

Chapter 8

Audrey

“Audrey, quit pacing,” Peter tells me. “You’re going to wear out the carpet.”

“Sorry,” I mutter, looking up at him. I hadn’t even realized I was doing it. It’s a habit I’ve had since I was a kid that shows when I get nervous, and I don’t think I’ve ever been more nervous than I am at this moment. “She’s gotten old,” I say to my mate, my voice barely a whisper.

“We all have, Auds,” he reminds me and I know he didn’t mean it harshly, but it stings to hear. My own son is a grown man now. We’ve already handed him the throne, and my own mother has never met him. It was never my intention, but mistakes were made that we just never made it back from.

I think back to that day, the day I had ruined everything with what little family I had left. The day I had walked away forever. Well, what I thought was forever, but here I am, back in the packhouse I’d spent so much time in with my dad as a little girl. He’d never have wanted this for any of us.

“She killed your father, Audrey!” mom exclaims, throwing her hands in the air.

“She didn’t,” I yell back, causing Austin to slip into the room now, Peter following behind. “What happened was an accident. It was going to end up all happening anyways.”

“Nothing in this pack has been right since she showed up,” mom says, crossing her arms over her chest. “She seemed sweet, but she destroys everything she gets near.”

Austin steps forward, gently taking mom’s arm in his hands. “Mom, you know that’s not true. David was the reason for any problems. Celeste didn’t even know. He wouldn’t let us even tell her.”

“And YOU,” she screams at Austin. “You went and named the library after her!”

“Mom, she made it,” he tries to reason with her. “She did so many good things while she was our Luna. You just can’t see them because you’re upset.”

She rips her arm away from Austin, moving to sit in a chair across the room away from the three of us. “How could you have her at your marking ceremony?! I should have told everyone there exactly what she’d done.”

I sigh, pacing the side of the room. “She’s my friend, my family,” I say quietly. “She made a mistake, but David made it so much worse. She’d have done anything to x it if she had known.”

“I can’t believe either of you. I won’t stop until the entire kingdom knows what she’s done,” she says deantly, but there’s a glint in her eyes that tells me she’s very serious about this threat, and that she intends to make sure everyone knows.

“Mom, you can’t,” I say, wanting to protect my friend.

“I will,” she tells me, her tone challenging. “Just because you’re the princess doesn’t mean I will listen to a thing you say.”

“You will,” I tell her, trying my best not to lose my temper, but feeling the little control I have left slip away. I close my eyes and dig deep inside, pulling all my power from now being a member of the royal family. “Neither of you will ever discuss the things Celeste did.” I didn’t say it formally, but I can feel the power of my words dripping with my intention and they both can as well judging by the shocked expressions on their faces.

“I made such a mess,” I say softly, turning to pace again. “Seth is so angry. He’s going to kill me.”

“He won’t,” Peter says, standing and walking to me. Gently, he takes me into his arms and holds me to his chest. “He’s angry right now, but he just needs some time. If anything, MOLLY won’t let him do anything to you.”

Thank the Goddess for Molly. Truly. I’ve never understood why my wolf wanted to protect and defend Celeste so ercely until Seth grabbed Randall and sniffed him. The second he did, I knew he was mated to their daughter. Our wolves must have always known, on some level, for as terrible as things became, they always made us remain on good terms.

Molly, though. That girl is kind to her core. When Peter told me she had watched him kill her brother, I had thought we’d never see our son again, that he’d leave with his mate and assume the throne when Peter died. I couldn’t believe that she was, and still is, able to move past that. Truly, she’s been through too much in her short life, but it’s made her into the most kind and understanding Queen.

“Should I try to link him?” I ask, looking up at my mate.

“No,” he says quickly. “No. You’re going to have to give him some space. It’s going to take him some time. Would you like to go speak with your mother?”

I shake my head as tears come to my eyes. “She told me to never come back.”

“What are you doing here?” mom asks as I walk into the door of my childhood home.

“I wanted to see you,” I tell her, an unsure smile on my face. “I thought we could try to work past it. I brought my son for you to meet. He’s at the packhouse with Peter. He’s so beautiful, Mom!”

“Are you going to release me from the order?”

“You know I can’t do that,” I say with a sigh. I was hoping that enough time had passed for her to move on, but clearly, this was a mistake. I should have let Peter come to Pink Moon alone.

“Then leave,” she says, waving her hand dismissively. “Don’t come back to Pink Moon again. There’s nothing for you here.”

“She was grieving, Auds,” Peter says softly into the top of my head.

I nod, knowing that he’s right, but still feeling the sting of her rejection. “I just wanted her to meet my son. Dad would have loved him so much.”

A knock at the door pulls me from my thoughts as Peter releases me and moves to answer it. I sniff and can smell Molly, but not my son. He opens the door, motioning for her to enter.

“Hey,” Molly greets me with a sad smile as she walks over and gives me a tight hug. “Listen, there are some... complications. We need to meet with you both, as well as my parents, Austin and your Mother.”

I wrinkle my forehead at her in confusion. “What does my mother have to do with any of this?”

Molly sighs and looks up at Peter. “David is Lucas’ choice for Alpha of the rogue pack. We need to know everything that ever happened. We think that they’ve been connected for quite some time and we’re not sure what they’re up to. In every scenario we thought out, THIS was never even a thought.”

“s**t,” Peter mutters under his breath. “I can assure you, they’re not up to anything good.”

Molly nods in agreement. “Listen,” she says, turning her attention back to me with a look that tells me she’s not entirely comfortable. “Seth isn’t ready to talk to you about the secrets, but we need to know anything that can help. He has requested that you lift your order on your brother and mother.”