

Restless Wolf

Almost four years Later

Alpha Lucas Lyons was tired of being alone to run his pack. I longed for my mate and Luna. My last friend left without a mate was my Beta, Dylan Frost. He was twenty-four years old. My friend Alpha Eric Connors had been my oldest friend without a mate, and he'd found his six months ago. Now, Eric had a beautiful family.

Eric finding his mate at thirty-two years old gave me hope that even though I was twenty-six, my mate was still out there. I was so lost in my thoughts I didn't hear my Beta enter the room. Dylan cleared his throat. I offered, "Hi, Dylan." Dylan nodded, "Lucas, Red Run's school burned down. They don't have time to rebuild in time for the school year. Don't worry. The beta Blood activated and we found a solution for the kiddos. Half of the kids will be coming to our territory to go to school here." He handed me the list.

I glanced at it, "Most of them appear to be werewolves from our allies pack." Dylan nodded, "The pack will need to know there are a few that aren't werewolves on the list. They can't be as open as they are used to in school with their natures now. I don't know how they even got so lucky to go to school with no humans. I think it's us, Lucas. We brought in a pup baby boom when we took over, and they reap the benefits. Now, they will have to do what we did in high school. I feel vindicated. They have it so easy and they don't even know." I laughed, "Call a pack meeting. I'll make the announcement." Dylan snorted, "I did that before I came in here. You'd be lost without me." He was an excellent Beta. He was a big kid, and his humor came in handy often.

Dylan passed by Christy on his way out. He rolled his eyes and shut the door. I sighed. Dylan hated Christy. She was my friend with benefits. For some reason, my Beta couldn't stand her. He was now convinced she enchanted me, since it had been proven Claudia Harden had enchanted Eric. Dylan kept threatening to call Eric's mate to see if Christy had enchanted me too. I shook those thoughts off.

I smiled, "Christy, this is a pleasant surprise." She smiled, "I live in your pack and seeing me is a pleasant surprise, Lucas?" She leaned down to give me a kiss. My wolf, Dominic, grumbled, "Can't we kick her to the curb? I don't like her." I sighed linking him, "Dominic, she's a pack member." He growled, "We don't have to fuck her because she's a pack member." I inwardly groaned.

I asked Christy, "What can I do for you? I've got a pack meeting to get to." She was surprised by my abruptness. She stumbled, "Oh well, I thought maybe we could mess around tonight." I wouldn't have minded but my wolf was being a pest.

I declined, "Not tonight, sorry Christy." She smiled sadly, "I understand. Things have been tense lately. I still can't believe Claudia turned out to be such a bitch. We used to have a lot of fun; you, me, Eric, and Claudia." I nodded, "We did. Maybe we will be able to go on double dates with Eric and Haley now." Christy sighed, "Sure, it's not the same though. I hear she's only nineteen." I laughed, "She's wise beyond her years. She will be twenty soon anyway. Eric is throwing her a surprise birthday party because she's never had one."

Christy raised an eyebrow, asking, "So, you really do like Eric's mate?" I laughed, "I've told everyone I like her." Christy nodded, "Yes, but I know how much you and Eric enjoyed an occasional roll in the sheets. Probably like no one else understands it. Now, that won't happen." I nodded, "I have nothing but respect for Eric, you know that. Our relationship just won't have that physical aspect anymore, and that's fine. It was more about comforting each other being the oldest Alpha's without mates. I'm happy for both of them. Just as he will be happy for me when I find my mate."

Christy nodded then offered, "You know, I would be your Luna if you needed me to." I sighed, "You know that, my Luna will be my mate." She sighed, "I know that's what you want. I'm just saying if you don't find her, I'd help you. You can have a chosen Luna." I nodded.

Dominic growled in my head. He snarled, "Friends with benefits my ass! She's using us! She just wants to be the Luna." I growled back, "She likes us. She always has." Dominic was still pissed, "She will be mean to our mate when we meet her." I growled, "No, she won't. She will be happy for us." Dominic snorted, "Mark my words, she will be a bitch. Be ready when I say I told you so. She better not make mate run away from us or I WILL kill her." I rolled my eyes at my obstinate wolf.

My chest tightened at the thought of my mate running away from me. I closed my link with Dominic. I told Christy, "I appreciate the sentiment, but you know the Luna position will always be for my mate. Let's get to the pack meeting." She nodded sadly. We walked out to the pack gathered on the lawn. I left Christy in the crowd.

I stepped up to the platform. I spoke, "Now, I'm sure rumors have been running rampant today about school this year. Red Run's high school burning down means their students will be split up among the closest high schools. Most students coming here to our district are from our ally, Red Run's, pack; however, there are names we don't recognize. Beta Dylan spoke with Beta McAlister. We do have some humans coming with our fellow wolves." I heard groans. I continued, "I know that means you can't openly talk about werewolf activities like you're used to. I do NOT want to hear about any bullying of those humans. I want you to act like the young men and women you are. Do you understand?" They all nodded. I added, "Punishments for any calls I get about any disturbances with our allied

pack, or humans will be dealt with harshly. You are dismissed.” They all dispersed quickly.

I smiled listening to their small talk. Surprisingly, they were mostly excited about the neighboring pack coming in. Especially the pack members about to turn eighteen. Their chances of finding their mate easily just increased. I couldn't help but feel a twinge of jealousy. I'd been waiting for my mate for so long.

Dylan came up beside me. He sighed, “Those jerks have no idea how lucky they will be when they find their mate at eighteen. If my brother just finds his, I will be so happy for him. Then I SHALL find some way to get him. Eric's mate is a fairy. Fairies like pranks, ergo... I'll collude with her for an epic prank.” I nodded, “Not all of them will find their mates.” He nodded, “Ugh. I'm becoming bitter. It's not good for everyone to have bitter Dylan running around. I should be used to it. We've seen it time and time again. I keep waiting for Haley to come to her senses and choose me over Eric.” I laughed, “Eric would actually kill you. You two joke, but that would do you in, Dylan. I won't be able to stop him, he's fiercely protective of her.”

Dylan laughed, “As he should be. She's a gem. The Beta's love her. She's hilarious. I can't believe Eric doesn't have people catering to her every need.” I laughed again, “Oh believe me, he caters to her needs just fine. They just had a pack baby boom because of how satisfactorily he caters to her needs.” Dylan laughed, “That's actually pretty funny. Seventy-five pups. Maybe we should have them go for a romp in our forest.” I snorted, “I'll be sure to suggest it, and let them know it was your idea.” Dylan smiled, “Hey anything that gets her in our territory. He's a lucky prick.” Lucas smiled, “He waited for her for fourteen years. I'm happy for him. It really does give me hope that my mate is coming, I was starting to think I'd never find her. I honestly thought that Eric had the right idea taking a non-werewolf bride for pups.”

Dylan snorted, “He waited for fourteen years for perfection. Let's also pretend we didn't know he liked her the WHOLE time. He did. We know he did. He was always twitterpated with news about the fairy princess. I had a bet going she was his. I won in case you were curious. Then he just happens to organize a treaty for his bride who turns out to be his mate. The kicker is not only the princess of the fairy's but the Hackura. Not even I saw that twist coming. PRICK! Just admit it, he sucks. Just a little bit. Come on, for me just this once.” I smiled, “I really can't feel anything but happiness for him. He's a good man, and he loves her.” Dylan laughed, “What's not to love? Hell, I love her!” I groaned, “You really need to cut that out.”

A voice came from behind us, “You do. My brother is not rational about my sister in law.” I turned and smiled greeting, “Jackson, what brings you here?” Jackson glanced at Dylan, “Eric wanted me to remind you about Haley's party in two

weeks. I was in the neighborhood and heard about Red Run's school randomly catching fire and burning down. I know the principal at your school is a werewolf, if they need more buses to get kids here; or if they need another school to bus kids to ours is open." I nodded, "I will pass along the word. Thank you, Jackson. We are looking forward to Haley's party."

Jackson looked at Dylan then back to me. He asked, "We?" I smiled, "Dylan's coming with me." Jackson groaned, "Just be careful. Ever since his confrontation with the Hackura men who tried to take Haley; Eric is on edge." Dylan and I both gaped at him. Dylan snorted, "I am texting Beta Caleb immediately asking where my memo on that is. I can't believe I don't know what he's talking about." I asked, "Hackura confrontation?" Jackson laughed, "Yes, it ended with a glorious Haley rant about what the fuck the friend zone is. She doesn't think she friend zoned anyone because they were not friends."

Dylan roared with laughter then asked, "Is it any wonder I love her? She's a gem and must be protected at all costs." Jackson grabbed Dylan by his shirt, "Don't make this a problem, Dylan. I like you; but no one will take Haley from my brother. You like to joke around, and we enjoy it too. Just not with this. Not right now. It's too soon. I know you time your jokes, now isn't the time." Dylan nodded, "It's just in good fun. I won't take her from him. Simmer down. I merely worship the ground she walks on." Jackson let him go. Dylan linked me, "Alpha super sensitive is making the mood go down. Dylan is out!" He took off running.

I offered, "He really doesn't mean anything by it, Jackson." Jackson looked at me, "I know he doesn't. I know how much Dylan wants his mate. Eric's just not in a joking mood about Haley right now." I winced, "She won't leave Eric, and we both know it." Jackson nodded, "I know she won't, but my brother might just hurt Dylan if he keeps this up. Dylan needs to find his mate so we can all chill out. I will not see my brother in the pain he was when Haley was taken from him ever again. I will kill anyone I see as a threat to my older brother's happiness. As much as they mess with each other, I know Dylan feels the same way. He avoided Eric like the plague when Haley was taken for a reason."

I nodded, "I understand. I am protective of Eric's happiness too. Dylan is just a big kid at heart, he's messing around." Jackson nodded. He looked behind us then changed the subject, "You really need to kick Christy to the curb. She's becoming Claudia levels of obsessed with you." I looked over and saw her staring at us. She looked away as soon as she noticed us.

I asked, "You too, huh?" Jackson laughed, "Should I have my brother explain? You'd listen to him." I smiled, "He wouldn't. He likes Christy." Jackson laughed, "Then my lovely sister in law needs to come to your rescue. She likes you. I think she feels very protective of you, as does my brother. If Haley came here and disliked Christy, Eric would side with her. He won't make the same mistake he did

with Claudia.” I groaned, “Well, Haley will probably never meet her. It’s not a serious thing with us, you know that.” Jackson smiled, “To you it’s not serious. I don’t think that’s true on her part” I nodded, “That’s... well true.” Jackson smiled, “Your mate is coming Lucas, just as Eric’s came.” Jackson left our lands leaving me with those words.

Dominic spoke to me, “Mate is near. I feel it.” I perked up, He added, “I just feel we are going to meet her soon. If I knew where she was, I’d take you to her. I’ve thought I’ve felt her near a few times, but I thought it was wishful thinking.” I asked, “How long, Dominic?” Dominic admitted, “A year.” A YEAR?! I sighed and went back to go do my paperwork. Could my mate have been this close this long?

The next few days passed by and soon the kids were in school. One of our warriors found his mate the first day of school from Red Run’s group. I walked into the pack house to greet her. When I walked in, I immediately smelled Jasmine. I asked Dylan, “Where is that amazing scent coming from?” Dylan frowned, “We need to get you into the pack doctor. Your super sniffer is on the fritz. I do not smell anything amazing. Don’t worry. I’m all over this.” I laughed and followed the scent.

