

The Alpha's Guardian Chapter 6

I hesitate for a moment, panicking. Should I chase her down and try to make her stay or should I tell Francis to get out? He has about 6 minutes if she continues to limp her way to the packhouse, about three minutes if she runs. She stumbles in the distance and a wave of guilt washes over me. She took my pain as a penance for an injury she didn't prevent. I lied to her and allowed her to take it, knowing exactly what she would feel. I jog over to her, watching as she steadies herself. Her skin is pale and sprinkled with sweat. She looks at me with determination.

"I don't need your help," she says, her words clipped.

"I thought I would walk with you since I'm heading the same way." I offer. She just nods as she looks forward and trudges on. She is about as tough as she is stubborn, and after only a few days, I can say with complete confidence, she is one of the most stubborn people I have met.

"Can I ask you some questions?" I ask.

"Depends on the question."

"Guardian-related questions."

"That's fine." She says through clenched teeth.

"How did you become a Guardian?" I ask.

"I was selected." She clips out.

"Well, that much is obvious, but I mean how?"

"Samuel, The Lead committee member, found me in the woods when I was a kid. The next day I was in guardian training." She shrugs.

"Ok, but what is a Guardian exactly?"

"Have you not heard the stories?" she stops to look at me bewildered.

"I don't pay attention to lore," I respond. She laughs at me. Even when she laughs, she is intimidating. I want so badly to allow myself to be impressed by her, but I hold it back. She has to have some ulterior motive.

"You are a werewolf. You ARE lore." she taps me in the forehead with her finger and then sighs. "Guardians are an elite group of people who are trained to be the best in every respect. We are the ultimate weapon and gift."

“So a glorified bodyguard, then?” I snort. She stares at me, lost for words, and scoffs.

“No. We provide more than safety. We provide guidance, healing, both mental and physical, safety and companionship.” She says it with so much conviction I can feel how much she believes in what she does. She loves her occupation even if she seems stoic and bitter about it.

“Companionship?” I wiggle my brow at her. She rolls her eyes.

“Friendship, we are great for giving advice and confiding in. You will see Alpha. We will be great friends, even if I find you obnoxious.” She looks forward and continues to walk again. I glance down at my watch and take a moment to tap into the mind link.

-Francis. Be done. We are coming back- I say, quickly ending the link and starting back up behind her.

“So when will you give me my pain back?” I ask her

“It will slowly leak back to you through the night. I only have partial use of my trained abilities until you agree to do the ceremony.”

“Who says I will agree?” I ask, scoffing. I’m being stubborn, I know that, but I can’t help but feel like I don’t have enough information about what I am getting myself into if I accept her as my guardian.

“Oh, you will agree. Everyone always does. It would be stupid to refuse help in your situation.”

“what’s that supposed to mean?”

“I don’t mean any offense. I’m only stating the facts.”

“And what facts are they?” I ask angrily.

“You are clearly injured still. Your warriors are barely average and you repeatedly keep getting attacked by the rogue king himself.”

“There is no rogue king, he is just a myth,” I snort in annoyance.

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“Oh, there is definitely a rogue king, and with your denial, I would say he is the least of your problems. You seem to lack a functioning view of reality.”

“So that’s why you are here, then? To protect me from the big bad rogue king?” I say in a mocking tone. She stops and winces, her hand flying to her leg, where my phantom pain throbs.

“I am here to protect you, help you. They sent me here with nothing more than a ‘Keep him alive, he is important’ order.”

“They had to have told you more than that, given you a little file or something that you can refer to.” I ask her, growing desperate and angry. Why is it so hard to get answers?

“What don’t you get? I have given you all the information I was given.” She throws her hands in the air in defeat. It would appear she gets grumpy when she is in pain. I just stare at her as she stands fuming before me waiting for me to question her further. She grows impatient and stalks off with her limp leg.

“Wait,” I call out to her, pinching the bridge of my nose. “Why didn’t you intervene earlier when the rogues attacked me?” I chase after her, coming up to her side as she pants.

“I thought you would be a better fighter.” She says simply. I can’t help but scoff at her as her jab hurts my pride. I’m an excellent warrior. When my bum leg doesn’t act up, that is. But she doesn’t know that the pain she is carrying for me is many years old and steeped in wolfsbane. Though I have to admit it’s satisfying watching someone of her status struggle with the pain I’ve come accustomed to.

“It was like twelve to 1 and I was injured.” I retort quickly.

“I’ve had worse odds,” she mutters. Stopping again to catch her breath.

