

Chapter 65

Dimitri

It was one of those rare weekends where I'd opted to be in charge of group training. Luke kept ditching to be with Miguel, and honestly, I found myself wishing the honeymoon phase was over with already. I got it; It was hard to be away from your mate. But he had responsibilities in this pack, he wasn't my Gamma for nothing. So, this morning I was heading to his room to pull him out of bed and get his ass to the training yard. He couldn't skip out with me there. Standing in front of his door, I knocked three times loudly. No response.

"Luke! Get up and let's go!" I yelled.

Sounds of rustling and groaning drifted to me through the door. A second later, Miguel opened the door dressed in sweatpants and a backwards t-shirt. It was obvious I'd woken him up.

"Good morning, Alpha." He yawned.

"Morning. Can you fetch your mate for me? It's time for training."

"Sorry Alpha but Luke is not here. I believe he already went down to the yard."

My eyebrows scrunched together. Luke got up before me? Did Hell freeze over?

"Uhm, okay. Thanks. Sorry I woke you."

"Do not worry about it." He smiled and waved before closing the door.

Still extremely confused, I made my way through the house, stopping by the kitchen to grab a banana and water. I'd been up thirty minutes and already it was a weird morning.

"I love you." A mind-link came from Lily, catching me by surprise.

"I love you too. Why are you up so early?"

"I woke up when you were in the shower."

"Oh. I didn't mean to wake you."

"It's fine. I'm going back to sleep for a while. Just wanted to tell you that I love you."

I could feel the smile in her voice, one of my own appearing on my face. She cut off the link and I waltzed through the front door, munching on my breakfast. The closer I got to the yard, the more the air smelled of sweat. Spotting Luke, I joined him looking over the groups of maybe warriors. They were in rows of five, everyone down doing sets of push-ups. I noticed some were having more difficulty than others. One kid looked like he was ready to pass out already.

"Who is that?" I pointed.

"Greg Bannerman. The group puker."

I made a face. "Why haven't you cut him yet?"

"You'll see why when they spar."

I shrugged. The guy had good muscle tone, even if he was on the heavier side. He'd be a big dude after he shifted.

"Can't believe you got here before me." I said to my Gamma.

"I have a feeling it's going to be an eventful day." He replied.

"What does that even mean?"

"Well, eventful is an adjective, commonly known as events or incidents, especially of a striking character. For example-"

"Alright smartass. Just focus on the exercises." I rolled my eyes and he chuckled.

I'd given Ned the day off as I was going to be here. Together, Luke and I ran the kids through the regular exercises and then laps. As promised, Greg vomited thirty-four laps in. Apparently, it was a new record for him; Most days he didn't last past twenty-five. Stopping beside him, I handed him my water, telling him to keep it. Greg was tall, taller than most here. His face still held some of his youth, sweat pouring down his face and from his pits. He was breathing like he'd run a thousand laps instead of just over thirty.

"Thank you...Alpha." He huffed as he chugged the water.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"Seventeen sir."

"Can I ask you something Greg?"

"Sure Alpha."

I moved him off to the side of the track, away from the others running. I studied him quizzically. "Why are you here?"

"Uhm? I train every morning, like everyone else?" He was confused.

"No, I mean why are you still training? No offense kid, but you don't seem cut out to be a warrior. Why do you come back every day?"

He straightened at my question, his brown eyes growing lighter in the sun.

"I come back every day because I'm not a quitter. Blood Moon needs the best to protect us, and I intend to be the best. I know I don't look like much, now, but I've been training for years before this with my dad. I have

what he calls the 'fat gene'." He laughed once. "I've always been a bigger guy. So was Dad, before he shifted."

I rubbed my chin thoughtfully. "Who's your dad?"

"Jake Bannerman Alpha."

My eyebrows raised. I knew his last name was familiar. Jake was indeed one of my best. If not Ned, I would have put him as head of the warriors. Ned just happened to be a little better, but I knew they trained together themselves. I was surprised when Ned had beat him all those years ago. Looking at his son now, I could see the resemblance.

"My Gamma says you're a fair fighter."

Greg shrugged. "My size helps a lot."

"Your Dad is right, this-" I waved my hand around us, "- Becomes easier after we shift. Our stamina goes up, and our endurance. Can I give you a little advice though?"

"O-of course Alpha. I'd really appreciate that." He seemed stunned that I, of all people would give him advice. Was I that out of touch with my own pack?

"Judging by the er, pile there." I gestured to his vomit. "I'd say you're eating a hearty breakfast."

"Always Alpha."

I shook my head. "Not a good idea. Before I train, I have one bottle of water and one piece of fruit. You shouldn't eat a full meal before training, especially the way Blood Moon does it."

He nodded softly. "I'll remember that. Thank you, Alpha."

I gave him a small smile. "I look forward to seeing you spar. Now come on, only sixteen more laps to go."

I kept pace with him while we ran, encouraging him. Luke watched me with raised brows, as did many of the others, but I didn't care. This was the type of Alpha I strived to be; I just lost my way somewhere. When we finished, I handed Greg another water and patted him on the back.

"You've got heart kid." He gave me a grin and Luke announced the next set of drills. The scent of wildflowers invaded my nose and I turned to see my mate. She smiled brightly at me, looking all sorts of adorable in red sundress and black flats.

"What are you doing out here?" I asked her.

"I needed some fresh air. And I couldn't resist coming to see you." She walked in front of me, wrapping her arms around my neck and bringing me down for a lingering kiss.

"If you keep doing that, I'm going to have to take you upstairs. And that would be counterproductive, since I'm here to make sure Luke doesn't skip training. Again."

She sucked my bottom lip between her teeth, biting gently. I growled lowly, gripping her waist.

"Sorry, I can't it." She giggled. Pulling out of my arms, she looked to where Luke was setting up teams to start sparring. "Can I watch too?"

"Sure. Come on." I took her hand and pulled her over. "Everyone, say hello to our Luna. She'll be observing as well today."

"Hello Luna." They chorused. A few offered her smiles and Lily waved to them.

"Alright. Everyone in position? Good. The aim is to take down your opponent quickly and effectively. The longer you draw it out, the more chance there is for someone to sneak up behind you, or from the side. Try to never give an enemy that advantage."

The kids nodded at me, facing their partners. I signaled for them start, keeping an eye on mistakes and openings they left. I was impressed by how well some did, and disappointed by others. One particular girl caught my eye, she looked a lot like Karla. This must be her younger sister, Kaitlin. She was around the same height as Karla, and moved just as quick. For sure, she'd picked up some moves from her sister. My gaze travelled to Greg, who was throwing punches and rib jabs faster than I expected. He took down his partner with ease, before helping him up.

"Greg!" I called. He halted mid kick, looking over to me. I motioned for him to join me.

"Yes Alpha? Hello Luna." He nodded respectfully to Lily.

"Hello."

"Greg, I want you to partner with Kaitlin." I said.

"W-what?! Kaitlin? But she's... and I'm..." He gestured down his body.

"I know. That's why I want you two to spar. You won't always fight someone your size you know."

He gulped loudly. "But what if I hurt her? She's so tiny."

"Occupational hazard Greg. Now go." I shooed him away. He looked terrified. I watched as he tapped Kaitlin on the shoulder; She had to crane her neck to look him in the eye. He gestured to me and she shrugged. Her partner walked off to join Gregs former opponent and the two took fighting stances. Lily squeezed my hand.

"I hope you're sure about this." She said.