I found some of the pack high school seniors in the kitchen and frowned. They all turned and greeted me happily, “Hi, Alpha!” One quickly asked, “What’s wrong?” I sighed, “I just smelled some jasmine and followed it here, but it’s faded.” They looked at each other, Chelsea Hanes said, “One of the non-werewolf transfers was here about an hour ago. She smells like jasmine” I asked, “Why was she here?”

Chelsea answered, “Oh, she was here because she’s my lab partner. We are supposed to be working closely together all year. She was cagey about her place, but if you want, I’ll meet with her there instead.” I shook my head. We’d had humans in here before. I told her, “No, it’s fine you can meet here.” Then I grew concerned.

I questioned, “She was cagey about where she lives? Do we need to look into that? My youth center has beds for those who need it. I wouldn’t want anyone to stay in a bad situation.” Chelsea sighed, “She was really nice, but she didn’t talk about it. I didn’t push, I’ll try to ask her. She’s sitting with us tomorrow at lunch. We will let you know if we think she’s in trouble.” I nodded and left the pack house with Dylan on my heels.

Dylan said, “The pack understands why wayward teens are your passion.” I winced. My sister ran away when she was sixteen. We caught up to many places where she had been staying, but we’d always just missed her. It broke my heart she was living that way. Most of the places we almost caught her at were run down. Or

she was outside in the wild. I put out the word that my sister would never be a rogue, that she was a part of my pack always.

I admitted, "I miss her so much, Dylan. I just hope that help is being given to her, like I help the teens I see in need." Dylan sighed, "You should ask Mr. gets everything he wants Alpha Prick to help look for her again. With Haley being so powerful, maybe they could find her." I whispered, "I just wish I knew what she was running from." Dylan sighed, "I know man, but maybe we can get closer to her with Haley on the case." I nodded, "I'll speak to Eric about it at Haley's party." Dylan gave me a look, "Ask him now. Lacy is on your mind for a reason." Dylan left me alone to consider his advice.

I quickly decided he was right and dialed Eric's number. Eric answered, "Hello, Lucas." I greeted, "Hello, Eric." Neither of us spoke for several moments. Eric's concern came through in his tone when he asked, "What's wrong?" I sighed, "Nothing I just heard about one of the new girls at school today. It brought up my feelings about Lacy." Eric asked, "Is the girl having trouble?" I replied, "I don't know. She was cagey about her home life. That's not why I called though."

Eric surmised, "You want Black Mountain to renew our search for Lacy. Not unlike you, I never stopped looking. The last lead I had was before Haley came into my life. I tracked Lacy down to a pack in California. I don't know how she knows when we are coming. I didn't even tell you we'd caught onto her. She fled before we got there. She's not a rogue though. She never joins packs, but she stays with them. She just keeps leaving them when we find her."

I hit the table yelling, "WHY? Dammit! Why is she running from me? From my parents!" Eric sighed, "I don't know, Lucas. When we find her, because we will find her, we will ask her and get some answers." I put my head into my hands. I asked, "Does Haley have any way of finding her? Can she pop to her?" Eric said, "I don't know. I can ask her; I can't believe I haven't thought of that. Shit... She's going to hit us both for not telling her about this." I laughed, "You guys have had a lot going on." Eric snorted, "Like that will matter to her. She's on a mission to save the damn world. Be prepared for her to pop us to you and slap you or pull fairy hijinks." I thanked him, "Thank you for asking her Eric." Eric said, "I should've thought of it sooner. We will talk soon." I hung up and desperately tried not to hope that Haley could find Lacy.

About an hour later, I looked up when I heard a pop. I stared astonished at Haley Connors. She looked pissed. My phone rang. I answered, "Hello." Eric's voice came through in a growl, "I believe my mate is with you." Haley glared at the phone. She retorted, "You bet your ass I am, Eric Connors. I will deal with you in a minute." Eric growled, "I told you not to pop away from me." Haley actually smiled but her tone stayed even, "You and my lion have explaining to do. It's his turn." She leaned over and hung up the phone.

My jaw dropped. I told her, "He's going to know you hung up not me." Haley smiled, "That he will. Let me tell you my lion, I bet my punishment is sexy and really fun. Don't you dare tell him that either, I find his punishments to be fun and involve fucking. That's not the point. You are in trouble! Tell about your sister."

I smiled asking, "You like it when Eric punishes you?" Haley's smile broadened, "Yes, I really do. Now tell me about Lacy." I smiled sadly, "She's my baby sister. She's eighteen now. She ran away when she was sixteen. All she left was a note saying goodbye. We've been trying to track her down, but she evades us at every turn. Somehow, she's getting wind that we are coming." Haley nodded, "I tried to pop to her and was thrown back. So, she has magical help." I was stunned, "Are you serious?" Haley frowned, "I can't lie, so yes. It could be fairy help, which would mean I could get around that shit. With Aiden's help. Then I'd just need some supplies for the charm. If it's witch bitches... I'll kick their asses. I'm going to think about it. I have an idea, but I'd have to tweak the charm. I need to speak to Aiden to see if he thinks it would work. Are there any other damn secrets you are hiding from me, my lion?"

I laughed, "Nope." Dylan burst into the room and smiled broadly, "I KNEW I smelled you. Et tu Brute? No link Alpha man? For shame!" Haley laughed, "Good to see you, my friend Dylan." He took off his hoodie and threw it to her, I groaned, "Eric will kill you." Haley laughed, "No he won't. Why would he do that?" Dylan smiled, "Put the hoodie on." Haley shrugged and put his hoodie on. She asked, "Why did I put your hoodie on?" Dylan's smile deepened, "Because when you pop home you will smell like me. It's so rare one gets to mess with the Great Alpha Eric Connors. We plebeians have to take our shots in when they come to us." Haley laughed.

Dylan said, "I would have hugged you, but I know how you feel about that." Haley smiled, "I'm working on it. I'll let you know when we've reached hug status." I grinned broadly now and mocked my Beta, "She's hugged me before." Haley slapped my arm, "You hush! You are my lion. Dylan knows that. Have I worn this long enough?" I laughed informing her, "The second it touched your skin you'd worn it long enough. You are a brave little fairy." She winked, "Half Fairy, half Hackura. Fairies are mischievous, my lion. We thrive on pranks and goading people. Plus messing with Eric's possessiveness is fun. Besides, I told you at the summit with the Claudia situation it was time to fight fire with fire. I don't have an ex to throw in his face, so smelling like Dylan seems like a very minuscule way to begin my fire." Dylan roared with laughter. I grimaced.

I told her, "I'm not sure Eric will see it that way. I heard you had some Hackura men troubles." Haley's face darkened, "I did NOT! They had brain problems or some shit... I don't know... they never said we were friends, and they certainly never said they liked me. I already told Miley, who agreed by the way, that had they asked me on a date before I met Eric I would've gone. Nothing would've

happened, but they never even asked. Then those asshats say I friend zoned them. WE WEREN'T EVEN FUCKING FRIENDS!" Dylan was admirably holding back his laugh, whereas I was not. She glared at me.

Dylan said, "For the record Haley Connors, I am your ever faithful servant or friend whichever you wish to see it as." Haley told him, "Friends it is." She took off his hoodie and gave it to him. I sighed, "Well, I'm going to plan Dylan's funeral." Haley frowned, "I won't let Eric kill my friend." I smiled, "You not wanting Eric to kill him, will make him want to kill him more." Dylan smiled, "It will also mean he won't kill me. He'd do anything for her. Plus, he does not actually want to kill me. We are friends. We mess with each other. I'm the only one brave enough to get him. He appreciates me... Deep, deep down in his little pinky toe." Haley smiled, "Eric would do anything for me, wouldn't he?" I nodded and she popped away.

I rolled my eyes at Dylan "We are going to hear his growl from here. You're playing a dangerous game." Dylan laughed, "Oh, it's all in good fun. They wouldn't leave you in a Beta lurch. My brother hasn't graduated. His eye is on the lead warrior title, and he shall get it. He trains oh so hard. Besides, Alpha Eric loves you. You guys were bed buddies." I blanched, "Don't say it like that." Dylan laughed, "You've shared girls at the same time and tumbled in the sheets. What would you call it?" I sighed, "We are friends with a deep connection and respect for each other. Who now no longer will have an intimate component because he found Haley." Dylan smiled, "And what a find it was."

We both went to bed. My phone rang at four in the morning. I groaned. Christy spoke beside me, "Make that stop ringing, Lucas." I kissed her shoulder. Dominic growled, "We didn't go to bed with her. What is she doing in here?" I stumbled out of bed. I told him, "I'm not even awake right now give me a second." I walked out onto my deck reading who was calling. I snorted greeting "Good morning, Eric." Eric growled, "Tell Dylan that Haley is FUCKING MINE!" I snorted, "He knows. It was a joke." Eric replied, "I'm laughing. So damn hard. Can't you tell?" I sighed, "I was in the room. He just gave her his hoodie." Eric growled, "Unless your office is now in the Artic fucking ocean why the FUCK would she need a hoodie?"

I asked, "Did she not explain it to you?" Eric was quiet for several moments. He told me, "She just went to sleep." I roared with laughter, "You fucked her all night long? You guys have pups, Eric. She needs more sleep." Eric growled, "No, she doesn't. It's her Hackura and fairy sides combined. That's not the point! You know what? When you meet your mate, I am going to have so much fun giving you shit. Tell Dylan if he values his life to stop this." I sighed, "Eric, they were messing with you. Apparently, they are now friends." He growled, "They are not fucking friends."

I bit the inside of my cheek to keep from laughing. I told him, "Haley called Dylan her friend last night." Eric yelled, "MOTHER FUCKER! FINE! I swear he lives to annoy me." I laughed, "It does make him happy." He growled, "Goodbye, Lucas." I laughed for several minutes when I hung up the phone. I probably shouldn't give Eric such a hard time, but he never gave a shit about any of the girls he was with. He cared about Claudia, but he had no problem sharing her. Or being with me and Christy while he was with her. Now, he was ready to punch Dylan because Haley wore his freaking hoodie for a couple of minutes.

I sighed and looked at Christy in my bed. I needed to lay down ground rules. I didn't tell her to come up here. Our relationship wasn't going anywhere, but it was familiar and comfortable. Dominic spoke, "You do need to stop. Let's go for a run."

I jumped down from the balcony and shifted. My wolf was large and black. All Alpha wolves were. I ran for twenty miles before Dominic settled down. I came back to the house and grabbed some clothes before walking inside. I asked, "What's up with you Dominic? Why are you so amped up?" He answered, "I don't know. I just feel like something is going to happen." I sighed, "Something good or bad?" Dominic answered, "I'm pretty sure it's good."

I groaned and walked into my office. Dylan was waiting. I told him, "Eric called very early this morning. He's not happy with you." Dylan grinned broadly, "Ah, but now I'm Haley's friend. He won't hurt me." I nodded, "He might hurt you." He smiled, "We have our fun. You know that. It's so rare I get such good material to annoy him with." I nodded, "I know. Anyway, what do we have today?" Dylan smiled, "You're speaking at the high school. To Mr. Blaze's class, all day about your youth center." I groaned, "Why did I agree to that?" Dylan smiled, "So that any teens who are struggling know they have a place to go because you care. That's what we call you, Alpha Care about Teens... That's a lie. We do not call you that." I rolled my eyes, "I do care. Let's head out."

We stopped at a diner near the school. I smelled the scent of jasmine again. I ran inside, but the smell disappeared. Dominic was going crazy in my head. I was disappointed. Dylan gave me a weird look when he came inside. My assistant at my youth center, Ruth, joined us. She smiled, "Good morning Alpha Lucas and Beta Dylan. What's wrong Alpha?" I sighed, "I keep smelling this scent, but it disappears as I get closer." The waitress came over to take our order.

