

Chapter 26: Just love

-Josh-

Every day, strong emotions grow in my chest for Clara. Lust for her remembering how good it felt when I hugged her, jealousy thinking other males might be around her, fear that someone might hurt her.

I know I might sound like a creep, but my feelings for Clara remain and only grow over time. I wonder myself how can it be possible. Anyone would have move on long time ago, but for whatever reason I cannot.

I have dreamed more than once about a wolf with shining light grey fur. Her paws and belly are white. I never get to see her face... well, her snout since she is hiding it under her paws. In the dream, she is lying next to a pond in the middle of a forest I have never seen. There, I see her from afar and she feels my presence but cannot see me.

Last night, I got closer to her. She was hurt and called for me. The pain I felt in my chest woke me up, it felt so real that I could not get back to sleep.

"Mate is hurt!" Screamed Alastair alarmed. He thinks that wolf in our dreams is our mate, and we are sure that is Clara's wolf. Mates feel each other's pain and share strong emotions and strength, but they need to be marked rst. How could it be possible?"

We have never seen Clara's wolf, and I do not even know her name, yet Alastair is sure that wolf is her. I left her days before her wolf awoke... Could have she sense me then and calls me now recognizing me as her mate? I really hope so, but I am worried something might have happened to her. I need to nd her soon.

Lost in my thoughts I almost missed the call from Shawn, the young Alpha of Sunlight pack. My roommate for a year at the Alpha's Academy.

"Josh! My friend, I am so happy! You have to congratulate me!" He sounded very excited by the phone.

"Congratulations for passing the exam! I should have called you. I was so busy..." I was trying to excuse me for neglecting my friend. I have called him more times looking for clues about Clara, than to ask about his wellbeing.

"No! Dude... I've just got back my home and guess what? My sister's nanny is my mate!" I am glad for him, but him nding his mate without effort was like salt on my wound. Some are just lucky.

"That is great. Congratulations again!" What else can I say to a happy wolf. Probably Renata will not be happy, but a mate is a mate. Shawn always said it.

"She is amazing, and so smart! And so pretty." Sure. I guess. Damn. I wish I can be a better friend for him and be truly happy as he is. Something made him send me a picture of him with his mate. He was kissing her cheek while she was blushing with a big smile on her face.

I almost felt from my chair... her face is more mature, her eyes and hair are of a different color, but I am sure this is Angel!

"What is the name of your mate?" I missed the information... did he say? Pull your self together Joshua!

"Angelica!" An even bigger smile is parting my face now... Angel, Angelica, Angel... the same face. It is her. Of course, to not mess up she would choose a name closer to her real one. And if Angel is at Sunlight territory, Clara must be there or at least close. Or she could show up for the mating ceremony. Luck is nally by my side. Alastair was howling in happiness, making it even harder to think clearly.

"Does she have a sister?" Stupid question, Shawn has a picture of Clara! He would have told me if he saw her there.

"No, she does not. But she has a best friend named Claire... Why are you asking? Are you ready to forget Clara? Hahaha... Similar names! Maybe this Claire is your fated mate!" Shawn! Clara is Claire, Claire is Clara. You found her for me.

"We found mate!" I am as excited as Shawn now and even Alastair who is quiet most of the times, is now almost jumping around... inside of my head.

I had to take deep breathes, it might be a false alarm. Or it might be her and I still have to be careful... Besides, I have all these plans to... I must clear my head, rst. Be logical...

"You know, I should visit you... like tomorrow, would be good?" My mouth faster than my brain. Better to act quick, I do not care I have to be there fast.

"Of course, you are welcome! Come! Wait... my mother is... mom, he is cool!" I heard that her mother is talking to him, asking why he is inviting me over.

I decided to hang up and send him a message, that I am on my way. I turned off the phone after it. I will be received if I was not informed about not being welcomed. Maybe, they are hiding her there or somewhere else. Regardless, if I reach Angel, she will lead me to Clara.

I left my pack in a hurry, grabbed whatever I had in hand. I am sure I can buy whatever I need later.

