

Chapter 3

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Kalea

After meeting with Alpha Harding, things were pretty quiet at home and school. Due to the punishment handed out by Mr. Scout, Hailey has stopped picking on me. The week went by without so much as a peep from her. With Alpha Harding having grounded her and making her miss graduation, I doubt that she would be another ruckus. Though, I was pretty sure the Alpha wouldn't prevent his daughter from attending the ceremony. Even though what she did to me was horrible, she didn't deserve to miss this big milestone. Regardless, she was barely going to graduate anyway. Just because she was the Alpha's daughter didn't mean that title naturally came with brains. Hailey was in the bottom percentile of our entire class, which wasn't very large.

The final week of school was filled with nothing but finals, and I spent the better half of the weekend in my room or at the library studying for my tests. My parents continuously asked whether or not I would be leaving Wyoming for college, and my answer repeatedly was, "I don't know." Even though I had been accepted to several pristine universities with full-ride scholarships, I just couldn't see myself leaving the pack or my potential mate. Mom mentioned that he may not be in our pack, which got me thinking, "What if?"

"Knock, knock," I heard my Mom's voice as she opened the door to my room. "Kalea, I cut up some fruit. Do you want some?"

"Sure, Mom," I replied. She came in and placed a paper plate on my desk. There were apples, strawberries, mango, and my favorite, red dragon fruit. "Thanks," I mumbled and hugged her quickly before returning to my studies.

"Kalea, sweetheart, are you excited?" she asks me as she sits on my bed.

"About?" I ask in return without lifting my head from my notes.

"The night of graduation. It's going to be your birthday that same night. You'll finally obtain your wolf and the possibility of finding your destined mate," she said with glee in her tone. I dropped my pen, sighed, and looked over at her. She had hearts in her pupils, and she wasn't even the one this was all falling on.

"Mom, I don't have time for a mate," I tell her. I wasn't sure if I was telling her for her or myself, but either way, I wasn't in the right mindset to entertain the idea. "Besides, aren't you the one who told me that my mate might not even be in this pack?" I throw at her with a knowing look.

"Well, that's only if you don't find him on your birthday," she tells me. I let out another sigh. "Honey, why are you so apprehensive all of a sudden? You were always excited about finding your mate," she says, coming over to me while combing my hair with her fingers. I loved it when she did that. I look up at her, and I can't help but notice the differences now. It never occurred to me when I was little, but now that I'm almost 18, the differences between our physical appearance and that of my Father are too noticeable.

Mom was a natural redhead, while Dad was dirty blonde. The height difference was one of the more considerable differences, and let's not forget our eye colors. Mom had green eyes, while Dad had hazel eyes, and me, well, one eye was sapphire blue, and the other was brown. Everyone thought it was a congenital disability for a long time until my parents came clean about the adoption.

"Mom?"

"Hm?"

"Can you tell me how you guys found me again?" I asked while turning to face her and hugging her waist.

"Again? But we've told you the story now a dozen times," she replied sweetly, combing my hair with her fingers.

"I know, but I like hearing it," I answer. I feel her eyes, but I don't bother looking up. After a few moments of silence, she squeezes and pulls me over to the bed. We sit and face each other while she takes my hand in hers.

"When you were just a baby, your Father was on patrol one night while a few of the kitchen staff and I were in the garden gathering fruits, veggies, and herbs for a feast that the Alpha and Luna were having. I realized we needed apples for one of the fruit centerpieces the Luna wanted, so I went to the pack orchard. While I was picking some apples between the trees, I heard a faint cry from the woods behind the pack territory. I wasn't sure if it was within the border or outside of it, so I mind-linked your Father. He came running over, and I told him what I had heard. Of course, being the stubborn man he is, he ignored I was hearing things. At that time, we were still heartbroken that I could never conceive. He thought my mind was playing tricks on me, but he heard the cries, too. He shushed me, and he went to go investigate..."

