

Chapter 8

# The Alpha's Mate Who Cried Wolf

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It's a beautiful town with lush trees and plenty of parks. I see a shopping strip and some cute cafes and clothing stores.

There are plenty of people around who are most likely werewolves. I feel many unwelcome eyes on me. I perk up when I

spot the watchtower and go there.

After climbing hundreds of steps, I take in the view

Shadow Crest sure is beautiful. A dense, green forest surrounds the

town for miles, and I'm unsure which way to go. Finally, I sit down, defeated, and dangle my legs over the ledge, resting

my head on the rail. What am I going to do? Turning into a werewolf scares me, but I can't run from that. It's going to

happen no matter where I go. I reflect on last night: My dad shot Ryker, and he protected me from my father, and how

my heart ached at almost losing him.

Suddenly, I feel a presence behind me. Ryker lets out a heavy sigh and sits down next to me, dangling his legs over the ledge.

“Ryker, I’m sorry I ran off. I panicked and didn’t know what to do.’ I explain.

‘Do you want to talk about it? Mia mentioned what she said, he says.

‘How am I supposed to come to terms with shifting into a wolf, shifting into something I’ve always feared since I was

seven years old? I don’t want to meet my wolf, Ryker. I don’t want to shift,’ I cry. Ryker places his arm around me and

pulls

me close. His nose nuzzles my neck and sends tingles through my body.

‘Astrid, I want to help you conquer your fears. On your first shift, I will be by your side. I will help you transition through it.

I won’t lie, the first time is the worst, but it gets easier. I promise to help you through it,’ he says, tucking my hair behind

my ear.

I nod and rest my head on his shoulder, silently taking in the view of Shadow Crest.

‘If you’re ready, we can go to the shopping strip. I’d like you to meet some people.

‘Okay, let’s go,’ I smile.

‘Let’s try Medley’s clothing store, Ryker says. He opens the door, and a bell chimes.

‘Welcome to Medleys. How can I help you? Oh. Alpha Ryker, the sales assistant says, bowing her head.

‘What an honour to have you in my store, it’s been a while, she gives him a platonic, friendly wink.

“And who do we have here?’ She smiles while looking me up and down.

‘Astrid, I’d like you to meet Medley, she is the owner here and will help you pick out some clothes,’ he says smiling, ‘and

Medley, this is your Luna, Astrid,’ he tells Medley.

Medley’s jaw drops on Luna, and she bows her head.

I’m sorry. I did not know Alpha had found his mate.

How did Alice and Vanessa react to the news?’ She asks. Ryker looks

at me, then back at Medley.

‘Alice found out this morning, so she will probably inform Vanessa that the agreement is no longer happening today.’

‘Right. Well then, Luna, if you’d like to come this way, with me, into the change rooms, and we’ll try on some clothes, she says.

Following Medley, I ask Ryker, ‘who is Vanessa?

‘She is just a friend who has always had a crush on me, but I wouldn’t worry yourself over it too much,’ he says.

‘Is that why Alice wasn’t thrilled this morning?’ I ask.

Ryker nods.

‘Yeah. Vanessa is her daughter, and all of Shadow Crest knows she wants to be my mate and Luna, he explains.

‘She doesn’t have a mate?’ I ask.

‘Her mate died two years ago, in her old pack, Shady Crest. She transferred to our pack after he died. She says they were abusive toward her, forcing her to be the pack slave. Alice and Vanessa ran away and found themselves here, and she developed a silly crush on me, he explains. I nod, accepting his explanation, and continue to the change room where Medley has hung dozens of dresses, tops and skirts for me to try on. In what feels like a fashion call in a movie, Medley shows me a consecutive offering of chic clothes in an assortment of fabrics I’ve never worn before. ‘Do you have anything more casual?’ I ask. ‘You’re a Luna and should dress as such, she smiles. I haven’t agreed to be anyone’s Luna. I’d just like normal clothes like everyone else, please. ‘Surely Alpha has marked you?’ She asks, looking at my neck. I grab her wrist before she moves my hair aside and sees the bruises. ‘You will keep your hands to yourself!’ I say sternly. ‘Luna, forgive me. I’m so sorry. I’m completely out of line. It’s unheard of, not marking your mate right away, especially an Alpha mate,’ she explains.

Medley excuses herself while I try on some clothes. I choose three casual dresses, a few pairs of jeans, a few tops, a couple of hoodies, and a couple of cardigans to go with the dresses. Medley returns with a few bra-and-underwear sets.

‘These are the clothes I’ve chosen. You can take them to the counter with the undergarments you’re holding, I say.