Ruth smiled broadly then asked the woman, "Was there a waitress that clocked out early?" The waitress answered, "Yeah, she had to get to school. She works early and late shifts, picks up what she can. She's a sweet girl. The big guy feels for her." She said pointing at Al the owner, who was in my pack. I knew this woman. It was his mate, Liz. She was human. I hadn't met her officially, but I knew of her.

I frowned asking, "Why does he feel for her?" Liz shrugged, "She clearly needs the money, so he made up a shift that lets her come in the mornings for a few hours. She's actually a transfer from the school that burned down. We all breathed a sigh of relief when it happened to be honest. She's been working here for a year and used to ride her bike here from her old school."

My jaw dropped. I yelled, "That's twenty miles away!" She nodded, "I know. Like I said she clearly needs the money." Ruth asked, "What's her name?" Liz frowned, "Why are you interested in her?" I interjected, "I run the youth center in town. I just want to make sure that if she needs our help, she knows it's an option." Liz considered then offered, "Her name is Emmaline Richards. She's a really good kid." We nodded. Dominic was purring her name in my head, dumb wolf.

Dylan said, "Well now we know her name which means we can find her today. Or when she comes to her next whatever it is that her and Chelsea are doing, we can talk to her." Ruth smiled at me biting her lip. I asked, "What?" She just shrugged, "Oh, nothing." I raised an eyebrow as did Dylan.

We moved on and talked as we ate our breakfast. We all walked over to the school together. We got to Mr. Blaze's class early. He smiled when he saw us, "Ah, you're just in time Alpha. We have about twenty minutes until my home room starts. This is my accelerated class; they are my brightest students of the day." I nodded, "It seems we are only a few days into school, and you're already attached." He smiled, "There are some special ones. One in particular, sweet girl. She's new." Dylan laughed, "Let me guess, her name is Emmaline." Mr. Blaze was taken aback.

Dominic was purring again. I asked him, "What is your deal? Stop purring!" He closed our link. I assumed it was to keep purring. Mr. Blaze asked us, "Have you met her?" I answered, "No, but her name keeps coming up. We just ate across the street where she works." He frowned asking, "She works at the diner?" I nodded, "We want to talk to her. We've heard some things about her that make me think the youth center could really help her." He considered, "I don't know much about her, but I do know that her parents didn't show up for meet the teacher." I frowned.

Dominic growled in my head. I growled back at him, "WILL YOU STOP IT! What is the matter with you Dominic?" He grumbled but didn't answer me. My head was starting to pound from his growling and purring. I sighed, "Shit." Ruth asked, "What's wrong?" I lied, "I didn't get a coffee to go." She smiled, "I'll go grab some from the teachers' lounge. I have to take a call during this class anyway. Unfortunately." Both Dylan and I frowned. I asked, "Why is that unfortunate?" Ruth smiled, "I have a theory." She didn't continue that thought.

I asked, "What would that theory be?" Ruth teased, "Women have to keep some cards close to their chest, Alpha. I told our Beta what I think, and he thinks I'm

wrong. Or he's just saying that I'm pretty sure it's the later. Either way I'll be collecting fifty dollars from him when I come back from my call for the second period. I just know it." I looked at Dylan who rolled his eyes. He retorted "You're giving me the fifty, Ruthie. Why ever would I make my day interesting by placing a losing a bet." She smiled, "We all know you would. I'm actually very sad that I must make this call." She left to go get coffee.

Students began to file into the class. I linked Mr. Blaze "Which one is Emmaline?" He turned and frowned, "She's not here yet. She's been a few minutes late every day. Now that I know she works across the street I'm guessing she takes a quick shower here." My frown deepened. I needed to talk to this girl.

The bell rang and I started giving my speech about the youth center when the door opened. The smell of jasmine hit me like a freight train. I turned and saw the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. She was tall, about five foot eleven inches, with chestnut brown hair. She had the most perfect breasts I had ever seen. She was a little underweight, but she was perfect.

Dominic screamed the second we locked eyes, "MATE! MATE! MATE!" She was standing there staring at me with her wide blue eyes holding a coffee. I growled, "MINE!" Everyone in the class gasped. Dylan said under his breath. "Well, this just got seriously interesting."

Whispers

Emmaline Richards looked at her I.D. That was my name now. I was no longer Evelyn or Evie. I chose Emmaline because it reminded me of my birth name. I picked Richards because it means brave. Which I was determined to be. I was mulling over the new information I'd just gotten.

The school I'd been attending for the last year had burned down. They would be busing groups of students to new schools. My group was going to be at Blue Moon high school. The names of schools in this state were weird. I assumed it was based on the pack names. Most of the people I attend school with are werewolves. They just didn't know that I knew that. I had met a few werewolves that had come to David for help, so I knew what kind of aura werewolves projected.

I think they assumed I was human. Or they thought I didn't know I was a supernatural, which was fine by me. They left me alone, and I left them alone. Which worked out really well during the way the werewolves just had. Peter Kyle and Drake McAlister watched me in school, but I was certain they didn't know I was fairy for sure or not. I didn't even really know what I could do as a part fairy other than turn stones into water. Sometimes, if I touched someone, I could see a flash of their memories. I couldn't do it consistently though.

I sighed and sat down in the tent that I had made my home for the last year. No one wanted to rent an apartment, or even room, to a kid with no credit history emancipated or not. I was almost seventeen now, though. I'd been saving everything I could. I had hope that this place near the diner I worked at would take pity on me. I had enough for the first five months' rent.

I looked at the card that was my proof I was emancipated. Craig had given me an official, laminated card that did not state my old name, and my parents weren't listed on it either. I snorted. I guess I should say parent, since I didn't know who my biological father was. The one who raised me wanted me apparently wanted me dead.

I had only been running for six months when I discovered my Uncle and Craig were right about that. I had passed by a coven talking about how scary David was. They mentioned he put a bounty out on his own daughter. I knew they meant me. David would never let it get out I wasn't his daughter. He was too proud. After overhearing them, I had run from the place I had called home for six months. I had to keep shuffling between places after that. I never felt safe. Then I finally find a place I feel safe, and then the freaking school burned down. Most of the humans I was friends with were going to a different school than me. All because I picked a last name in the later part of the alphabet. The ironic thing is with my birth surname; I'd have been with all my friends.

Don't get me wrong. It's not that the werewolves weren't nice here, they were. They just usually stuck to their own kind. I sighed. I was excited that I wouldn't have to bike to the diner anymore for work then haul ass back to school. I smiled thinking of my job. Al, the owner, really worked with me and wanted to help me out. He was one of the people I'd gotten a flash of his memories. I reminded him of his sister who had moved away because she found her mate. I did look similar to her, but she was shorter than me. She also got regular meals so she looked like she had some weight on her than I do.

I shook those thoughts off. Thinking of food made me hungry. I hoped at this new school the swim coach would let me swim in the pool after hours. I couldn't swim on the team because that would be too obvious. David could easily find me if I started placing in competitions. The swim coach at the school that had burned down had let me practice with the team. She begged me to join, but I said I couldn't. I hated it, but that's what my life was. At least practicing with them was fun. I know the werewolves on the team didn't understand how I could beat them.

To be honest, I didn't either. I hadn't been able to learn much about fairies. They were very secretive, and I didn't have a fairy contact like my mom and uncle. I wondered if it was my dad who they spoke to or another fairy relative of mine. I liked to think that fairy's loved water just like I did. I was going to have to get the layout of the new school and figure out if any teams practiced in the morning so I could take my shower there.

I had it down to a science at my old school. The administration and teachers noticed, but they mostly thought I showered because I biked to work and back in the mornings. In reality, it was because I lived in a tent with no access to indoor plumbing.

I looked up at the sky. I missed my brothers and my sister. I always sent them a letter on their birthdays with no return address. If I could afford it, I'd sent a small gift too. Those days sucked because I would travel outside the state I was living in. I always sent them from different areas just in case David had found out. It was worth it though. Just to feel somewhat close to my siblings on their birthdays. I sent them to the apartment Dusty had lived in when I was still at home. I hoped he hadn't moved. I often wondered if they missed me like I missed them.

I always tried to see the good in things like the Princess Haley did in the stories my mom told me about fairies. I wanted to emulate her as much as I could. Like the fact that I have probably seen a lot more of the states in than most kids my age. I also knew I could survive on my own.

My lowest moment of realizing how alone I was happened four months after I left. I tried to use the burner phone to call my aunt and uncle to let them know I was safe, at least I had thought I was at the time, but the call couldn't be completed. I

hoped it wasn't because they didn't want me to call them. My uncle did give me the phone after all. When I realized it didn't work, I threw it away.

I wished the bus schedule for getting us to school started earlier because I had an early shift at the diner. I had my trusty alarm clock with batteries so I could get places on time. The diner opened bright and early at four in the morning because they got a lot of trucker traffic. Al kept a close eye on me on the mornings I worked. Those guys were handsy. Our uniforms were the short little pink dress with an apron that most diners have. Al was a good guy, though. He'd step in and put people in line if necessary.

I closed my eyes to get some sleep. My alarm went off at two in the morning. I groaned, knowing I needed to get moving. I needed enough money for school supplies without dipping into my savings. I threw on my uniform and grabbed my bike. I enjoyed my little routine, as crazy as it was. It kept my legs in great shape too. I was going to have to move my living space closer to the diner and school with the change though. I'd scope out the woods in that area after school today. I packed up my tent, and all of my things, into my duffle bag. I put them on my back and began my journey to the diner. I enjoyed my morning ride; it was really quiet most days.

Some days I saw some wolves, but I knew they were from the pack around here. I didn't bother them, so they didn't bother me. I made it to work at three forty-five. I stowed my stuff in the little back room that Al let us all keep our stuff in. I sprayed myself with some perfume, slapped some deodorant on and went out to help with the prep for the morning rush.

The girls and Al smiled at me as I filled up the rest of the saltshakers that needed it. Right when we opened our first group of truckers came in. I sighed when I saw who it was. Every week this group came in and they always slapped my ass, but they were good tippers. I walked over, offering a smile, "Good morning, Ralph, Jerry, and Simon. Would you all like your usual this morning?" They always ordered eggs, bacon, and coffee. Sometimes Ralph would order pancakes, but not often.

Ralph leered, "Unless you're serving up yourself on the side with sugar, you know that's what we want." I hit him upside his head with my pencil. I admonished him, "Now, you know that I don't like that kind of talk, Ralph." Ralph laughed, "And you know I like it when you get rough with me. One of these days, you'll realize I'm a prize. I'll whisk you away from here."

Al came up behind me, "Is there a problem over here?" I turned forcing a smile, "No problem, Al." I turned back to the group, "I'll get your order in guys. It should be up shortly. I walked over and gave Fred, the cook, their ticket. He glared at the table, "You say the word, and I'll spit in all their food." I laughed, "They aren't

worth it.” Fred smiled, “I haven’t met anyone worthy of you yet, Emmaline. I heard you’ll be at the school across the street this year. That’s good.” I smiled, “It will mean I can stay longer in the mornings I work; so that’s good.”

He smiled, “Now if anyone gives you trouble, you come to me or Al. We will go to the Alph... I mean Mr. Lyons.” I smiled, knowing Fred was about to say their Alpha. I played dumb asking, “Who is Mr. Lyons?” For some reason saying his name gave me a little thrill. Fred told me, “He’s an important man in this town. In fact, he owns most of it.” I shrugged “I’ve never seen him in here before.” Fred admitted, “He stops by for lunch sometimes, but you are always in school.” I nodded and walked away.

