

Talking to the Moon |

New Life

After days on the road, our van, along with several others, finally pulls up to a massive pack house. All of us new recruits scramble out, eager to stretch our legs after the long journey.

The pack house is a sight to behold, easily three times the size of White Oak's. The land extends for miles beyond what I could see on our drive in, and it's impeccably maintained. I can't help but admire their attention to detail.

The alpha of the Lunar Eclipse Pack welcomes us. He's a towering figure, intimidating and commanding; even Michael seems on edge beside me.

"Welcome to our pack. I'm Alpha Jason. The Lycan Academy is our pride and joy, and I expect you all to treat it with respect.

"You'll be assigned to one of six groups based on your unique skills, and each group will have a trained lycan leader.

"At the end of this training, I hope you'll all be qualified lycans. But remember, the moment you fall behind is the moment you'll be sent home."

Another man, just as intimidating as the alpha, steps forward.

"I'm Beta Jamal. I'll be assigning you to your groups. As the alpha mentioned, we have six groups based on skills.

"Group one, brute force and strength; group two, coercion and infiltration; group three, weapons; group four, rogues; group five, wolf forms; and group six, multiple talents."

The beta begins to assign each new wolf to their group. "...White Oak Pack. Michael, group one, and Olivia, group six."

We all start moving toward the cabins marked with our group numbers. I enter the last one, marked with a six. It's a classic summer-camp-style cabin, complete with wooden bunk beds.

I claim the top bunk of the bed farthest from the bathroom and shower. The cabin is coed, which doesn't bother me, except for the few men who can't resist ogling the women as they change.

The woman who claimed the bed under mine smiles at me. "Hi, I'm Clara."

“Olivia.” I extend my hand and she shakes it warmly. “Where are you from, Clara?”

“Pine Valley Pack. You?”

“White Oak Pack. I came here with a friend, but he got assigned to a different group.”

Clara giggles. “Oh, you mean that cute guy you were talking to? Group one?”

“Yeah, Michael... But he’s not cute, just full of himself,” I joke.

“So...you two aren’t...” Clara stammers.

“Together? Goddess no. He’s a doofus if you’ve ever seen one.” I laugh.

Michael and I have been friends for a long time. Outside the ring, he’s quite funny, but inside the ring, he’s all business. “Anyway, I’m gonna go for a walk and check out the land after I change. Want to join me?”

“Nah, I better stay and rest. Big day tomorrow.” Clara starts unpacking her bag into her dresser drawer.

I’m in the middle of changing my shirt when another large man walks in. Do they only come in large sizes in this pack?

He smirks at me but continues walking into the cabin.

“I’m Leo, your group leader, and I expect total compliance. Training starts at six a.m. sharp out front. Tardiness will be punished by doing laps around the pack house.”

He turns around, scanning each wolf in the cabin. When his eyes meet mine, I quickly look away. I’m not looking for trouble, and this man screams trouble.

Leo starts to leave but stops and turns around just before he reaches the door. “Oh, and no fraternizing. If you catch my drift.”

He smirks again, his gaze lingering on my lips. He licks his lips and then walks out the door.

I shake off the unease and finish changing. “Are you sure you won’t join me?” I ask Clara, who is already lying on her bed.

“Maybe another night. Have fun.” She rolls over and snuggles into her pillow.

As I explore, I quickly realize that this pack is wealthier and larger than any other pack I know. Each house is pristine, with beautifully maintained gardens.

I pass an Olympic-sized swimming pool, an obstacle course, and an arena that reminds me of the movie *Gladiator*. I roll my eyes at the ostentatious display, but I can't deny a twinge of envy.

At the edge of the forest, I sit down against a tree and study the pack grounds. Tears well up in my eyes, and my heart aches. I've lost everything.

I've lost the only men I've ever loved, and I've lost...a child. The realization hits me hard, and I break down. It takes hours before I can pull myself together.

I stand up and keep walking.

When I reach the heart of the forest, I decide to let my wolf run free. I hang my clothes on a low branch and play with my moon necklace resting between my breasts. I leave it on and shift into my wolf.