“Oh yes, big bad Guardian” I jest. Her eyes snap to mine, a look of anger and annoyance sitting on the surface of her hazel eyes. A small amount of fear runs through me as I swallow hard.

“Is this all some joke to you, Alpha Wade?” She fumes. “It is not fun for me to have to come here to protect an egotistical male who refuses my aid and experience all for the sake of his manliness. You know what. F**k it.” She reaches out, thrusting her hand roughly to my arm. I gasp out as pain radiates from her hand in waves ebbing at the edge of my sanity. I suck in my breath and close my eyes tight. She releases a breath in relief as she steps back from me. I notice the pain is not nearly as bad as it had been, and I look at her in shock.

“Twenty questions is over, I will see you on the pitch for training tomorrow at 7 am” and with that, she storms away, the limp she had taken from me completely gone.

I take a tentative step, feeling the pain present in my leg again. It radiates up my thigh and into my back as I breathe deeply. The pain is not as debilitating as it usually is, and I look up in shock at her back as she grows smaller in the distance. The pain she felt is my

everyday pain, pain I have grown accustomed to over the last 5 years. I could see her struggling under the weight of it but without the help of the alpha strength she was still able to walk around and move, and albeit angrily, she was able to talk and answer questions. I've never experienced a pain share before, in truth, I hadn't even known it was a thing.

-Francis- I say through our mind link.

-Yes Alpha?- He responds

-Update- I ask hoping for something

-I found a small locked box but I saw her through the window and stopped to get the scent dampener-

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-Good. Now, what do you know about pain shares?- I ask him as I make my way back to the packhouse.

-You mean the healer's hand?- He asks in excitement. Of course, he knows the actual name for it. Guardian's are a kind of celebrity to some wolves, apparently, my Beta is no exception.

-Sure.-

-Pretty much they can take the pain of the person they are assigned to. They absorb it and by doing so it allows the body of the injured person to heal while the guardian simultaneously heals the injury through their own body. I don't fully understand it, but it's a crazy concept.-?Francis answers.

-In theory, if Ali were to do the healer's hand to me, how would the wolfsbane in my wound affect her?-

-You have enough wolfsbane in your injury to keep it from healing, even with alpha strength and abilities. I would think it would render her unable to move, if not put her in the hospital. But I'm just spouting off assumptions here.- I close the mind link and walk directly towards the packhouse. It seems I have some more guardian research to do.

By the time I arrive at the packhouse Ali is already here. I walk into the kitchen taking a seat at the large island in the middle of the open area. Ali sits quietly at the table with her laptop and an apple as she looks completely sucked in. Her keys are clacking as she types, followed by a lull while she reads and takes a bite of her apple. I can't help but watch her movements, the more time I spend with her the more intriguing she becomes. For someone so blunt she still remains such a mystery. I hadn't noticed the scar above her eye

until today, a faint thin white line running the length of her brow and stopping just before her temple.

“You are staring, Alpha,” she says without looking up as she types away at her keyboard.

“I’m trying to understand you” I admit not taking my eyes off of her. She sighs heavily.

“What is there to understand, I have told you everything I know.” she finally looks up at me with curiosity. “You are the one who refuses the bond that will allow us into each other’s head”

“Sounds like a mate bond,” I say as I scoff at her. She shakes her head.

“Leave it to an unmated alpha to assume what either bond feels like when he has had neither.” she scowls at me.

She has got me there. I have yet to meet my true mate and I have never had a guardian, I know she aims to make it an insult, but is it possible to be insulted by these truths?

“Look you need to understand, I want to find my true mate. But I’m running out of time.” I find myself feeling defensive.

“You are an Alpha. Find the strength to resist your wolf.” She says as if this is an easy task.

“You of all people should know wolves with power need to fight the animal instincts more. We are stronger because we have a more primal connection. My wolf needs to mate, and my true mate continues to elude me!”

“If you say so, Alpha.” She mutters, turning back to her computer and taking an extraordinarily loud bite of her apple.

This woman is infuriating. How can she not understand? a wolf with her abilities must struggle to stay in check especially since she also is mateless. Unless she is lying to me about something. My wolf perks up at the thought growing angry at the thought of someone trying to deceive us. We refuse to be made a fool of.

-I found a small locked box but I saw her through the window and stopped to get the scent dampener-

The Alpha’s Guardian Chapter 7

Ali POV

Frowning in the mirror, I reach over to the countertop and put my necklace back on. I have always hated jewelry and I often have begged Samuel for an amulet like the male guardians. Their rings are large and gaudy, and each one matches their personality. Mine is 3 dainty metal chains twisted together with a circular moon locket. Inside the moon locket lives the seed of a moonflower. The necklace has many qualities to help protect me. For one, it's my mate's deterrent.