I got through the rest of my shift on autopilot. I had no idea why I couldn’t get the thought of this man I’d never met out of my head. I shook myself. Hopefully, I never met him if his name alone could distract me like this. I waved to Al and Liz as I ducked out for school. I ran over to the front office. I wanted to get my schedule.

The secretary gave me a knowing look before I even spoke, “You are Emmaline Richards?” I nodded. She smiled, “Yes, I was wondering who our emancipated student was. Do you work at the diner?” I nodded, “Yes, I do.” She smiled, “Good for you getting a job before everyone comes for those.” I told her, “I’ve worked there for a little over a year now.” Her face showed shock, “But... that’s twenty miles from where you live.” I just nodded without explaining.

She recovered enough for me to ask, “Where’s the girls locker room? I’d like to change before class.” She stood, “I’ll show you where it is.” She led me through the halls. I wanted to groan when I realized that it was on the opposite side of the school from my first class. The secretary evaluated me, “You are in all accelerated classes. Your grades are impeccable and you have a job.” I nodded, “Yes ma’am.” She gave me a long look then said, “You’d better hurry. You’re going to be late for class. Here.” She handed me an excuse slip.

I stared at her surprised. She told me, “This town has a soft spot for hard working students like yourself.” My eyebrows furrowed, “Why?” She smiled sadly, “Because we hope that the kindness we show, is shown to one of our own until we get her back.” With that she left. I was frustrated with myself for not shaking her hand to see if I could get a flash of her memory. I wanted to hear more of the story.

I pushed that aside and took a quick shower. I sighed in relief when I discovered this school had shampoo, conditioner, and soap available in the stalls; just like my old school. I jumped out of the shower and threw on the only pair of jeans I owned with a hoodie.

I ran my hands over it. It was Dusty's old hoodie. I missed him so much. Thankfully, the day I left my mom had packed this before I left. Tears pricked my eyes. I shoved those thoughts aside. My mom chose David. I'd like to think it was to protect me, but the older I got the more I understood she should've taken me and ran. Instead, she sent me off alone. It took a lot of time for me to stop hating her. I was still angry with her for what she did though. I just didn't hate her anymore.

I still didn't think it was fair that she was the one who had an affair, but I was the one dealing with the consequences. I lost my whole family because of it. I walked into my class and handed my excuse slip to the teacher. He smiled, "Please stay for a moment after class, Miss Richards." I nodded and quickly took a seat. I smiled at the boy next to me. He'd been at my old school. We weren't friends, but I knew who he was. He was popular, and a werewolf. His name was Drake McAlister.

I was stunned when he spoke to me, "Hi, Emmaline." I smiled in surprise, "Hi, Drake. I didn't know you knew my name." He laughed silently, "Oh, I know your name. We all do." I frowned, but before I could ask why Mr. Blaze began our history lesson. This was going to be a fun class. I took notes on the syllabus that was on my desk. After class Drake said, "Catch you around, Emmaline." I nodded to him.

I walked up to Mr. Blaze's desk. I said, "Hi, Mr. Blaze. You wanted to speak to me?" He looked up and smiled, "Yes, I did. I didn't get to meet your parents last night at meet the teacher. I usually ask the parents a few questions, so I thought I'd ask you instead." I nodded. He smiled, "You're supposed to be a junior, but this is a senior level class. Are you going to be alright in here?" I nodded, "I'm on track to graduate this year, I have a 4.0 GPA and I was in accelerated classes last year."

Mr. Blaze smiled, "Yes, I have your transcripts. Have you thought about colleges?" I shook my head and looked down. I whispered, "I'm not sure college is in the cards for me." He frowned, "I'd be willing to help you look into it. I know the guidance counselor would as well. If it's a money issues, our school helps students look for scholarships. I think you should really consider it, Emmaline." I nodded. He continued, "One more question, then I'll let you go to your next class. How are you doing with your school being moved to this one after yours burned down?" I shrugged, "It's fine. I like it here so far." He nodded, "Alright, you can go to your next class."

I left, going on about my day. I noticed I had several of my old classmates in my classes. I started to suspect it was intentional. The school officials purposely put us together where they could. I walked into the cafeteria alone for lunch. Drake called me over to his table, "Hey, Emmaline! Over here." He beckoned me over with his hand too. I looked at him surprised but headed in his direction.

He told me, "Sit with us today." I nodded, "Ok... thanks." He smiled, "We gotta stick together in this new school. We are the Red Run group after all." I nodded, "Alright. You didn't talk to me at all last year though." Drake and the boys around him winced. Drake offered, "That was last year. We were jerks, and you were new. Now, we need to stick together." I rolled my eyes, "Sure." He smiled, "Anyway, I saw you in that little uniform this morning. How did you already get a job at that diner across the street?"

I laughed, "I've worked there for over a year now." His jaw dropped, "That's twenty miles away from where we live." Everyone was going to say that today I guess. I nodded, "I know, but I got a job at the place that would hire me when I moved here." He frowned. His friends looked at each other. It was awkward for a few minutes before they started talking about joining the football team. The school was having special tryouts for our school's athletes since we didn't know we were coming to this one when they had tryouts before school started.

The bell rang signaling lunch ended. I stood up telling them, "Thanks for letting me sit with you guys." Drake smiled, "You're welcome to sit with us anytime." I nodded, admitting "It's nice to know some people for once this year. I've switched schools a lot." Drake smiled and put his hand on my back, "We are all here for you if you need anything." I offered him a small smile before I left to go to my last few classes.

My last class of the day was the first class I didn't see anyone I recognized. I wanted to groan because it was my biology class. The person you sat next to was going to be our lab partner for the year, according to the white board anyway. A girl that had blonde hair and blue eyes smiled and waved me over. She asked, "Hey, you're new right? It's Emmaline, isn't it?" I just nodded and she pushed out the seat next to her.

She told me, "My friends are right behind us, but there's only three of us in this class. You seem pretty smart. I don't need one of the guys sitting next to me ruining my GPA. I've worked really hard for my grades." I smiled and sat down next to her. She stuck her hand out to shake mine, "I'm Chelsea Hanes. Behind us we have Valerie and Samantha." I shook Chelsea's hand.

Samantha immediately said, "I go by Sam. I heard you sat by Drake McAlister at lunch today. I didn't get to come to the cafeteria, I had an errand to run during lunch. I was out this morning too. Now, I'm catching a whiff of the most delicious smell my friends claim they don't smell." I nodded, "I did sit by him at lunch, he went to my old school." She asked, "Do you know Drake's friend, Peter?" I smiled teasingly, "Peter Kyle? Yes, I know who he is. Those are the two most popular guys from Red Run. Last year Peter wasn't in school for the first week though. It was some family thing. I'd imagine this year will be the same."

Chelsea smiled, asking, “Is he as dreamy as they say?” I shrugged, “The girls at our old school seemed to think so, but he never gave them the time of day.” Now they were all three intrigued. Valerie asked, “Really? He’s waiting for his ma... I mean he doesn’t even hook up?” I smirked. I had figured out last year what werewolves call their soulmates. Witches say wick, but werewolves say mate.

My mom wasn’t David’s wick. It was a big deal when they got married, according to the stories I’d heard over the years. David’s wick died a few years before he met my mom. I answered, “From what I’ve seen, Peter doesn’t hook up or date. Drake does though.” Sam smiled, “I know. I was hoping to date him, but he seems to have an eye on you.” I studied her. She’d actually be perfect for Drake. I didn’t know why that thought came to me, but they should definitely be together.

I quickly said, “Drake McAlister doesn’t want to date me. He’s just territorial about the students from his school. He was being nice at lunch. He’d never spoke to me before today.” That seemed to satisfy Sam. I offered “I could introduce you to him tomorrow if you’d like, Sam.” She perked up, “Really? That would be great. If I haven’t gone insane trying to find that faint scent they don’t smell.” I nodded and our class got started. She seemed agitated. Sniffing around the class. I wondered if something in here bothered her.

I focused on the class. I internally cringed at the amount of outside of class work the teacher expected. I would make it work though; Chelsea seemed really nice. I wouldn’t let her down or shoulder all our work on her own.

When the teacher let us get to know our lab partners, Chelsea told me, “We should get together after school to go over a plan on how to get this all done.” I nodded, “That’s fine. I have to be at work at six tonight, though.” She smiled, “Oh, well we could go to your place if it’s closer to your job.” I shook my head, “Oh no... my place... no. I actually work at the diner across the street.”

She smiled asking, “Al’s place? I can’t believe we’ve never seen you! We go for breakfast every Saturday.” I admitted, “I don’t work mornings on Saturday’s. I’m either on the afternoon or evening shift.” She told me, “Well, we will have to come see you at lunch. Let’s head to my place then.” I nodded, relieved she didn’t push.

I collected my book, and quickly grabbed things out of my locker. I was happy I left my tent and duffle at the diner with Al. I didn’t need these girls asking questions about why I had a tent. I know Al wanted to ask, but he respected my privacy. I left with Chelsea. Sam was still agitated and sniffing around. Valerie was dragging her to the car. I shrugged.

I got into Chelsea’s car and I smiled. It was a nice car, a little red Jetta. Katie had this car when I left. I told Chelsea, “This is a nice car.” She smiled, “My dad works for Alp... Mr. Lyons. He’s his... I mean at one of his umm companies. My dad got

this car for me for my birthday.” I nodded. I wasn’t going to ask which company, not wanting her to have to lie. She didn’t know I knew about how packs worked.

I looked at the window of her car. I remembered David had bought my siblings cars when they turned sixteen. A pang of sadness hit me wondering if my real father would’ve done things like that for me. I didn’t need a car really; I’d just like to know if my dad even knew I existed. I wanted to know why I couldn’t have just gone to live with him. I had a lot of questions that I’d probably never get the answers to. I shoved that aside before I cried. I gasped when Chelsea pulled into what must be their pack lands.

It was beautiful. I almost drooled over the giant lake near the gorgeous castle looking house. I would love to swim in there. Sam pulled me out of my daydreams, “Come on Emmaline! Let’s get inside.” I nodded and got out of the car, staring at the lake. Sam bumped my hip with hers teasing me, “You’ll have to come to one of our barbeques. We swim in the lake all the time.” I smiled at her, “That would be a lot of fun!”

We walked into a giant house where a lot of the kids from school were already sitting. They looked up and nodded to the girls I was with. They gave me a welcoming smile. I smiled back. I somehow felt very at home in this place. I had a sense of belonging that I had never felt in any of the places I’d lived before.

The girls led me to the kitchen. A woman was standing in there cooking with her back to us. She turned and smiled the second we entered the room. She gave Chelsea a hug and kissed her cheek, “Hi, sweetie. How was your first day? And who’s this?” She pointed at me smiling. Chelsea spoke, “Hi, Mom. School was good. This is my lab partner and new student, Emmaline Richards. She’s one of the transfers from Red Run.” She smiled at me and put a bunch of little sandwiches on the table.

She told us cheerfully, “Here’s an after school snack. Eat them up!” I smiled and timidly took a sandwich. I bit into it. I couldn’t contain my moan. “This is the best sandwich I’ve ever tasted.” Chelsea laughed, “My mom loves to cook. She does it for everyone here. Mr. Lyons can’t get enough of her cooking.” My heart fluttered at his name again. I asked, “Who could blame him? This is fantastic.”

