

# Never again by Malgorzata Uchto

## Chapter 2

### 2. Opportunity

Mandy's POV

I couldn't believe it was really happening. Peter was leaving me. Oh My God! What was I supposed to do now, all alone, heartbroken again? Was this some sick joke or something? My brain kept shouting all the negative thoughts at me. My heartbeat increased. Was I going to have a heart attack? This was it. I was going to die now. He said it. He said it...

Wait!!!! Did he say mate? I didn't imagine it, right? Or was I starting to go mental?

"Did you say MATE?!" I finally found my voice, still frozen in place.

"Yes."

I blinked a few times and started to pace around the living room, biting my thumb nail. My mind started to shut down, and the only word that I repeated constantly was 'mate.'

"Mandyyyy?..." Peter's concerned voice pulled me out of my thoughts.

"Oh my God! Oh my God! Oh, my f\*\*\*\*\*g Gooooood!" I shouted in realization. Clapping my hands, smiling like an idiot, and jumping in place, I turned to face Peter.

His face showed a lot of emotions, my outburst must have shocked him, but the most prominent emotion was worry. He probably thought I was mental, but I couldn't control my emotions. I was happy for my friend.

Giggling like a teenage girl, I jumped on the coffee table and let my feelings out. "My Peter found his maaaaaaate!!!! Ladies and Gentlemen, my Peteeeeer," I pointed at him dramatically, "foooooound his MAAAAAATE!"

"Get your butt down here, baby girl." he ordered, shaking his head, "NOW!" he added. Putting his hands on his hips, he furrowed his eyebrows and pouted his lips, waiting for me to cool down.

Coming back to my senses, I jumped off the table and took predatory steps his way.

"You!" I pointed my finger at his chest, and let my words flow. "You made me feel like I was losing my mind! You were avoiding me, making lame excuses, making me feel abandoned. And to top it all, you resigned from work without even telling me!" I punched his arm. "And you feel authorized to scold me?!" Pointing at myself, I shouted, releasing tears. "I... I..." I couldn't find my voice. I threw myself at him and broke down.

He held me close and let me cry my heart out, murmuring sweet nothings into my ear.

When I finally calmed down, I took a few deep breaths, composed myself, and moved away from his embrace. "So." I cleared my throat. "Let's start again. You were saying...?"

He chuckled and shook his head in amusement. "I said...I found my mate."

This time, I reacted properly. "Oh my God, Peter, I am so happy for you! Tell me everything. Do I know him? Is he a werewolf? When did you meet?... " I shot my questions at him one after another.

He laughed and led me to the couch. Sitting beside me, he reached the table and offered me a beer. I took it vigorously and gulped almost half of it to calm my nerves.

“Easy girl,” he said, taking the bottle from my hand. “His name is Benjamin, Ben for short. And no, I don’t think you know him. He’s not from here.” he answered dreamily. “He’s a werewolf, he came here for business purposes, and we met in the club.” he paused. “We bumped into each other when I passed the VIP room in ‘Stairs’. It was...” he sighed. “I can’t even describe it, magical, I guess. I was speechless, just stood there starstruck admiring his gorgeousness...”

“Wow.” I blurted out uncontrollably, staring in awe at my best friend.

“He invited me for a drink, and since then, it just went naturally.”

How on earth didn’t I recognize the symptoms? For two weeks, he wasn’t himself. He wasn’t my Peter, the carefree and spontaneous freak. He was reserved, like guarding some precious treasure against the ugly world. Now I know. He found his treasure. I can’t blame him, can I?

“Can I meet him?”

“That’s why I’m here. I wanted to ask can I bring Ben here tomorrow for dinner?” His eyes pleaded for me to say yes.

I smiled and nodded my head, “Yes, of course.”

We spent the evening talking about Ben, well I was just listening, mesmerized by his story. His strange behavior had everything to do with Ben. He is a Beta from a pack in South Carolina and came here to finalize their new project. He told me

about the dates they've been on and how complete and safe he makes him feel. He is undeniably in love. I am happy for him. At least he has his happy ending.