"And there I found the most beautiful baby girl." We both looked up and saw my Dad standing in the doorway. We both smiled. "When I saw this beautiful helpless creature, I couldn't help but wonder. Could the moon goddess be blessing us because we couldn't have children? You were in this beautiful woven wool blanket lined with silk and the good kind. The blanket was lavender, and I was surprised because most women want their girls to be covered in pink. On the blanket was your name – Kalea."

"Wait, what?" I said. "You weren't the ones who named me?"

"Did we never tell you this part of the story?" my Mom asked, and I shook my head.

"Oh, my, I thought we had. I'm so sorry, sweetheart," she responded. I looked up at my Dad, who had the guiltiest expression.

"So, my name was already chosen when you had found me?" I asked my Dad. He nodded his head.

"I looked around where you were placed and realized it was literally an inch across the pack border. Whoever your birth parents were, they knew what they were doing. It's how I instinctively knew that you were one of us—a werewolf. Humans would never know about our border, let alone that just behind the trees was a werewolf pack," he continued.

"Kalea, did we tell you about the note?" my Mother asked me. I looked back at her with wide eyes. "Oh, I guess we haven't," she concluded herself.

"Note?" I looked back at my Father. He cleared his throat and walked out of my room. About two minutes later, he returned with a small box in his hands. He handed it to me; I took it and placed it on my lap. I looked at them both and hesitantly opened the box. I was shocked to find the lavender baby blanket and a piece of parchment paper. The blanket felt so expensive as if it were woven and made by hand, specifically for me. The paper felt expensive, too. It wasn't your run-of-the-mill notebook paper. No, this felt like it was from the Renaissance era and was used by royalty.

"We were going to give this to you on your birthday for graduation, but I think it's best if we give it to you now," my Father says and stands back. "Honey, I think we should leave her to read it privately," he tells my Mom. Mom kisses my temple, and I don't even look at them. I'm too captivated by the items in front of me. These two particular things were on me the day I was found by my parents. I heard my bedroom door close softly. I unfolded the note and was surprised that it was addressed to me.

Kalea,

Happy 18th birthday, my beautiful daughter. I'm sure you are wondering what is happening and why you are now receiving this. The reason is because we, as in your Mother and I, feel that you are at the age where you will be able to understand and see things from our perspective. Kalea, we didn't give you up because we didn't want you. We gave you up because we had to protect you. However, I cannot explain why just yet; you will soon come to know what we are protecting you from. You may not believe it yet, but please know that your Mother and I love you with everything we have. You are our only pup, and it pains us both to part ways with you.

Your grandparents will never forgive us, but as your parents, it is our duty to protect you at all costs. Even if that means we must live in heartbreak for years. We hope that one day, you will find it in your heart to forgive us. We love you more than words can comprehend, Kalea. We will see you again.

Love,

Your Father, Tobias.

My mouth hung open as I finished reading the note. The handwriting was so pristine to have been written by a man I almost thought it was fake. But what made me realize it was real were the dried-up spots of water droplets on the paper. But I realized it wasn't from water but from tears. My birth Father cried while writing this to me. I held the note in my hand and picked up the blanket. I clutched it, brought it to my face, and smelled it. It smelled like a newborn baby mixed with watermelon on a hot summer day. I smiled and inhaled again.

I was speechless and just held onto the items as I laid back and rested my head on my pillow. I was surprised that my birth Father signed his name on the note. Then again, the name Tobias is pretty standard. My birth Father could be anyone. I honestly wished there was a way to find them, but unfortunately, werewolf births aren't recorded like human births. And there's no telling where I was born, either. I could have been born in a third-world country for all I know. I take a deep breath and decide to get back to studying. I only had a week left of school before my entire world changed again.

When Monday morning rolled around, and my alarm clock went off without fail, I groaned in frustration because I knew that I didn't get more than two hours of sleep after being up all night studying. I lifted my head and looked over at my bed, still seeing the baby blanket and note from my birth Father. I smiled softly and walked over to the bed. I picked up the blanket to sniff it again, but I saw a chunk missing from it. I spread it out on the bed and noticed an entire corner missing. I cursed my head to the side and found it strange. I figured I would ask my parents about it when I went down for breakfast. I folded it back up, placed it with the note back into the box, and tucked it safely under my bed.