Driving like crazy earned me a good scolding by mind-link from my dad before leaving my territory. Mom was again at Blood Moon checking on her sister, so I did not have to be yelled by her.

On the road, I mind-linked everyone accordingly to activate my plan to gain Clara's heart. I guess Marcus and Allen will be happy that all those projects we have worked over two years will be rewarded by her smile. The smile of my Luna, Clara.

I am sure now that Moon Goddess is working on something to get us together. We are part of a bigger plan. I do not know... I probably sound like a crazy FDL fanatic, but what else can I think as how things are for me right now.

Clara rejected Mason almost two years ago, and even though he claims to love her now, I cannot believe it and certainly doubt she would ever take him back. Neither do I know that she would choose me.

If she thinks I might have a fated mate somewhere out there, she could reject my advances. Despite of which, I am already prepared to woo her and win her heart if that is the case. Because there was a connection between us, an attraction that she was not ready to accept thinking about a mate who ended up being Mason. I hate what he did to her, but he left the space for me.

I feel I should have been her mate from the start, but if Moon Goddess makes me her second chance mate, I am taking it. Those are rare and precious.

Besides, it is not about who was rst, but who is there forever, and I want her forever. I would prefer us to choose each other instead, but I am aware of how she is. Being her second chance, would smooth things between us, especially considering my family ties.

Freaking Mason Van Ryan, my cousin. I guess my blood relationship with him will not please her, but I am prepared for that too. I have had enough time to be prepared for more than one scenario.

The only one I would be worried about is someone else showing up to be my mate. To be honest, I have no idea about it. I guess if that is the way, I will not commit the same mistake of Mason. Still, I have promised to protect Clara with all I have, and I will.

"Clara is our mate, I am sure. Trust me, trust our instinct." Alastair comforts me whenever he says she is the one for us.

After meeting Clara, I become aware of the inequity and the unfairness towards omegas, and even deltas, even without FDL fanatics, those thoughts are engraved in the werewolf population.

There are no laws against omegas taking other roles besides of service, yet you would hardly see omegas as doctors or teachers, no warriors as far I know. Deltas never reach high positions in the military service, despite their efforts. Therefore, the barrier is not legal is in our heads.

Clara inspired me. Even at her seventeen self, she was the kind of mate I would love to have. She made me a better version of myself.

I have spent almost a whole year working as the King's inquisitor, and despite of my constant coordination with him, I still do not know what the FDL took from him. I only know he is hates them with passion. Besides, the King is right, FDL members are everywhere and preparing for something big. Fortunately, I think we will get to them on time.

Before my truce and collaboration agreement with Mason, I was able to track a great number of FDL members and secure everything according to the King's plan. Yet, with his help more wolves got caught or are under surveillance at this moment. Clara is of big interest for them and we are careful while looking for her, and now even the King is helping me in my search.

During my time at Blood Moon, I got information about Clara being the Luna of Moonlight, the last descendant of the leaders and capable to raise that pack again. Nevertheless, I nd odd that her mother being omega and her father being delta would give her that power. Not even Alpha's daughters are considered equals to Alphas considering aura's display.

I am not an expert in werewolf biology or genetics, but at least Clara's father should have been Alpha to activate those gens. Although, I do not know more about her ancestors or how her lineage passed to her. Regardless, I knew there was something special about her from the start.

Her aura surrounded me besides of my wolves, we felt welcomed to Blood Moon on our rst encounter. I noticed then that she was a natural leader, hidden in her rank as omega, without knowing how amazing she was. I fell in love without a mate bond, and despite time I miss her company every day.

"She was born as Luna, the real center of a pack is not the Alpha. The Luna is." Said Alastair.

It makes sense to me, a young Alpha can take the role of Alpha of a pack or even form its own pack, as long he is mated. Without a Luna, the Alpha is known as Stole Alpha. Same as Mason is right now. He is doing well, but without a Luna, even the strongest Alpha can get lost.