After talking, laughing, and planning tomorrow's dinner, we called it quits and ended the night. Peter stayed and occupied 'his' bedroom at my place. Lying in bed, I was exhausted but content, not thinking that, in the end, he will leave me. South Carolina is on the other end of the country. Sighing, I closed my eyes and fell asleep.

...

"Wake up, sleepyhead!" Something heavy hit me. Trying to steal a few more minutes, I didn't move. "Come on baby girl. It's time for coffee."

"Go away, I don't know you," I reached for the sheets in an attempt to hide, but he predicted my moves, tossed them away and grabbed my ankle.

"If you don't want me to treat you the same way, you better move your ass and march to the bathroom. Coffee and breakfast are waiting," he ordered.

Defeated, I did as I was told. After finding my outfit and putting on my makeup, I went to the kitchen when the smell of coffee and bacon hit me. My stomach growled in anticipation. Eating and talking about today's tasks at work, I couldn't help but ask, "Why didn't you tell me you resigned? You went straight to Ryan. Why?"

Putting our empty dishes into the sink, he sighed. "I'm sorry I did it behind your back, but I wasn't ready to tell you. Mr. Williams never asks for reasons, and I knew he would accept it without demanding answers," he explained. "Besides, it was inevitable, knowing Ben lives in a pack and I don't," he added, taking my empty plate.

"You're right. I would interrogate you in a flash," I said, smiling at him. I put my coffee mug in the sink, then turned around and hugged him. "I'm so happy for you, really happy." He patted my head and kissed my temple. A few moments later, we broke our hug and headed to work.

The day went quite fast, a few members of Peter's team complained about his decision, saying he was the best and they won't work with anybody else. Some congratulated his bravery and wished him good luck. I was still a little sad about his leaving, but I knew I could deal with it in time.

Coming back home early to prepare dinner, I quickly took a shower and changed my clothes to yoga pants and a loose t-shirt. Putting my wet hair in a messy bun, I started to cook. Forty minutes later, everything was almost ready. I put the salad at the table with sweet potatoes and white wine. The chicken will be ready in 5 minutes. I quickly went to the bedroom and changed into a simple summer light blue dress and sandals. Nothing fancy, but classy. Just when I was taking the chicken from the oven, the doorbell rang.

This was it, the moment I was waiting for.

Opening the door, I was met with a grinning Peter wearing dark blue jeans and a cream-colored sweater, and when I turned my head right, I was met with a huge wall of muscles in tight black jeans and a black button-down shirt smiling friendly at me. He had dark blonde hair pulled into a manly bun and brown eyes. I wasn't shocked or intimidated. I have seen such a big man before. He looked similar to my brother or his Beta minus the tattoos. Through his collar, I had a little peek of ink on his neck. Big Bad Beta, I thought. Smiling back, I gestured for them to come inside and closed the door.

"Come in, make yourself comfortable, perfect time for dinner." I led them to the dining table.

"Mandy, I would like to introduce to you my mate, Benjamin Owens," he said, facing me.

"Ben, this is Amanda Anderson, my best friend," he added.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Ben. Can I call you Ben?" I said, extending my hand for a handshake.

"Yes, you can, and the pleasure's all mine," he replied in a low voice, taking my hand in his, and to my surprise, he kissed the back of my hand and sent me a wink, making me giggle.

"Such a flirt you have here, Peter." I addressed him and looked back at smiling Ben. "Congratulations on finding your mate. You couldn't get better than Peter," I said, with a smile.

"Thank you, and you're right," he answered, sending a playful wink to Peter, making him blush. I chuckled at that.

When we sat down at the table, Peter immediately started to put food on Ben's plate, complimenting my cooking skills. We ate in a comfortable atmosphere and made small talk about their story. Ben also told me a little bit about his pack, friends, and family. Sudden and strange pain hit my heart hearing that his best friend, an Alpha, is a widower. It broke my heart knowing she died giving birth to their only son. At least he is not alone like some people.

