willing to bear your pups straight away, she smirks.

Ryker and I growl in unison at her words. I exhale sharply.

‘You’re nothing but a scruffy little dog from the woods!’ I snap. Mia, Hayley, and Kane burst out laughing. Seth tries to

keep his composure. Vanessa stands.

‘How dare you! I came from one of the strongest packs in the world. Shady Crest! We are-’ I cut her off.

‘Shady, I say. The entire table is roaring with laughter.

‘At least I know what pack I come from,’ she snaps.

Everyone goes silent, bracing themselves for my reaction.

‘For all we know, you could be from one of the weakest packs: the Rabid Rebels or the Astral pack. I can assure you when

we meet your wolf, we’ll know, and if you’re from a weaker pack,

the elders will intervene. You won’t be allowed to rule as Luna. I’ll be chosen in your place instead!

‘And what if I’m not? What if I’m from one of the strongest packs?’ I snap.

‘Well, the strongest pack used to be the Moonstone pack. They have pure white wolves, but they had been wiped out

around eighteen years ago, so keep dreaming! Shady Crest is the strongest now, and our wolves are brown, and I have

never seen you there. Shadow Crest comes next.

Alphas are black, and pack members are grey,

Vanessa explains,

smirking at me, feeling victorious.

‘So, we already know you aren’t from a powerful pack. So, until you’re the official Luna, I’m still in the running, she

concludes.

‘Actually, Vanessa. I think it would be best if you moved out of the packhouse tomorrow. Seth will organise one of the

nearby cabins for you to remain close to your mother.’

‘You can’t be serious?’ Vanessa yells.

‘Yes, I’m very serious. You will move out tomorrow.’

‘You can’t kick me out, Ryker. You can’t make me move out!’

‘If you are not out by lunchtime tomorrow, I will drag you out of this packhouse myself, Ryker growls.

Standing up from the table, I walk away.

‘Astrid, where are you going? You haven’t even touched your dinner, Ryker growls.

I lost my appetite. I will not stay here and listen to this scruffy little mutt anymore!’ I storm off to my room and shut the

door, locking it again.

If she thinks she can speak to me like that and treat me like that, she has another thing coming!

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