

The Alpha's Hunt - Chapter 1

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Angelic music played in the speakers around the pack. Torches were lit along the streets, and the moon shone brightly in the center of the sky.

A shadow was cast over the edge as the blood moon began to form and once it was fully merged it would be time, and later on when the blood moon began to pull from its form the horn would blow- indicating that the Hunt had begun.

“Are you nervous?” My little sister, Mathilda, asked me.

“Hazel isn’t nervous, sweetheart, this is an honor. One that you too might experience in a few years if you’re lucky.”

I shifted on the bed and suppressed the growing anger towards my mother.

I looked into Mathilda’s hopeful eyes and cupped her tiny chin.

“I hope you never do,” I said and glared fiercely at my mother when I turned my head.

If a female didn’t have her mate by the time she turned eighteen, she was to be a volunteer for the Hunt. It wasn’t her choice but somehow, through the centuries that this tradition had been alive, young girls had been brain washed to see this as an honor.

If we were unmated our names were automatically placed into the Chalice of Choice that the ringleader would later pull from. The name had always boggled me, Chalice of Choice, it was ironic because we had none.

You would never see a parent prouder than when their daughter’s names were read.

The blinding joy in their eyes when they saw their girls being taken away, thrown into the truck, and driven out of the pack. It was rare that they were ever seen again but their absence was taken as a good sign.

“You’re all finished, dear,” my mother stroked her hands gently over my shoulders.

She walked over and grabbed the white under dress. It was barely a dress, it looked like a nightgown but thinner and more exposing.

The thin straps were pressing into my shoulders, my skin turned red when my chest was too big for the size my mother had gotten. We also weren't allowed to wear bras, our legs had to show and no shoes or socks were allowed.

We had to be as bare as possible, shamed and belittled to our core before we arrived at the house.

I had witnessed the Chalice ritual more than once in my life and each time there were factors that never deviated; The girls were lined up next to each other, their hands clasped behind them to give a good overview of their bodies, their hair fell in braids- either one or two- down their back but could never cover their chest or their face. When a girl's name was called she was to step forward without speaking- not a single word or sound except for the subtle breath exhaled between her scrubbed lips. They were evaluated by the Lady Hale who then ranked the girls from 1 to 10.

It was rare for a girl to ever get below 3.

You see, in order to get below 3, you would have to be a weak-as-hell omega without any redeeming qualities and to be thought of as nothing more than a waste of space. Or you had to be wolf-less; my stomach churned because one of the girls tonight didn't have her wolf yet and that hadn't happened in over a century. Those who were given anything three and under were forbidden from participating in the Hunt, they were cast aside and many times shunned by their packs and their families as a result of the shame.

When I tell you that those are the lucky ones...

The others, those who get rated 4s and up, are blindfolded, their hands are bound and they are led to the truck that will later drive them away.

The scary part for me wasn't the ceremony, I knew what happened at the ceremony, what frightened me was what happened after when the truck drove away and the girls were unloaded at the house. How it was to meet the Alpha's that were meant to hunt them, when they got that first sniff and everything else that they had known their entire lives became obsolete. All for the pleasure of the Alphas. Nobody knew what happened there because you're never allowed to hear about it, the girls that leave don't come back.

"Let's go," my mother reached out her hand. I took one last look in the mirror, my hands slightly trembling at my sides and my toes pressing into the cold floor.

"Sure," I ignored her hand and walked out of the house.

I stopped on the staircase leading up from the garden and watch the lines of girls marching toward the cliff. The amount of white dresses and bared bodies was almost scary...they looked like ghosts haunting the streets but they were happy. I was terrified.

I knew it wasn't sunshine and roses that awaited us. It wasn't a fairytale ending with an all powerful alpha; it was hell, where the men ruled and we followed. If you, as the chosen mate, didn't obey...there were no rules for the alphas and their prey after the hunt was over.

I took a step, about to descend the three step staircase and join the girls when I was stopped by a small hand grabbing my arm. I turned around and looked into the doe eyes of my sister. I hunched down in front of her and fixed her floral cardigan before pulling her in.

"I don't want you to go," she whispered so only I could hear. It would be seen as disrespect if anyone heard her, she should be happy for me but luckily my sister had listened to me more than my parents in her years.

"I know, baby, but I have too. I promise I will be fine,"

The first tear fell from her eye.

"Will you come back to me?"

I squeezed her shoulders and swallowed the burning lump in my throat. How do I tell her that it isn't up to me anymore?

"Do you remember when I promised that I would never lie to you?" She nodded her little head and wiped her red nose so I continued, "I don't know if I can come back to you but I promise to always think about you and to do everything I can to come and visit. Is that good enough?"

I saw her trying to smile through the tears and it broke my heart that I couldn't take her inside and close the door, to promise her that I would never leave.

Never in my life had I wished for a mate or a man but right now I kind of wished that I had met my mate here, because then I wouldn't have to go.

"Yes," she whimpered out.

"let's go," Trixy said as she stood in the front of my mind.

The spot where the ritual happens had always been the same. It's the edge of a mountain surrounded by the forest overlooking the pack. The stabbing stones under our feet were said to draw out any impurities before we reached the top of the mountain.

I always used to rolling my eyes when the girls bled on the stones as they walked this path- they would smile and look enticed at the blood trail behind them. However, walking the trials myself, I felt every sharp cut stone under my feet and pressed my nails into the palms of my hands to keep from growling.

We walked in the circular pathway; our feet were covered in blood and the more you bled the more sins you had committed that needed to be washed out. Apparently, I had managed many sins in this lifetime. I grunted and tried not to think about the pain.

The moss-covered rocks around us were damp from last night's rain and the cool breezes sweeping in were piercing my skin like razors. I'm a werewolf and we don't freeze easy, but I hadn't eaten for two days so both my wolf and I were weak and not at all our best selves. They say the two days of fasting is so we look as lean and perky as possible, but I say it is to keep us weak, tired and meek for the Alphas.

"Can you believe it's our turn?" Iliana sang and pulled her braid through her fingers.

"No, I really can't," I answered.

I dug my nails into the palms of my hands to redirect the pain that swept through my body. Nobody here could see me shiver or be cold, that too would be seen as a weakness and anything you do to bring shame upon yourself will also be reflected on your family. I couldn't do that to them- especially my sister who would be the one suffering the most from everyone turning their backs on her. All of her friends would be forbidden from ever talking to her again, or even playing with her. No boy would look her way when she became of age and our family would be marred forever.

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