

# Talking to the Moon |

## Birthday Bash

“Ready for your birthday surprise?” Michael teases, winking at me as he steps into the fighting ring.

I laugh, “Are you?” He lunges at me, but I dodge him at the last second, causing him to stumble past me.

“Not fair!” he protests.

“Just smart. Let’s go again.”

I glance around, searching for something. Suddenly, I’m hit with a delicious scent: green apple and lemon. It’s not food I’m craving, but touch. Then another scent wafts over me: rosewood and vanilla.

Caught off guard, I don’t see Michael’s punch coming until it connects with my jaw. I rub the sore spot, cursing myself for getting distracted.

Michael readies himself again, gesturing for me to make the next move. I step left, then right, throwing him off before I dart left again and land a punch to his ribs.

He groans loudly, and I quickly move behind him. Before he can recover, I step on his leg to gain height and lock his head in a chokehold.

I hold on until he taps my arm, signaling his surrender. I release him, and he drops to his knees, coughing.

Outside the ring, Alpha Darren and Greyson applaud, and Alpha Darren’s laughter rings out. “That’s my girl.”

“Alpha,” Michael and I greet him in unison, baring our necks in respect. He nods, and we relax.

Greyson dismisses the trainees, who head for the showers, patting me on the shoulder and congratulating me on my win.

“Olivia, have you decided yet? I’m sending Michael, but you’d be a great addition,” Alpha Darren says, his impatience clear.

I can tell he wants more than just a skilled fighter. He wants to keep me away from his sons. He's smart enough not to order them to stay away from me, so he's taking a subtler approach.

"I'll let you know soon, Alpha Darren," I respond, unsure. I still don't know what to do. Play it safe or risk it all?

"Don't take too long," he teases.

"I won't, I promise. Have you seen the twins?"

He chuckles. "I have."

"And?" I prompt, annoyed that he's not giving me more.

"All I'll say is this: the birthday girl is expected at the docks at exactly seven tonight, looking her best," he teases.

"I will, thank you." I start to jog toward the showers when Alpha Darren calls after me.

"Oh, and Olivia...happy birthday."

Back in my room in the pack house, I find a small box on my bed. I smile, recognizing it as a birthday gift from the twins, and rush to open it.

Inside is a necklace with a full moon charm. On the back, the words *veni*, ~vidi~, ~amavi~ are inscribed.

"We came, we saw, we loved," I whisper, tracing the inscription.

My heart aches at the thought that this might be my last night with them. Even if I find my mate, my feelings for them won't change. I'll always love them, but I'll have to bury that love deep in my heart.

After a long shower, I spend the rest of the day reading and preparing for the night.

I choose to wear ripped white jeans, a black T-shirt I stole from the twins, and black high-top shoes. I curl my blonde hair into big waves and French braid one side, ending in a ponytail. I finish the look with light eye shadow, mascara, and dark-red lipstick.

I put on the necklace they gave me.

Checking my phone, I see it's 6:48 p.m. Time to head to the docks. I walk downstairs and out the door, following the path to the lake.

The full moon lights my way, and Greyson and Emma join me. They both wish me a happy birthday—Greyson with a hug, Emma with an awkward wave. She still doesn't like me much.

"I heard they've been planning this all day," Emma says, a hint of jealousy in her voice.

"More like all month. I can't tell you how many hours of planning I had to sit through," Greyson adds, draping his arms over our shoulders. "Those boys sure know how to throw a party."

As we reach the lake, I can hear music and see lights strung up in the trees. The air is filled with the scent of beer, tequila, rum, soda, grenadine, pineapple, and other drink ingredients.

And then I smell it again—the green apple and lemon, the rosewood and vanilla. My nipples harden, and I feel a clench in my pussy.

The scents are intoxicating, turning me on before I even see who they belong to.

The docks come into view, crowded with people. It seems like every pack member between sixteen and twenty-five is here—well over a hundred wolves.

As I pass through the crowd, people greet me and wish me a happy birthday. Some congratulate me on being old enough to find a mate; others are just happy to have an excuse to drink.

I follow the intoxicating scents to the end of the docks, where I find Jameson and Liam with their backs to me. Even from behind, they're gorgeous. And then it hits me—the scents are coming from them. The green apple and lemon from Jameson, the rosewood and vanilla from Liam.

*Mates* echoes in my mind, and I know I've found them. My best friends, my boyfriends of three years, are my mates.

I already know I love them, and it's not just because of the mate bond. They're everything I've ever wanted or needed. My wish has come true, and happiness swells in my heart.

They're standing with their backs to me, chatting and watching the moon's reflection on the still lake. They both sniff the air and grin.

"Mate," they both say, turning around with the biggest smiles. Their eyes meet mine.

The moment our eyes lock, the mate bond snaps into place. I'm happier than I've ever been. But then I see their frowns.

My smile fades as I take in their troubled expressions. "What's wrong?"

"No," Liam whispers. Jameson won't look at me, his gaze fixed on the dock's wooden slats.

I furrow my brows. "What do you mean, no?" Jameson steps toward me, grabs my arm, and leads me off the dock. Liam follows us. "Jameson, you're scaring me."

The electric surge flowing from where Jameson is touching me adds to my confusion. Why is he pulling me away? Why is he angry, and why won't he look at me? Why is Liam letting him do this?

"We need to talk at the pack house, Olivia," Jameson says, leading me toward the path to the pack house.

"Jameson, ease up," Liam says, catching up to us with a somber look. "She can walk on her own."

Jameson doesn't let go, and the questioning looks from the party guests only add to my distress. What did I do wrong?

"What's going on?" I ask, but neither of them answers.

We're on the path in the woods, far from the party and any eavesdroppers. I pull my arm free from Jameson's grip and wrap my arms around myself. They both stop and look at me.

"Let's go inside," Liam says, trying to coax me. But I want answers.

"Why are you acting like this? You're both my mates. I love you. Don't you love me?" I ask, tears threatening to spill.

They don't answer. The only sounds are the wind rustling the grass and insects chirping. Then it hits me. "You're rejecting me?"

"Olivia..." Jameson reaches for me, but I step back. "We don't have a choice."

"We never wanted this," Liam admits, rubbing the back of his neck.

I start shaking, and tears stream down my face. I don't cry often, and this is probably the first time since my dad died. "Why?"

"You're an omega," Jameson says, avoiding my gaze.

I knew Alpha Darren wouldn't want an omega as a luna, but I thought the twins didn't care. I thought they loved me and saw my potential.

I'm a strong warrior, smart at tactics, good at arranging events, and knowledgeable in many topics. I've always been considered beautiful and smart, liked by most.

"Then why spend all these years with me if I wasn't good enough?" Their downcast eyes give me the answer I didn't want to hear. I was just entertainment, a way to pass the time. "Go on then, do it," I dare them.

They both sigh. "I, Liam Alexander Murphy, alpha of the White Oak Pack, reject you, Olivia Beth Wilson, as my luna. Do you accept?"

"Yes." I feel the mate bond snap and pain rips through me. I fall to one knee, clutching my chest. My breathing is ragged, but I stand up, ready for the next blow. I will stay strong, even through this.

"I, Jameson Gabriel Murphy, alpha of the White Oak Pack, reject you, Olivia Beth Wilson, as my luna. Do you accept?"

"Yes." The same pain courses through me, and the last mate bond breaks. This time I fall on all fours and start dry heaving.

The twins rush toward me, trying to help, but I push them back, ignoring the electric surge from their touch. With great effort, I stand up, turn around, and run off.