

Chapter One

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Alpha Quinn Danvers

I glanced out the windows and into the centre of the Pack village. It was a warm day and I watched as my pack members went about their lives. I had the beginning of a headache and I needed a break from the paperwork for a little while.

I paused when I saw a flash of bright red hair. I knew instantly it was Ruth 'Eden' Glass – the newest member of my Pack. She was walking through the pack village, in the direction of her small cottage. She was wearing workout clothes and her flaming red curls were held up in a high pony tail. A 'cheerleading' ponytail I guessed. I smirked as I watched her fuss over the numerous bags she was carrying, looking flustered.

She introduced herself as Eden, but I thought she looked more like a Ruth. To me, she was Ruth. The name suited her more. Ruth was beautiful – I'd have to be blind not to notice that. Her figure was petite and muscled, with flawless porcelain skin which contrasted her standout fiery hair.

A knock came on my office door as I was watching Ruth. "Come in" I called, staying in the same position. I was smirking to myself as I watched Ruth get caught by Doris – one of the eldest Pack members – who began to chat to her. I could see she wanted to escape, no doubt she had some kind of cheerleading practice to get to, but there was no escaping Doris once she caught you at a vulnerable moment. That women could talk for hours.

"Hey, boss, ya creeping on the pack again?" my Beta called out to me. I laughed at Ken as he walked into my office. He moved over to the window next to me and followed my line of sight. "Ah, so it's only Eden you're creeping on?" he teased. I stopped myself from correcting him about her name, remembering only I thought of her as Ruth.

"I was just taking a break and she happened to be in my sight line" I explained nonchalant.

"Sure" Ken snorted, "and you just happened to refuse all transfers into the Pack for the last three years but then suddenly let her in. It's got nothing to do with the fact that she's single, beautiful and completely your type?"

"Stop playing matchmaker" I stated, giving him a stern look.

"I'm not playing anything. Just saying what I've noticed. It's been ten years since your mate died, Quinn, maybe it's time to settle down. The Pack is--"

"I know how the Pack feels" I cut him off, strengthening my look. Ken held his hands up in surrender and laughed.

"Alright, alright, I get it. You're not staring at Eden and you're not interested at all".

"I wouldn't say at all" I grumbled and he smirked. "But, I'd never go there" I carried on quickly, before he could tease me anymore. "She's got mate problems, the dramatic kind. That ain't the kind of shit you get involved in. Mates are mates".

"And she divorced her mate and left her pack because of him" he countered.

"And she can't even say his name. I don't know what went down, that's her own business, but you don't fuck with mates. It's not how it works" I told him firmly. "Plus, I'm not really interested".

"Uh-huh" he smirked, before we turned away from the window. He dropped a brown file onto my desk. "These arrived earlier".

"What are they?" I asked, sitting back at my desk and opening the file up.

"Documents from the Equinox Pack. Alpha Zev has been speaking to a few other Alphas about Tristian Masters. They don't think he's fit to run his Pack anymore, so they want to overthrow him. But, it's not easy as officially none of his pack members have made any formal complaints about his treatment of them".

"I knew this would be coming" I sighed heavily, rubbing my temples as my headache was beginning to get worse. "And let me guess, because we're the closest territory to Solar Mask Pack, it's going to be my job to gather evidence about him?"

"Correct, as always Boss" Ken laughed.

I sighed heavily, "I get that Seth Zev is like the big shot Alpha and all that, but he is a right pain in my ass. Why does he always have to get involved in other Pack's affairs? First with those Yellowstone Wolves last year, and now this bullshit".

"Not to mention he's a paedophile" Ken added.

"He's not a paedophile, his mate's just a little younger than him" I shrugged. Ken gave me a look. "Alright, a lot younger than him. But he can't help that, the mate bond is the mate bond".

"Still weird as fuck though. Don't like shit like that, ya know?" he snorted.

"Yep, not arguing that". I sighed and shook my head in annoyance. "Ignoring me, I'm having a bad week and I'm bitching like a teenage girl. I'll go through the paperwork and call the Equinox Pack myself. Thanks Ken".

"Sure thing, boss" he nodded, before walking away. He paused in the door and spoke back to me. "You know, you might not be having such a bad week if you got laid" he grinned. I gave him a sardonic look.

"Hey, I just might know a girl. Mid-twenties, red head, recently transferred to the pack? Her name is Eden. Heard of her?"

"Get out of here before I make you go through all this paperwork" I snapped, shooing him out. He gave me a boyish smile, the kind he used to give me when we were kids, before he disappeared out my office. "Idiot" I muttered under my breath, but I was smiling.

I spent a few hours going over the paperwork, before speaking with Seth Zev, before finishing some other work I had to do. When it got to evening, my headache had finally disappeared but I was grumpier that I had been before.