We spent the rest of the time going over our plan for biology for the rest of the year. It was doable, but with my job it was going to be hard. I would make it work like I always did. Chelsea’s mom came back in when we finished. I told her, “Thank you for the snacks! I’ve got to get going.” She frowned, “All the buses are already back to your side of town by now. How are you going to get home?” I smiled at her, “I actually have a shift at Al’s to get to.” She asked, “You work at Al’s? I knew I’d seen you somewhere around here before. Why would you work

all the way over here?" I shrugged "He is the only one who'd give me a job when I moved here."

She looked at Chelsea who shrugged. She turned to me, "Well, come on then. I'll give you a ride." I smiled; thankful I wouldn't have to walk since my bike was still at Al's. I gratefully said, "Thank you, Mrs. Hanes. That's very kind of you." She smiled and ushered me outside to her car.

We both got in. Mrs. Hanes turned to me, "It's Gemma. None of that Mrs. Hanes business. You and my girls are going to be good friends. I just know it." She dropped me at Al's. She rolled down the window and asked, "How will you get home after your shift?" I smiled, evasively answering, "It's taken care of." She nodded slightly and drove off.

I looked at my watch. I had an hour before my shift started. I waved at Al as I ran in and grabbed my duffle and tent. I grabbed my bag and headed off behind the school. After about a mile of walking, I stopped and smiled. There was a little pond with lots of trees and a small clearing. It was the perfect new place to stay. I set up my tent, stowed my bag, stood back, and surveyed the area. It was hidden enough that it should work. I would have to be on alert for the werewolf patrols. They must go by the school. Red Run did, but I figured out their schedule.

I sat down. I couldn't help but be grateful Al helped me set up a bank account when I started working for him. Now, my paychecks were set up for direct deposit. It was nice not having to find a spot to bury my money anymore. I was always worried someone would find it and take it. Al's mom worked at the bank, so she let me set up an account with Al co-signing for me. I looked at the time and realized I needed to get moving. I changed into my uniform, jumped on my bike, and headed back to Al's.

I got there just as my shift started. I came out of the back, and groaned as Ralph and gang came in. They must be staying for the week. I took their order. I got slapped on the ass twice before I hit Ralph with the tray. I glared at him, "Back off there, buddy." Ralph laughed teasing, "You know you excite me when you get rough." Gross, freaking pervert. He was old enough to be my dad. Actually, he probably was David's age.

Fred came out from the kitchen. He pointed his spatula at Ralph, "Ralph, you know that you can't man handle the staff. I'll throw you out." Ralph smirked at him, "Oh, come on now, she likes it." Fred snorted, "It doesn't matter whether she does or doesn't; hands off the waitresses." Ralph growled but the rest of my shift passed without incident.

Afterwards, I tried to get back into the school to wash my hair, but it was locked. I groaned. Hopefully, since I didn't have to bike as far now, I could wash my hair before my shifts. It would just depend on if the school opened early enough.

The next two days passed pretty quickly. I was enjoying not waking up at two in the morning to get to work on time. Sadly, the school didn't open early enough for me to shower in the mornings. I ended up hiding out and waiting until everyone emptied out of the school or into their sports practices before I could shower. Some of the girls even kept hair dryers around so that was a treat for me.

Drake and his friends had been super nice to me. I had sat with them at lunch. I'd ended up tracking down Sam in the front office and dragged her to Drake to introduce them. They'd both been sniffing the air like they could sense each other. The second I said her name, they practically devoured each other's lips. When they pulled apart, they both said mate under their breath. I pretended I didn't hear them. Everyone else was practically jumping up and down while they made out.

I'd figured out last year that Peter Kyle was Red Run's future Alpha. Drake was his best friend, so I assumed he would be Red Run's future Beta. Everyone's reaction pretty much confirmed that. They were thrilled about him finding his mate because he was their future Beta.

One of Drake's other best friends, Garrett, had been super nice to me as of late. He always talked to me during lunch. Drake was making sure no one ever bothered me. I wondered if he was just grateful, thinking I'd brought him his mate. He would've found her eventually without me. They'd clearly been smelling each other. I'd take the help he was offering though.

It wasn't really necessary, since everyone in school was really nice. I'd heard several mentions of Mr. Lyons. I'd found out his first name was Lucas. I kept repeating the name to myself. His name was sexy. In my mind he was incredibly attractive. Obviously, he'd be taller than me, with dreamy eyes, and a sexy voice. I got distracted anytime anyone mentioned him. Hopefully, no one noticed. I was thinking Drake might have. I almost had a heart attack when Mr. Blaze told our class Mr. Lyons would be here tomorrow to speak to us about his youth center. Drake glanced at me sharply. I ducked my head to avoid his eyes.

I looked out the window of the classroom. Honestly, I'd love it if those youth centers to work out for me. I had tried before, but they want a record of who stays there for the state. They take down your birthday and everything. It would be too easy for David to access those records. A teenager with the same birthday, staying at a youth center would be a red flag for him. I'd had to flee the last and only town where I'd try to stay at one. That was actually how I'd ended up here in the first place.

I was so amped up about Mr. Lyons coming tomorrow I stayed hidden in the school until everyone had left. I changed into my swimsuit and swam several laps before I calmed down. I swam a little longer, just because I loved it. Eventually, I got out.

Someone cleared their throat and said, “Well, you’re not supposed to be in the pool at this hour. I’ll forgive you if you join the team. You didn’t come for tryouts, but you have stamina. Your times are fabulous.” My heartbeat tripled. I turned around and came face to face with the physical education teacher, standing beside the principal.

I gulped, “Mr. Foster, I’m so sorry. I just enjoy swimming. I’m sorry, I’ll just go.” He put up his hands, “Wait! Emmaline, no one is upset. I was just teasing you. We really can’t allow students to swim unattended; it’s a legal issue. Why didn’t you come out for the team? Your old coach sent me your name as someone who practiced with the team. I was hoping you’d come to the try outs we hosted for the Red Run students.” I sighed, “I don’t compete. I’d... I’d practice with you guys though.”

Both men looked at each other. Mr. Foster told me, “You should compete. I timed you, and you’re the best swimmer I’ve seen in a while. You could get a full ride scholarship to college if we got you in front of scouts.” I could feel the blood draining from my face.

Mr. Foster sighed, “Alright, tell you what. You can practice with us when it works for your schedule like you did at your old school. Just consider competing. I would also like it if you came to the meets and cheer the team on.” I agreed, “Yes, sir. When I’m not working, I’ll be at the meets.” Mr. Foster frowned, “Working? Where do you work?” I swallowed, “At Al’s across the street.” Both men nodded turning away from me.

I took off running to the locker room. I turned on the shower and sat underneath it. I berated myself, “What were you thinking Emmaline! You can’t sneak around a werewolf run school! You know they have a great sense of hearing and smell. UGH!” I hit my hand on the shower stall door. I quickly got out and changed. I left and rode my bike for an hour before my shift in case anyone was following me.

Once I finished my shift, I quickly made my way to my tent. My heart was still racing. I sat by the pond and started to calm down. The water was always a calming force for me. I looked up at the sky and did what I always did when I felt lonely. I talked to the fairy princess, Haley Holloran. “Hello, Princess Haley. I don’t know what’s going on with me, but every time I hear the name Lucas Lyons I can barely contain myself. I’ve never even met him. That’s going to change tomorrow though. He’s speaking to my class, and I think I’m nervous to put a face with the name. Like always princess, I’m tempted to call upon your protection, just

so I can actually see you in person. I'm not sure if the protection deal is a one and done thing though. Since I have people who want to kill me, I figure I'd better wait. I should wait to use my get out of jail free card if someone tries to kill me; not to satisfy my curiosity. I hope you've found your prince, that's all you were ever missing in my mom's stories. Goodnight, Princess."

I zipped up my tent and tried to get some sleep. I tossed and turned all night. After what felt like five minutes of sleep, my alarm went off. I cursed myself for the millionth time this morning. I got up threw my uniform on. I grabbed my bike and headed to work. Al pulled me aside, "You're getting here earlier than you normally do. What's going on?" I smiled at him, "Don't worry it's nothing bad. I just moved closer to the school since I'm here for school now." Al knew I was emancipated. He sighed in relief, "Alright. As long as everything is ok." I nodded, "It's been really nice actually. I get more sleep." He walked away quietly.

The shift was dragging on. Al yelled from the back, "Hey Emmaline, take off earlier than normal, alright? We are really slow." I quickly agreed. I was excited that I could wash my hair this morning. I walked over to the school and ran into the girls locker room. I washed my hair and threw on my jeans and a green t-shirt. I looked in the mirror. The shirt was now form fitting, as it was a few years old.

Chelsea, Sam, and Valerie came into the locker room as I was finished getting ready. Chelsea asked, "Showering after your shift at Al's?" I nodded. Sam squealed, "Great! Now we have enough time today for me to do your makeup." I told her, "I don't wear makeup." I couldn't afford to buy things like that. She nodded, "I know. I'll just do a natural look. I want to be a cosmetologist. Please, let me do this as practice." I sighed and sat on one of the benches in the locker room.

Sam clapped and came over. She pulled out her supplies. She didn't finish until the first warning bell had sounded. We all ran out. As I ran in the opposite direction to them Chelsea yelled "You look great, Emmaline!" I passed a mirror and smiled. I called, "You did a great job, Sam. I love it!" Sam waved, "Anything for you! You introduced me to my man." I laughed. They would've found each other pretty quickly.

The other girls were lucky. Their first class was really close to the locker room. I was a few doors down from my class when I saw a woman I'd seen at Al's a few times. She came out of the teachers' lounge, smiling when she saw me. She asked me, "You are Emmaline, right? I've been in Al's a few times early in the morning. I'm pretty sure I recognize you." I nodded, "I am Emmaline."

She handed me a cup of coffee. She told me, "I'm Ruth. This is for Mr. Lyons. I have to take a call, and he desperately needs a cup of coffee. Can you give it to him?" She smiled at me as I took it. I told her, "Of course, he's talking to my first

class today.” The final bell sounded. I sighed, “Gotta go.” She smiled, “That you do, Emmaline. I’ll be seeing you around.” I frowned, wondering what she meant.

I shook my head and walked as quickly as I could without spilling Mr. Lyons coffee. I walked into the room and the smell of chocolate hit me. It was mouthwatering. I looked up into the most stunning blue eyes I’d ever seen. My heart hammered in my chest. I heard a voice whisper in my head, “Mine” I knew my eyes went wide. Who said that? I couldn’t stop staring at him to look around and check. My brain was shouting at me to hand him his coffee and sit down, but I couldn’t look away. I was positive this was Mr. Lyons. He was tall, just like I’d imagined he’d be. He was about six foot three with dark hair that framed his face in a crew cut. He was wearing a fitted shirt. He should never wear anything else. His hard body was framed perfectly.

Oh god, what is wrong with me? I’m ogling this man as if he were a piece of meat. A fine piece of meat. He was standing somewhat at an angle. I gulped when I saw his ass. Seriously? Did God himself sculpt this man? I looked back up and saw his eyes on mine. I was shocked to see the lust in them. His eyes were going back and forth from blue to black. I knew that meant his wolf wanted to come out. SHOOT! Did I offend a freaking Alpha werewolf? Who may or may not be a literal god? When he growled, “MINE!” Everyone gasped. The man beside him said something I couldn’t quite hear.

His words registered in my mind. My face turned beat red. I was going to die of mortification. Duh, you idiot! You have his freaking coffee. My hand shook as I held it out to him. I stammered, “Umm Mr. Lyons a woman in the hall gave me your coffee. Sorry I’m late.” He took his coffee from me. His eyes never left mine. I forced myself to brake our staring contest and quickly went and took my seat.

