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"Fine, fine, I'll go." They all squeal, getting the full attention of the guys. "But I have conditions." I say to no one listening to me at all anymore.

"What's got you all excited, Love?" Alpha Lucas walks up and asks, wrapping an arm around Luna Ava and kissing her softly on the cheek. He can't seem to not touch her when he is within ten feet. It's really cute.

"We just talked Skylar into going to the mating ball." She said happily as I winced and shielded my eyes trying to hide as best I could from watching eyes, waiting for someone to make fun of me.

"Wait, you weren't planning on going?" Oliver asks, taking his usual defensive stance crossing his massive tattooed arms over his chest. Why would he care if I go? He's got Marnie to entertain him anyway. There's no way I'm going to be able to hang out with the guys much with the Barbie trio around.

"Uh, no. Where have you been the last couple weeks? I hate all of this dress up stuff and I'm not old enough to find my mate, so it's kind of pointless. But it's Sierra's one and only time to go, I can't miss it, according to her and the Luna." Dripping my last words with sarcasm just for her.

"We have to go shopping this weekend." Sierra claps her

hands, like the Luna, skipping right over my last comment.

"We are totally joining you, you know, for professional opinions." Sam adds, stepping comfortably close behind Sierra and trying to wrap his sweaty arms around her shoulders. She squeals and jumps out of his grasp.

"Gross, you are exceptionally nasty today, go shower before you touch me." She wipes her shoulders off with her own towel scowling at him as we laugh.

"You just want to watch me make a fool of myself trying on stupid dresses." I roll my eyes at him and laugh at my friend.

"It will actually be a nice change from your usual choice of baggy and comfortable or workout clothes." He laughs and jumps out of the way as I aim a swift kick to his butt. "It will be interesting to see what you're hiding. I'm sure you're fit enough to make all the girls jealous." He wiggles his eyebrows at me.

I take a deep breath fighting the heat in my cheeks. "Fine you can come, but you are buying me food." I snap back, missing another kick as he dodges around my brother to hide from me.

"Deal, Little Bit." He stays behind my brother, intelligently anticipating another attack from my foot, but he reaches around Mateo to shake on it and then he's looking at me funny.

"What?" I ask, questioning if I really want to know.

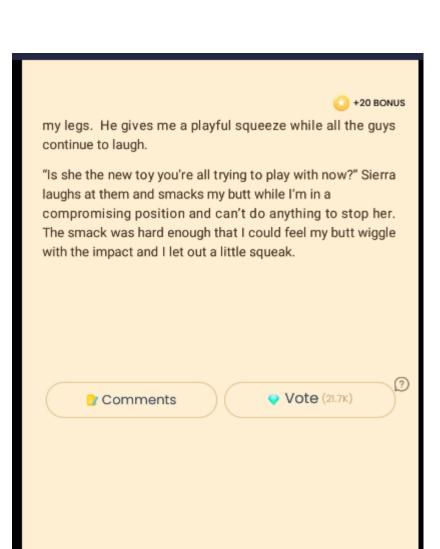
"I was just wondering if they made dresses in hobbit sizes."
He laughs along with everyone else and takes off as I chase
him across the field. I easily caught up to him and jumped
on his back. He jogs back to the group like, I'm not even
there, both of us laughing.

"Hey, Sam, let me help you out, you have a tiny little something on your back." Oliver chimes in and lifts me off Sam by my armpits and holds me out away from his body like someone who's never held a baby before. His large hands have a firm grip on my ribcage and I am painfully aware of how close he is to touching my boobs with his massive hands and I'm not sure what to think about that. My feet dangling off the ground.

"Put me down a*shole." I kicked my legs backward, trying to divert my embarrassment, earning more chuckles from everyone since it did absolutely nothing.

"Let me help you with your baggage." I'm still squirming as Dakota grabs me bridal style. At least I feel less like a little kid now. I wrap my arms around his neck naturally, to try and hold some of my own weight. My brain kicks in at how close I am to him and I feel embarrassed all over again. Before my cheeks can even flame up. Cam steps up to us.