Mason has already a dark side, no Luna by his side might trigger his worse face to his pack. Since my aunt is getting better, it would be advisable for him to step down until he chooses a new mate or gets a second chance. Because I am not going to back down, and his stubborn wolf might not either.

I understand he feels guilty about everything he did to Clara, and wants to make things up for her, but he lost his chance. He should just apologize and let go.

Ten hours later, with very few stops on the way for gasoline. I arrived at Sunlight pack, I guess Shawn was not kidding when he said that it was cold. I should have brought a ticker sweater.

Again, the protocol at the border delayed my arrival. Shawn was mind-linked and took him almost an hour to allow me in, which I found odd.

However, maybe it is not weird. If Angel is hiding here, she might have been informed by Shawn about my arrival. Damn! I did not think about it carefully. I was so excited that I did not plan this carefully. She could try to hide, but her mate is here... how would she do that? Still, something is going on.

"We will worry about it later!" Alastair is anxious. Well, we both are anxious, this is the closest we have gotten to nd Clara.

This pack is different just as Shawn told me, small houses, small homes and the pack of werewolves coming and going.

They did not follow the protocol to receive me in the front door. Well, it is cold, so I had to knock the door, and it took a bit before someone opened the door.

I just walked inside following the voices to a big room that seemed to be a living room with a big chimney. I was not prepared neither expected to nd that scene.

Renata was sitting next to Paige in a couch sobbing holding her friend's hands and keeping her head high. Shawn was sitting in front of them with her head down, red up to his ears, not looking at anyone in the room. He looked defeated.

The werewolves that I assumed to be Alpha and Luna of the pack were standing and looked very sad. None of them noticed my presence until the Luna turn to face me.

"I am sorry, we are in the middle of..."

"Josh is my witness!" Said Renata. "Shawn was my boyfriend at the Alpha's Academy." Why am I getting involved on this? I guess the Luna thought the same since she frowned at Renata.

"There is no doubt about your relationship with our son. He has admitted that already." Said the Alpha, I think Shawn told me his father's name is Dean.

I know I am being selsh, but I want to know where Angel is. I assume she would be with Louise, Shawn's little sister. This situation might be a bad omen.

"I will show Josh where to stay..." Said Shawn standing up and going to where I was standing.

"No. You should stay here and manage the situation." Said the Alpha with an hard tone. Shawn look at him and then at Renata.

"I think it is pretty obvious how I will manage the situation. Please, excuse me." Then Shawn practically pulled me by the arm, to get out of the house.

We walked in silence until we stopped at the door of a small house, which I assume it is for guests. Not far from the Alpha's house. Shawn opened the door and we both entered.

I imagine Renata came here since Shawn promised her to make her his Luna and wanted to claim that promise to be fulfilled, but this was more serious than a broken promise.

Shawn told me Renata showed up in his pack telling them that she was pregnant with his pup. His parents are disappointed, and his mate is inconsolable. Angelica locked herself in her room and is not coming out.

"What are you planning to do?" I asked him. I know what I would do, but I do not know what he is planning to do.

"The right thing, I guess. Renata's parents throw her out. A pup needs both parents. What else can I do?"

"Are you sure? I am feeling bad for the situation and Renata, but your mate's life is in danger. Would you really do that to her?" As far as I remember Angel was a delta, stronger than omegas but Shawn is Alpha. It will not only be very painful for both, but her life is the one at risk.

"She does not even want to talk to me. I f****d up really bad this time, dude... I was so sure Renata was the one for me back then... so sure! Until I meet my Angel!... But I promised to Renata I would take care of her no matter what."

"Maybe you can do that, but still be with your mate. You assume your responsibility as father but not as her mate. Those are different things."

"How can I have my pup's mother and my mate at the same time? Renata needs me, and Angelica has already offered to drink a potion to survive rejection. She..." His voice broke.

"I am really sorry." I told him patting his shoulder. From my perspective he is taking a solution that would end up in more broken hearts.