I am bound by an oath to not find my mate until I am released from servitude. Taking the oath meant my ability to sniff out my mate was now suppressed. This is to keep me from leaving the heat of battle to protect someone that is not in my charge. The one I am protecting must always be my first priority, even over my own preservation. This is nearly impossible with the mate bond in place.

The necklace I have is a scent suppressor, meaning my mate is incapable of smelling me when I am near. We can literally walk by each other and never be the wiser of our soul connection. Many male guardians come to the committee to fill this position after their mate passes, it's a way to give them a purpose, a meaning beyond their own heartache and self-destruction that inevitably follows the death of their soulmate.

I have worn this necklace every day since the day I turned 18. I'm not supposed to take it off for any reason, but more and more lately I can feel the weight of it, its heaviness weighing me down at every turn. So when I take a shower, I allow myself to be fully me, unsuppressed, unburdened. It's liberating, but harder and harder every day to put back on.

I sigh as I tuck it down into my sports bra and step back to check my appearance. I really don't care if I look great. At this point, I couldn't have my mate even if I wanted him. But with my position, I have a sort of image to uphold. My vibrant purple tank top fits snug to my muscular curves and my black leggings highlight the sculpted muscles of my thighs and butt. I've worked hard for these muscles, and by showing them a little, I'm proving to those doubting me I am indeed fit for this position.

I walk in the doors ten minutes to 7 am and find Alpha Wade standing on the side of the mats chatting with two men while a few other wolves straggle in and only 2 or 3 of them are actually warming up. I have to remind myself that the rest of his so-called warriors have ten minutes before they are late. Even if I feel that 5 minutes before arrival is technically late.

"Alpha," I say as I walk up to him. He smiles curtly while the other two me gawk.
"Gentlemen," I say, nodding and trying to hide my smirk.

"I'm Francis." One of them says, stepping forward with a warm welcoming smile on his face as he sticks his hand out in my direction. His dark hair is a mess and his shirt is wrinkled, but his smile is pleasant and his eyes gentle.

"You're the beta?" I guess as he smiles largely.

“Yep! And this is Kane,” He says motioning to the quiet man to his right. I take a moment to look him over. He is shorter than the other two, but his presence is calming and I immediately know he is a gamma. Gamma’s are the pack protectors. Not in the sense that they are the warriors, but they deal with the inner circle of things, like ensuring the pack gets to safety when the alpha and warriors fight, making sure people are fed, have shelter, and are clothed.

“Pleasure to meet you both,” I say while shaking their hands. I shoot Alpha Wade a scowl for not introducing me to his men and he smirks happily. It’s feeling like he enjoys being a defiant little shit, though it could just be the alpha in him, or perhaps he just truly dislikes me.

“Do you have a training plan set up for the day?” I ask Wade.

“I figure we spar in human form for a little while, and after a couple of hours shift into wolf form.” He shrugs. I roll my eyes. Great training with no proper plan is always a terrible idea.

“Your warriors should learn the technique. You should assess weaknesses and strengths so you know who to place where and who to rely on for certain tasks. Do you have a group of trackers at least?” I look between the 3 men who say nothing. Kane puts his hands in his pockets and rocks back on his heels, while Francis whistles and looks up at the ceiling. My eyes land on Alpha Wade, who turns red.

“I am the Tracker.” He finally says.

“What? You can’t be the Alpha and the Tracker. You lead your people into battle, you fight side by side with them. You can’t track and fight simultaneously.” I say, in shock.

“We were losing too many trackers to the rogues,” Kane says, looking down at his feet.

“So what, you felt sending your Alpha was the smart thing to do?” I ask, aghast. “That is the most idiotic thing I have ever heard.”

Alpha Wade growls angrily as he steps into my personal space, glaring daggers at me.

“I will never ask my people to walk into a situation that may lead to their death if I am capable of doing it and have a higher chance of survival.” I step into him, chest to chest, nose to nose.

“Then train them appropriately so they can survive,” I say curtly.

“I can’t afford to lose more people,” He says simply.

“By refusing to train them to be better than you, you are consigning them to death! You can not protect each wolf by sacrificing yourself. You must train them to defend

themselves, so they can be accountable for their life. Not you.” I respond by puffing my chest out to assert a little more authority. Before he can respond, his eyes glaze over as he listens to someone in the mind link.

