

## Chapter 2

"Earth to Melanie!" Amy exclaimed, waving a hand in front of her.

Melanie was suddenly brought back from her thoughts to the sight of Amy pocketing her phone.

"Let's go or we'll be late for second period."

Blinking, Melanie grabbed her books, realizing she'd completely spaced out instead of studying. Melanie had Advanced Placement English while Amy had Discrete Math. Amy's class was all the way on the other side of the building but Melanie's class was fairly close to where she'd been lounging around.

When Melanie settled down at the very front in her English class, glad she was early and could get her pick of seats, she was surprised when a loud growl rippled through the room. Looking up in confusion, her eyes landed on Brad's retreating back as his trouble-maker friends looked at him high-tailing it out of the classroom.

"I guess he's cutting class," spoke up Jerrel's cheerful voice as he came and sat down next to Melanie.

Melanie shrugged her shoulders, deciding she couldn't be bothered with Brad's antics. It was a new school year and she needed to focus more on herself. She'd be turning 16 in December and then she'd have her first shift as well as be able to find her mate. She couldn't wait to find out who her mate was. Depending on how strong your wolf was, some people could sense their mate immediately after turning even if their mate hadn't shifted yet. Other people, usually lower-ranked wolves or omegas could only sense their mate if their mate had also already shifted and had passed their 16th birthday. There were times one mate shifted before the other and could sniff out his or her mate. Those couples usually got together by default since it was apparent they were meant to be together.

Melanie looked shyly over at Jerrel. Maybe he was her mate? He was really sweet and one of the 'cool kids'. Melanie couldn't help but wonder what he saw in her. But ever since the end of last year, he'd definitely shown a marked interest in her. Especially, after that one time she'd tried to hide from the gym teacher who was making them run laps in gym. You'd think with her wolf genes, she'd be a pro at physical sports but she wasn't. Running laps made her want to hurl. Jerrel had found her hiding under the bleachers and had promptly sat down beside her, offering a smoke from his joint which Melanie had refused. Jerrel then proceeded to smoke his joint in peace while Melanie sat doing her homework. They made small talk but spent most of the time sitting in companionable silence. At the end of it all, Jerrel had gotten up, told her she was actually kind of cool and left. But that day had marked a sudden shift in the dynamics between them. Whereas she'd never been on his radar before, he'd definitely noticed her now. He would show up at her place to hang out, respecting her wishes to avoid smoking while he was around her.

Currently, Jerrel was busy getting his stuff out of his bag. Melanie eyed his side profile, unable to help her eyes straying to his biceps. She decided it wouldn't be so bad at all if Jerrel ended up being her mate. She then averted her eyes to the front of the class as their English teacher began class.

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Brad was pissed. Brad was so pissed he punched the tree in front of him in anger. He'd walked into English class, actually planning to attend for once when he smelt it. The wonderful smell of mocha chocolate had made his mouth water and desire burn through his body at startling speed. And when his eyes landed on her, sitting there with a small upturn of her pouty lips (his instincts urging him to go kiss them), those stupid black-rimmed glasses perched on her nose, the word mate resounded through his brain.

No. It couldn't be. This had to be a mistake. He'd heard of mistakes happening before. Melanie just couldn't be his mate. The teacher's pet couldn't be his mate. A low growl had ripped through him as his wolf fought him for control but Brad won out and high-tailed it out of the classroom as fast as he could. There was no way in hell anyone could find out. His friends would never let him hear the end of it.

Weird Melanie with her stupid plants was his mate. Was he being punished by the moon goddess? Brad closed his eyes, banging his head against the tree. He had to fight it. He had to wait until she turned and reject her. The guys would never let him live it down. Fuck this s\*\*t.

Angrily, Brad made his way off the school grounds. There was no way in hell he was going back there today.

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Flashback

It was the middle school dance and Melanie had let Selene get her ready. She was wearing a deep forest green dress with a small sprig of mint pinned on one side and Selene had curled her hair.

"I think we need a deeper red to go with your skin tone," Selene stated hesitantly as she looked Melanie.

Melanie looked in the mirror, feeling grown up and pretty. She was wearing the exact shade of lipstick her mother wore in the family picture hanging in their foyer. Selene had the same pale coloring as her mother. Melanie was tan and the re-engineered red lipstick seemed to clash horribly with her skin tone. But Melanie loved it. Happily, Melanie got into her father's car to make her way to the middle school dance.

"You look like a forest elf," her father said fondly, ruffling Melanie's hair fondly before bidding her good-bye. "Have fun tonight," her father called after her.

Melanie was excited for her first ever school dance. She was still taller than most of the boys in her class and was easily able to search the crowd for Amy who she spotted dancing with Josiah, another boy in their class. The two seemed to be laughing and enjoying the fast beat of the music. Awkwardly, Melanie made her way over to the punch bowl, deciding to get something to drink.

"Looks like somebody didn't get the memo that it's not Halloween," guffawed a voice from behind Melanie.

Melanie nearly spat her punch back into the cheap plastic glass. She turned to see Brad guffawing behind her with his stupid group of friends.

"You look like the clown from 'It'," Brad jeered.

Melanie put her hands on her hips and opened her mouth to respond when a voice cut her off.

"If you and your friends can't be nice to my friend then I'm not so sure I want to be your friend."

It was Amy. Amy had apparently arrived with Josiah to see Brad making fun of her.

"Hey, it's not my fault your friend and Brad don't get along," Josiah said defensively. "And to be honest, she really does look like she's from the circus."

"You don't know how to be nice," Amy stated, grabbing Melanie's hand and dragging her away from the group of bullies.

"Next time, you might want to skip all that powder on your face. You look like a clown," Brad called after her.

Melanie bit her lip to keep a small sob from escaping. She'd been so happy, trying to make Selene do her makeup like her mom did in the pictures. But the truth was, she wasn't her mother. She was just plain Jane Melanie. Who was she to think she could look as glamorous as her mother?

"Don't worry about what they say," Amy said firmly once Melanie and her were outside of the school gym where the dance had been taking place.

"I don't think I like parties," Melanie said in a small voice.

"Let's go to my place and order a pizza," Amy suggested. "We'll watch your favorite movie?" she offered as an after thought.

"Ferngully!" Melanie exclaimed happily.

The two linked arms and made their way outside to wait for Amy's mother to come pick them up.

It was after that day that Melanie decided on two things:

- 1) She was never going to wear makeup ever again
- 2) She was never ever going to attend any of stupid parties that involved her peers

End of Flashback