

# Chapter Four

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### Alpha Quinn Danvers

Ken was a BBQ freak. Any time the temperature spiked over a hundred Fahrenheit, he got out his grill and donned his once-white apron. Not that I was complaining, because Ken did the best catfish and combine that with Diana's homemade grits, and it was a damn southern party in my mouth.

I wasn't the only one who loved Ken's BBQing skills. Half the damn pack smelt that meat and came running with their tongues hanging out. We all sat around eating and drinking beer in the warm evening. I sat on Ken's porch, sipping a beer, when I heard Ken and Diana arguing inside the house.

I frowned, finding the fact that they were arguing with guests around unusual. People could hear them in the garden, so I got up to tell them to take it somewhere else. But, as I drew near to their patio doors, I finally heard the words they were saying.

"You made her cry!" Diana hissed angrily.

"I only made a joke" Ken argued back.

"Great, now you fucked it up for Quinn" she snapped. I came to a stop hearing my name. I frowned as I listened to their conversation nosily. Part of me knew it was wrong to listen to their arguments, but then again, I was their Alpha.

"I didn't fuck anything up. If anything, I just made her hate me".

"I gave you one thing to do, get Eden here for Quinn and you couldn't even do that" Diana shouted at him. Anger coursed through my body when I realised what was going on – they were trying to set Ruth and I up and in the process, they'd upset her.

I pushed the door open, hands clenching into fists, as they turned towards me. They both looked shocked, and then bashful, for being caught. Diana must have seen my anger because she instantly tried to calm me. "It's not what you think Quinn. Just let us explain".

"No need. I heard enough" I growled – my voice held my position and my dominance. I didn't o en use my position of power, I didn't like to dominant people below me. But I was furious with Diana and Ken; my supposed best friends.

"Quinn we were just trying to help" Ken tried to reason with me, using a voice that made it seem like I was the one in the wrong.

"How dare you try to manipulate me. I don't want anyone to play matchmaker, especially not you two dammit. If I wanted a romantic relationship with someone, I will initiate it. You two are way out of line" I shouted. I knew everyone in the party could hear me, but I was furious.

"But that isn't even the worst part of this" I yelled. "In your scheming you hurt a sweet, innocent, girl who was just minding her own business. She has only just joined this pack and now you have made her feel isolated and upset".

"Quinn, we didn't mean to. We just wanted you happy, we know you like her" Diana replied, sighing heavily. I didn't reply, just shook my head at them, before turning and walking back out to the garden. Everyone looked up at me in shock. I was a gentle and calm person usually and most of them had never heard me raise my voice.

"Party is over. All of you head home" I yelled, as I moved through the garden. I walked through the territory, heading towards my house, before I stopped. I paused, thinking of Ruth. I hated the idea that she was upset and especially when it was partially my fault.

So, I changed direction and headed towards her cottage. I thought over everything I was going to say to her as I walked, but when I got there and knocked on the door – everything went out of my head. Ruth opened the door, her red hair like a flaming mane around her porcelain skin. Her eyes were red rimmed with tears and she had a large woollen blanket wrapped around her.

"A-Alpha" she sni ed, wiping her eyes.

"I told you that you could call me Quinn" I smiled sadly at her.

"No o ense, Quinn, but if you're here to get me to go to that damn party..." she growled out, letting the threat trail o . I chuckled so ly, thinking that I admired how strong she was even when she was so low.

"I'm not. I came to apologise for Diana and Ken, they were out of line" I told her, smiling so ly. "I wanted to make sure you were alright. But, I can see you're not".

"I'm fine" she whispered, her voice breaking. She sni ed deeply before her sobs began. She looked so young and so broken, that for a moment I froze. Then I quickly stepped into the house, pushed the door closed behind me, and put my arms around her. She was small and dainty as I tucked her under my arm.

I guided her into her lounge, before sitting her down on her couch. I sat beside her, my arm still holding her as she cried into my shoulder. The hurt in her cries was heavy and I knew that her tears had little to do with Ken and Diana, and a lot more to do with more personal reasons. I assumed mate problems, because I knew that despair like that only came from an absent mate.

I didn't say anything, no so words that everything would be alright, because that would make it worse. A er I lost my mate, people telling me that "I'd get through it" and 'it would all be alright' made me feel worse. It made me feel small and pathetic, like my tears weren't necessary and that I was overreacting. I wouldn't do that to Ruth, I promised myself that I would never do that.

She cried for a while on me, before she began to calm herself down. When she had control of her emotions, she pulled away from me sharply. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry" she rambled.

