

Chapter 2

Harlow

Thankfully, I let Thane cook. It is worth giving up my non-existent chef's hat for Thane's food. Besides, if I gave them burnt noodles, it would have left a great impression on my in-laws and probably a bad taste in their mouths.

Dinner is quite pleasant, surprisingly. Afterward, Leon and Rhen clear the table. Now, with nothing to distract me from speaking with the woman, I kind of want to ee, but Rhen and Leon return with a cinnamon and custard tart I didn't realize Thane had also made—no way am I missing dessert.

Thane snorts when I go to get up but immediately sit back down again after seeing dessert. I grab my spoon as Elaine gets up and grabs the bag Raidon retrieved for her. I freeze. Instead of approaching me, however, she passes it to Raidon, who in turn passes it to me. I let out a sigh of relief, knowing that she won't suffocate me by coming over.

"I got a few things for the baby and also a few sentimental things from when Raidon was a pup," she tells me, nodding toward the bag.

"Huh?" Raidon says, leaning forward and looking in the bag. His mother slaps his shoulder.

"Let her open it," she snaps at him, and I undo the ribbon pinching the top of the bag together. Reaching in, I pull out some pink crochet booties and a blanket. The wool is soft in my hands as I hold it up.

"I crocheted that for your little one," she tells me, and I nod, thanking her. Raidon pushes his chair back, as I refold it. I set the blanket on his lap, so I don't ruin it by placing it on the table. Reaching into the bag, I pull out a metal rattle with a teddy bear on it. Leon snorts beside Raidon, and Raidon groans, making me look at him.

"Don't you dare," he hisses at his mother. I glance at her while Thane tries and fails to contain his laughter. Charles shakes his head, sitting back in his chair and draping his arm over the back of Elaine's chair. I look at Elaine. It is quite heavy for a baby rattle.

"Raidon called that his Bam-Bam; he had an obsession with The Flintstones when he was a child," Elaine chuckles, and Raidon growls.

"This was Raidon's?" I ask her, and she nods. Rhen snorts, making me look at him questionably.

"Always trying to embarrass me," Raidon mumbles.

"I think it is sweet," I tell him.

"Yeah, sweet, when he was a baby. He even took that thing to school," Thane laughs beside me. I look at Raidon, whose cheeks are turning a little red.

"Yep, he took it everywhere with him, had to all but pry it from his hands when he was ten after he smacked his teacher over the head with it," Charles tells me.

"That prick deserved it, calling my mom a w***e," Raidon grumbles.

"Hush, you," she scolds her son before rubbing the side of his face with the back of her hand. "He used to be protective of his momma," she chuckles.

I can't tell, I think dryly. He still is! Thane snickers, watching Raidon grow redder at his mother's affections.

"I wouldn't laugh too much, Thane. Don't think I have forgotten how you used to carry around that pink unicorn blanket. It was barely a piece of scrap by the time your mother had enough. She had to sneak into your room while you slept to get rid of that thing."

"I was a boy," he bites back.

"Sixteen is a boy?" she taunts. He huffs and folds his arms across his chest, sitting back.

"Your mother had to sneak it into the trash like she was smuggling drugs over the border. It had holes in it everywhere," Elaine chuckles.

"It was sentimental," he huffs.

"A unicorn blanket?" I chuckle, looking at Thane. Thane swallows but says nothing.

"Wait, she doesn't know?" Elaine asks, looking at Thane. He presses his lips in a line, and I glance at him, before he sighs.

"I had a twin sister. Her name was Scarlett. She died when we were four. The blanket was hers," he tells me.

I suck in a breath, not expecting such a heavy answer. I am curious to know how she died, but I know better than to pry. He will tell me when he wants to.

"Have you got siblings?" I ask Rhen, already knowing that Leon has a sister.

"Two brothers. We aren't close, and they are half-brothers," he tells me. I look at Raidon.

"Only child," he answers, and I nod.

"You have a twin too?" Elaine asks me, before looking at her son. "Raidon told me about her. You two recently reconnected?"

"Yeah, I thought she was dead," I tell her. I wonder if it is genetics that causes so many twins to be born from Alpha lines. I am very glad to be having only one baby, because I am already the size of a house.

Turning back to the bag, I find a pink dress and a teddy bear. I thank Elaine for the gesture, and we talk more about baby stuff and appointments. Charles even goes over my medical charts with me, which Thane keeps on hand. Elaine also goes over my pathology results, telling Thane I am lacking some vitamins, and he tells her he will get supplements for them tomorrow.

When Raidon gets up to help with the dishes, Elaine slides into his seat beside me. She starts fiddling with the gold bracelets on her wrist.

"There is something else I want to give you," she says, looking up at Thane. He nods to her, and she unclips one of the bracelets from her wrist. They are matching, but the one on her wrist has a few different charms on it from the one she hands to me.

It is quite heavy for a bracelet. Charms cover one side of it, and I admire the shiny gold.

"I can't accept this," I tell her, but she shakes her head.

"Hana was going to give it to you. She had the charms rearranged a few weeks before she passed. She told me the other side is for you to fill with your own charms," she says.

