

Chapter 2: Delay Tactics

Cyra

“What do you mean you’ve been accepted to the Warrior Academy?” my father, Alpha Arden, demands.

Behind him, leaning against the wall, his face set in an unemotional mask, is my intended mate, Alpha Stellan. I found out a year ago that my father created what is called an Alliance Bond with Alpha Stellan’s father. In order to solidify the alliance between our two packs, they wrote up an agreement dictating that I would be mated to Alpha Stellan and become his Luna.

Because our packs have been in an alliance, I’ve known Alpha Stellan for years. It’s not that he’s not a nice man or a good man, I’m sure he is. But when I turned eighteen last week, I realized that he also isn’t my fated mate. That would have made things simpler. But I wasn’t surprised. Stellan is nice enough, I’ve just never been enamored with him the way other women are. I don’t care that he’s an Alpha, probably because I’m one too. What I do care about is that my choice to find my fated mate has been taken away from me by my own father, no less.

So, in an act of rebellion, I applied to the Warrior Academy six months ago. I didn’t expect to be accepted. Only twenty wolves are accepted each year, and this year, I am one of them.

“It’s simple, father. I applied to the Academy, and I was accepted,” I say patiently.

“You don’t need to be a strong warrior. You have Stellan for that. You just need to be a good Luna and give him heirs.”

“Yes, because that’s all a mate bond is to you, isn’t it father? Having an obedient Luna who pushes out babies!” I say getting angry.

“Having the right Luna is the most important thing for an Alpha,” he growls.

“Then perhaps, Stellan should look for his fated mate since we all know I’m not her!” I say, getting to my feet and shouting back at my father.

“Let her go,” Stellan says quietly.

“What?” I say, turning toward him. He pushes off the wall with the elegance of an Alpha. There’s really nothing wrong with him. He’s attractive, as all Alphas are, with blond hair and green eyes. He’s just ... bland. He’s boring. I need excitement in my life and I expect that, like my father, Stellan will want a quiet Luna who gives him an heir. After that, I’m pretty sure that he’ll just ignore me.

I’m confident that’s what my father would have done with my mother if she hadn’t died in childbirth.

“Everyone knows that the Warrior Academy is elite simply because they only let a handful of students in every year. You have to have the right credentials, the right background, the ability to show that you can maintain among the other elites in the packs, and they also have to show that you’re an intelligent thinker. The few warriors I know that have come out of the Academy are some of the strongest, smartest fighters I’ve ever met. Even the ones who aren’t Alphas fight like they are. You going to the Academy will only make our pack stronger when you return. I had hoped that we could complete our marking and mating ceremony this weekend, but if you’re leaving, our wolves would struggle to be apart for so long,” Stellan says.

‘I wouldn’t struggle,’ Rina, my wolf, says. She’s not any happier about this arranged mate bond than I am. She, like me, has always wanted her fated mate. My parents weren’t fated mates and from everything I’ve heard about them, there was no love between them. I sometimes wonder if my mother died just so she could just get out of her crummy life.

Stellan walks over and strokes his fingers down my cheek. I force myself to hold still and not yank away from his touch.

“Thank you, Stellan. I know you didn’t ask for this mate bond any more than I did, but I also know that taking your place as Alpha is important to you. It’s only one year. Many Alphas wait longer than that to find their fated mate. I’m sure one year will only make our bond stronger,” I say.

‘Or at least give us time to figure out what we can do to get out of this mess,’ Rina says in our mind space.

‘Maybe he’ll find his fated mate while we’re away,’ I tell her.

‘Do you think he’d accept her?’ she says, doubtfully.

‘Probably not,’ I sigh, fighting to hold still as Stellan leans in for a kiss. He presses his lips to mine but there’s nothing - no spark, no excitement, no love ... just dewy lips pressing against mine.

“When do you leave?” he asks when he pulls back.

“Two weeks.”

“Then we can spend some time together before you go. I’ll return home today as I planned, but I’ll come back this weekend and we can spend time together before you leave.”

“Thank you for understanding,” I tell him.

“It’s a good thing one of us does,” my father growls. “One year, Cyra, that’s it.”

I hold his gaze while both men walk out of the room, then I let my shoulders slump.

‘You heard him, Rina. One year. We have one year to figure out what the hell we’re going to do!’

I avoid my father over the next two weeks as much as possible, spending my time packing to be gone for a year and seeing Stellan on the weekends.

He tried to convince me to at least seal our bond with sex, but I declined, saying that Rina would struggle with the distance if we did. In reality the thought of sleeping with Stellan doesn’t excite me any more than his chaste kisses do. I imagine that we’ll take off our own clothes, climb into bed, he’ll roll on top of me, slide it in, pump a few times, then roll off me and fall asleep.

What I need is a man who will press me against the wall, nip at my lip and demand entrance to my mouth. A man who will fight for dominance and win. A man who will bend me over a desk and take me from behind because he can’t go another minute without being inside me. A man who will take me outside, covering my mouth with his hand while he thrusts into me so he can muffle my cries of pleasure because we’re close enough for others to hear us.

Rina begins purring in my mind. ‘Yes, that’s EXACTLY what we need.’

When it’s finally time for me to leave, I say goodbye to my father, who at least made sure to pay for the Academy for the year and put enough money in my account to ensure that I wouldn’t want for anything this year.

Stellan gave me another one of his chaste kisses, telling me he’d come visit me once I was settled at the Academy and then I got in my car, waving as I drove off.

It wasn’t until I left our pack lands that I felt like I could finally breathe for the first time since I found out that I was basically being gifted to Alpha Stellan as his Luna.

I rolled down my windows, turned up the radio, and let my new-found, if temporary, freedom roll over me.

Hours later, I arrive at the Academy in a rush of excitement. There are people EVERYWHERE! Or at least it feels like they’re everywhere. People are in various stages of checking in and unloading their cars. There are people standing around guiding newbies like me to find where we’re supposed to be. It’s organized chaos.

I pull up and give the person directing cars my name.

“Alpha Cyra, your check in station is right over there. Park anywhere you can find a spot, check in, get unpacked, then go park your car in the designated spot. Your check in person will tell you where that is,” he says, marking me off on his tablet and walking to the car behind me.

I find a spot and park, going to the check in table I was directed to. I get my room assignment, key, parking spot, syllabus, class schedule, and a map of the campus. It’s a small campus with only three buildings; dormitories, workout room and sparring center, and classrooms.

Here, being an Alpha doesn’t give you any special privileges, other than probably being prioritized on the entrance list. All underclassmen are on the first floor. I go back to my car and grab as many bags as I can carry before walking inside the dormitories. There’s no differentiation between males and females at the Academy. They don’t admit based on gender at all. It’s solely based on your essay, your educational scores, your experience, and your future goals. I lied a bit about my future goals, but no one here needs to know that.

The moment I step foot inside the dormitories, my heart drops. Rina stands up in my head, instantly alert.

Oh no. What are the fucking odds?

I draw in a deep breath of his fresh, clean, bamboo scent.

When I open my eyes, I see him standing in the hallway. I don’t know how I know it’s him, other than the intensity of his gaze on mine.

He growls possessively and in three steps, he has me pressed against the wall of the dormitory, his mouth taking mine in the most dominant , possessive kiss I’ve ever experienced in my life.