I cupped her face, using my thumbs to brush the tears from her cheeks. "Don't apologise. You have nothing to be sorry for".

"You're an Alpha and--"

"And my ranking doesn't have anything to do with my friendships" I cut her o . She nodded so ly, bright eyes looking up at me like a lost puppy. We both went quiet and it took me a few moments before I lowered my hands. I didn't want to. Diana and Ken were right, I did have a crush on Ruth.

"I'm a fucking basket case" Ruth sni ed, brushing her hair back.

"Been there, done that. I know what you're going through, Ruth".

She looked up at me in shock, "you do?"

"I lost my mate too. A long time ago. And it hurts, yeah it fucking hurts like nothing else and no one understands that until they've been in the position".

Her eyes glistened up at me, "what happened with your mate?"

"There was a battle going on with other packs, nothing to do with me or the Red Knox Pack. But, we found a group of Wolves on the edge of our territory. They were all dead. My mate was one of them" I explained.

"Oh god. So you didn't even get to know her?" Ruth's bright eyes shone up at me, the sympathy made my own heart squeeze in pain. The memories were so bitter and painful, that I had to swallow thickly.

"I still don't know her name and it's been ten years" I admitted.

"We're good people, this shouldn't have happened to us" she whispered, eyes sparkling with vulnerability and strength at the same time. It was beautiful. She was beautiful.

"Yes, we are good people" I nodded in agreement. "But we can still have good lives. We can't live in the shadow of our mate's absence".

"Easier said than done" she whispered.

"I know and it will get easier. The more time you have to heal and the more you keep people around you, the easier it gets".

"I can't trust anyone. Not a er Drew, not a er what he did". Her eyes glimmered with more tears, but she stubbornly blinked them away.

"Will you tell me what happened?" I asked so ly. She looked at me, reading on my face that she didn't have to do anything she didn't want to. But she nodded and took a deep breath.

"Drew and I had met when we were both in our senior year of high school. And it was the typical story, he was a football player and I was a cheerleader. You know how it is, cliché as possible". She rolled her eyes, trying to make light. "And for a while, everything was good. We finished school, went to college together, then le and got married".

She paused, before looking down at her hands nervously. "It's alright, Ruth".

"Drew got injured so he couldn't play football anymore and he hated not being able to play. So, he turned to alcohol. I swept it all away, pretending that he didn't have a problem. It was just a hard time. That was what I kept telling myself. I had to keep telling myself it, because one day I was hoping I might believe it. We began to argue a lot...and I mean a lot. He le a few times, in drunken fits and he'd be gone for days".

"Where did he go?" I asked, hoping my instinct was wrong.

"Bars, clubs, anywhere that sold liquor. And then a er that, any bed he could get into...even if it meant sharing it with other women".

I blinked in shock, "but that can't be right. Mates don't have desire for anyone but each other. Fuck, I couldn't look at another girl for years".

"The alcohol changed him. He wasn't my mate when he was like that" I said, shaking my head. "But, I forgave him".

"Why would do you that?" I hissed angrily. I hated the idea that someone was lucky enough to have a mate – one as beautiful and caring as Ruth – yet they cheated on her and treated her like crap. It wasn't right.

"I forgave him because I found out I was pregnant" she admitted. My blood ran cold and I froze as I looked at her. She'd never mentioned a child before and I realised that this story was just going to get darker and darker.

"You were pregnant?" I breathed.

"Yeah, with a little boy I named Abel". She didn't smile, didn't give anything away, as she finished her story. "One day I came home and found Drew with another woman. They were both drunk and having sex. In our marital bed, while I was eight months pregnant. I was so angry, I was screaming and crying. I told him that I was leaving and he'd never see his son again...". She paused, taking a long breath. "He grabbed me, to keep me there. I fought out of his hold and slipped. I fell down the stairs...I landed on my stomach". Rogue tears slipped down her face.

"Ruth, I am so sorry. No one should have to lose a child". I cupped her face once more, wiping her tears again.

"I was too far along. I had to still give birth to him. I knew he was dead but I still had to go through labour. And Drew wasn't even there, he was passed out drunk somewhere" she explained. I wanted her to stop, to not tell me anymore, because my heart was breaking for her. But she had to finish, had to explain everything to me. "He got sober a erwards, tried to win me back. But I just saw him and saw the man that murdered my son".

She broke down into sobs again. I wrapped her in my arms – tighter and harder this time – as I pressed her into my chest.

If I had a crush on Ruth before, I was smitten now. I'd never let her be hurt again.