After dinner, the guys sat on the couch, bringing their wine glasses with them. I quickly cleaned the table and put the plates in the dishwasher. Grabbing two more bottles of wine, I joined them.

...

"...And then he said you will probably kill him for not telling you earlier about me and that I have to protect him from your wrath." Ben continued talking about Peter's concerns, laughing at the same time.

Peter was sending Ben daggers with his eyes, making me laugh. We had recently finished our fourth bottle of wine. While it made me a little flushed, they stayed unaffected, damn those werewolf genes.

“Must admit he looked so cute at the time,” he said, putting his right arm at Peter’s shoulders and pulling him closer to his body, kissing his forehead. That gesture made me awe them.

“Well, I must admit that at some point I was hurt he didn’t tell me, but I wasn’t angry – a little disappointed, yes, angry, no.” I answered honestly and took another sip of wine.

Peter released a relieved breath and smiled satisfied, then apologized sincerely. We talked until midnight, laughing, and getting to know each other. Ben was a really good guy, they fit together. Peter is lucky.

After we said our goodbyes and made plans for another day, I took a quick shower, put on my purple shorts and white top, and went to bed. Before the darkness consumed me, I thought about the Alpha and his son, and the same pain hit my heart again. Putting a hand on my chest, I closed my eyes and dozed off.

...

The next few days were filled with many activities such as trips to bars, watching movies, or having fun playing paintball, they even let me win once. They persuaded me to sing one night at the karaoke bar, which was embarrassing. Although they tried to convince me I was great. Yeah, I know better, no more singing. That night we ended up in a fight. Some guy decided to hit on Peter, which made Ben go full Beta on him, and we had to apologize and pay his medical bills. Thankfully he didn’t press charges against us. After that, we simply hung around my place or ate at restaurants avoiding pubs.

Although we had fun and spent a pleasant time together. I knew my time with Peter was coming to an end. In three days, Ben had to go back to his pack and be in charge during his Alpha’s absence due to an alpha training he’ll take part in. I wanted to fill my days with Peter’s presence as much as I could, knowing that our time is limited.

We were shopping at the mall. Our ‘Drama Queen’ needed to purchase new clothes for his new place to make a good impression. That’s my Peter. Worse than any girl.

"Can you please hurry up, I'm hungry?" Ben whined after another hour of shopping.

"You can't rush perfection besides don't you want me to look good?" Peter answered, looking at the full-length mirror in the changing room checking his next outfit.

Sighing, Ben plopped onto the couch I was already sitting on and put his head on my shoulder.

"Goddess, where does he want to fit it all at my place, I'll need to expand my closet," he said, gesturing for at least ten bags of clothes Peter already bought.

"I love him, but I'll go bankrupt in less than a year if he doesn't stop." he sighed, letting his head fall back onto the couch's backrest and closed his eyes.

"This is my fault," I said, apologetically while rubbing his shoulder in comfort. "I had him for six years, he is my best friend, and I treated him like family. Most of the time, it was just us, so I might have spoiled him a little." I made my best puppy dog eyes hoping for forgiveness.

He only turned his head left, opened one eye, and looked at me accusingly. "A little?"

"Is 300 dollars for a pair of sneakers a little?" he narrowed his eyes, "What more did you do to him? I need to prepare myself," he added.

"Well...." I began, just as his phone started to ring.

"Oh Goddess, please don't say it, I don't want to know." Standing up from the couch, he took out his phone from a pocket and excused himself to take the call.



"Call me when he's done," he said over his shoulder, heading to the exit.

"Ok, I'm done, I have everything I need. Where's Ben?" Peter appeared in front of me with at least ten different clothes in his hands, his eyes searching for his mate.

"Great, so let's pay," I said, taking out my wallet while walking to the counter. "Ben had a phone call, so he went outside to answer it."

The shop assistant smiled at us when we argued about me not paying, but I won. Peter took his bags, and we left the shop in an attempt to find Ben.

