

Chapter 30

The meeting room is reminiscent of a courtroom with the council members on a raised platform. Holt's Grandfather is in the center of the long line of council members. Three chairs are empty as Jared and Marco are behind Micco, Tess, Naomi, and Holt's chairs. I'm seated at the edge of the room where I've only been acknowledged once, and that was to state my name. Beta Morris, Donny, and the rest of the elders are in attendance, separated to show their support behind Micco. Only three of the Elders are on the opposing side, with Griffin and he is a so-called witness.

"Tessalee Denton, please stand to address us." One of the councilmen says.

"I beg your pardon, Councilman Drexel, but my name is Tessalee Johnson now. I am mated; therefore, my family name has changed to Johnson." Tess says as she stands in the designated podium in the center between the two audiences. Councilman Drexel only gives a slight nod in acknowledgment.

"Tessalee. What is your official mating date?" The councilman in the farthest seat asks.

Tess hands over a sealed document. "As stated there on my certificate my mating took place two weeks ago on August 3rd." The council each takes a turn to review the document and write down any information they deem necessary, then return the paper to Tess.

"Please explain in detail the reason you assumed that a human could possibly be your mate." The next seated councilman says with a scowl.

"Councilman Blair. I understand that you have a chosen mate, so I doubt you'll understand the mechanics behind a true mate bond, however, I will try to explain." I notice a few of the council members smirking,

while he and two others are scowling. "You see, the first sign was the scent. Even hungover from a night of heavy drinking, I was able to scent him. Next, I heard his voice and my body reacted with a tingling sensation felt throughout my spine and into my limbs. Next, when our skin touched it felt like we were connected through a firm of electrical current. And finally, when our eyes locked, I was barely able to breathe as my breath was taken from me. Our souls aligned and it was like I had tunnel vision. All I could see or think about was the man in front of me. All this happened in a matter of seconds as my foot was caught in a bear trap and I was in excruciating pain, yet my focus was still on my mate." She looks at me and I smile. "Who just so happened to be a human, but my true mate nonetheless." Tess lifts her chin in confidence as members finish taking their notes.

"Mrs. Johnson, when you discovered that your mate was human, why did you not reject him?" The third seated asks. He was one of the scowlers from before."

"Well, Mr. Brooks, I would be ungrateful to throw away the gift from the Moon Goddess. I had wanted to find my mate since I was a young girl. As I'm sure most of you are aware, our mate is the other half of our souls. I needed my mate, I wanted my mate, and I accepted him, regardless of him being a human.

"Did you tell Mr. Johnson that he was your mate immediately after the first encounter?" The fourth seated asks.

"No, sir, I did not. I actually went to drastic measures to ensure he did not know of our kind and only informed him after a period of dating."

"Drastic measures?" Councilman Lancaster speaks up. "Please elaborate."

"As I mentioned when we met, my foot was caught in a bear trap. Cody helped me out of it, then administered first aid. Later that day, I re-cut my wound open with my claw. I didn't want him to question why I was

healing so fast. The next morning, I had the wounds cut open again, but I used wolfsbane blades to keep the wounds from healing." A few of the council members wince at her pain.

I look at her leg and still feel guilty that she had to scar herself to keep a secret. I shake my head and let out a breath as the next councilman takes his turn. "When did you tell the human about our kind?" The next councilman asks. I see Micco's jaw flex as he glares at the councilman.

Tess also has a look of disgust as she glares at the man. He visibly swallows. "I told my mate of our kind just before his daughter had her first shift. He didn't believe me until afterward when he saw with his own eyes." I hear a few huffs from the elders on the opposing side, but if any of the council has an opinion on the matter, they keep quiet."

Uriah Lancaster looks to both sides. "Any more questions for Mrs. Johnson?"

"I have one." A councilman nearer to me speaks up. Uriah nods to him. "I understand that there was a rumor that your elders were going to suggest that you take a chosen mate. The timing on you finding your mate makes me wonder; did you chose Mr. Johnson to spite your own elders?" Stone Bram has a smug sneer as if he's got Tess trapped. That bastard probably told the councilman that scenario.

"As previously stated, Councilman Anders, Cody is my true mate, not chosen. Honestly, I did hear of the rumor which was why I was at the bar the previous night."