I would choose my mate over anything; I do not know if I am right or wrong. The life of the pup is important and as much I would love him or her, I would never make the mother happy taking her instead of my mate. I would always think about my true mate. How can you live like that? Would you not blame the chosen mate and the pup for your misery? I do not know.

Then the doubt again invaded me looking myself in his mirror. Shawn's reaction, and my situation with Clara.

"Trust me! Clara is our mate. Please, do not let go of her!" Alastair tells me every time a doubt appears in my head. "Even if you are wrong Al... I just cannot let go of her." I calmed my wolf. He is convinced and I decided to trust him completely again.

Paige knocked the door, and I went to open it. She was serious and had a box made of wood under her left arm.

"I am sorry Shawn, Renata and you were not careful and now... well... I am sorry for your mate too." Paige looked mad at him.

"You do not need to tell me Paige. I know, but I also know that I am sentencing both of us to a life of misery. Hopefully, the pup will be happy and grow up to be a better Alpha than me." The carefree attitude of Shawn evaporated from one day to another. There is bitterness in his voice.

After driving for so many hours, the fatigue caught up on me. Alastair feels drained as well. And this situation got complicated so fast.

"There is a way for you and Renata to be happy. It will help you both." I doubt there will be a way to make things right for Shawn.

Shawn and I looked at her in disbelief. The almost mute Paige was taking a magic solution, and even offering him a magical way out of this mess. As, it was literally a magic solution.

"... I was given some time ago, this box... But I did not dare to use it because I preferred to wait for my true mate... It is a potion, a love potion. If you drink it and then kiss Renata, you will feel and believe that she is your mate. You both will be happy and content with other." I guess it is the same potion that was used on Mason, the one that Sky received from her mother.

"How are we supposed to use it? How would it work?" Shawn asked.

"Since you already know your mate, you must break that bond... after it, you both drink it and kiss. She will have to chant a spell with your name, which is also in the box. And pum! Renata is your true mate... However, you should never look for your true mate, your wolf would ght the bond with Renata, and if that ever happens... because it is a possibility, do not you're your mate because the spell will break and you will end up hating Renata."

I understand better now what happened with Mason, and that misunderstanding about the love potion. Yet, there is something bothering me about this story. Paige knows a lot more than what she is saying.

"I will think about it." Said Shawn. At least he can choose to be under a spell and try to live a happy life with his option. Paige nodded her head and placed the box over the coffee table. I will keep the box with the potion.

As Paige was about to leave following Shawn's example, I asked her to stay and I locked the door.

"No open door this time?" She asked. The old habit I had back at the Alpha's academy to avoid gossips, and now I am doing the opposite for the same reason.

"I have a few questions... if you do not mind." Paige looked at me without hesitation and gracefully sat down in front of me.

"I imagined so... you are smart after all."

"You blew your cover for your friend; I would have never guessed it; your disguise is perfect... Why did you do it?"

"Love... just love" She smiled at me.

Paige never pursuing me for real, she could have tried to make me drink that potion. Probably, that was her aim at the beginning. However, she never did. However, I was her perfect cover of unrequited love and no one would ask more questions... Yet, Paige was always next to Renata, no matter what she was there for her.

"I understand." I said opening the box to conrm what I realize from what she just disclosed for Renata and Shawn's sake. The symbol of FDL was carved inside of the wooden box under a thin layer behind the bottle of potion.

"I hope you really do understand. Because I will cooperate with you and King, Inquisitor... but I want you to promise me, this mating ceremony will happen. And that Renata and her child will be safe in this pack. Her parents are evil creatures, Dark River is hell, and I cannot let them hurt her. They might start a war over this."

Love even outside the mate bond of werewolves is still a powerful thing, and Paige has proven it. I feel a new respect towards her now. Love indeed can inspires us to be the better version of ourselves.

I know enough about Paige and decided to take the chance, she would not leave Renata's side, neither reveal to her about her membership to FDL, or tell her about her true feelings.

Paige's declaration was good enough to conrm the King's suspicions and everything we have done to make things right. After all, she was the Queen's niece.

"I have done to make things right. After all, she was the Queen's niece."