We spotted him in Domino's sitting at a table, probably waiting for the food he ordered, still with a phone attached to his ear. He looked funny. Dressed in all black. Showing his muscular body covered in tattoos and a cold face emitting his domineering aura. He was surrounded by giggling teenage girls trying to be noticed and boys feeling intimidated by his cold demeanor. If you didn't know better, you might think he's some mafia leader.

We made our appearance just in time to hear him ending the call. "Yes Boss, I'll be there as soon as possible."

"Problems, babe?" Peter asked, concerned when he sat next to Ben and gave him a peck on his lips. Ben growled in pleasure and put a hand at Peter's neck while he was retreating and brought him back, just to smash his lips with Peter's. That made Peter let out a little moan, and the giggling girls whined in dissatisfaction. The boys instead whispered a little 'yes' and made a winning gesture with their hands. Not waiting for live porn in public, I cleared my throat.

"Em, guys, you have an audience, and as I'm happy to see you in love, I'm sure this strange couple in the left corner is about to call the manager, so I suggest you wait until you get home," I advised taking the empty chair across Ben and sat down.

"I don't mind, he's mine, and I can kiss him whenever and wherever I want," Peter announced a little loud for the whole restaurant to hear and smiled at Ben.

Ben only smirked at him mischievously and responded. "Wherever, you say? I have plans for later, so I hope you don't mind being caught." he winked at him, and Peter gulped.

"So, what's the problem Ben, we heard you before you ended the call," I asked worriedly.

"Well, first. I hope you don't mind me ordering for all of us. Pepperoni pizza and extra cheese and mushrooms for you, Mandy," he said while putting his arm around Peter's shoulders. We both nodded, waiting for him to continue.

"My Al...." he looked around checking if there was anyone listening. "My boss wants me to come back sooner. There are some issues with our rivals (probably describing rogues), and I need to take care of the matter. Because he already left for his trip," he said apologetically, looking at me, because he knew that my time with Peter was precious.

"When?" Peter asked the dreaded question I couldn't form because of the dryness in my throat. We both looked, expecting Ben to answer.

"Tomorrow" was his simple answer.

Tomorrow. I have only this night with my best friend, and then he'll be gone. I know that South Carolina is not the end of the world. But not having him here with me will be different, difficult. I'll need some time to adjust to my new life without him. Can I manage? If someone asked me if I can manage to take another department and lead an extra 500 new people, I would say yes in an instant – piece of cake. This is something I can do on a daily basis, but we're talking about private life. Letting someone important to you leave you to live on the other side of the country, that's different. But I think I'll have to figure out a way to survive that. I still have Ryan, although he rarely has time for me, preferring to relieve stress in his favorite way. Man whore. So, it leaves me with my brother and his

mate. Shit! Still not a good idea, he's not around either, living far away in South Dakota.

"Mandy? "Peter's concerned voice brought me back from my daze.

"Sorry I zoned out a little." I giggled. "You were saying?"

"I asked, do you want to help me pack my things tonight? The flight is at 9.00 am, and I need help with all the new stuff I bought. Are you ok?" He took my hand and gave a reassuring squeeze.

I smiled at him in response just as our order was delivered. My appetite was long gone after the bomb Ben threw at me, but I couldn't show how devastated I felt so I said a quick, "I'm ok.", took a slice of my pizza, and started to eat. There was an uncomfortable silence for a few minutes before Ben excused himself and went to the restroom.

"I'm sorry Mandy. It was not my intention to make you feel sad," Peter said looking straight into my eyes, pleading for forgiveness. I stopped eating.

"I'm not sad honey, he's your mate, and understandably you want to be together, either here or at his place. It's just..." I took a deep breath and continued." I never thought it would be so far away, I'll miss you." Tears fell from my eyes when I said the last words, causing Peter to grab me and put me on his lap to hug me tightly. I put my head on his chest and let myself cry harder. It must be some show to people around us seeing me falling apart in a guy's lap after his boyfriend left.