The full moon still lights up the sky, making it easy to see everything in my path without using my wolf sight.

I run up a small hill and perch myself on top of it on my hind legs. My wolf howls a long, sorrowful howl, a howl filled with my pain.

Losing my mates and a pup all in one day is indescribable, even if I didn't know about the baby before.

After lying down and letting myself wallow in despair for what feels like hours, I finally get up with a newfound determination. I won't let what happened break me.

I'll learn from it, and maybe, just maybe, I'll come out stronger on the other side. Maybe...

My wolf runs up and down every path, only veering off when something stirs in the distance. I'm not alone out here.

I run in circles and then hide behind a bush, waiting for my intruder to reveal themselves. I wait for a few minutes and start to grow impatient. I can smell it, and it smells like a wolf—a male wolf.

A larger-than-average gray wolf appears before me. His features are unmistakably lycan, with his enhanced ears, snout, hind legs, and fur thickness.

His senses are sharper than any ordinary wolf. He sniffs the air and then zeroes in on my hiding spot. I've made it too easy for him to find me.

The wolf springs at me, knocking me down with such enthusiasm that I'm more shocked than scared. We roll in the grass, and he ends up on top.

I let out a growl, but it doesn't faze him; instead, he nips at my neck. It's hard enough to sting but not enough to leave a mark.

I growl again, louder this time, and snap my teeth at him. I could swear he's smirking, which is absurd because wolves can't smirk. I shove him off and dart to the side before he can regain his footing.

Now it's his turn to growl as he rises and starts circling me. "*Shift*," he mind-links me.

I refuse, and he shifts instead. The gray wolf morphs into the large man who had yelled at us in the cabin. The large, fiery-red-haired, blue-eyed man with not a hint of fat on his body.

His body is adorned with moonflowers that sprawl from his back, over his shoulders, down his arms, and wrap around his chest, abdomen, and thighs.

His muscles are more defined than even the twins', and my gaze can't help but wander to his manhood. His very large and thick manhood, standing erect.

Leo chuckles, and I realize I've been staring. "Shift," he orders again, and this time, I obey.

Once the transformation is complete, he steps closer to me and reaches out, but I step back. He takes another step, and I retreat again.

He growls again, but in human form, it's far less intimidating. "Why are you backing away?"

"I'm not. I'm still here, but don't touch me," I retort. He stirs something in me more than I'm willing to admit, but I'm not ready for this, for him. I may never be ready for another relationship again.

"I need to touch you to get what I want," he declares, taking another step toward me.

I raise my hands, ready to push him away once he gets too close, but he stops.

He tilts his head and studies me. "Was that your howl I heard earlier?"

I knew someone might have heard me, but I hadn't cared at the time. All I wanted was to ease the pain, and it seemed like a good outlet.

I nod slowly, and he steps back. "Why? I mean, why are you so sad?"

My heart skips a beat, and not in a good way. I don't want anyone to know; their pity would only make it worse. "Nothing. Just homesick, I guess," I lie.

"You're lying. You're good at it, but I can still tell," Leo asserts.

He starts rubbing the back of his neck and gives me a crooked smile. His boyish charm shines through, and I have to admit he's stunning. Any other day I would have been all over him.

"I can't talk about it, it's... I just can't," I insist stubbornly.

"Yet."

I huff and cross my arms over my chest. "Yet?"

"You can't talk about it yet, but I'll get you to open up eventually," he strides forward and wraps me in his strong arms so quickly that I don't have time to protest.

"There's something about you, Olivia, and I'm going to figure it out."

For a fleeting moment, I let myself enjoy his embrace but then snap back to reality.

"How do you know my name?"

Leo chuckles and winks at me. He releases me, turns around, and shifts back into his large gray wolf. He takes off running, and when I call out his name, he glances over his shoulder, that smirk back on his lips.

I return to the cabin and quietly slip into bed after washing up. I spend the night tossing and turning, tormented by my loss but also pondering my next move.

Becoming a lycan is my only goal, and I'll do whatever it takes to achieve it. I'll work hard, focus on my training, and perfect my skills.

Maybe then I'll be good enough.