"Can you offer proof?" The same man asks.

"Can you prove that your mate is a true mate?" She asks.

"I am not the one being questioned for treason."

"Treason!?" Tess looks to all of the councilmen. "Gentleman. Is it treason to accept the gift of the moon Goddess? My mate may be human, but he would have learned of our existence with or without me.

At least now he and his daughter are in a pack where the little tyke can be kept safe and trained properly, and not running around some random city streets. The question you should really be asking yourselves is how many other wolves missed out on their mates because they too may be human."

"You still have no proof." The asshole continues to taunt.

"She has proof!" Elder Potts stands up from his seat. I knew I liked the old man.

Uriah signals for Elder Potts to step forward. "Tess, you may step down. Elder Potts, please take the stand." The two trade seats and I feel Tess's worry and frustration. "Elder Potts, what proof does Tess have that she and Mr. Johnson are true mates?"

Elder Potts chuckles like it's obvious. "You gentlemen all forget the healing powers of a mate because you're used to healing quickly, but if you have an extensive injury, your mate can help speed the healing process." He nods my way and then continues. "Cody has a mate mark, which means Tess pierced his jugular vein. Any human would bleed out in a matter of minutes without proper medical intervention. Tess had to have healed him or he wouldn't even be alive to have this ridiculous hearing."

"Is that just the opinion of some old raving wolf?" The councilman grumbles.

Elder Potts chuckles again. "No, pup. It's from five decades of experience as the pack doctor. I had to get my medical license the same way humans do, through schooling. There have been countless times that I've had to get the mate to assist in the healing process. It doesn't work for chosen mates, only true mates."

The councilman and Stone both look like they swallowed a lemon.

"Thank you for your testimony, Elder Potts. I apologize that some of our

younger generation forget their place and show disrespect to our Elders. You may return to your seat." Uriah says that last part while looking down the row to the surly council member. "Elder Jared Hudson, please take the stand."

Jared stands perfectly calm as he faces his peers. "I understand that you were involved in this situation somehow, however, the details are not clear. Please explain."

"Cody is my son-in-law." The room gets noisy as people discuss that fact. After it quiets down, he continues. "My mate and I had one child, Audrey. Unfortunately, Audrey was a runt. She and Cody married and together had a daughter. My granddaughter Willow was born a werewolf, but we did not tell either of her parents. My mate and I had Willow in our care over the summer and we noticed that she started showing signs of her first shift. Cody and Tess came to pick her up, but she was at the end of her fever stage. Willow had her first shift at my home."

"So, you did not tell the human of our kind?" One of the elders asks.

Jared shakes his head. "No, Frank, I did not. My mate and I had concerns about what to do when his daughter shifted, however, when Cody arrived at our home with Tess, a werewolf for a mate, we allowed Tess to handle the situation." "Any other questions for Councilman Hudson?" After they all shake their heads, Uriah allows him to sit down. "Based on testimony from both Tessalee and Jared, the one that revealed our existence to Mr. Johnson is Tessalee Johnson. As Elder Potts proved, they are indeed true mates. This is a very precarious situation we have here. Whether or not Mr. Johnson would have found out about our kind is up for debate. As this is only a hearing, the council will vote as to pursuing the charge of treason against Mrs. Johnson."

"Elders!" Marco gets to his feet. "I understand the charge, however, you have not heard from Cody."

"We don't need to hear the human." That asshole elder says.

Marco cocks his brow. "Then perhaps one other witness should be brought forth. This is an extremely serious charge that not even I was notified about. Since it is only a hearing, I have one more whiteness that should be heard." "Who is this witness?" Uriah asks.

Marco walks to the back of the room and opens the door. I growl as Willow walks in with Leslie holding her hand. I can no longer hold back; I jump to my feet. "Leave my daughter out of this!" Marco puts his hand up to tell me to sit back down.

"I had miss Willow Johnson's DNA tested. She is in fact Mr. Johnson's biological daughter." He hands over a document. I never doubted that Willow is my daughter, not once, and the fact that they did this behind my back really fucking pisses me off. I'm fuming!

