

Chapter 3

Alaric

She’s covered in cuts and bruises! Who the fuck would do that to her and why do I have this overwhelming need to find them and end them slowly and painfully? She’s a tiny waif of a thing, thin and frail. Only the worst kind of bully would do that to someone like her.

“Tell me who hurt you, sweetling.” I don’t mean to growl but I can’t help it.

I’m not a soft man. I’m used to commanding respect, not coddling little omegas. But she doesn’t seem put off by it, in fact, she appears to ignore it completely.

“Who didn’t?” She shrugs like it’s no big deal. “Here, I brought you some food. It’s not much, but you need to keep your strength up.”

She chatters away, unwrapping her little bundle and presenting it to me like a sacrificial offering. She doesn’t seem affected at all by her injuries though I can tell by looking at them that they must be painful. It’s almost like she’s accustomed to this kind of abuse and I don’t like it. I don’t like it at all.

“I asked you a question, sweetling. I expect an answer.” My tone is firm, brooking no argument, but I manage to keep my aura in check. I’m not used to being defied or ignored.

She sighs, exasperated but resigned. “The Beta’s daughter hates me. Well everyone hates me, but she detests me more than the others. She makes it her mission in life to hurt me when no one is looking.”

“And her friends are all too willing to join in on the fun. Today was just worse than usual. Now, let me check the nasty bump on your head.”

“That can wait. Tell me why you say everyone hates you.” It’s clear by her run down little shanty and the lack of food in her pantry that she’s not well cared for by the pack. It’s inexcusable and I want to know why.

“I don’t have a wolf.” She looks away when she answers, her face coloring with shame. “I’m an embarrassment to them.”

“I see.” I keep my expression neutral, but inside, I’m enraged. I knew the moment I met her she didn’t have a wolf. Being wolfless is an anomaly but it happens sometimes. There is nothing shameful about it. Any good Alpha would care for all members of his pack equally.

My wolf rumbles unhappily, pushing me to comfort her but I don’t want her to get attached. We haven’t even exchanged names yet and it’s better that way. I can’t stay here long.

“And the Beta’s daughter? What is her problem?” I press for more information. Not out of concern for her but because anything she reveals could be beneficial to my mission. At least that’s what I tell myself.

“She doesn’t like that the Alpha’s son, Cassius, is nice to me. She’s decided he belongs to her and wants me to stay away from him. She thinks I’m trying to seduce him or something.

“Which is ridiculous.” She wrinkles her nose adorably. “I can barely speak around him. I get all tongue-tied when he’s around, hardly seductive behavior. And it’s not like he’d seriously consider someone like me anyway.”

“Hmm.” I mumble. “You don’t seem to have a problem talking to me.”

“You’re easy to talk to and a good listener.” She rattles on, not missing a beat. “Anyway, Daphne is as psychotic as they come and unfortunately, I’m in her line of fire.”

“Maybe it would be prudent to steer clear of the Alpha’s son if that’s a trigger for her.” I suggest the obvious but this little spitfire isn’t having it.

“Absolutely not! He’s the only person in this pack that’s ever been kind to me and I won’t repay him by avoiding him to save my own skin.” She snaps. “Besides, spending time with him, however short it may be, is the highlight of my day. And he’s very nice to look at.”

I have to hold back the snarl threatening to escape at her words. Why should it bother me if she has no sense of self-preservation, wasting her time on a man like Cassius Sloane. From what I know of the man, he’s no good for her but it’s not my place to tell her so.

“Oh! Guess what!” She exclaims without waiting for an actual guess. “Tomorrow is the big contest to determine who the new Chief Omega for the packhouse will be!

“I’m going to compete! If I’m chosen, I’d get to work inside everyday instead of out in the fields in the sweltering heat. But the best part is, I would be working closely with Cassius everyday to make sure everything is to his liking.

“We’d be spending lots of time together, choosing menus for pack dinners and going over his schedule, making sure he has everything he needs for meetings and such. It would be a dream come true for me!”

This time a growl does slip free. For some reason, the thought of her spending time with that man annoys the shit out of me! I really need these wounds to heal soon so I can be on my way before this little omega really gets under my skin.

She flinches slightly at the sound and I feel guilty for scaring her. “I’m sorry. I won’t hurt you little one.”

“I know. I’m not scared of you. You’re my friend.” She says confidently, offering me a radiant smile.

She helps me lean forward and cleans the wounds on my back, her touch patient and gentle. I’ve noticed she hums while she works and the sound soothes me as I breathe through the pain. But something about what she said is nagging at me.

“I’m happy to be your friend, sweetling. But you shouldn’t trust so easily. You don’t know me that well. If I were someone else, you could’ve been in real danger. I would think your pack has taught you that lesson well.”

“And if I’d let them break me, if I closed myself off, suspicious of everyone instead of choosing to look for the best in people, you wouldn’t be alive today.” She pushes back, her lips turning up in a challenging smirk.

As much as I love a good challenge, I let the comment go. I have a job to do and bantering with a pint-sized omega is not part of the plan. I need to focus my energy on healing so I can move on. But a tiny ounce of guilt pricks at me when I see her face fall at my obvious dismissal.

Why do I get the feeling this tiny little wolfless omega is going to be the death of me?