

## Chapter 14

\*\*Molly\*\*

"I just need to be alone, Molly," Mom tells me softly, but she takes my hand in hers.

"Can't do that," I tell her softly. "Dad said you're embarrassed, and I can't let you feel like that."

"I loved him," she whispers. "And he loved me. He used me, but I know that he also loved me."

I nod, squeezing her hand. "I'm glad you had someone who cared for you. Dad is, too."

"I begged him. I wanted to reject my mate, swore to him that I would. I DID, but he told your dad not to accept it. They were friends, and I thought it was because he cared about your dad, but he was just using me."

"How was he using you?"

"He wanted Willow. She was important to his plan. She had left, though, sure that not being with my mate would hurt her."

"Thank the Goddess for Willow, huh?" I tell her with a small smile. Mom's wolf is amazing. She has always, somehow, just KNOWN things. "Did she know Seth was my mate?"

Mom shakes her head. "No, but she was sure that you had one and he would find you. Willow never doubted that."

I smile at her with a nod. "Being under the blanket reminds me of when you found me."

Mom starts to cry more and I frown, but she squeezes my hand. "David and I fought one night. The first night he wanted me to kill someone. I ran off and Willow got wet. The temperature dropped and she couldn't hold the shift. I was lost out in the woods. I thought for sure I would die, but David finally found me. He brought me back here and had Rita put me in a warm bath. He bundled me up and we slept in the room by the rear that night," she says, wiping her cheek. "Your dad told me one time that whatever had happened before him would help me somehow, that there was a reason for it all, but I always doubted that THAT would matter. The moment he linked me when he found you, so cold and wet... I knew it was all meant to happen."

"Mom," I say softly, feeling my own tears prick my eyes. "You're the best person I know," I begin, but she cuts me off.

"That's bullshit," she says with a small laugh. "We all know your dad is."

I smile at her. "You're a real close second, though. It could be a tie, really."

"You always make me smile," she says, reaching up slightly to pinch my cheek just like she did when I was little.

"What else do I need to know?" Mom's lip quivers and I squeeze her hand, hoping that she knows I'm here for her. "I'm not going to judge you."

"I loved him so much," she tells me. "We were sure that we were mates. When I woke up on my birthday and went to find him, we were both upset. We spent the day apart but that night I went and found him. Molly, I begged him to sleep with me."

She looks mortified about telling me about this and, honestly, I'm not sure that it's anything I need to know, but I don't want her to stop. "It's alright."

She tells me everything... EVERYTHING. And she tells me from her viewpoint, like it's happening now, and she doesn't know how bad he really was in the end. Somehow, I think that makes it worse. My heart breaks a little when she tells me about her heat cycles and how she had to be sedated because she didn't have her mate, but David took care of her the best he could.

"It's so embarrassing to tell you this, Molly," she tells me. "I never dreamed, in all my life, I'd have to tell you any of this. Your dad did so much to protect me from anyone finding out. And Audrey, too."

"Dad really loves you," I tell her with a smile. "He always has."

She nods. "When the bond between David and I broke, I felt so empty and alone. I'll spare you the mushy details, but your dad was amazing. He was so patient with me as I hid in our room for months. He used to pick a cover for me every morning. I didn't know it was him for a while, but I melted when he told me."

I smile at that, knowing that it sounds just like my dad. He's never shied away from making sure the whole pack knows just how much he loves my mom. In return, my mom has acted just the same. "It's embarrassing how much you guys love each other," I tell her with a giggle.

"Good," she says with a genuine smile across her face. "You're the queen now, and I know that comes with making difficult decisions. You should know that David seemed to be a good Alpha, but he made some poor choices. Your dad will tell you differently, but I have never thought that he was all bad. I think he made bad choices and was in over his head."

I nod, thinking about what she's said. She would probably know best, and maybe Austin. They would have been closest to him when he was Alpha. "If we make him Alpha, would your bond come back?"

"I don't know," she says so softly and I can quickly tell that she's terrified of that being a reality.

"What does Willow think?" I ask her, wanting to know her wolf's opinion over everyone else. "She always knows things the rest of us don't?"

Mom sighs and takes a breath. I realize that she's letting Willow come forward. I can't remember a time that she's ever allowed that to happen. "He was too ambitious. Don't name him Alpha."

"I know," I reassure her. "Right now, though, we've let Lucas get close to us so that we can keep an eye on him. I think Seth may want to do the same with David. I need to know if it's going to hurt Mom."

"There's no way to know," Willow tells me. "The bond is so rare, I doubt this is anything that has ever happened before. We won't know until it happens, if you decide that it must."