After that was said and done, I jumped in the shower to wash away the sleepiness that I was still carrying. Afterward, I felt refreshed and dressed in a simple black t-shirt, skinny jeans, and black and white Pumas. I gathered up all of my school supplies, threw them into my bookbag, and skipped down the stairs to the dining room.

"Good morning, Two-Tone," my Dad said from behind the morning newspaper. I was still surprised that these things were still being made.

"Good morning, Daddy," I reply and kiss his cheek. I was getting some milk from the fridge when I remembered the blanket. "Hey, Dad?"

"Yes?"

"My baby blanket, the one you found me in?"

"Mmmhmm?"

"Did you notice that a chunk of fabric is missing from it?" I asked him as I poured the milk

"Yes, I did. That's how it was when I found you," he replied, putting the paper down and smiling at me.

"Oh, okay. I was just wondering," I said and put my oatmeal into the microwave to heat a bit after adding cold milk.

"Are you ready for your exams?" my Mother asked, coming from the pantry with onions and potatoes in hand.

"As ready as I'll ever be. Only three days of finals, two days to bask in the amazing feeling of no more school and graduation!" I squeal at the time the microwave beeps. I take out my oatmeal and join my Dad at the table.

"And don't forget your birthday, sweet girl. Do you want to do the usual?" my Mom asks.

"Sure!" I said enthusiastically. The usual consisted of going to my favorite breakfast diner, shopping, and then ice cream at the famous creamery. Then it would be off to graduation and then the pack party.

Exams went by faster than I could have comprehended. Before I knew it, day one was already over, and I knew I had aced all of my exams for the day. As I was leaving my last class for the day and heading to my locker to empty it and take personal effects home, I couldn't help but overhear some pack members chattering by the exit.

"Did you hear the rumors?" one girl asked.

"About what?" another asked in return.

"The Alpha is going to announce Josh as his successor at the graduation party!" the first one shouted in a whisper. "I heard directly from Hailey," she added.

"Oh my gosh, I wonder if he will finally announce who his mate is!?"

"Maybe? I mean, he will be twenty and has yet to find his destined mate. Who knows, he may end up taking a chosen mate instead."

"I wonder if it's one of us!?" the third squealed excitedly. "None of us are 18 yet. So many of us will be 18 in the next few weeks and during the summer. You never know!" she said with joy to her friends.

"Oh my goddess, you're right!" the other two squealed with her. I just rolled my eyes as I eavesdropped on their conversation. Josh finally becomes Alpha. Strangely, I remember Alpha Harding telling him he would only pass down the title once Josh settled down. Either Josh has found a chosen mate, or the Alpha is ready to retire. I shrugged my shoulders to myself, not really caring. Josh was an alpha's hole, but I half expected that he'd at least grown up since being out of high school for a few years. Yeah, he was the worst bully I had endured for two years, but I have eyes and can see perfectly. Josh was a ne-looking specimen. Hell, all male werewolves were. There was no denying that Josh had it all – the grades, the looks, the body, and, I'm pretty confident, the anatomy. All of the girls that ever had a chance to sleep with him would never stop talking about how big he was in that spectrum.

That was the furthest thing on my list of priorities. Was I a little nervous about finding my destined mate by the end of this week? Sure, what teenage girl wouldn't be nervous to possibly find the love of her life that was fated to dream to the all-powerful and all-knowing moon goddess? It's even a teen she-wolf's dream to find her destined as soon as she turns 18. But knowing my luck in the area of love, my mate wouldn't be here, and if he were here on the off chance, he would probably reject me. I mean, why wouldn't he? Everyone in the student body and the pack has already denied me. Why would it be any different with my mate? Either way, I wasn't going to worry about that right now. I still had more exams to study for. I'll worry about the mate bond when that time comes. If it ever does.