Drake was staring at me with wide eyes. I sent him a questioning look. He quickly looked away. Weird. I took out my notebook. It was really quiet. I looked up to find Mr. Lyons was still staring at me. I looked around. Mr. Blaze, the man beside Mr. Lyons, and the entire class was watching me. My face heated up. This might be how I die of embarrassment. Everyone noticed me checking him out.

Mr. Lyons cleared his throat, “As I was saying,” Everyone looked away from me and back to him. I locked eyes with him again until I forced myself to look down at my notes. I mentally chastised myself, stop looking at him. I managed it a few times, but every time I looked up, he was looking at me. I felt like we were the only two in the classroom. His presence was comforting to me. I had this inclination to be around him all the time, which was ridiculous. What would he want with me? He was clearly an Alpha. He was also older than me. The age difference wasn’t a big deal in the supernatural community. He needed his Luna though. The thought hurt my heart. When the bell rang, I glanced at the clock on

the wall frowning. The hour had flown by. I was really sad that my time with Mr. Lyons was already up. I put my things away before standing.

Mr. Lyons spoke, "Miss Richards, could you stay back a moment?" I nodded. I was more than happy to do so. I really wanted to do anything he asked, while simultaneously wanting to run from the room. It was an odd dichotomy of feelings. Everyone filed out of the room whispering to each other. I frowned at the massive group of students huddled outside the door craning to get a look inside. Mr. Blaze shut the door when he left. Why did he leave? It was his classroom.

I couldn't even look away from Lucas when his friend introduced himself, "I'm Dylan Frost." After an awkward pause, I forced myself to look at him. I knew that last name. I asked, "Are you related to the Travis Frost that's in a few of my classes?" Dylan smiled, "I am. I'm his older brother. I'm the funny one. It's a pleasure to meet you." He put out his hand to shake mine. I reached to take it when Mr. Lyons growled. Dylan lowered his hand. He winked at me and rolled his eyes.

I turned back to Mr. Lyons, surprised. I'd never dropped my hand. Lucas shook it. I gasped as sparks erupted from where our hands were touching. I pulled my hand back slowly, staring at him in shock. What was that? His eyes widened.

I broke the silence, "I'm sorry you had to wait for your coffee this morning, Mr. Lyons. I didn't want to spill it." Lucas frowned, "What? Oh, I don't care about the coffee. Please, call me Lucas." A warning bell rang. I cringed, "Oh umm I should probably go to my next class." My heart hurt at the thought of leaving. I whispered, "It was nice to meet you, Lucas." He quickly waved his hand, "Mr. Blaze will write you a pass to your next class. I wanted to speak to you about my youth center." My heartbeat was getting out of control.

I asked, "Didn't you just spend the entire class doing that?" He frowned, "Yes, but your name has come to our attention. I wanted you to know if you need a place to stay, it's open to you." I couldn't stay there, but I also couldn't disappoint him. I also couldn't lie. As hard as I tried, I just couldn't.

So instead, I asked, "Do you have a pamphlet or something that I can read through?" He nodded and handed it to me. Our skin touched again, I bit my lip to keep from gasping. I wanted to jump into his arms. I realized I was staring at him and snapped out of it. I grabbed the information he was holding out for me. I awkwardly said, "Umm... Thanks it was nice to meet you both."

I walked out of the classroom and took a deep breath. It felt like the first full breath I had taken throughout the whole first period. Mr. Blaze handed me my pass with a smile on his face. All the students in his second period were openly gaping at me. What was going on? Everyone was being weird. Including me.

I rushed to my next class. I handed the teacher my pass. She smiled at me knowingly. I frowned. When I turned around everyone was staring at me. I took my seat next to Drake. I whispered, "What the hell gives today? Do I have something on my face?" Drake snorted, "You do. Makeup." I frowned, "Everyone's staring at me because I let Sam put makeup on me? I thought it looked ok." He said, "No, that's not why they are staring. Of course, my girl did a good job. She's the best." I pushed, "Then why is everyone looking at me like I just stepped out of the circus?" He smiled, "You'll find out."

I sighed and started taking notes. He clearly wasn't going to tell me. I was beginning to feel self-conscious. By the time lunch rolled around, I practically ran into the lunchroom looking for my friends. I spotted Sam in line for food. I jogged over to her,

I told her, "Everyone has been staring at me all day. I thought I looked good, but I'm getting a complex. Do you have something I can wipe this off with?" Sam laughed, "No one is staring because of your makeup. Everyone's talking about your run in with the Alp... Mr. Lyons." My face turned red. I shrieked, "Run in? I gave him coffee! I stared at him way to long because a freaking god sculpted that man, but I gave him his darn coffee." Sam bit her lip then laughed, "Just come sit with us." I sighed, "No way! I feel like a fish in the bowl. I'll see you in biology." Before she could say anything else I was out of the cafeteria doors.

I went outside and sat in the shade under a tree where I could hear the bell for school. I wished there was a pond closer by. I leaned against the tree and closed my eyes. I had been there a few minutes when I smelled chocolate. A shadow cast over me, and I knew who it was without looking. I forced myself to look up and gulped. Lucas was standing right in front of me. His eyes were scanning me.

Eventually he asked, "Can I sit here?" I found my voice after several moments, "It's a free country and from what I hear you run this town. So, I couldn't stop you." Lucas smiled and sat down. He told me, "You of all people could stop me." I frowned asking, "What does that even mean?" He avoided the question, "So, how are you in senior classes when you are only sixteen years old?" I frowned and looked away. For some reason, it bothered me that he was bringing up my age. Supernatural's didn't really care about ages. So why was he asking? By pack standards, I'd be an adult because I would've shifted.

I looked into his eyes and told him, "I'm almost seventeen, and I've been on my own for a while now." He growled, "Why is that?" I looked away because when I was looking into his eyes, I was seconds away from spilling everything. I whispered, "It's just the way it had to be." He growled, "Why are you emancipated?" I turned to stare at him in shock.

I stammered, “How... how did you know that?” He smiled, “The woman you ran into with the coffee asked the secretary about you. She gave her your file, which I read. It’s strange your emancipation record doesn’t list your parents’ names. I’ve never seen one without that information on it.”

I cringed. That had been what the last youth center staff had commented on too. Lucas continued, “That makes it seem like you’re running, Emmaline. Who are you running from? I’ll protect you; I swear.” I believed him, but I couldn’t let him get hurt because of me. David would go after him if he knew it would upset me. I told Lucas, “I believe you, but I can’t let you get caught up in my mess.”

The warning bell rang. I jumped up. How did time pass so quickly around Lucas? I told him, “I’ve got to get to class.” Lucas looked at the school with annoyance. I turned to go when he pulled me back for a hug. I melted against him. My entire body was tingling. To my utter shock, I felt myself getting wet.

He growled and pulled back. I looked up at him. I wanted him in a way I’d never wanted anyone. Lucas told me, “You need to stop looking at me that way if you want to get to the rest of your classes.” My face turned red. Did he want me too? He smiled and kissed my cheek. He whispered through gritted teeth, “Go, before I lose all sense and do what I’ve wanted to since I first saw you this morning.”

I desperately wanted to know what he wanted to do. I needed to know more than my next breath, but I forced myself to turn away. I started to walking when I barely heard him say, “This is the beginning, Emmaline. I’ll see you shortly.” I shivered in anticipation, but a little bit of fear. I had this feeling that Lucas was going to find out all my secrets. That didn’t bode well for me, I’d be keeping them for four years. Which honestly was a miracle in and of itself.

I shook off that feeling and ran into my next class. To my utter embarrassment, people were still staring at me then whispering. When I made it to my biology class I made a beeline for Chelsea. She was bouncing in her seat. She yelled, “Thank god! I have been WAITING for this class all day! Tell me everything about your first class. Everyone is talking about it; this is so exciting!”

I frowned and asked her, “Why is everyone staring at me because I embarrassed myself and ogled Lucas Lyons? I cannot be the only female to notice he’s a freaking god.” Chelsea laughed, “If I asked how you felt about other women staring at Mr. Lyons that way, what would you say?” Before I could stop myself I answered, “Bitches.” I clapped my hand over my mouth. What was wrong with me?

Chelsea, Sam, and Valerie all laughed. I told them, “I have no idea where that came from.” Sam spoke, “I feel the same way about Drake.” I frowned, “Drake is your boyfriend. Lucas is the guy who runs the youth center in town. He just wants

to help me because he thinks I need it. I'm probably just a charity case to him." I really hoped it wasn't true because it would crush me if it was. I was probably just some crusade to him.

Chelsea became concerned, "That's not true. No one sees you as a charity case," She admonished. I sighed, "Alright." She smiled again, "So, tell us everything from the moment you walked into the class." Luckily, it was a lab day, so our teacher didn't mind us all talking. I told them everything from smelling chocolate when Lucas was near, to him growling at me because I had his coffee. Then him growling at his friend Dylan, Travis' older brother, for going to shake my hand. I told them that he came out to talk to me during lunch.

When I finished the story, I noticed almost the entire class, including the teacher, were listening to us. I flushed and put my head down. I tried to keep working on our lab assignment. The girls didn't care though.

Valerie squealed, "You totally have a crush on Mr. Lyons. Don't think we didn't notice you called him Lucas." I frowned, "He told me to call him Lucas. Chelsea's dad works for him. Don't you call him Lucas too?" They shook their head, "No, we call him something else." I sighed. Right, they probably called him Alpha Lucas or something.

The bell rang. Chelsea smiled at me, "You don't have to work tomorrow after school, right?" I nodded, "Right. We are still planning to work on our homework at your place, aren't we?" She nodded, "Yup. After school I'll drive us back to my place. My mom wants to know what you want for snacks." I smiled, "I'm not picky. Whatever you want is fine." I'd eat anything. I learned to not be picky living on my own. She smiled, "You are a fabulous friend, Emmaline."

Chelsea ran off. I looked at my watch, went to Mr. Foster's office, and knocked. He looked up and smiled, "Lun... I mean Emmaline. What can I do for you?" What was he about to call me? Did I look like a previous student? I shrugged that off. I told him, "I don't have to work until six tonight. So, I was wondering if I could practice with the team." Mr. Foster smiled, "Go get changed. Maybe with you in the pool the team will have better times. Your old coach told me you motivated everyone to swim harder." I smiled, "Thanks!"

I ran to the locker room and grabbed my swimsuit. I quickly changed. When I entered the pool area Mr. Foster introduced me, "Ok, everyone this is Emmaline Richards. She's going to practice with us today. She going with the gold group." Everyone looked at me with interest.

The werewolves that made up the gold group laughed. One asked, "Do you think she can keep up with us, coach?" I couldn't stop myself from retorting, "I think you'll be trying to keep up with me." The boy smiled, "Game on Lu... Emmaline."

I really must look like an old classmate or something. I shrugged and we went to our lanes. Mr. Foster told us to swim a few laps to warm up. I went easy to see what kind of pace the werewolves kept. They were pretty fast, but I knew I was faster. Mr. Foster split us up in groups. I was paired with three of the boys in the gold group.

One taunted me, “You’re going to eat our dust, Emmaline.” I just smiled teasing, “And when you get beat by a girl, I’m not even going to feel sorry for the crap your friends give you guys.” The whistle blew. I dove off the starting block into the water. It was a freestyle race, and I gave it everything I had. We were doing six laps. Down and back counted as one lap. When I saw the red marker come into the water, I knew this was my last lap. I kicked my gear higher. I touched the wall and came up and took off the goggles and swim cap that Mr. Foster had let me borrow.

