

Chapter 3 - Denying the Alpha

I wake up tucked tightly into my bed. I have a matching shirt and short pajama set on, but how did I get here, and who dressed me? That I don't know. The last thing I remember is fainting by the river. There was no way I made it all the way back here on my own. Whoever it was, I was grateful for it. If they hadn't found me, I would surely be making an awful naked entrance right about now.

Wait, my wolf, I didn't even get to see her. Disappointment rushes through me with an unrelenting force, I had been looking forward to meeting her most of all, I sigh heavily.

"Hello." I try to reach out to her, but I don't get anything back. I'm not too worried though because I can feel her in the back of my mind. I don't know how I know this, but it feels like she is sleeping. She must be so tired from shifting. I know I was. I really needed to see her soon, but right now, my entire body felt stiff and sore. There was no way I could shift again just yet. We could both use some rest and recovery, so for now, I'll just leave her be.

As for my Declan problem, I was fighting my very soul to stop myself from going to him, throwing myself at his feet and then begging till my voice was hoarse for his acceptance, but I couldn't be that pathetic. I'm making a promise to myself right now. I will not beg him for anything. The moon goddess chose him for me, and I know she must have her reasons for that, so I will give him a chance, but only if he works hard for it and can prove to me that I will be his only woman. I will not just accept him because he's alpha, and most importantly, I will NOT cry for him. I have done enough of that already.

I can feel thick dirt caking my skin, my feet are slathered in dried blood but have otherwise healed, and there are a few leaves and twigs stuck in my matted hair, just great. In other words, I am a hot mess. I don't have the energy, but I'm determined to look strong and unaffected by it all. To do that, I was going to need to clean myself up.

Every muscle is fighting against me, but I manage to drag myself over to the shower. I'm all alone in here, so I can indulge myself in a moment of weakness.

I blast the heat, and I just lay on my back, sprawled out on the shower floor, the cold tiles are a stark contrast to the hot water, but they'll warm up soon enough. I have never been more grateful for the sheer size of my shower or the two heads at each end as I am right now. I just lay there, letting the heat drum its way into my very achy muscles.

After a good ten minutes, my body actually starts to feel like it might be able to cooperate with me a little. I push myself up into a seated position and get to work on pulling all the dead leaves and small twigs out of my hair. At least there is no creepy crawlies. Then I get to work on scrubbing my skin.

I loved the smell of my apple and raspberry body soap, but now that I had my wolf senses, it was almost overwhelming to use. I might have to try out some new ones. Once I was satisfied that I no longer looked like a discarded scarecrow, I shut off the shower and stepped out into the chilly morning air.

I pulled on a simple blue long sleeve top that showed my cleavage nicely, black skinny jeans and tied it together well with my absolute favourite knee-high dark brown leather boots. I ran a brush through my hair and fluffed it a little to give my curls some bounce.

I dab some concealer under my eyes to cover the dark bags that scream tired mess. I want to hide just how much what happened yesterday affected me. The last thing I needed was for Declan to feel like he had the upper hand.

As for Samantha, well, she was my sister, and I loved her, but if she thought that meant anything right now, then she was wrong. The fact that I was her sister didn't stop her from screwing my mate and on my birthday, no less. Not to mention she had the audacity to chase me down here like she had done nothing wrong. Screw the pair of them. I would show them how much I didn't need them. I wasn't a girl anymore, I was a woman now, and this woman was capable of being happy all on her own.

I walked silently into the dining hall, doing my best to act calm, casual and confident when really I wished I were invisible. I could smell the scent of vanilla and brown sugar heavy in the air, but I was able to fight the urge to look for the source.

I sighed in relief when no one turned their heads to stare or flash me pitiful glances as I walked by. It could only mean one thing. No one else knew. I was grateful for that, at the very least.

However, that sense of relief was very short-lived when I noticed who was sitting at the breakfast table with my parents. Declan and his father, Alpha Jackson, and Samantha were there too. At least she was sitting beside our Dad and wasn't draped all over my mate. I don't know if I would be able to keep my mouth shut if she had been. It's showtime, I guess.

"Hey momma, hello daddy." I give them both a kiss on the cheek before taking my seat next to my mom.

“Good morning, Alpha Jackson.” I bow my head ever so slightly as a sign of respect to my Alpha, I mentally high five myself when I manage to look that good for nothing SOB in the eyes.

“Good morning Declan.” I smile at him brightly like I would every other morning. I didn't want to. I kind of wish I could flip him the bird, but I didn't for a few different reasons, the first being that I would have to explain myself, and I didn't want to do that for three reasons. One, I didn't want to upset my parents, and they would be because I was hurt and even more so because Samantha was involved, two I didn't want Jackson to force us to accept the mate bond. I liked that to be my choice and my choice alone and three, and probably most important of all, I didn't want Declan to know that he had gotten to me.

Samantha shot me a nervous glance. “Morning, Sammie.” I half smiled at her while I loaded my plate with as much fresh fruit as I could fit before dumping on a few big globs of yoghurt mmm yum.

Declan and Samantha were both staring at me like I had lost my mind. It felt like a real victory.

“We missed you last night.” my mother pouted.

“I know, Mom. I was really anxious about my first shift. I just wanted to be alone.” it may not have been the whole truth, but it was close enough.

“We would have come with you.” she whines. She hates it when she feels one of us has shut her out. I would have to find a way to make it up to her later.

“I know, mom.” I pat the top of her hand while I shovel in another mouthful. The goddess, I was hungry.

“How was it.” my dad winces. I know he means my shift. I bob my head a little while I try to swallow my food.

“Painful.” I'm honest.

“And your wolf?” Alpha Jackson asks. I try not to look at him when I answer because I don't want to look at his son. I hope he doesn't notice.

“I don't know. I passed out before I could see her.” I shrug. It wasn't uncommon for a newly shifted wolf to blackout. In fact, some didn't come too for days. The quicker you wake, the stronger the wolf. I had only been out for a few hours, so I had a strong wolf. That was to be expected; after all, I was a beta's daughter.

“When did you get back?” My dad asks, a grimace marring his face. He must think I stayed out all night. I put my fork down and gave him my full attention.

“Actually, I don't know.” I shrug and try my best to act as though it didn't bother me, but the truth was it was something that had been puzzling me all morning. “I woke up in bed. Maybe someone on patrol found me.” I offered. It was the best explanation I could come up with.

My dad just nods. He must agree with me. I was well known throughout the pack. I wasn't overly popular or anything. It just came with being the betas daughter. I hoped it was a female who found me, nudity was an unavoidable part of our lives, but still, I was unconscious and vulnerable. I would feel better if it had been a woman.

“Any luck finding your mate?” Sammie asks. I bite down on my tongue so hard I almost bite it off.

“Nope.” I say, casually popping the P. I hope no one notices the fact that I have bent my spoon out of shape. She made me so angry. Why goad me?

Declan is glaring at me hard, but I don't care.

“Oh well, it's only been a day.” she encourages me with a smile. What is her deal?

“Do you think you might be up for a run later?” my dad looks at me hopefully. He has been waiting to run wild with me for the longest time. I hope my wolf wakes up soon.

“Maybe, my wolf hasn't woken up yet.” I tell him. All five heads snap up instantly. I squirm a little. All attention is very unsettling. Alpha Jackson, my dad and even Declan all stare at me curiously. Whatever their thinking, they aren't sharing it with me. Oh well.