

## Chapter 13 - Denying the Alpha

DECLAN'S point of view

Oh, crap, she knows. Faith must have told her, or maybe it was her parents. Samantha has been with me, so there is no way that it was her.

"What are you talking about?" when in doubt, play it out. I didn't have to give her anything. Maybe she didn't even know.

"A kitchen omega mind linked me that she saw sneaking up the stairs with what looked like an unconscious woman." she pointed accusingly at me. Omega should mind their damn business. They wouldn't survive without us. They should keep their hands down, or I'll force them down.

"Does it look like I have any girls in here?" I cocked an eyebrow at her.

"Samantha only just left." she threw her hands up in the air like she was talking to the most infuriating idiot she had ever met in her entire life.

Damn, I forgot about that. She has me there.

"We were out on a run, there was a small accident. I took her up here to help her. She healed, she left." I shrugged it off like it was no big deal. At least she didn't know about the rest of it. I just needed to convince my dad's stupid beta to keep his mouth shut.

"If I asked Samantha, what would she say?" she folded her arms across her chest and stared me down. I may have been the future Alpha, but she was still my mom. She would never fear me. She would still be here scolding me long after I took over the pack.

"The same thing." she doesn't make a single attempt to hide the doubt in her eyes.

"You have been different." A sadness settles over her, one I wish I could take away. I had created it by trying to avoid it. I was angry all the time because my wolf was. Grayson was mad because I wouldn't take Faith, my true mate. I wouldn't take faith because I worried for my mother. Either way, it seemed like my sweet mother was hurting.

I wonder how she would feel if she knew. I'm worried she wouldn't stand in my way, that she would accept Faith and then be sad about it behind closed doors, left to deal with it on her own. I have been the only person she can talk about Connor with. Would she still

feel that she could after I mated Faith? I was my mother's safe space. It would be selfish of me to betray her, in any way, for any reason. I couldn't take Faith. I made the right decision. If only my will could see that, if only he would stop trying to force control, this battle of power was affecting everyone and everything.

"I wish I could explain, Mom." I want her to hold me, but I can't even meet her eyes. I just stare at the wall behind her.

"You can always tell me, anything son, you know that." she places her hands on each of my shoulders. She was doing her best to coax me, it might have worked, but still, I couldn't meet her eyes, so the effect was lost.

"I know, Mom. I'm fine. I promise." another lie. They were piling up fast. Damn, I wish I could turn the clock back, but then would I actually do anything differently? Nah, probably not. Grayson will stop moaning eventually.

'No, I won't.' he scoffs quickly. He throws up those damn mental walls back up before I could even reply. I had barely heard from him these last three months.

At first, he thought he could change my mind, but he never, and I mean never, shut up, and the mental pictures of Faith that he would push forth were a constant. Then one day he finally got the hint, on her birthday I was going to reject her, and he hasn't spoken to her since.

I may not have rejected her on her birthday. Toying with her first seemed like a better option. If I made her hate me, truly hate me first, then there was no chance the bond might survive. Still, I would have to reject her soon before Grayson took over and marked her against my will or my parents found out, and my father forced her on me.

My mother, I wasn't sure how she would react. She tended to take my side but against the moon goddess? I can't be sure. I wonder how Conner would feel about all this? I guess I never actually knew him, so who would know?

"Mom, can I ask you something?" I walked into my closet. I stripped off my old shirt and tossed it into the dirty washing basket before pulling on another almost identical black shirt. Samantha's scent was beginning to overwhelm my anxious mind.

"Of course, you can always ask me anything, you know that." her face is etched with her concern for me.

I let out a heavy sigh, just trying to relieve my self of some of the tension. It doesn't work.

"I'm an Alpha soon, but I'm not the intended one. Does it upset you that Connor won't be taking over?" it wasn't the real question I wanted to ask, but it was something that I often wondered about. If he were alive, he would have been the Alpha already.

"I miss your brother every minute of every day. I think about him constantly. It has been six thousand, six hundred and thirty nine days since he died, and for every single one of them, I wish we had just stayed home that day. Does it upset me that I lost my son absolutely? It does. Does it upset me to see my other son, thriving, and succeeding, no. I love you, Declan. I'm incredibly proud of the young man you have become. Connor's death taught me to appreciate everything for what it is right now because we never know what's coming."

It surprised me she knew exactly how many days had passed like she had been counting them or something. I hope I never understand that level of pain or that amount of strength.

"Why do you ask, honey?" because I want to know if you could accept Faith in his place.

"No reason, just nervous, I guess." is what I say instead.

Her smile doesn't reach her eyes. It looks almost fake. She doesn't believe me, I can tell, but she also isn't going to call me on it. My mother was good like that. She called me on my crap when she needed to, but other than that, she always let me come to her, she never pushed me, and it made our relationship stronger.

Her eyes glaze over for a moment. I wonder whose mind is linking her.

"I have to go, honey. Heather says he needs to speak to me." she touches my cheek with one hand and plants a quick loving kiss on the other.

The moment the door closes behind her, I frantically try to reach out to Heather, Mitchell, Samantha, and then finally Faith. All of them have their mind link shut off.

Bile rose in my throat; it stung. They were going to tell my mom. If I was Alpha already, I could force the link open. Curse my father for dragging this out. The power hungry asshole.

I swear if a single Huntress ruins my family or me, I'll force them out of the pack the moment I take over as Alpha. My father couldn't hold onto the title forever.