Mr. Foster smiled at me. He told me, “I really want you on the team. You just smoked our three best male swimmers. They have another lap left.” I avoided answering him, “Thanks, Mr. Foster.” I heard clapping from the stands. I looked up and saw Lucas, Dylan, and the principal smiling at me. My face turned red. I turned away to look at the clock on the wall. I needed to get moving.

The three guys got out of the pool after finishing their laps. They were stunned to realize I was already done. I winked at them, “I’d say thanks for the race boys, but it wasn’t much of a challenge.” They growled as I smirked.

I turned to Mr. Foster, “Thanks for letting me swim Mr. Foster. I’ve got to head to work.” He nodded, “Seriously Emmaline, think about joining the team.” I smiled sadly, “Thanks, but it works better for me to just practice when I can.” I left before he could say anything else.

I changed and headed off to work. I had been there an hour when the smell of chocolate hit my nose. I was both excited and annoyed. Before when I heard his name, he invaded my every thought; now his god like self was every freaking where I was. I’d been working here for a year and never met him. Why was he suddenly everywhere? I’d never sleep again at this rate. I turned and did a double take. Why was he so freaking hot? He was stretching and his shirt was barely showing off his abs. I wanted to lick them. **WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH ME?** I turned and ran to the back.

I took several deep breaths before I heard Ralph yelling for me. Great, that’s just what my day needed. Ralph. Liz came around the corner. She eyed me before offering, “I can take Ralph’s table for you today, Emmaline.” I sighed, “No, it’s ok. They give good tips, and I need the money.” She looked towards Lucas and lowered her voice, “Just make sure you keep your distance. Mr. Lyons may run them out of town for how they normally treat you.”

She walked away before I could ask why she said that. I smiled when I saw Lucas and Dylan sit in my section. They were with the lady who gave me his coffee this morning. I think she said her name was Ruth. I sighed and walked to Ralph's table first. I asked, "Do you guys want your usual?" Ralph reeked of alcohol. I grimaced he was worse when he'd been drinking. He asked me, "Are you still not serving yourself on the side there, sweets?" I heard a growl that sounded like Lucas.

I replied, "That's still a no, Ralph. Do you want your usual burgers and fries? Maybe some coffee?" He smiled, "You just get us, Emmaline. I'd take you away from here, and you'd never work again. What do you say?" The growling was getting louder. I smiled tightly, "Still no. I like working here. So, the usual then?" He nodded.

I quickly left the table and gave Fred their ticket. He took it from me smiling broadly, "Well, hello there Ms. Emmaline." I smiled, "Hi, Fred. How's your day going?" He winked, "Never better Ms. Emmaline. Never better. I do believe Ralph and gang are going to be put in their place. Firmly." I frowned, "I'm not sure what that means. You and Al always put him in his place."

I left and went to Lucas, Dylan, and Ruth's table. I greeted them brightly, "Good evening. What can I get you guys?" Lucas was angrily glaring at Ralph's table. His eyes softened when he turned to me though. He asked, "What do you recommend?" I immediately told him, "Fred's burger is our specialty. He makes them for me take home on my night shift. It's got his special twist." Lucas smiled, "I'll have the Fred's special then." Dylan spoke, "The same for me please. It's my regular order when I come here." Ruth said, "I'll have the Caesar salad with chicken dressing on the side." I nodded and asked, "Any drinks?" They all said water was fine.

The rest of my shift passed almost without incident. Unfortunately, Ralph had to go and be himself. My back was to him busing a different table in my section that had just vacated. My only warning was the snarl I heard before Ralph groped my ass. He whispered, "Come back to my truck with me, sweets. I promise you won't regret a single second." The growl became a deafening roar.

Ralph looked over in shock, and I used that distraction and kicked him in the balls. I gritted my teeth, "Look here buddy, stop grabbing my ass! I'm not coming back to your truck tonight or any other night. For god's sake, you're old enough to be my dad! You need to go sleep it off."

Lucas was beside me in a second. He had Ralph by his throat. He effortlessly picked him up in the air. My jaw dropped. I knew Lucas was an Alpha, but Ralph was a werewolf too. Lucas picked him up as if he were nothing. I was admiring the bulging of his biceps.

I snapped out of it and touched his shoulder. I told him, "It's alright, Lucas. I'm fine." He looked at me, "Your statement implies he's done this before. It's far from alright." Dylan cleared his throat, "While holding someone by the throat inside this fine establishment is a choice we are making... Let's take this outside, boss man."

Lucas nodded then looked me over. He asked, "You're alright?" I nodded, "I'm really ok." He assessed me again and carried Ralph out by his throat. Dylan followed closely behind him skipping as he went. Before the door closed Lucas said, "I'll see you again, Emmaline. I have to take care of this." I nodded to him. Dylan threw Ralph and his friends into an SUV and sped off.

I turned to see a smiling Ruth, "Hello again, Emmaline." I smiled, "Hi, Ruth." She motioned to the check on the table. She informed me, "Mr. Lyons left the money for our food." I winced, "I'm sorry they didn't get to finish their meal." She smiled, "No one is upset about it. It wasn't your fault. So, will I be seeing you at the youth center?" I frowned, "I'm good, but thank you." She smiled sadly, "We all need help sometimes. There's no shame in it." She left after statement. I wanted to tell her I knew that, but asking for her kind of help could get me killed.

I got through the rest of my shift and grabbed my bike. I got the sense I was being followed. I wasn't going to lead them to where I actually lived. I started to head towards Red Run's borders. At least where I thought their borders were based on the wolves I'd seen on my way work. I noticed the moment they stopped following me. It must be a fairy thing. I kept going, making sure. I stopped and waited fifteen minutes before I doubled back to my tent. I sighed in relief when I didn't sense anyone nearby.

I sat by the pond and calmed myself. Once my adrenaline faded, I went into my tent to sleep. I felt hands on me and felt tingles all over my body. I moaned, "Lucas." I opened my eyes, seeing his stunning blue eyes were on mine. He growled, "You are mine, Emmaline." I felt a finger slide inside me. I moaned, "God yes, Lucas. I'm yours." He smiled and pumped his fingers into me. He leaned down and bit my neck. I screamed his name and woke up to my alarm blaring.

I looked down to see my own hand in my underwear and swore. Seriously? I'm having wet dreams about an Alpha who probably has a girlfriend or something? I know he's not married because he doesn't have a wedding ring. His neck didn't bare a mark, but no woman wouldn't want him. I cringed at the thought of him being with someone else. I shoved it aside and grabbed my uniform and went to work.

I rode up stunned to see five burly men waiting outside. They all watched me ride up with interest. Ok, that was new. I went inside to see a smiling Al. I greeted him, "Good morning, Al." He smiled, "Good morning, Emmaline." I jerked my head

towards the guys outside asking, "Is that a new crew? I've never seen them before." He smiled, "No, they live around here. They just aren't usually here for the morning rush." I nodded and got to work getting all the stations ready for morning crowd.

As soon as we opened the doors those five guys sat in my section. I walked over to take their order. I asked, "What can I get you guys?" One spoke for the group, "We will all have bacon and eggs, Luna." I frowned. Why would they call me that? I wasn't their Luna. I told them, "Oh, it's Emmaline. I'll put your order in." They nodded and I left.

The smell of chocolate hit my nose minutes later. Apparently, my body was becoming hyper aware whenever Lucas was about to be around. I turned my head to see him walk in. Holy crap on a cracker. He was in a suit, in Al's. God...

Liz bumped me with her hip. She teased, "You're drooling." I quickly wiped my mouth and came away with nothing, I rolled my eyes, "Ha-ha Liz. Very funny." She laughed, "Plenty of women stare at him." Anger filled me and I looked away. I muttered, "I'm sure they do." She smiled, "He's looking at you though." I turned around to see if she was right. She was. He was looking right at me. I smiled at him, and he smiled back.

He walked over and joined the five guys that had come in when we opened. I walked over, "Good morning Lucas and Dylan. What can I get you?" Lucas smiled, "Eggs, Bacon, and Coffee would be fabulous, Emmaline." I shivered when he said my name. He had dropped his tone and his voice was pure sex. I didn't know that was a real thing, but when Lucas said my name; I wanted to throw him down and repeat my dream. I quickly walked away and got their order in.

Their group stayed and drank coffee until I left. I was running late so I quickly showered and ran to home room just as the bell rang. Everyone was still whispering today, but not as bad. I couldn't wait for next week when Peter started coming to school. Surely, everyone would talk about that instead of coffee gate.

I sat next to Drake who observed me then asked, "So, where were you last night?" I frowned asking, "What do you mean?" He looked away then amended, "I mean what did you do last night?" I sighed, "I swam with the swim team for practice." He smiled interjecting, "Yeah, I heard you kicked some blue moon ass there, little Emmaline. It's impressive, almost inhuman." I gulped. His eyes narrowed.

I looked away. My heart was racing. He couldn't know I was a partial fairy. He just couldn't. He would've said something when they were at war with them. I admitted, "I used to swim all the time. I'm really good. I'm surprised your friends didn't mention it last year. I used to beat them in the pool a lot." Drake laughed,

“Oh, from what I hear it’s more than pretty good. Anyway, you kicked swim ass and then...” I frowned, “I went to work and went home.” He frowned but nodded.

Several kids seemed to keep a close eye on me all day. After third period, I turned to see Travis Frost standing behind my locker. He greeted me, “Hello, Emmaline. Since we have the next class together, I thought I would walk with you. Do you mind?” I answered, “Um, I guess that’s fine.” He smiled, “I hear you met my brother the other day.” I nodded, “I did. I’ve seen him around a lot lately. He seems nice.” Travis laughed, “He’s a big kid. Here we are, m’lady.” He opened the door and walked me to my desk, than sat down next to me.

I stared at him in question because this was the class another transfer from our school was in. His name was Grayson, but he wasn’t a werewolf. Travis usually sat on the other side of the classroom. In unison some other werewolves from Blue Moon got up and sat in the seats closest to me. Grayson, who usually sat next to me, came in and threw me a questioning stare. I shrugged and noticed every male in the class glaring at him. What the hell was in their coffee this morning?

It was announced that Saturday night we would have a get to know you mixer to welcome new students. Everyone was excited. I quickly realized that by mixer they meant dance. It was finally lunch and I ran in to sit beside Chelsea, Sam, Valerie, and Drake.

I threw my tray down and muttered, “God, something is in the freaking water today.” Chelsea choked back a laugh. Drake smiled at me. Sam asked, “So, Emmaline where is your place?” I stopped eating and looked at her like a deer in headlights. I wanted to lie to her, I really did. For some reason I just couldn’t lie. Avoid? Yes. Lie? No. I asked, “What do you mean?” Sam frowned clearly picking up that I avoided answering her.

Drake reiterated, “She means where do you live? The secretary is Sam’s aunt and she’s all worried they have no address for you on file.” I gulped, Shit. Drake's eyes narrowed again. I looked away, “Oh, well I recently moved.” Drake was quiet. His eyes were calculating. Chelsea spoke, “Well, maybe for one of our studying sessions you could show me your new place.” I just shrugged. I wouldn’t. I already knew I couldn’t tell her or any of them the truth. She’d tell an adult, but I also couldn’t lie.