"Hey, Quinn" Ken popped his head into my office, as I was grabbing my jacket to leave. "Diana is making ribs and she wants to know if you want to come over for dinner?"

"Sure" I shrugged. Ken was not only my beta, he was also my best friend and I knew that he could see I was getting stressed lately. Him and his mate had me over at their house at least three times a week, if not for food for some kind of movie night or games night. I knew they were worried about me, heck I was worried about me.

Ten years ago, when I was only twenty three, a group of dead Werewolves were found on the border of my territory. They were from another Pack and they'd been injured in a battle and they'd come to my territory to try and gain asylum. However, their attackers had caught up with them and finished the job before we got there. Among the dead was a girl, roughly around the age of twenty, with bright blonde hair and sun-kissed skin.

She was my mate.
She was dead before I got there.
I never even found out her name.

That was ten years ago and still her face haunted my dreams – that unknown girl was the person I was supposed to spend my life with and I never even got to meet her. It was cruel and unfair, but that was life I guessed.

And after hitting thirty, and still not taking someone else as a mate, my Pack began to worry. Not only worry that I didn't have an heir to take over in the future, but also worry that my isolation was going to push me over the edge. Wolves didn't take isolation from pack members or mates very well.

Maybe that was why Ruth intrigued me so much. She'd not only left her mate – who was still very much alive – she had also lived by herself for almost three years. That kind of isolation drove most Wolves to suicide, but Ruth didn't seem at all affected. I got the impression from her that she preferred her own company, but that was unusual.

I walked back to Ken's house with him, smiling and greeting any pack member I walked past. My father had been a cold man and I never liked how much he distanced himself from the Pack. So, I made sure that I was always approachable and tried to get involved in as much as possible.

I heard Ken's children before I saw them. Ken had a thirteen year old daughter, a nine year old son and five year old fraternal twins. His house was always busy and Diana was always dealing with some drama or another.

Dinner was as crazy as it always was in Ken's house, but it was normal to me. Ken, Diana and the kids were family and I loved the dinner drama. But, that night it took a toll on me. Perhaps it was Ken teasing me about Ruth earlier that night, or my nostalgia for my lost mate, but suddenly I was succumbing in that house. That house full of love and children and life.

"Oh shoot, I just realised I didn't send one of those documents back to Seth" I commented, as Diana was clearing the plates.

"Hey, no talking shop in this house" she reprimanded me playfully.

I laughed, "right, yes, no work talk here. I know the rules, Di. However, this is a serious situation and I need to head back".

"You can just do it in the morning" Ken shrugged.

"No, better do it now". I stood up and pushed my chair back. "Thanks for the food, Di, it was lovely as ever". I turned to the kids, "you kids behave tonight and go to bed when your daddy tells ya to".

"Yeah like that is ever going to happen" Ken snorted, and his twins poked their tongue out at him. My stomach twisted slightly and I must have made some sort of facial expression, because he glanced back at me. "You sure you're alright?"

"Yeah, man, I'm fine. Just tired. I'm going to send that paperwork off and get straight home and into bed" I laughed. I said another quick goodbye before escaping the house. I was so tense as I drank in the cool night air. I tried to shake my mood off. Ken was my best friend and I hated when I got in these moods because I always felt a little resentment towards him – he got the life I always wanted. The beautiful wife, the picket fence, the kids. Whereas I had an empty house and wrinkles.

I took deep breaths as I walked into the thickets of the forest. I decided an evening run might help me clear my head and burn off some of my mood. I stripped off my clothing and hung it over a tree branch, before limbering up slightly.

I quickly shifted forms, my large midnight black Wolf taking the space my body was before. I stretched out my form, my muscles popping and creaking as I did so. I sheathed and unsheathed my claws a few times, before taking off in a slow jog. After my body was warmed up a bit, I pushed myself to a full run.

I ran around my territory for close to an hour, pushing myself as hard as I could. Sweat forced my fur to cling to my flesh and my paws were caked in dirt. But my mind was clearing and it was easier to breathe.

When I heard the sound of fast dance music, I slowed my run down to a jog and followed the sound. By coincidence, I had ended up outside of Ruth's cottage. It was a dark evening and I blended into the night, so I had no worries about her seeing me. I eased up to the window and peeked inside. In the living room, her furniture was all pushed to the sides and she was dancing in the middle. The music was fast and rhythmic and she kept pace, dancing in quick and athletic moves. She threw a few jumps in their before adding a backflip.

I watched silently with impress. "Five...six...seven...eight" she countered out loud, clapping her hands together before doing some punching movements. I smirked in amusement; she was such a cheerleader.

I spent a few hours just watching Ruth. And for the first time in years, my mind was clear.

A/N - this story will be updated every Friday evening (UK time).

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