He turns to me, anger still clear in his eyes.

“Kane will lead the training for a while. You will stay and observe,” he orders as he and Francis turn and sprint from the building. I look over at Kane.

“Have you ever led a training before?” I ask him, raising my brow. He smirks at me.

“Like once. But I’ve trained with Alpha Wade, so I am well versed in fighting and certain styles,” he says.

“Good. I want a list of weaknesses for the 5 strongest wolves. I do not care what the gender is.” I say as I move towards the door.

“Where are you going?” he asks, looking worried.

“I’m heading to check on the alpha. My job is to protect him.”

“He doesn’t need protecting right now. The Alpha is punishing a couple of Omegas for a prank they pulled.” He says, following me.

His words make me feel sick. So they treat their Omegas poorly here as well. Every pack is always the same. The hierarchy leads to the beating of those lower and treating them like slaves. A hierarchy that destined me to the lowest of ranks when my family decided to run from the punishments, resulting in their death and me wandering the woods wolfless and weak. A menacing growl escapes my lips and Kane looks at me, bewildered.

“Then I will go protect them.”

“They are Omegas...” He says confused.

“Every wolf is capable of being great.” I snap out, turning to face him. “The fault of male leaders is thinking everyone is weaker than them. I guess it’s time for them to learn a little humility.” I mumble as I take off, running out the doors in search of them.

The Alpha’s Guardian Chapter 8

I follow the scent of the Alpha for about a quarter of a mile until I come up to a group of people. I can see the top of Alpha Wade’s head as I angrily push through and freeze when I see what’s happening before me. In the mud are the young omegas I met the other day. They shiver in fear as Alpha Wade hovers over them, demanding answers they are too frightened to give.

Robin is covered in mud as her brother tries to cover her frame from the line of sight of the onlookers. Her shirt appears to be slightly ripped and her hair is matted to her cheeks as she sobs about being sorry. Mason looks feral as he growls like a beast with rabies at anyone who comes near. Alpha Wade grows weary of their crying and lack of answer as they hand him a whip and he raises it above his head. My feet are moving as fast as I can push them as I land myself in front of the shaking teenagers my back facing the Alpha.

The whip comes down hard across my left shoulder and carries through to my right hip, igniting everything in between with intense pain. Alphas are indeed much stronger than the average wolf. I hiss and growl at the impact as everyone gasps. My head is turned to protect my face and Mason looks up, our eyes locking, and I can see the innocence there. Whatever the crime, these two scrawny kids aren't the perpetrator. I turn my fury to Alpha Wade who is glaring daggers into my eyes.

"You have no right to interfere here, Guardian." he spews his words as if they are rotten.

"You would really beat innocent kids?" I ask, ignoring his declaration.

"They aren't innocent."

"How would you know? You haven't given them a chance to respond"

"I have been trying to get them to speak for 10 minutes. All she says is 'I'm sorry repeatedly. Her brother sits in silence." Mason growls.

"Is this how you treat your pack members?" I ask. He snaps his eyes to mine. His beast is trying to lead. He needs to do a better job of reining him in.

"They are Omegas." He says. His words hit harder than the strike of his whip, and a low growl vibrates through my chest as I step closer to him.

"So they are less worthy of justice than Alpha Wade? Do you not take it out of the lead Omega?" I hear Robin whimper behind me, and Mason gasps. I turn to look at his worried expression as he pleads for me to stop with his eyes.

"Our lead Omega is their grandmother. Would you rather strike an old woman?" he says, thinking he has me in a tight spot.

What he doesn't yet know is that I am an Omega. And I am the highest in rank here outside of him. Which means I must carry their sentence. I never wished to reveal my heritage, what I am. But I am so beyond sick of se*xist, prejudiced assholes that I'm willing to be sacrificed to show these onlookers and Alpha Wade just how wrong they are with their outdated thought process.

"If you were to lash a strong Omega, how many would it be?" I ask coolly. The crowd murmurs and grows. More and more people arriving to check out what the ruckus is. A

few chuckles sound from various so-called warriors as one shouts from the back. ‘No such thing as a strong omega.’

Looking directly into Alpha Wade’s now normal eyes, I can see he has himself in control once again. Good, he is about to learn a valuable lesson today. I step back without breaking eye contact and I lift my shirt over my head and toss it to the side, standing in just my sports bra. Everyone is silent, and I roll my eyes at them. Alpha Wade stuns me when he steps in front of me, blocking me from the view of everyone else.

