

Birthday



"I'm eighteen, mom. Today might just be the day. I wish you were here to see it, but I know why you aren't, and I'm sorry," I whisper as I look myself over in my long mirror.

Today I took extra care to make myself feel and look beautiful, and since I am off, I don't have to worry about getting dirty.

Everyone gets the day off for their birthday omega or warrior; it doesn't matter. So I don't have to worry about chores today or helping with the party set-up, thank goodness.

I smile at myself happily. I definitely got my mother's looks. I got my father's height since I am 5'10", and my mother topped out at 5'4", but the rest of me is all her. I got her easily tanned skin and her light brown eyes. I also got her dirty blonde hair and small nose. And while I do wish I was thinner, what teenage girl doesn't, I got my mother's amazing curves.

All in all, I am about an eight on the attractiveness scale. But when I count in my personality, I give myself a ten.

Once when I told a friend-enemy that I was a ten in my book, she called me vain. But I just told her I was speaking honestly. My mother always told me to judge myself honestly and to stay sweet. Because a poor personality can sour even a pretty face. My mother also said to admit if you find yourself attractive. Because if you lie and say you find yourself ugly when you don't, you become a liar. And liars aren't pretty.

Needless to say, that girl stopped being my friend. She told our other friends to shun me also, so now I just hang out with the other omegas, which is cool because I love Melanie and Shannon. They keep me smiling. Not to mention Momma Marsh, Trevor, Chance, Lydia, and Chris, who are all older. They were friends with my parents and sweet as can be. But the girls my age, Melanie and Shannon, understand me.

They understand that I only want to be the best that I can be to make my mother's sacrifice mean something. I want to be the best omega I can be, and when I get my wolf and my mate, if my title changes, I want to be the best I can be then too.

My mom always said every wolf matters. Our roles in the pack have meaning, and if they didn't, then they wouldn't exist. Every pack needs an Alpha. Every pack needs a Beta. Every pack needs its warriors and workers. And every pack needs its omegas or caregivers, if you will.

Now, as a female wolf, my wolf will match her mate. So since I don't know who my mate is, I don't know my true level yet. For all I know, my mate might be a warrior, like my mother's parents were. Or my mate might be an omega like my father and his parents were. No female ever truly knows, and until the age of eighteen, we train and master the roles that our parents have, or in my case, had. It's a good system—a perfect one. How could it not be? Our Goddess created this world just for us.

And today when if I meet my mate, I will know. Then I will shift when the moon is at its highest, and I will be complete. I will know what role I will have for the rest of my life. If I don't meet my mate, I have to wait.

Twice a year, all mateless/wolfless wolves go on "the hunt." We gather at the center of the world, which is called Outcast. It is where all the wolves who are rejected or mateless live. At Outcast, there is no fighting. It is neutral ground available for those who need it. So enemy packs are forbidden from fighting there. Everyone is there with one goal in mind, to find our match made specifically for us.

If you are female and find your mate, you leave your pack forever and join the pack your mate is from. If you don't find your mate, you can remain at Outcast or return to your pack. But many stay at Outcast. It boosts the chances of finding your mate. Plus, you are wolfless until you find your mate, so you are a liability to your pack. If your mate has passed before meeting you, you are forever wolfless. The safest place for you is Outcast because it is neutral ground.

I feel the worst for those wolves. They never meet their other half or their wolf spirit, but many mate with the wolves who have been rejected. They live happily, but they probably always wonder.

Honestly, I hope my mate is in my home pack, but I wouldn't mind moving. I have no family in my home pack, so I wouldn't miss anyone. But if my mate is from my home pack and I find him today, I won't be an omega.

The only omegas who are my age and mateless right now are females. A couple of the omegas who were friends with my parents have young pups. But I'm never around them, and I am much too old to be their mate. So if I find my mate today, I will be mating into a different role, which is weird to think about.

I like being an omega. I like taking care of others. But I also find I have a fiery side, like my mom, who was born a warrior. She became an omega when she mated father, but she trained as a warrior for eighteen years. That's how she first became friends with Alpha Patrick and Luna Kandace. Luna's parents are warriors, just like my mothers were.

According to my mother and the other omegas her age, my mom was a savage when it came to fighting. She even made Alpha Patrick submit. But when she got her wolf...her wolf had the characteristics of an omega—a weak body with a kind nurturing spirit.

But my mother didn't complain. She loved her new role, and she said it balanced her friendship with the Luna. My mom said that before they found their mates, Kandace was very competitive with her. Luna liked Alpha, who crushed on my mom. But mom said she didn't return the feelings that Alpha had. She was relieved when her mate turned out not to be the Alpha.

The only thing hard for me to swallow is if my mom had gotten the stronger wolf spirit, she might still be here. She might not have had to fight teeth and claws in her stronger but also weaker human body. As wolves, our hide is thicker and can take more damage than our human body. But my mother's wolf spirit had zero fight, and my mother chose to defend that day in her human flesh.

I smile a bittersweet smile as I clean up my room. I think of my mother's last moments often, and while I can't be more proud of her and who she was, I wish she had just run. I wish she had given our enemy what they came for. But that just wouldn't be my mother. She would have never run...not like someone else I know.

I grind my teeth together at that last thought and slam my makeup box closed a little harder than necessary.

Stupid Luna! If only she had helped. If only she had shifted and used her Alpha wolf spirit. She could have fought side by side with my mother. They would have been able to handle the threat and keep them from doing what they came to do, but instead, my mother died, and only I know why. Only I know what transpired between my mother and our enemies that day. And while she won, she still died.