

Chapter 5: Saying Goodbye

Kennedy

It isn't until I get to my room that it hits me. My entire life is about to change.

"Sweetheart, are you okay with this? You can say no. You don't even have to accept Alpha Quirin as your mate, although, I'm pretty sure that you are happy about being mated to him," my mother says, coming to stand in front of me.

"I've always loved him, mother," I say.

"I know. I've watched you watch him all your life."

"You have?"

"What kind of a doctor would I be? What kind of a mother would I be if I see what others don't, but I don't see my own children. You have always been very dedicated and very driven, Kennedy. You knew from a very early age that you wanted to be a doctor and you've never wavered from that. You knew from a very early age that you wanted Alpha Quirin, and you've never wavered from that either. He's a tough nut to crack, but if ever there was a nutcracker in this family, it's you, Kennedy," she says, making me laugh. I feel tears pricking my eyes.

"You'll have a hard road in front of you. But if you want this, if you really want this, then I know you'll prevail. MY daughter doesn't fail. She knows what she wants and she goes for it, no matter how hard the road gets, no matter how long it takes, no matter how much effort she has to put in. She will prevail. So, I'll ask you again. Is this what you want, Kennedy?"



"Yes. Yes, he's what I want. Alpha Harold said that his pack is very different than ours, but... Quirin is very different than father."

"Yes, he is. I know you've seen it in him. I've seen it too on rare occasions, but there is a softer side to Alpha Quirin. Find that side of him. Make him be that person with you. If you can do that, if he can do that, then I think that the two of you can be happy."

"Thanks, Mom."

She pulls back but doesn't let me go. "If at any time things get too rough, you change your mind for any reason..."

"I won't." 1

"I know, but I have to say this anyway. It's what your father wanted to say to you before. You always have a place here. Your father will always keep you safe, even if it means going against Alpha Quirin."

"There's enough animosity between them, Mother. I would never do that, not to Dad or Quirin." 1

"Just know, if you ever need us, we'll be here for you."

"Okay. Now come on, before Quirin decides we need to leave and I have nothing packed. You know how he hates these types of events."

"I do," she says, turning to grab my suitcase. "I also know that he's never missed one where you were the person being celebrated," she says.

"He's never missed any," I say distractedly as I look around trying to decide what I want to take with me and beginning to put things in my own small suitcase.



"Kennedy, how many of your sister's and brother's birthday parties has Alpha Quirin attended?"

I frown. "He was invited to those?"

"Every one of them. Just like he was always invited to yours and Connor's."

"I just assumed he was invited to ours because of Connor being the Alpha heir."

She shakes her head. "He was invited to all of them. But yours are the only ones he ever attended, and I don't think it's because he was trying to create a bond with Connor."

I think about that, feeling something warm blossom inside me. Maybe Quirin felt the same pull to me that I felt to him. I know I'm much younger than he is, but maybe...

"Kennedy, there's something else I want to discuss with you," my mother says.

I turn and look at her.

"Tonight, Alpha Quirin will make you his. It's a wonderful time, sometimes. You've been in the hospital long enough that you've heard of women who said their first time was good and others who said it was horribly painful. I don't know what Alpha Quirin's experience is with women..."

"I know he's been with other women," I interrupt.

"But how many of those women were virgins, Kennedy?" she asks patiently, and I blush.



"I don't know what Alpha Harold and Luna Farrah have told him about a woman's first time and I can't see Alpha Quirin being comfortable enough to sit through that conversation. So you need to be prepared to make him slow down, take his time with you, so that you don't tear too badly. If he takes his time, the pain isn't too bad, and the pleasure makes it worth it. Don't be surprised if you bleed even the first couple of times, that's normal. Just try to talk to him first. Try to get him to take it slow the first couple of times. Once your body adjusts and the two of you find what the other likes, it will get better."

I nod.

"Your mate is getting antsy, Ken," my brother's voice says in my head. 1

"I need to go, Mother."

"I know," she says, pushing my folded clothes down into the suitcase. "I'm going to miss you. I don't know what I'll do everyday without you in the hospital with me," she says, and I hear her voice catch.

"I'm going to miss you, too," I say, feeling the tears burning my eyes again. She opens her arms and I rush into them.

"You be the best friggin doctor any pack has ever seen! Do you hear me?" she says fiercely.

I nod. "I've had the best role model in the world!"

"And when you start taking classes, make sure your on-sites are here. I want to see how you're progressing."

"Okay," I say, hugging her tightly.

We grab my suitcases, one for clothes and one for toiletries and I take a



final look around the room. I'd packed a picture of my family and one that I had from a birthday party years ago that had Quirin in it. That picture had been in pride of place on my dresser for years.

When we get downstairs, my brothers and sisters, father, and Quirin are waiting for me. I'm not sure if my father told the others to continue with the party, or if they just didn't realize that I was leaving. That's okay, now that I've found my mate, the Alphas in the room will be looking for their next possible Luna. My sister, Wendy, should be thrilled. She's the next oldest Alpha female and will be getting a lot of attention the rest of the evening.

As we step off the last stair, my father and Quirin step forward to take the suitcase out of my hand. I watch my father grit his teeth but step back, acknowledging that Quirin, as my mate, is now responsible for taking care of me.

I go around and hug my sisters and brothers, saving Connor for last. 'You know you always have a home here, Ken,' he says in the mind link.

'I do. Thank you. I'll see you next week.'

My father hugs me tightly, much longer than normal, almost as if he's afraid to let me go.

"I love you," he says.

"I love you, too." 1

"Are you ready?" Quirin asks me.

"Yes."

We walk out to my car.



"What about your car?" I ask him.

"Henry drove, so I don't have a car," he says, putting my suitcases in the trunk as I open my door. I feel the heat of his body at my back as I look at my family once more.

"Alpha Quirin, I'm trusting you to take care of my daughter," my mother says.

If he wasn't standing so close, I'm not sure I'd have noticed the shift in my mate. I know that if those words had come from my father, they would have made Quirin angry. But from my mother...

"I'll take care of her, Luna." He says it with absolute sincerity, and I see my father and brother relax.

I turn and look up at the man that will be wearing my mark later tonight.

"We'll take care of each other."

I wave one last time and then get into the passenger seat of my car. Quirin gets into the driver's side, and we pull away from the packhouse and my family, the only home I've ever known.

I take a deep breath and look at the road ahead. No matter what comes my way, I know I can handle it.