“What the hell are you doing?” he demands in a whisper.

“Teaching everyone here a little humility Alpha.” I step back and raise my arms up. “How many lashes were these pups to get?”

“six each” Francis says remorsefully. He is the only one who looks sick over what is unfolding before him.

“For what?” I demand.

“three for the girl for instigating, and three for fighting a warrior unwarranted.” My eyes dart to Robin who sobs and Mason who proudly defends her. My heart swells for them.

“Send the accuser up to stand next to me then.” A young wolf about only 18 walks up and mournfully stares at Robin and I can practically see it. The mate bond. This warrior is mated to Robin, and he broke her heart.

“Did you reject her?” I ask him loudly. He looks at me guiltily but does not answer I tsk and move on.

“Alpha Wade. Double the lashing. twelve each for a total of twenty-four.” He looks at me, speechless. “I, Aliauna, Guardian of Alpha Wade, 115th Warrior of the Guardian committee, and OMEGA WOLF will take this punishment that has been wrongfully imposed on two young omegas under my charge.”

I turn around and brace myself for my lashings and when they do not come; I spin and look at the still shocked crowd. Rolling my eyes, I reach out and close Alpha Wade’s gaping jaw.

“Would you start already? We have warrior training to get to so I can teach your pack how to be real men.” I spin back around and the crowd murmurs to life.

I have a second’s notice when the sound of the whip whistles through the air and lands on my bareback. Pain ripples through my body as I focus on removing myself from my body and escape into my meditation. My body forcefully lurches with every hit, each strike landing lighter than the last. Alpha Wade is tired, or he doesn’t enjoy whipping me. Perhaps he is more human than I thought.

The final lash lands and I allow myself back from my meditation space. I am almost bowled over by the pain that was awaiting me. Damn, it's been a while since I was whipped. I take a deep breath and spin around to see the group has nearly tripled in size and is stunned to silence. I walk over to Robin and Mason, reaching down only to scoop up my shirt. I help Robin up and hand her my shirt, smiling sweetly at her.

"Are you ok?" I ask and she nods, looking at me stunned.

"Aliauna." Mason starts, but I put my hand up to stop him.

"I want to see you both later for dinner. We need to have a discussion. Now take your sister home and get cleaned up."

I walk over to Alpha Wade, who is watching me intently.

"Let's finish training," I say, continuing on and back the quarter-mile to the training pitch. When I get back I realize that I have completely forgotten I didn't have a shirt on. The back of my sports bra seems to be in tatters, as it is not nearly as snug as it once was. I huff out in annoyance and spin around to find Mason running directly for me with a small bag in his hand. I eye him suspiciously.

"Beta Francis asked me to give this to you. He mind linked his mate to go and find you a replacement in your room," he says shyly as he hands me the bag containing a fresh sports bra and a black tank top. I smile gratefully.

"Thank you, Mason. Beta Francis seems like a good guy"

"He is the best, though Alpha Wade used to be pretty cool too," Mason mumbles just as Alpha Wade walks through the doors with Francis by his side. I raise the bag to Francis, as a thank you, and he nods to me and smiles kindly.

"Ali!" Alpha shouts. "Get changed and let's get started."

I slip to the woman's locker room, which is run down and dusty. I can tell there are very few if any, female fighters in this pack, and I'm oddly annoyed by this realization. Gingerly, I rip what's left of my sports bra off and wince when I slowly pull the other one on. I move to put my tank top on but the fabric feels like sandpaper on my tender back so I quickly remove it and decide today I will train a little more scandalously. With my head held high, my back red, and my body on what feels like full display, I saunter out to the men who are flopping around like dying fish attempting to show off their so-called skills.

This is going to be a really long day. I'm actually almost wishing the lashing had taken longer.

The Alpha's Guardian Chapter 9

Wade POV

The moment she walks out of the locker room, my eyes find her. She looks stoic as usual as she eyes up the men training on the pitch in front of her. Oddly, I'm angry that she has dressed so scandalously. I look sideways to see Kane practically drooling at her when she treks our way. I roll my eyes. Maybe it's a dominance thing. She is trying to assert her own by showing off her femininity?

I'm not so blind that I can deny she is ripped. This girl has biceps that scream annihilation and abs so toned that I'm convinced she's made of stone. I mean, really, do women get abs that defined? My eyes wander up and I swallow hard. She has a perfect angular face and plush pink lips that are in a line, looking disappointed. Her eyes are busy watching, assessing, the men who are trying to show off and failing.

