



## Chapter 0446

"Okay, I didn't do anything and I am exhausted. You really did this everyday, Bitty?" Oliver and I were sitting out at the patio table with the rest of the guys, Jena and Lil eating dinner and going over what we did for the day.

"Yeah, I don't do it alone though. Not that you weren't helpful." I backtrack quickly. "I just don't normally do the magic part on my own. It's a lot. What about you guys? How was Sky training?" I smile at Jena and Lil. "Was Dwight as lippy this morning as he was yesterday?"

"Not after his smug ass was paired with me for the patrol run and then Alpha Jen for the first hour of training."

"You have got to quit calling me that." Jena complains. "And yes, that pansy will think long and hard before he says something smartass to a team lead again."

"Technically you are an Alpha, the Alpha of your pack in fact. Why should we not use your title?" Mateo is just stirring the pot. "I still call Alpha Lucas, Alpha and I will call the twins Alpha when it's their time." He shrugs like that is the most natural thing.

"But, like this, sitting here at dinner with no other pack members around, you will still refer to them by their title? I know you don't. You have been friends your whole lives, you use their names in casual settings."



She is sitting next to me, so when he leans in to whisper in her ear, I can hear everything.

"There is nothing casual about you." He growls at her and I can feel my own face flush and she gasps low.

I have never seen my brother like this with any girl. He would flirt a little, but he seems to actually be trying here. He's never given attention to one girl over another. I wonder if he is practicing for his mate. They will be 18 in the spring, maybe his wolf can sense a connection with her even though we have our warrior brands.

"Ugh, stop." She pushes him away and Lil and I share a smile.

When we are all done and heading upstairs, I grab the girls and bring them with me. We have each been attached to at least one of the guys since we got here and I want a little time alone with my friends. No one questions it, until I shut the guys out of my room and we laugh at their whining protests. <sup>1</sup>

"At least dinner wasn't interrupted by the banshee and her dad." Jena says. "It's really hard to have a conversation with them around. They seem like the kind of people who take words and twist them or they like to spread gossip. I don't know how your Alpha deals with it or why. It doesn't make sense for him to just let them roam around the way that they do, and he seems like a pretty strong and authoritative Alpha most of the time. No offense to your

Alpha, they just seem to have some underlying control that they shouldn't."

"None taken. I always thought the same thing, but being so far removed from everyone for so long I didn't know that what they were doing and how they were behaving was wrong. Even when I was getting beat up on a regular basis, it never occurred to me that maybe someone should have stopped it." 1

"So it was her that caused you all the trouble." Lil says pointing to me. "The guys asked us today about it and said you would never tell them who was beating you up."

"I never said it was her." I try to sound convincing as I flop onto my bed.

"You didn't have to, but now you need to explain what the hell is going on. Why does she think she is going to be Luna? Why would anyone allow one person to cause so much trouble unchecked?" Jena asks, sitting next to me.

I sigh. "I don't really know the origin. Luna Ava mentioned that Kaley's parents have been trying to convince her and the Alpha since she was born to make her the twins chosen mate. I know that Kevin didn't take too well to being looked over for the Delta position, even though Delta Kyle is older and the position should be his for that and so many other reasons. She has never really liked me, and I have no idea why, other than no one liked me because of my dad's feelings about my birth." 2

"That's harsh." Lil says. "What's with your dad anyway? You always said he doesn't like you, but you kind of avoid actually explaining."

"There isn't much to explain. I'm the spare Beta, and a female, so that's usually enough for most people. Everyone in this pack knows that my mom died giving birth to me. I am the reason he lost his mate and the reason he suffers everyday." I rub my hands over my face. "I know more now that I have been training with the Alpha King. I guess the women in my family have a hard time giving birth to the next female because of the extra abilities our bloodline gives. They actually need to have special potions and a witch to help them get through labor. I mean they had to have something bad going for them right?" I can't help but laugh. I don't wish for things to be easier, but would it be too much to ask that things aren't always the hard way too?

"So, you're telling me that when you get around to having kids, it's going to be this big production if or when you have a girl?" Lil asks.

"Something like that. But, I'd really like to be in my twenties before I even have to think about that. I feel like the more I know about mates and all of that stuff, I feel like the Moon Goddess should give us some more time without mates."

"You want more time to fool around with other boys before you finally settle down with your mate?" Jena asks and winks at me and of course I blush and shoot up.


“NO! I just wish we got more time to be adults and do things that didn’t involve settling down and having kids right after finally being considered an adult.” I stick my tongue out to her.

“I think she’s right, you want to play the field!” Lil cackles and almost falls off my bed which makes us all erupt in laughter. “But really your pack is kind of weird when it comes to Kaley and her dad. It’s not just here, I noticed out on the run too. People talk about them, but indirectly. No one likes them and they don’t seem to be of use to anyone in the pack and yet they instill some kind of morbid fear. What is really going on?”