"SIT DOWN, CODY. We had to do it in case the council questions her parentage." Micco commands me and I begrudgingly take my seat. I look at Tess, she's just as pissed off as I am. She growls something into Micco's ear, but I can't hear her. He whispers something back, but she shakes her head and sets her jaw.

"Miss Willow. How are you today, little one?" Uriah softly asks.

"I'm scared. My daddy isn't like us, but it's not his fault." She says with her big doe eyes and my nose tingles as my eyes begin to moisten. I blink back the tears. Fucking bastards putting her through this.

"Your daddy is not in trouble, little one." Willow's little shoulders slightly relax. "Willow, did you know that it's against the law to tell humans about our kind?" Willow shakes her head, no. "How old are you, little one?"

Willow raises her hand with her little fingers spread. "I'm five. I'll be six on December 9th. Uncle Holt said he's going to buy me a tiara."

Uriah softly smiles. "I think you will look pretty with a tiara." Willow beams with her arms behind her back. "Willow. Your Grandpa told us you just had your first shift. Can you tell us about it?"

Willow looks to all the men and I can see she's afraid to say something wrong. I know she understands what's going on. "I was scared Daddy would hate me. He didn't know about us. Mommy told me that it would be okay and that he would still love me."

Uriah smiles. "Please, go on."

"I was hot and tired so Mommy laid down with me. I fee led funny and we were outside. Mommy and Daddy took a walk, but only Daddy came back. He was mad at me because I showed Grandpa's chair. I didn't mean to. I told Grandpa I was sorry."

"I'm sure he understands," Uriah comments.

Willow nods her head. "He said so. Daddy was mad that I did that so I was scared to shift. My body hurt really bad. I didn't want Daddy to be madder at me. Mommy took me from Daddy then Grandpa laid on top of him on the ground. Mommy promised me that Daddy was not mad. She said he just didn't understand. I was scared and I hurt a lot. Daddy was yelling my name. Mommy told me that I would feel better after I shifted. So, I did. Grandpa let go of Daddy and he fitted down next to Mommy. He didn't touch me. He only looked at me. Grandpa and Grandma took me for my first run. Daddy was scared of them too."

"Thank you for sharing that with us. I'm sorry you hurt so much. It's no fun shifting the first time, is it?"

Willow shakes her head. "No. It hurt. I didn't want to shift in front of Daddy, but it was hard. Mommy made it better. When we came back from our run, Daddy picked me up and played with me. Now I'm happy because I have a new mommy. Please don't take my mommy and daddy away from me. Daddy didn't know and I only just got a mommy. I love

her." Tess wipes her eyes and my nose tingles again. I hold back my tears, but Tess sniffs as she wipes her red tear-soaked eyes. Micco holds her tight.

"Thank you for talking to us. I'm going to have you go back outside with the Beta mate, okay?" Willow nods and then hops down from the podium. Leslie waits for her with her hand extended. Willow blows me a kiss and I wave back at her before the door closes behind her.

"That's a sweet little girl you have there, Mr. Johnson."

I nod to Uriah and clear my throat. "Thank you."

Uriah lets out a breath. "The case of treason was brought before us by Mr. Bram minutes before Councilman Denton informed us, we would need a hearing regarding the matter. After much discussion, we settled on this being only a hearing. As of yet, you are not in trial, Mrs. Johnson." Tess nods and Uriah continues speaking.

"Our secrecy from humans is to protect our kind. Mrs. Johnson brought up a very valid point in that if her mate can be human, how many more human mates are out there? We have laws not only regarding humans but also regarding mates. Mates are a sacred blessing from the Goddess and it would be impossible for a human to mate a Were without the revelation of our kind. As such, it is up to the council to decide if Mrs. Johnson should be tried for treason or not. So, gentleman, all those in favor of a trial raise your hand." Four of the twelve raise their hand. "Those that are opposed?" Seven raise their hands, including Uriah. Uriah nods. "The trial of treason is found to be unwarranted. This hearing is adjourned."

I let out a sigh of relief then stand up just in time to catch Tess in my arms. "Hi, Darlin'. You're so brave." I whisper then kiss her soft lips. "I love you so much!"

"I love you too." She whispers in my ear. Stone and Griffin rush out of the room while the rest of the room slowly clears. I send a glare to both Micco and Marco. I haven't forgotten what they did behind my back.