"I'll miss you too, baby girl, but we always have phone calls or FaceTime, or you can come to visit me on weekends, thank Goddess, you are rich, so you can afford the tickets." he joked, kissing my head repeatedly, making me laugh.

"At least I won't spend it on your new unnecessary shoes." I giggled, looking at his face, God he's gorgeous. I want a Peter for me too. He's perfect.

He pushed me away from him a little and held my arms, raised one eyebrow and gave me the 'are you f\*\*\*\*\*g serious' face. "Unnecessary shoes?" he asked accusingly.

I just sniffed and nodded.

"You are all wrong, woman. Without those 'unnecessary shoes', I wouldn't have found my mate, because I was bending over to lace my 'unnecessary shoes' just in front of the VIP room at that club. If I didn't, I would have just passed by and never met him. So I should thank you for buying them for me. It's all thanks to you that I'm complete now." he assured me, and with a final sniff, I put my hands around his neck and hugged him tightly. His hands went around my waist, and he put his head in my hair, giving me another kiss.

"Please, just don't forget me." I pleaded into his neck.

"Never." was his simple reply, and he tightened his grip around my waist. After a few moments of us hugging each other, I took my previous seat and continued eating. Ben came back shortly after our moment, and the talk went smoothly again.

Later in the parking lot, I was searching for my keys, when a voice from behind made me turn.

"You didn't answer my question!" Peter shouted from about six parking places away.

"What question?" I shouted back.

"Will you help me pack this evening?" his voice was pleading.

Smiling at him, I answered. "I'd be honored, see you later!" I waved and climbed into the car, starting the ignition. Checking my view, I stepped on the gas and drove my way home.

....

"Deacon?" I sniffed after hearing the other side pick up the call.

"Are you alright, Mandy girl? Are you hurt? Why are you crying?" my brother's concerned voice invaded my ear.

I sniffed a few more times before I could make a coherent sentence. "He's leaving me, D. He's leaving me all alone here." my voice broke down at the end and I let my tears flow freely. I promised myself to be strong, to take it like a champ, but I couldn't. When I entered 'his' bedroom at my house, all the memories came, and I collapsed on the white, fluffy carpet and cried my heart out. Maybe if I cry now, I won't later. Bullshit. I'll cry myself to sleep at least for a month before Ryan will intervene and give me his famous speech about life being hard.

"He's leaving D. He found his mate, and now he's going to live with him and will forget about me like everyone does." I said, climbing into his bed and smelling the pillow that still has his scent of citrus and something earthy.

"Who's leaving?" Deacon asked, concerned.

"Peter."

"Oh, Mandy, I'm so sorry to hear that, but it's a good thing. He's a werewolf, and finding a mate is the most exciting thing for us. You know that." He tried to reason with me.

"I know, but still, it hurts," I whined.

"Mandy, you should support him, not make it harder for him, you knew this would come eventually. When he finds out you cried about it, he will feel guilty for finding his mate and might do something stupid." Deacon lectured me, "and you don't want that, right? You don't want him to reject his chance to be happy just because he's moving a little away from you." he deadpanned.

He was right. I can't take this opportunity from him just because I feel insecure. Remembering my happy time with my mate, I forgot who I was talking with and spilled the beans unintentionally.

"If finding a mate is so important to werewolves, why did mine reject me?!" I shouted to the phone without thinking.

There was dead silence at the other end, and when I registered what I had just said, I clapped my hand over my mouth with a hard slap, but it was too late.

"What did you say?!" my brother growled into the phone so loud I had to pull away the phone to not make me go deaf. He was seething with anger. Oh, my stupid ass, why did you say that?

"Nothing, I didn't say anything. I'm just an emotional mess right now, and I say whatever my tongue wants." I said, jokingly, hoping he would buy it. But of course, he didn't, he's my brother after all, not by blood but still.

"Mandy, did you just say you found your mate?" he asked coldly. Sighing, I answered, defeated.

"Yes." I think it's about time to share my little secret with him. It's been so long, keeping it to myself, that saying it out loud made me feel a little relieved.

"When?"