Snapping myself out of the daze, I clear my throat and whack Kane in the gut, grabbing his attention. He yelps and rubs his stomach, wearing a sheepish smile. I have no claim on her, but I don't like how the men in here are looking at her.

"Ali," I holler out and motion for her to come my way. She nods and moves towards us, looking regal. Francis sidles up next to me.

"I swear the bag had a shirt. Sammy told me she put everything she would need in it." He says. Great, this means he noticed me staring. Maybe it's because I'm still mateless and Francis isn't, but I hate that I'm staring at someone who is not my destined mate. I sigh at the thought. I really need to get this wolf under control.

"Alpha," she says as she approaches and I can't bring myself to look at her.

"My warriors can't have distractions since, as you said, they are average. Please find a shirt."

She frowns slightly at my words. I can see she wants to say something, but she reaches down to her waistband and pulls a thin black tank top out. Her breath hitches as she pulls it over her head, groaning only when it gets hung up on her sports bra. Kane reaches out, helping her straighten it, and a low growl rumbles through my chest. He quickly sticks his hands in his pockets and takes a step back.

"Where do you want to start?" She asks.

I think about it for a moment. Admittedly, my pack doesn't have any real special talents. But what we lack in talent, we make up for in loyalty. My pack knows I would die for each and every one of them, including my Omegas. What happened earlier was not anything remotely normal for us. My wolf was on high alert as it always is when I am that close to the woods. I couldn't for the life of me rein him in until Ali stepped in. She has this commanding presence that demands your full attention, and if you don't comply, she forces it.

“If I’m completely honest, I think we need to do a complete run-through of everyone’s strengths and weaknesses. It’s been so long that I really don’t know where to start.” I say.

She turns and looks at me. Her stare makes me uncomfortable. I feel exposed and self-conscious. Clearing my throat, I turn my head back to the guys who are still trying feebly to look tough and mighty in front of the beautiful guardian. I’m reminded of a small child wanting to show their mother this new cool trick they learned and the mom pretending to be thrilled. Admittedly, Ali has a great stoic face as she tries not to laugh at two 16-year-old boys wrestling.

“Right, well. Let’s start with endurance training and see where they are. After that, we will turn to technique on the bags. I want to see who can throw a punch and who has potential. We need to sort out who we think would be better trackers than fighters.”

“I want trackers who can defend themselves,” I add.

“Yes, I agree, but we can teach fighting skills. Tracking needs to be honed. Focus on getting them trained so they can get back on the pitch for sparring.”

“How do we know who to pick for potential trackers?” Kane asks.

“The top 10 fastest runners in human and wolf form. The ones who are quick on their feet and have suitable form, but not much force behind it. We are looking for attention to detail and agility, not brute force.” I tell Kane.

“Exactly,” Ali says, smirking at me.

“I also want a posting up for women to come train if they feel inclined to do so.” She says taking a pad of paper that Francis just handed her. I tap into the mind link quickly reaching out to all the females in the pack inviting them to train today and then I listen back into the conversation happening next to me.

“We can take notes on the people with promise in certain areas and compare notes,” Francis suggests,

“Well, let’s get started,” Ali says as she glances down at her watch.

“You have somewhere better to be?” I quirk a brow at her.

“Yup. I have a lunch date.” She says, smiling widely. I swear my heart skips a beat. I have never seen a genuine smile from her before and I’ll be damned if this is the last one.

“Right. Well, we only have an hour lunch break.” I say, intentionally trying to break her date short. She shrugs at me, smiling defiantly. This woman is going to be trouble.

“All right, guys. Circle up.” Francis calls out. Immediately, they all stop what they are doing and run over, standing in front of us.

“As you know, we have been lacking in our training regime as of late. We can no longer get by with just relying on our senses and endorphins. You need to be stronger, faster, smarter than the rogues that are coming our way. We will do the basics today. You will be judged and sorted into warriors and trackers. Just because we selected you for one does not mean you can’t be both or that you are terrible at the other. It just means for the time being we are going to assess your skills where you are placed. Understood?”

I am the first to notice the 3 women walking in timidly. Well, that was fast. Ali seems to follow my line of sight as she grins with excitement.

“Did you mind link everyone?” she asks quietly.

“Just all the females.” I smile, proud of myself for doing something right in her eyes. It’s a nice change of pace.

“Ladies.” She hollers, “Come on up please.”

All three ladies walk up. As they get closer, I see Sammy, Francis’ mate, Talia, who is Kane’s older sister, and Marie. Talia looks confident and ready to go where Marie looks timid and afraid. Sammy, however, looks as stoic as Ali usually is. I smirk. Francis must be in her head and she is trying to ignore him.