"That's not how you carry her properly." Cameron quickly scoops me up with one arm and throws me over his shoulder. I squeal and then laugh at the abrupt change in direction. His hand rests just above my knees, in between



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"Oww! That's going to leave a handprint on my ass!" I shout at her trying to reach back and rub the sore spot. Her and I are still laughing and I'm trying to look around Cam's back to see where she went when Cam puts me down slowly and Sierra and I realize they are no longer laughing.

"We have to run. See you guys at training tomorrow morning." Oliver says a little strained, before they all take off. Sam looks amused, Mateo angry and Oliver, Cam and Kota are, I don't know, uncomfortable and blushing maybe. Weird.

"What the hell was that all about?" I ask watching the guys leave the large training grounds like they couldn't move fast enough.

"You're kidding right?" Sierra asks, hands on her hips. I just stare blankly at her. Even for them, that was weird, but she is looking at me eyebrows raised, like I missed a punchline. " They all just realized you're a girl, a hot girl, that's what."

"What does that even mean? When have I ever not 'been a girl?" Sarcasm dripping in my words.

"I have my suspicions, but let's just wait until we shop this weekend. You know they are all going to come to 'give opinions' since you don't normally dress up and your brother is probably going to try and smack at least one of them for making inappropriately accurate comments."

"No way, my brother would never fight any of them. They all make inappropriate comments all the time. Why would shopping make it any different?"

"Wanna bet?"

"You sound like Oliver and Sam." I laugh. "But sure, I think you're effing crazy. There is nothing different about me now versus this morning or in training gear versus a dress and they are not all going to want to dress shop with us, that would be torture. I know it will be for me. Sam is just coming to hang out with you and give me a hard time about being awkward as hell."

"Well you sound like all of them with your new colorful language and if they all show up and if your brother argues with any of them you owe me lunch at a place of my choosing." She laughs at me flipping her still sweaty dark hair.

"Deal. What is it with me and making deals with everyone?" I shake my head and laugh as we start to make our way out of the arena too. It's just the two of us now. I'm not sure when the adults left, but it must have been before the guys took off randomly.

"Another product of hanging out with very competitive and idiotic guy friends." She stops and looks around the parking lot. "Those jack*sses left us. Man, you really messed them up, they must be scared of you now." She laughs as we both

start walking towards our street. I just roll my eyes.

She is speaking in riddles and I normally think of myself as a pretty smart person, but I can't figure out what in the 'F' she is going on about. I wave her off when we finally make it back to her house 20 minutes later. The twins' truck is in the packhouse driveway, but there is no sign of any of the guys. I keep on walking to my house and head straight for my room once I'm inside.

The silence used to comfort me. It let me know I was safe and no one was around to find something to correct or criticize, but now that I have been spending so much time with such loud people, it's almost suffocating. I can hear soft music from my brother's room, letting me know he's home. I would love to talk to him about what Sierra was saying. He usually will give me a straight answer when I don't understand people's behavior, then again he left us high and dry with the rest of them, which is just as weird. But I'm afraid to knock on his door, music can mean one of two things. He's doing homework or a girl.

I really don't want to interrupt in case it's a girl. My brother doing the horizontal tango is not something I want to imagine, let alone get a live picture of. Those boys seem to get around and I guess I understand the appeal. They are all tall, hot and completely muscled out and I don't even think they have hit their prime of good looks yet. They know how good looking they are, their egos are a testament to that. Combine that with the fact that they are future leaders of



the pack, makes them celebrities.

I keep this train of thought as I head into my room and straight to the shower. I just never understood the complete lack of self respect it takes to throw yourself at someone with status just for a little bit of attention. If you aren't noticed without having to, sometimes literally, throw yourselves in their path, why bother? They aren't worth the time. They have probably been with all of the Sophomore and Junior girls and are making their way through the Seniors now. Which also surprises me. Kaley doesn't seem to make a big deal about them sleeping around with most of the upperclass female population of our school. She just has a problem with Sierra and I.