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"Honestly, I don't know about Kevin, he's been a part of the school forever, but Kaley uses fear to stay in control of the kids at school. It started as small threats and mean girl comments, but people got used to it and she had to up her game. I caught her physically beating a little girl and I stepped in, that's when she started targeting me. She broke the leg of one of the warrior's daughters with three of her minions and recorded it when I wouldn't give her the answers to a test. The message that came with the video was 'choose better next time.' When I went to my dad the video was gone and couldn't be found and I got in trouble for causing problems. But the little girl was harmed and nothing happened to Kaley."

"She didn't say anything. She was afraid. I'm sure they told her she would be hurt more if she did. That's how things always happen. We have cameras all over the school and yet every time I was pulled into a closet and smacked around or the day I was taken and whipped then dragged out to the forest, no evidence could be found and therefore I 'must be lying to get attention' according to her dad. Since of course I envy her intelligence and beauty.

"AHHH! Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha!" This time Lil did roll off the bed laughing. She pops up like a gopher from the far side. "You have got to be kidding me! That make-up caked-up diva

wannabe? No one wants to be her! That's the dumbest thing I think I have ever heard! They are delusional."

"We need to get into the school and I need access to the computers. She can't cause this many problems and not make some kind of mistake. You are the smartest person I know, there is no way she is outwitting you. You just happen to take her threats seriously and she is crazy enough to follow through on the violence. But there is something we are missing. You are a Beta, beat her ass at her own game and then beat her ass for real. I have been here two days and I want to punch her teeth in." Jena growls.

"I agree. We are stuck here and we train just fine on our own, we don't need to follow your puppies around everyday. How do we get in? What's a good reason for us to be at school since none of us need to be in the building? We need a reason to snoop around and get into every nook and cranny of that school at all times of the day and night." Lil settles herself next to Jena, like she needs to show they are both in this for real.

"They are not my puppies and I'm down with filling our time. I have to have some time between sessions of magic work. It's exhausting. I didn't realize how much Elena was helping me."

"You say they aren't your puppies, but you knew exactly who I was talking about." Lil raises an eyebrow at me.

"Who else would you be talking about? I don't have a large

group of friends. And besides, I think one of the puppies has imprinted on Jena." I smile at her.

"Mateo has not imprinted on me, you are delusional. We annoy each other." She rolls her eyes and Lil snaps her head to the side.

"But you knew exactly who she was talking about." Lil's sh\*t eating grin says everything and we all start laughing. 1

"I can admit that he is good looking, they all are. I mean, I'm surprised you were able to leave, Midge. But he has a huge hero complex and I don't need a knight in shining armor." She shrugs. "The chivalry can be a little overbearing and condescending."

"Okay, I don't disagree. They are overprotective at the best of times though. So I guess it's just something I got used to. I usually just tell them off and then go destroy a punching bag or fight all of them in a round robin. And I also agree that we could be doing something specific with our time. I guess the school is the best place to start. The other thing is the severed fingers that were left, with no scent or anything, similar to Tyler's eyes. It was a message then. I just don't know if I was the intended target then or if it was Luna Ava or Luna Queen Anne, since she was here too."

"Why does it seem like your pack goes through so much more than the average pack?" Lil asks.



"I always thought it was because we are surrounded by water and a perceived easy target or that Alpha Lucas is really close friends with Alpha Reggie. So we are targeted like family would be." I shrug. "I mean, we haven't been attacked the same way Jena's or Tyler's packs were, so I can't say it's unique or unusual."

"But, I don't remember having this much drama with pack members."

"Maybe they tried to keep it quiet too?" Lil supplies.

"What do you mean?" Jena and I ask at the same time.

"Well, think of it this way. You don't want the whole pack thinking that the Alpha doesn't have control, so instead of addressing every single little infraction, certain things are allowed to slide and only major life changing issues are handled when they can't be avoided."

"So you're saying that Skylar being whipped and having silver powder sprinkled on for good measure isn't a big enough reason to discipline?" Jena sounds offended.


"I think that anyone who causes problems should be made an example, but that is why I am a warrior and not a pack leader. If there was no proof other than Midge's injuries, who's to say that Midge didn't do it to herself and try to blame Kaley? Don't look at me like that! It's a known fact that they don't like each other. I think Kaley and her dad are a waste of space, but they have a great system. Think about

it. If you want to beat your enemy you have to think like them. It's what we are trained to do. And as Midge's enemy Kaley planted so much doubt against her, over literal years, that no one would believe her. So without concrete proof no one is going to go near the Cunninghams. It's your noncredible avoid-everybody word against their very involved-in-the-community word. It's what I would do, cause doubt and chaos from the inside and watch it implode on its own. No effort really." She shrugs again and I have to fight to pull my jaw off the floor. <sup>2</sup>

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