"This was Hana's?" I ask, thinking I definitely can't keep it. It should go to Thane, not me.

"Yes, she had the bracelet rearranged for Thane's Omega. She told me she was going to bid in the auctions. She was going to find a mate for him, since he was too stubborn," she chuckles.

I look at the charms on it as Elaine shows me her bracelet. It is an almost identical match, besides a few different charms.

"All four of us had matching bracelets," she explains.

I remember Jake telling me how Elaine, Hana, and his mother were all friends from an Omega facility. Yet he never mentioned a fourth woman.

"You, Jake's mother, Hana, and ...?" I ask.

"Yes, originally, there were four of us. Me, Hana, Soa, and Harper. Now there's only two of us left. We never found out what happened to Harper. Hana got her out before she was auctioned off or put into rotation," Elaine tells me.

"These bracelets were given to us when we were all in the Omega facility together."

"My father bought them for my mother while he was dating her," Thane tells me, and I peer at him over my shoulder.

"I thought your mother was auctioned?" I tell him. He nods his head.

"My father was one of the main sponsors of the facility. While attending a tour there, he met my mom. They dated for a bit," Thane answers.

"Headmaster Waylen was so mad! He scolded her for drawing attention," Elaine chuckles.

"Anyway, when she went to auction, he and his mate, who at the time was only his business partner, made sure to be the winning bid," Elaine chuckles. Raidon comes back in and clears his throat, but I hold up my hand.

"No, I want to listen," I tell him. It helps me understand Elaine better. We aren't so different, and I realize I had forgotten that. She ducks her head, staring at her bracelet, and I know she's thinking the same about me.

"Anyway, Hana came back for us. She gave us these bracelets, and she tried to bid on us, to set us free from the facility, but then politics came into play."

"And my fathers had just led for bankruptcy. Their business collapsed," Thane tells me, as Raidon takes a seat beside his mother. I glance at her husband, Charles, who has a somber expression on his face.

Elaine shakes her head and makes a strange noise. "Anyway, after we all left, we decided to get charms to represent each milestone," she tells me, showing me hers. She pinches a charm between her fingers. It's a tower, and Hana's bracelet in my hand has the same charm.

"The tower represents our time in the facility and us blooming. We were in the same facility she got you from, Harlow," she tells me, and I am taken aback. Some strange emotion chokes me hearing that, knowing that we are connected in a way I never imagined possible.

"The carousel represents my three years in rotation before Hana set me free," she says before showing me the next charm; it is a little birdcage with the door open. "This one represents my mate setting me free of the cage Omegas are put in when in the system."

The next is a medical symbol. "Caduceus and a tassel; these two represent my time in medical school and graduating." The next is a ring, "Me finally marrying Charles, and this one," she holds up an R, "is for having Raidon. And this is the last one," she shows me the charm of a baby. "Hana and I got them together. It represents our future grandchild," she tells me, and I nod, looking down at the same charm on Hana's bracelet.

Hana's also has the ring and the letters T and S, which I now know must represent her children. Elaine leans forward, showing me the other charms on Hana's bracelet. One looks like a tiny little mirror.

"Hana got this one to remind herself that what she sees in the mirror does not define her. She was more than an Omega, and she refused to conform," Elaine tells me before moving to the next one. It is a little book. "This represents the history of Omegas," she tells me, and my brows furrow.

"History?" I ask, and Elaine nods.

"Yes, we weren't always slaves to the system. Omegas were celebrated, revered. Not how it is today," she tells me. Hana's bracelet also has a tiny birdcage, and then I see a little unicorn.

"She got this one after Scarlett passed," Elaine says, moving to the next, which is a little gavel. "This one is for her fight against the system. She tried everything to get the laws changed," Elaine tells me, and I peek over at Thane, who is staring at the table.

"And this one?" I ask, holding up the little crown. Elaine smiles sadly.

"I remember she was so happy when she got this. She was in shock at first," she whispers.

"What's it represent?" I ask her.

"Becoming equal to her mates."

"When she took their serum?" I ask her. Elaine shakes her head.

"No, that didn't make her equal. The serum doesn't make you of equal power. This is from an older tradition, one that is long forgotten. It made her more than them."

I tilt my head to look at Thane.

"I told you my mother was their equal," he says.

"I thought you meant the serum," I whisper, and he shakes his head.

"This one represents something more than the serums, more than marriage ever could," Elaine tells me.

"It takes a very strong Alpha to do it. It's not in our nature. It goes against everything that makes us Alpha," Charles chimes in, smiling sadly at his wife.

"I have never expected it of you," she tells him, and he nods while I turn my attention back to her.

"This crown represents her becoming their Luna," she tells me.

"Luna?" I ask. It isn't a word I am familiar with. Elaine nods her head, but it is Thane who answers.

"My fathers submitted to her. She became their Alpha," Thane tells me.

I would never even think such a thing was possible. It goes against nature and instinct, so I understand what Charles meant by his words.

"It also caused an uproar when everyone in the city realized they would now be answering to a woman in charge," Elaine tells me.