

## Chapter Two

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#### Ruth Eden Glass

"Alright, again" I shouted, as I pressed play on my speakers. I counted them in and then the routine started. I watched closely as my cheerleading squad went through the routine for sectionals. Ashley, the captain, led the routine as Kim, the main flyer, made the stunts perfect.

As I watched I noticed at least three members of the squad were o time. I sighed heavily, putting my hands on my hips, before stopping the music. "Stop, stop, stop" I shook my head. They all groaned in complaint as they wiped sweat from their brows. "You guys have got to get your head in the game. Half of you are out of time, base's you look like you're struggling and Kim, honey, you need to point your toes".

"I'm trying coach" Kim sighed, pushing her blonde curls from her eyes.

"I know you are. But, guys, sectionals are just around the corner. At this rate, we are not going to advance to the next round".

"We need to advance to the next round, guys" Ashley piped up.

"I'm sorry, but I got loads of shit going on at the moment" one of the boys towards the back spoke up. "I have got my mid-terms coming up and I got a project due".

I sighed heavily as I looked at my squad. Their bodies were glistening with sweat and they all were still breathing heavily. They were good kids and they tried hard. "Alright, guys, I have to tell you guys something". I shied awkwardly on my feet. I had only been the coach for the Memphis All Stars for two months, but I felt that they trusted me well enough.

"I've been keeping something from you guys, because I didn't want to freak you all out and have you worrying about stu " I admitted, "but the Dean told me that if we don't make it to nationals this year that they're cutting our budget for next year".

"But we don't have a budget for next year then we won't be able to compete next year" Ashley frowned, working it all out.

"Exactly" I nodded.

"But that's not fair" she yelled, "they never cut money from the Football team or the Basketball team. We work just as hard, if not harder, than them".

"Believe me, Ashley, I know. I fought as hard as I could for the squad" I admitted. "And I was lucky. They were going to cut the budget now but I managed to convince them that if we got to nationals then they couldn't cut our budget".

"So we have to make sure we kick some ass all the ways to nationals" Kim added in, and the rest of the squad muttered in agreement.

"Look, if I'm hard on you guys at the moment, this is why. Because if they cut the budget then we're going to have cut part of the team.

And if we do that..." I trailed o .

"Some of us lose our scholarships" Daniel, one of the bases, finished for me grimly.

"Yes" I sighed, nodding at my squad. "But it's fine" I suddenly chirped, grinning at the kids. "Positive thoughts only in this gym, right? And the positive thoughts I want from all of you, is that we're going to ace sectionals and ride the high road all the way to nationals".

"Hell yeah" Ashley shouted and I smiled.

"All right All Stars, hands in". I stepped up and put my hand out.

Quickly all the squad put their hands into the centre. "All Stars" we all said in unison before breaking hands. "Alright, I'll see you all for practice tomorrow" I called, as everyone began to gather their bags and make their way out.

I sat in my oice for an hour or so, going over paperwork and documents for sectionals, before I headed home. Since joining the Red Knox Pack, I quickly thought of it as home. I'd only been there two months but it was a comfortable pack. But, I didn't hang out socially with anyone from the pack. I spoke to them occasionally, did my pack work, but kept my quiet life.

A er I got home, I showered and changed into another set of work out clothing, before heading out for my rounds. I was scheduled for board patrols from eight pm until midnight. I stayed in human form, jogging up and down the mile of territory I had been given to patrol. I kept my ears opening, making sure that no one came close to the territory. Luckily, it was a quiet shi .

Another Pack Wolf relieved me at just gone midnight, so I headed back towards my house with a slow walk. It was a nice evening and the bright moon shone down on me. I smiled up at the beautiful sky as I strolled casually.

"Beautiful night, isn't it?" a thick southern drawl called out. I jumped in shock, not realising anyone had been nearby, before turning to see Alpha Danvers o to the le . He was only wearing a pair of basketball shorts as his sculpted chest was bare and covered in sweat.