Valerie came to my literal rescue changing the subject. Meanwhile Drake studied me like I was his personal mystery to crack wide open. Sam kissed his cheek before he finally looked away from me to stare at her with puppy dog eyes. I laughed, “You guys are so freaking cute!” Sam giggled and just like that, I was forgotten; just like I wanted.

After school, I left with Chelsea to study at her place. Her mom had just left the kitchen when a tall woman with dark black hair stalked in. She glared at me. I was confused. I'd never met her before, but she clearly didn't like me. I was certain I'd never seen her at the diner. Oh god. What if she knows Ralph?

Chelsea looked up and smirked at the woman. She seemed to gloat, "Hello, Christy." Ugh. Christy. It hit me like a ton of bricks. I hated this woman for no reason. What was going on with me? Why did I hate her with a burning passion?

Christy sneered, "Chelsea, introduce me to your friend." Chelsea frowned, "Nope, sorry." Christy growled at her, "Now, pup." I stared at Christy in surprise. Chelsea was eighteen years old. She definitely wasn't a pup. Did packs really consider eighteen year olds to be pups? I thought packs called the unshifted members pups, but once they shifted they didn't.

Chelsea growled, "I'm not a pup, Christy. I'm an adult." Christy retorted, "Then act like one and introduce your friend." Chelsea wasn't going to, that much was clear. I stood, "Hi, I'm Emmaline. I've already gathered you are Christy. If you don't mind, we have about thirty more minutes of schoolwork to get done. I'd be more than happy to chat with you after that. We'd really appreciate if you could let us focus. This project is important to our grade."

Christy scoffed, "I don't want to talk to you. I just wanted to see what all the fuss is about. I don't get it, you're pretty plain." I smiled at her. If I was a normal teenager her words might get to me. I had bigger problems though. The man I thought was my dad that raised me wanted me dead. This awful lady thinking I was plain was honestly not even hurtful.

I decided to go with killing her with kindness. I smiled, "Thanks. I don't see the reason to paint myself with a bunch of makeup. I look how I look. If you have a problem with it take it up with the DNA gods or something." Chelsea laughed. Christy looked pissed and stalked out of the kitchen.

I muttered, "Who peed in her cheerios?" Chelsea laughed harder then told me, "You won't understand, but you did." I glanced up at her, "ME? How could I possibly have done anything to her?" Chelsea smiled, "You'll understand later." I frowned but we needed to get this work done so I focused.

We had just finished when Dylan walked in. He practically pranced. He greeted me, "Hello again, Emmaline. You make my life so interesting." I smiled, "Hi, Dylan." He asked "Did you review the pamphlet that Lucas gave you about the youth center? He's practically salivating for the answer. Like a prepubescent teen." I wanted to laugh. Review it? I practically smelled it until it lost all trace of Lucas' delicious chocolate smell. Thankfully, I had read the whole thing because I thought it would make Lucas happy.

I answered, "Yes, I did." Dylan smiled, "And?" I frowned, "And... it's a very well put together brochure." He frowned, "Are you going to make an appointment to view it? I know it would make Lucas oh so very happy." Alarm bells were going off in my head. I was fighting myself to give in and do something that would make Lucas happy. I knew what youth center workers were like. They all wanted to make youth's lives better. If I walked through their doors, I would become their new mission. I'd have to leave.

I gasped and clutched my chest at the thought. Breathing became very hard. I vaguely heard shouting. Suddenly, I felt tingling all over my body. I looked up to see a very concerned Lucas carrying me. Well, he was running. It was practically a sprint. He stormed into another building and yelled for a doctor. A doctor? They have doctors on their pack lands? Well, I guess that actually made sense. They can't explain some of their injuries to humans. Having a hospital on their grounds was logical.

One came running towards us and tried to take me. Lucas growled at him. The doctor held up his hands and pleaded, "Alph... I mean Lucas, I need to examine her. You brought her here for help." He pointed to a room for Lucas to take me. He begrudgingly set me down, barely backing away for the doctor to examine me.

The doctor frowned but turned to me with a smile. He announced, "I'm Dr. Gonzalez, but you can call me Hector. What happened here? I heard you were clutching your chest in pain. Has this ever happened before?" I sighed, "No. I don't know what happened." I truthfully didn't understand what had happened. It must have been a panic attack or something.

Hector nodded and ran several tests. He spoke to Lucas in low tones. He turned to me, "Well, I can't find a single thing wrong with you, Ms. Emmaline. You are free to go, but you come see me if you ever feel a pain in your chest again. Alright?" I nodded and he left the room leaving me with Lucas.

Lucas instantly asked, "Are you really ok?" I nodded, "I'm fine." He questioned, "What happened?" I sighed, "I... Dylan was just asking about the youth center and I just..." I trailed off. How could I possibly explain that the thought of leaving Lucas behind made me have a panic attack?

Lucas interjected into the silence, "Do you really not like youth centers? I don't know your past experiences with them, but I promise my facility is top of the line. I only hire the best, no one would hurt you." I admitted, "I don't think anyone would hurt me." He frowned like he was trying to figure out a puzzle.

Eventually he asked, "Then what do you think would happen?" I sighed, "Do they take down names at your youth center?" His eyebrows raised, "That's a regulation we have to abide by, yes." I told him, "I appreciate everyone's kindness and

concern, but I really am fine.” He looked like he wanted to say something else, but Dylan walked in.

He sighed, “Lucas, people are making me be serious. I’m devastated. By the way, you have a meeting to get to.” He nodded, “Gemma offered to take you home, Emmaline.” What? How? When? Lucas had been here the whole time. How the hell did he know Gemma offered to take me home? Dylan and Lucas left. I got up and walked outside.

Chelsea was waiting right outside the doors with her mom. She exclaimed, “Oh my god! Are you ok? What happened?” I shrugged, “They couldn’t find anything wrong with me. At least we finished our assignment first.” She frowned, “I don’t care about that. I’m worried about my friend.” She dragged me to her mom’s car telling her, “Give us a second, mom.”

We got in and closed the doors. Chelsea spoke, “It’s just us now. What happened?” I sighed, “I can’t go to that youth center. I had this gut reaction to say yes when Dylan said it would make Lucas happy. I just can’t do it. The thought of having to leave here…” I whispered, “Leave Lucas… it physically hurt. It hurt so bad that I couldn’t breathe.”

Her eyes lit in understanding. She held my hand, “Oh, Emmaline. It’s ok, I understand.” I laughed, “Do you? Care to explain why some guy who smells of the most delicious chocolate I want to eat, who keeps popping up all over town where I am even in my dreams; makes my chest hurt at the thought of having to leave him.” She frowned, “Why would you have to leave though?” I sighed, “I can’t tell you, Chelsea. Please don’t say anything to anybody.” She frowned but agreed, “Alright.” She gave me a hug and jumped out of the car.

Her mom got in and gave me a worried look. Gemma asked, “Are you alright, sweetie?” I nodded, “I’m fine. Thanks for your concern though.” She leaned over and squeezed my thigh. She asked, “Where are we headed?” I told her, “Al’s Diner. My bike is there, and I normally eat dinner with Liz on her break when I’m not working. I’m a little late, but she’ll wait for me.” Gemma nodded. She dropped me off, and I ran inside.

Liz immediately spotted me and smiled. She came over and moved me towards a table, “You’re running a few minutes behind.” She yelled, “Al, I’m taking my break!” Al grunted in response. Liz put our order in with Frank.

We sat and talked for a while before she asked, “So, Lucas Lyons, huh?” I looked up, surprised. She smiled, “I see you like a little sister, Emmaline. Lucas Lyons is a good man, but he’s never given anyone the time of day. Suddenly, the whole town is a buzz about you and him.” My cheeks turned red, “I don’t know how to describe it.” She looked over at Al with a smile on her face. That’s when I saw her

neck. Her uniform always covered it, but I saw the wolf tattoo with Al's name in it when she turned her head.

Everything made so much sense now. Liz was Al's mate, that's why he went crazy over any guy who touched her. That made me really happy. I'd always thought they'd be perfect for each other. Liz turned back to me. She whispered, "You'd be surprised what I understand, try me." So, I explained the situation to her. She just smiled and said, "I'm happy for you. You deserve the best." I nodded. I still didn't understand but whatever, I guess.

I left once we finished eating. I hopped on my bike. I sensed I was being followed again. I headed for the Red Run border just like last night. They didn't stop this time though. I had to cross where I thought the borders were before they stopped.

Then just when I felt like no one was around I sensed others following me. I began to cry. What was going on? I rode my bike towards the lake I knew was in this area. I was still being followed. I needed to swim to calm down. I didn't care that this was a bad idea. Or that I'd have to change the day I go to the laundromat. I just needed to calm down.

I jumped off my bike and ran full speed at the dock and dove off. The water was always my safe place. No matter who was following me, they couldn't take that away. I swam for an hour before I swam back to the dock. I quickly climbed out. I sat there huffing and puffing for a few minutes. I didn't sense anyone around. I quickly ran to my bike and pedaled for all I was worth. I made it to the border without sensing anyone following. I made my best time back to my tent and sighed in relief.

I peeled my clothes off and climbed into my sleeping bag. I set my alarm for my morning shift and closed my eyes. I woke up to the sound of the zipper of my tent being undone. I screamed and grabbed a flashlight I kept by my head. I kicked my sleeping bag off and got onto my knees prepared to fight. I was stunned when I realized I was looking into the incredibly angry eyes of Lucas Lyons.

I dropped the flashlight that I accidentally turned on. I questioned, "Lucas?" Was he real? Or was I dreaming again? Lucas looked around before he growled, "What the hell is going on Emmaline? Why are you sleeping in a tent?" I gulped. So, this was definitely real. He wouldn't be mad in my dreams.

Lucas climbed into the tent. The temperature skyrocketed. I blushed realizing that I was only in my bra and underwear. Lucas gazed down at my body. His eyes turned black and then back to blue. He growled and shut his eyes. He told me, "Put on some clothes, and come outside." I looked at my alarm clock and groaned. It was one thirty in the morning.

I asked, “Any chance this could wait since I have to be up in two hours for my shift?” Lucas pinned me with a look. So that was a no. He repeated, “Get dressed and come outside.” I sighed and grabbed some yoga pants along with the t-shirt that was too small he had first seen me in. I grumbled, “Couldn’t he just have come to Al’s to talk? Jeez.” I crawled out of the tent and stood.

I was stunned when I realized Lucas was not alone. Drake, Peter, Peter’s freaking dad, along with Drake’s dad, Dylan, and the five burly guys from the diner were with him. I asked incredulously “Umm, what the hell? Did you all decide to go camping at one in the morning?” Drake bit his lip trying not to laugh.

Lucas deflected saying, “We are asking the questions at the moment. Why are you sleeping in a tent?” I couldn’t look at him. I’d tell him if I did. I looked away and changed the subject, “Hey Peter. Is there any chance you want to come to school earlier than next week? If you come people will have something else to talk about besides awkwardly whispering around me for handing Lucas here a freaking cup of coffee.” Peter’s lips twitched into a smile. Drake couldn’t stop his laugh this time.

Lucas growled and moved closer to me. My breath started to hitch in anticipation. Lucas tilted up my chin with his hand. He growled, “Look at me, Emmaline.” I begrudgingly did. Once our eyes met he asked again, “Why are you sleeping in a tent in the middle of the woods?” I tried to force the lie out of my mouth. I wanted to say that I was just roughing it for the night. The words wouldn’t come though. I sighed admitting, “Because I live in the tent in the middle of the woods.” Everything seemed to stop for several second. Then growls tore through the air as Lucas’s eyes widened in shock, then anger. This was not good.