

## Chapter 48

God, she thought, and then there's Cullen again. Can't I stop thinking about him for just one minute? Her heart nearly beat out of her chest. The way he touched her was more than she could handle. I'm in love with him, she finally admitted to herself as she stared out the window. The question is if he feels the same and then what do I do about it. According to Rissa an alpha male could choose any female he wanted.

But they generally tried to find a woman equal to their abilities who could compliment their position in the pack. There was supposed to be someone out there that the fates intended for each of them.

That didn't stop people from mating with whomever they liked. It just made matters more complex for the few lycans who put effort into trying to find the one who was meant for them. Rissa said that Cullen had been around a long time and had chosen not to mate on several occasions.

At least one of those occasions had been badly handled. The girl had been wrongly given the impression that he was in love with her. Ever since that mismatch Cullen had put a lot of effort into making sure that he spread himself thinly so as not to accidentally make a girl think he was interested. Then there was the Jenna incident.

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She was so lost in thought that she missed Celia's approach until it was too late. Celia took the book out of Aislinn's hands and tossed it aside. "We have some unfinished business little one. I'm surprised you're out and about all alone. Have you finally qualified for grown up status?"

Aislinn stared back at Celia. She had learned quite a bit about Celia as well. If the woman thought that Aislinn had just been sitting around doing nothing and waiting for Cullen to have time for her then Celia was mistaken. Aislinn had spent most of time quizzing Rissa about the supposed competition and she was feeling pretty confident in her position with Celia at this point.

"I could say the same of you Celia. Doesn't Mack usually follow you around?" Aislinn's tone was haughty. She didn't bother to stand up. It wouldn't be necessary yet.

"I would be careful to not talk about things you don't understand little one," Celia growled in warning.

But Aislinn had been planning for this and wasn't about to not use the material she had been preparing. "So I heard that you've turned him down three times now. That's either cruel or stupid. I mean I guess I kinda pity you. Do you actually prefer the idea of being alpha over mating with someone who you were meant to be with?"

"You ignorant galla. You have no idea what you're talking about," she spat vehemently.

"I know that Mack believes you're his mate. And if he's feeling it for you than you should be most definitely feeling it for him too. I think that the reason you're so pissy is because you want something you can't have and at the same time you need something you won't accept." Aislinn flashed a superior smile at Celia. The people in the room who were listening to the conversation were starting to look frightened. Everyone thought exactly what Aislinn was saying but no one had the courage to say it to Celia's face.

In a shadowy corner of the room Mack stood watching and listening. He decided that he very much liked Aislinn and that she made an excellent match for Cullen. Now if only some of her common sense would rub off on Celia. Or at least shock her into reality.

Celia was struck dumb by Aislinn's gall. The only woman in this pack able, physically, to stand up to Celia was Sarah, and with good reason. No one was dense enough to talk to her this way. "You're not one of us. You have no rank to speak of. You have no right to speak to me this way," Celia growled menacingly.

"We haven't established that yet." Aislinn stood up at that point. "I should probably tell you that I had a dream last night. You lose this fight." Aislinn had been doing a lot of dreaming lately. For the first time in years she wasn't afraid to sleep, as long as Cullen was there. She didn't really know why but Rafe didn't seem to be able to get into her head when she was with Cullen. There was something about being with him that made her feel stronger, more confident in herself. She didn't know if Rafe's inability to bother her was because of Cullen or the way Cullen made her feel. Either way she was more rested than she had been in a long time. Ŵŵŵ.Novellworm.có(m)

Doubt flashed in Celia's eyes. Everyone in the pack had heard about what Aislinn was capable of. Celia considered that she may be bluffing to put her off guard. Then again if she wasn't and Celia started a fight and lost then she'd look like a fool. Celia hesitated. It was just long enough for Cullen and Keith to enter the room.

Cullen and Keith stopped when they saw the women standing toe to toe. Cullen growled a warning at Celia that Aislinn stopped with a pleading look. Keith started laughing again and Celia stormed out of the room. Mack then appeared from a corner to go after her. He nodded at Aislinn as he left.

"I suppose it's good that you interrupted," Aislinn said as she walked over to Cullen. "If Grandma came here and found me bruised there might be trouble."

"Then you two need to lay off the rough sex? That really is a shame," Keith chided. ŴŴŵ.nOvErlW0(r)(m).Com

Aislinn was getting used to his running commentary. Cullen ignored it so she didn't see why she should let it bother her. She slid her arms around Cullen's waist and nuzzled her face into his chest. Cullen responded by wrapping her in his arms and placing an affectionate kiss on top of her head. After everything Rissa had said about Cullen not touching women affectionately in public, every time he was like this with her she felt a little stronger in their relationship.

"Eww," Keith mocked. "Get a room."

"Don't tempt me," Cullen said. Then he looked at Aislinn with a wicked grin and raised his eyebrows.

"You serious?" She asked incredulously. Things had been getting rather intense between them. He didn't seem able to stop touching her. Not that Aislinn minded. But Rissa had said behavior like that was how couples got just before mating. Aislinn didn't know what she thought about that. Especially after learning how it was done. Besides, Cullen hadn't said a word about mating. Everyone else did.

They joked and suggested and poked fun, when they knew Aislinn was in hearing distance. But Cullen never said anything about it. After everything Aislinn had been told about his habits with women she still wasn't certain what he was doing with her. He was showing her a great deal more attention than anyone else he had been with in the past. But he hadn't actually defined the situation and she was scared to make him. As long as it was uncertain she could still hope.

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Cullen looked seriously hurt by her response. "If you're not interested then maybe an early dinner instead?" He was wondering if his wolf was making a mistake. She was always pulling back from him just enough to make him nervous. He wanted her so badly. But she seemed reluctant.

He wasn't used to chasing women as Keith had put it. He kept trying to come up with a magic thing to say that he knew she wouldn't be able to turn down. He didn't think he'd be able to handle it if he suggested mating and she told him that she'd prefer to just be friendly. At the very same time he knew that if friendly was all she wanted he'd take it for as long as she was willing to give it. Life would be much easier if human over thinking didn't complicate wolvern instinct, he thought.