Following Medley to the cash register, she scans the items and places them into shopping bags.

‘Is there anything else you need, Astrid?’ Ryker asks as he pulls his gold card out to pay.

‘Maybe a nightie to sleep in, but I don’t know if there are any in this store.

‘There are a few other clothing stores we can go to,’ he says. I nod, and we leave the store. Ryker insists he carries the bags.

We pass the next couple of shops and go into a nightwear store full of pyjamas and nighties.

“Alpha, it’s a pleasure to have you here. What do I owe the pleasure?’ The sales assistant says before looking at me.

‘Daisy, this is Astrid, my mate. Astrid, this is Daisy,’ he says.

‘Oh! We finally have a Luna! The elders must be so thrilled! And you, of course, Alpha!’ She walks over to me and hugs

me. I flinch as she squeezes me. Then, I cry out in pain.

‘Astrid, are you okay?’ Daisy asks, stepping back with worry.

I’m okay. My ribs are still healing, is all, I say.

‘I should take you to see the pack doctor to ease the pain, Ryker says.

‘It’s fine, as long as I don’t get squeezed again, I say.

‘Luna, I am so sorry! Whatever happened to you?’ She asks.

‘It’s fine, Daisy. You didn’t know. I fell down some stairs at

home,’ I lie, looking away.

‘Anyway, we’re here because Astrid needs some nightwear, Ryker says, changing the subject for me.

Before we go into the change room, I give Daisy different pyjamas sets. I find some of the silliest items I have no

intention of buying. I put on a green dinosaur onesie with a long tail and exit the dressing room. The hood is the shape

of a dinosaur’s face. Ryker bursts out laughing.

‘What about this one?’ I ask. Ryker is still laughing.

‘If that’s what you want to sleep in, be my guest,’ he says. I return to the change room, giggling, before trying on an

astronaut onesie. I walk out in slow motion as though I'm on the moon.

"Houston, we have a problem, I say. Ryker laughs again.

'What's the problem?' He asks, chuckling.

'The zip is stuck! I say, strolling back into the change room.

Ryker follows me into the small change room he can barely fit in and closes the door behind us. He runs his finger down

my spine to find the zip, eliciting a small moan from me.

He let out a slight cheerful growl while slowly unzipping the

back of my onesie. I turn to face him. Our faces are almost touching. It is sweltering in the change room.

With eyes transfixed on each other. Our breathing becomes

heavy. I close my eyes, relishing Ryker's warm touch on my face. When Daisy opens the door, we're pressed so closely to

each other, and our lips are about to meet.

'How are you going in there? Oh, my goodness! I'm so sorry!' She says, blushing and turning around. Ryker and I

straighten ourselves up.

'It's fine. Astrid is ready to try on the next one,' he says, with a grin and a cheeky wink. I blush, and Ryker exits the tiny cubicle.

‘Here, please tell Astrid to try these on,’ he tells Daisy. Daisy hands me a maroon two-piece set made from silk. The top is a button-up, short-sleeve silk shirt, and the bottoms are shorts. I think they’re pleasant and modest when I try them on.

‘These are comfy,’ I say, walking out with a smile.

‘Great. I’ll buy that set of pyjamas for you. Maybe try this set on too,’ he says, grinning. I turn before getting changed.

Ryker and Daisy are giggling.

‘Is there something wrong?’ Daisy blushes and looks away.

‘Nope, nothing’s wrong,’ Ryker says, smiling, his arms crossed.

I discover the source of their amusement later that night when I put them away: the silk set has Bite Me printed on the

bum. The pants that I try on are very soft and have a slight fluffiness to them. I can alternate between a singlet top and a

long sleeve shirt with them. I walk out, only to laugh.

Ryker wears the same dark-blue set in the male set.

‘I thought we could have a matching set,’ he laughs.

‘Fine,’ I smirk, shaking my head in disbelief. I change back into my clothes. Ryker has changed and has paid for

everything.

‘Want to look around the other shops?’ Ryker asks.



‘No, I think we’re ready now!

‘Okay, let’s go

We get back to the packhouse in ten minutes. No one else seems to be around, so we go upstairs to sort my new clothes

out. Ryker lies on his back with his eyes closed. I lean on the bedpost, admiring his handsome face for a few moments

before lying beside him.

‘Astrid?’ Ryker spoke.

‘Mmhmm?’

I’d like you to meet my wolf tonight. He looked at me and said, ‘I want to remove your fear of us.’ I turn on my side.

‘Okay, but I only want to meet yours for now, I reply.

“Okay, he kisses me on the forehead.

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