“Why are girls here?” One of the larger guys named Derrick, asks.

“Because women are warriors too.” Ali states. Derrick rolls his eyes.

“I’m sorry. If I’m fighting a massive rogue, don’t expect me to feel relieved seeing a small wolf cheering for me to fight harder.”

“What’s your name?” Ali says, stepping up to him.

“Derrick”

“Hi Derrick. It’s nice to meet you. I’m a female warrior who could in a split second rip your throat out with my bare hands-” She stops when Derrick’s chuckling grows louder.

“Oh, I’m sorry, is something funny?”

“Yeah, you have such cute little tiny hands, and you don’t have a wolf. Explain to me how you plan to rip my throat out?”

I can feel my face growing red as I step forward, but she places her hand out to stop me. Can she handle this? Absolutely. Do I want her to have to? Not at all. Ali chuckles now, stopping when she sniffs and touches her thumb to her nose.

“I have worked far too hard to be where I am, do what I do, to be laughed at by the likes of you. You will go first.” She says in a low voice. She steps back, raising her voice to make a new announcement. “Ladies and gentleman, Derrick here has upped our training run to a 50k instead of the 25k I was planning. And for fun, we will do the whole thing in human form. Derrick will lead.”

“Sure thing, Omega,” Derrick says as he starts to jog.

The moment he comes close, I reach out and grab his ear, pulling him closer; I turn to my remaining warriors, who are watching in shock. I can feel Ali’s eyes on me, but I refuse to look over at her. This asshole is done pissing me off.

“Derrick. She may be an Omega but she is your superior and fights more like a man than you ever will.” I release his ear, tossing him back to the group.

“She isn’t my superior until she does the Guardian ceremony, Alpha.” He spits. “And what do you need a guardian for? I bet you could destroy her?” I’m mad at the guy, but I also like his backhanded compliment. Looking over, I see Ali, who is smirking at me. Her face speaks volumes.

“You disagree?” I ask her.

“About which part, Alpha? Technically, he is correct. I am not their superior until we do the ceremony.”

“I mean about me destroying you,” I clarify. Her head tilts back as she laughs.

“Oh Alpha, no disrespect. But I promise you, you wouldn’t even come close.” I’m enjoying our playful banter. Does this qualify as flirting, or is she being serious? My wolf wakes up and fights for control again. I have to figure out why my wolf is becoming so defiant.

“Well, let’s see, shall we?” I taunt, taking a step closer to her. “You win and we will do the guardian ceremony tonight. You lose and you will have to work with me without it for a while.”

She shrugs. “Fine with me. I’ve been wanting to hit you since I got here.”

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“Wolf form,” Derrick demands, smirking. This douche thinks he is being so slick by suggesting this type of fighting. Me fighting her in my wolf’s form is insanely dangerous for her, especially considering she doesn’t have a wolf.

“Agreed.” She says quicker than I can decline. I glance at Ali, disappointed in her quick agreement, but she just smiles.

“To the center, Alpha,” she says as she saunters away from me.

“Damn it,” I mutter, following behind her. I know she is a formidable fighter and has an extremely high pain tolerance, but I’m certain I can beat her. Admittedly, I may be lax when it comes to training my warriors, but it is because I know my skills are enough in most situations to keep them safe.

I remove my shirt, not wanting to rip it and look down at my pants. These are my favorite jeans. Sighing, I unbutton them and slide them off, standing only in my navy blue boxer briefs, leaving nothing to the imagination of anyone in the training ring. I notice a tinge of red when she looks me over and I can’t help but feel satisfied she took the time to size me up. I smirk at her and she sends me a smirk back that does things to me. Closing my eyes for an extra moment to calm my wolf. The last thing I need right now is a hard-on from just a simple look from her.

I Close my mind off and allow my wolf’s form to consume me. The sound of bones breaking clocks out all other noises as they reform and fur emerge from my once peach flesh. My beast is the same height as my human body, making me 6 feet of sheer muscles and fur. My gray fur shines under the fluorescent lights and I tilt my head, looking at her one more time to make sure she is ready for this. She smirks that damn se*xy smirk again and gets herself in a defense position. She raises her fists and my wolf chortles. Does she think she can beat me with her bare hands?

She raises a brow in question, then motions for me to come to her. My wolf is airborne the moment she starts the signal and we land squarely on her. She tumbles to the ground as my enormous paws compress her shoulders down, my hind legs on either side of her waist. The group goes wild thinking I have already won this battle, and she lays there motionless. When I look away from her, eyeing the crowd, she makes her move. I’m thrown over her head and by the time I whip around, she is already up and chuckling.

