

## Chapter 15 The Game

Edrick

Moana and I both shot each other a somewhat annoyed glance as Ella decided, against our wills, to volunteer us to participate in the game as her parents. I didn't know how to explain to the staff member standing in front of us that Moana was just Ella's au pair, not her mother — and we were certainly not married, nor would we ever be.

The teenage staff member looked back and forth between Moana and I with a somewhat disbelieving expression on her face. I knew she could tell that Moana was human and I was a werewolf, but thankfully she didn't say anything.

“Right this way,” the girl said, stepping out of the way and gesturing toward the center of the park where a group of parents and children had gathered in front of a gazebo with a small stage.

Moana and I followed reluctantly, Ella tugging on our hands with even more excitement than she had all day, if that was even possible. As we approached the crowd, we started to get some strange looks from other parents.

I was still wearing my mask, so my identity as one of the world's most famous Alpha CEOs was still hidden, but I knew that people could tell there was something off about our pairing. I was still wearing my work clothes — a sleek white button-up shirt with the collar partially undone and the sleeves rolled up from the summer heat, a pair of tan trousers that had been freshly pressed, and my hair was well-groomed — but Moana

appeared rather plain next to me. She was a pretty woman, but wore a plain linen dress and sandals. I hadn't quite gotten around to taking her shopping yet for some new clothes that would be more appropriate for an au pair of a wealthy family, although if I was being honest I wasn't quite sure if she would've accepted my generosity anyway.

What was even more jarring for the other parents, aside from our differences in appearance, was that Moana was human and I was a werewolf. It was extremely rare for a married couple to have such differences, and it was often frowned upon. I was just glad that my identity was hidden, because as attractive as I found Moana, I didn't want people thinking that I, Edrick Morgan, was married to... a human.

Regardless of the discomfort, we made our way to the waiting area and stood along with all of the other families. While most people gave us snide looks and pulled their children away, there were — surprisingly — a couple of women who approached Moana with warm smiles.

“My, what a lovely couple!” one woman exclaimed, making Moana's face turn red. “And what a cute little girl...” she stooped down to Ella's height and pinched her cheek, which made Ella giggle.

The woman stood, then, and eyed me up and down before turning back to Moana and whispering something to her that made Moana's face turn even more red than it was before. Moana glanced over her shoulder at me with a sheepish look in her eyes for a split second before turning back to the woman, muttering a word of thanks, and staring embarrassingly at the ground with wide eyes as the woman walked back to join her family.

“What did she say to you?” I asked quietly, leaning a bit closer to Moana. She cleared her throat, obviously seeming embarrassed by the entire interaction.

“She... congratulated me on having such a handsome husband and a cute daughter,” she said.

Below us, Ella, looked up with a mischievous look in her eyes and put her hand over her mouth, stifling laughter. At some point I would have to give my daughter a talking to about how rude it was to put Moana and I in a situation like this, but I simply couldn't bring myself to disappoint her on her birthday, so I would play along with it for now. Ella was right about her birthdays; I hadn't exactly been the best father because I was so afraid of our identities being discovered by the papa razzi in public, but it wasn't fair for me to make my daughter miss out on her birthday just because of my own nerves.

The game announcer stepped up on stage then and cleared his throat into the microphone, quieting the small crowd and breaking me out of my deep thought.

“Good evening, ladies and gents,” he said with a plastic smile as he addressed the crowd. “Thank you all for participating in our family event tonight. I hope you all have fun as you compete to win prizes!”

The children in the crowd began to stir excitedly as one of the staff members pulled a sheet off of a table with a flourish. Ella gasped as the grand prize was revealed to be an extremely rare doll that she didn't yet have in her collection. There were other prizes as well, but I could tell already that she was going to be hell-bent on winning that grand prize.

“For tonight's game, you will all be trying to find your way through a maze,” the announcer said. “But — not just any maze! One parent from each couple will volunteer to stand at various pre-assigned points throughout the maze, while the other parent will be tasked with finding them...”

This sounds easy enough, I thought to myself.

“But there's a catch,” the announcer continued, holding up a small black blindfold. “Both parents will be blindfolded. It will be the child's job to use their Mind link to guide their searching parent to the waiting parent,

as well as the searching parent's job to use their child's advice and their own sense of smell to find their partner!"

"Ooh, how fun!" the woman from before said, clasping her hands together. I looked over at her to see her casting an almost condescending glance at Moana — she certainly knew that Moana was a human. This game was clearly geared solely toward werewolves, which put us at a major disadvantage. I let out a small sigh as I looked down at my excited daughter. If we didn't win, I would definitely have to figure out a way to buy her that doll or she would never forgive me.

Staff members came around and handed out blindfolds next while other staff members guided the children toward a tall platform that allowed them to look down into the hedge maze.

"I guess I'll be the one to hide," Moana said, looking a little embarrassed. I nodded and watched her follow the attendant that was leading the waiting parents to their hiding spots, then watched as she disappeared in the maze.

"Now," the attendant said after a couple of minutes, once all of the parents were hidden. "If all of the seekers could line up, we will begin. And please, put on your blindfolds."

I got into place and glanced up at Ella one last time, who shot me a grin and a thumbs up, before I put my blindfold on.

"On your marks... Get set... Go!"

"Go forward," Ella said immediately using our Mind link. "Now left... Now right..."

Unsurprisingly, Ella seemed to have already studied the maze thoroughly before we even started, and I realized that it was thanks to her amazing intelligence that I was actually getting a lead on the rest of the parents. She guided me through the maze with ease, as though she had done this a million times before.

“You’re almost there... Just one more turn to the right...”

I turned right, keeping one hand on the hedge to guide myself.

“She’s there, daddy! Just go forward!”

As I groped my way forward, I felt a strange scent fill my senses... It was faint, but it was there, right in front of me. A sweet, pleasant smell that made my wolf perk up suddenly. This couldn’t be Moana — she had no scent as a human!

But as we lifted our blindfolds...

It was, indeed, Moana.