"Yes, Alpha, nice night" I nodded, trying not to admire him. He'd obviously been running and his unkept appearance just added to his attractiveness. But I couldn't be caught staring at an Alpha – it was disrespectful and just damn right desperate.

"How are you Ruth?"

"Fine thank you, Alpha" I smiled, trying not to cringe at the name.

"And please, call me Eden, everyone else does".

"I think Ruth suits you better" he chuckled, his lips tilting up in a teasing lint. He was beautifully dangerous when he looked at me like that.

"Ruth was my grandmother's name, so I take that as you think I look old" I shot back. Part of me realised I had been disrespectful, but before I could apologise or even cringe, Alpha Danvers laughed warmly. I began walking towards home and Alpha Danvers walked with me.

"Old?" he boomed, shaking his head in amusement. "You do not look old, Ruth. I'm sure people mistake you for a college student every time you go to work".

I snorted, "I wish. Someone called me 'Ma'am' the other day, I've never been called 'Ma'am' before. People call my mother that, not me". I laughed and he chuckled warmly, his dark eyes glistening in the evening as we walked through the forest.

"How are you settling in, Ruth?" he asked me.

"You're not going to call me Eden are you?" I sighed, trying not to smile. I met his eyes and he shot me a cheeky smile, and I lost my battle to keep a serious expression.

"Like I said, darlin, I think Ruth suits you better". He sent me a wink, and it was an attractive wink – the kind that le me blushing. It was ridiculous, I was a twenty seven year old woman and he was my Alpha, yet I blushed like a virgin catholic school girl.

"Anyway, to answer your question, I have settled in very well, thank you for asking Alpha" I nodded, changing the subject and hoping he hadn't noticed my blush.

"You can call me Quinn".

I screwed my face up, "I'm not sure I've earned that casualty yet".

"Don't need to earn nothin' darlin" he shrugged, "if I call you Ruth, then you can call me Quinn". His eyes and smile were teasing again, and the moonlight highlighted his sharp facial features as we reached the pack village.

"That seems fair" I giggled. Quinn smiled brightly as he glanced down at me – at well over six foot he towered over my petite form. "So, what are you doing walking around so late, Quinn?" I questioned, as he followed me through the closed village and towards my cottage.

"Lots of stress going on in my life and the oice, I can't sleep well at the moment" he replied, lips pulling down into a frown for just a few seconds, before he smiled back at me. "Anyway, my life is boring, let's not talk about it".

"You're an Alpha, I can't imagine anything that happens in your life is boring".

"Well you'll just have to take my word for it. But, what about you cheerleader? How's your spirit team?" His eyes glistened with teasing. I frowned at him.

"I know what most people think about cheerleaders, but you're wrong. We train harder than most athletes, we compete hard and we get looked down on for it all".

"I wasn't--"

"Yes you were" I cut him o , forgetting his was an Alpha and had just disrespected him. But Quinn didn't seem to mind and didn't reprimand me any. "But it's alright, most people have that perception of cheerleaders. But we're not like that, if you saw us practice you'd realise".

"Alright" he nodded.

My brow furrowed in confusion, "alright, what?"

"Alright, I'll come and see your squad practice" he smiled.

"I wasn't...I...you don't have time to come" I blabbered.

Quinn playfully put his hand over his chest, "Ruth, you can't invite me and then uninvite me straight away. How fickle of you darlin" he teased.

I blushed again as I laughed. "You really want to come watch a practice?"

"Definitely".

"Alright then" I nodded, not expecting to hold Quinn to that promise.

"Well, this is me" I said, as we reached my cottage. I turned and smiled up at my Alpha – shocked with how easy it was to talk to him and relax in his company. "Thank you for walking me home".

"It was my pleasure darlin" he grinned, "I'll see you around Ruth".

"Yes,I'll see you around Quinn".