“Oh Alpha, you didn’t think I’d be that easy, did you?” She teases me.

I know she is trying to fire me up, but I’m not sure she understands that my wolf is enjoying it more than it is pissing him off. She launches the offense, this time running full speed towards me. I dodge to the left, but she had predicted my movement. She slides out to the side, grabbing hold of my fur under my neck, and using her forward momentum, she swings up and onto my back.

Going up on my hind legs and I slam down onto my back as I roll to remove her. She hugs tightly to me, her arms clinging around my neck as she leans forward. I see the glint of something around her neck as I kick my hind legs up like some large steed, trying to dismount its rider. The gold chain falls forward with the movement as an amulet falls from its hiding place in her bra. I reach out with my mouth chomping at it. When she sees what I am after, she releases me, rolling to her feet and tucking it back into its home.

“This is boring! Why aren’t you using your teeth?” someone in the crowd shouts.

My wolf responds in anger. A low growl erupts from the bottom of my chest as we launch again, teeth bared for all to see. I snap at her and chomp at any limb I can get at, but she is agile. She lands a blow to my snout and I recoil in surprise. Shit, she can pack a punch. She dodges me effortlessly, looking like a leaf floating in the wind. She lands without a sound, making it hard to find her in the dust that I am kicking up. We dance like this for minutes before I grow angry and embarrassed.

She is taunting me up in front of my pack. I shift back into my human form. She may beat me in my wolf’s form, but my sparring skills are impeccable in human form.

“Pants!” I yell out over the dust and through the cloud I catch them, slipping into them quickly. I wait silently for her to approach me. Her movements are too stealthy for me to hear, so I have to rely on my other senses. My sight is out as I can’t see in this cloud of dust. My hearing is out as she is too quiet, and my sense of smell is out because she has no scent. I close my eyes, relying on the air to guide me.

A shift in the air to my right alerts me to her presence as I duck and reach out. I catch a leg and yank it hard. She yelps as her body comes into contact with me hard. Her chest heaves against mine as I look down at her with a big smirk. The surprise in her eyes is enough to make me chuckle.

“Well, hello,” I say lowly, my voice coming out raspy. She plants her hands on my shoulders as she brings her other leg up and around my waist. Her movement surprises me and I release her from my grips. Leaning back, she drops her hands to the ground, and with an immense amount of effort, she grunts and I lift from my waist. She somersaults me to the dirt and her legs release me from their vice grip.

The cloud has cleared enough for the crowd to witness her move, and they groan as I skid to a stop in front of them. I jump up and lunge for her. She spins out to the right. She throws a punch and I dodge it as it whistles by my ear. I throw out a jab, and she deflects it. I toss out another and another in rapid-fire, trying to tire her out. She deflects and dodges each one. She throws an uppercut and I catch her hand, lifting her and tossing her hard to the ground.

Following her to the ground, I straddle her and raise my fist to knock her out. It is a fight, after all. Ali bucks her hips and I lose my balance, falling forward slightly. She wiggles out from my grasp and before I can stand; she steps beside me, kicking out hard and hitting

my bad leg. I let out a loud howl of pain as she climbs onto my shoulders, pulling me to the ground and forcing me to tap out. Holy hell. I roll onto my back once she releases me and I breathe hard. She saunters over, only mildly covered in dirt but otherwise looking fresh and ready for another round.

“Alpha Wade,” she says, leaning over me. “I think we should call training for today. You have a ceremony to plan and I desperately need a shower.”

I chuckle at her. Putting my hand out for her to help me up. We clasp hands and I yank her hard. She falls forward. Quickly, she adjusts her weight distribution and ends up rolling out over my head and turns, chuckling.

“Oh, that’s dirty.” She laughs. “You can get up on your hands and knees like the dignified alpha that you are.” she winks at me.

I bring myself to my feet and stalk towards her. Her smile falters when her eyes fall to my bare chest and abdominal muscles that are on full display for her to feast on. She gulps, but snaps her eyes up, regaining her composure. When I am a foot away from her, I reach out for her hand and raise it. Turning us towards the crowd.

“Let it be known that Aliauna, a Guardian and Omega wolf, has kicked my a*ss here today on the pitch.” I slide her a cocky smile “And that tonight there will be a Guardian Ceremony where I will accept and bond myself to her for the good of our pack and my safety.”