"Five years ago," I answered and immediately put him on speaker, placing the phone on the bed. I knew he would shout and probably cause some damage. I wasn't disappointed. I heard a ferocious growl and a sound of wood breaking. Probably his office desk, God why me?

After a few moments of hearing cracking noises and heavy breathing, he finally asked, "Who?"

His voice was so deep I instantly knew his wolf emerged. And that's not a good thing. Almost, immediately I heard Linda's concerned voice asking what happened. After a second, I heard her voice through the speaker, confused.

"Mandy, is that you? What happened?" her voice was between plea and demand. Deacon was still breathing hard.

"I told him my secret," I whispered.

"What secret? What are you talking about, Mandy?" she asked, intrigued and a little confused.

I took a deep breath and explained. "I found my mate five years ago but got rejected." I sighed at the end, waiting for the drama to start. As expected, the questions were thrown at me.

"What?!"

"Who?"

"I'll kill him."

"Calm down Deacon, she won't say anything unless you calm down," Linda said soothingly.

"Why didn't you say anything, Mandy? Goddess – five years! If I knew, I would have..." Deacon asked, finally sounding calm. Probably Linda had something to do with that.

"I know, you would have killed him. That is why I didn't say anything." I explained.

"But why? We're family. Does Peter know?" Linda asked.

"No, he doesn't. You're the first. And I guess I was embarrassed. I know everything about mates, from how to recognize them to how they complete each other and all that stuff," I stated, "but I didn't do my job properly, he was disappointed in me being human, that's why he rejected me, even after...." I stopped.

"Even after what?" Deacon's angry voice hit my ear.

"After we mated," I whispered. The growls and breaking sounds started again. Deacon was furious. Well, what did you expect from an Alpha?

"Mandy, can we call you back in a while, please?" Linda asked pleadingly to say yes.



"Yes, of course, I'm sorry Linda. I didn't mean to cause trouble." I apologized, grabbing my phone to end the call.

"Don't, we're family. We're here to help. Now let me calm down this Alpha male, and then we'll talk, ok?" she suggested.

"Ok, bye." I ended the call and collapsed on the bed exhausted and fell asleep instantly.

...

I woke up to the sound of my phone ringing somewhere in the bedsheets, searching with my hand and closed eyes. I finally found the culprit and answered the call.

"Mandy, I'm sorry for my outburst, but I was shocked." my brother's apologetic voice filled my ear.

"That's understandable, D. It's not every day you find about your little sister's rejection. I'm sorry I didn't say anything sooner," I said with my eyes still closed.

"Still, I'm sorry, but I'm your older brother, it's my duty to protect you, so why?" he asked.

"As I said, I was embarrassed. As a mate, I was supposed to be everything he needs, and seeing you and Linda or Nick and Anna despite all the differences, you're still together. I thought it was me. That I'm not worthy to have a mate, that's why I was silent. I know you love me D, but you can't fight all my demons. I need to do it myself, starting with my ex-mate" I explained. Hoping, he'll understand.

“Who?”

I knew he would ask that. “D, I love you, but this I won’t tell. I don’t want you to do something reckless. I’m fine now. Please understand.” I reasoned with him.

“Ok, but promise one day you’ll tell me?”

“I promise,” I vowed, looking out the window. It’s almost sunset. In an hour, I should be helping Peter packing.

“I have an idea. Maybe it’s stupid but hear me out sis.” I focused on his words.

“Why don’t you take a vacation. It’s almost summer, and what’s better than changing the environment to let yourself heal. Come home or go to Europe, just let yourself relax, what do you think?” he asked hopefully.

Thinking about his proposal, I didn’t see anything wrong with that. It’s a good idea. “You might be right. I’ll think about it.” I answered in excitement. “Thank you, D. You’re the best big bro a girl could have. It’s a great idea. I’ll call you later, I need to head to Peter’s now.” I said, and we said our goodbyes.

Taking a quick shower, I thought about our conversation. It was a good opportunity to deal with my emotions, and slowly adjust to my new situation. Without Peter close.