

When they touch me (Shelagh Milano)

chapter 1-5

Artemisia

“I, Riccardo Saviano, future Alpha of the Gray Shadow Moon Pack, reject you, Artemisia Guerrieri, Daughter of Alpha Franco of the Blood Moon Pack, as my mate and future Luna.”

I flinch as my feet touch the surface of the cold water and groan as the flashback of the day in which I accepted the rejection of the love of my life resurfaces from my memories.

Rick and I had been together forever. Since the day we met in our strollers, we had been a thing.

Or at least I thought we were.

We started dating officially after he stole my first kiss in high school and even if my mother had given me long talks about how I should preserve my virginity until I met my mate, I gave him my everything as we went to college and were allowed to live together by the elders of our packs.

As our packs already shared a lot of land and facilities, our bond was very well seen by everyone. And I guess I was not the only one who couldn't wait to find him as my mate. My father had talked plenty about how our bond would lead to a really strong alliance.

Well, shit.

He turned 20 a few months before I did and as he was acting strangely, I was scared about the possibility that he might have found out that I wasn't his mate. So, on my 20th birthday, I was immensely relieved.

Just until the moment that I wasn't.

Surely, as a popular and love-spoiled girl, I could have imagined everything happening but not to get rejected without any explanation on my birthday. As my dreams and plans for my future were

crushed on what should be the happiest day of my life, I needed quite a while to rise back up from my ashes.

My only luck was that even if I was ready to give up on everything, I didn't and kept going with my studies as I was too ashamed to go home and face my family.

While my father and mother took it more on the pragmatic side, mourning the loss of the alliance more than my pain, my brothers were fuming. I guess I prevented a few pack wars as I held back my brothers from killing Rick.

It's now been four years since I got out of college and back home. I regenerated all alright and was able to train as a pack doctor for our pack hospital. My heart, alas, couldn't get back on track. It seemed as if the pain was just too much to bear.

I sigh deeply as I watch a bunch of children play on the other side of the lake.

What happened to Riccardo, you might ask? Well, he got back and took over his title two years ago. He got mated with his chosen mate while he was still in college and now has two kids, aged 6 and 4.

Yeah. You got it.

I discovered the reason for my rejection pretty soon after it had happened. His mate was already 4 months pregnant as I found out.

The roaring my wolf released at this was as crushing as the heartbreak itself. My heart broke in a way that made me think that it wouldn't ever be able to be mended ever again.

'This is all your fault! You should have done more to please our Mate!' My wolf, Cassandra, hissed.

'That's not true!' I cried as her voice boomed through my head painfully, 'I did everything he wanted me to!'

'Not enough!' She retorted accusedly, making me whimper.

The next few days I tried to get her to talk to me again. I begged her to talk to me, but she ignored me. And never showed herself to me again.

If not reprimand me for my behavior in my daily life.

You see, our relationship with our inner wolf is essential to our kind. Losing her at such a crucial moment made the pain I felt multiply.

I was still able to train as a pack doctor as I was the Alpha's daughter, but I surely was the most useless being in the pack, and everybody knew that.

"Missy!" I turn around as I see my younger brother kick a stone in his path. "Mom wants to talk to you about Gio's coronation."

I groan, picking up my shoes and getting up. "I'm going to help, but I won't go!"

“You have to. Gio would be sad if you didn’t.”

My older brother would indeed be sad if I were to miss his coronation ceremony. He and his mate have been training for this moment for months and I know exactly how nervous he is. Even though I boast about being over Riccardo at every possibility I’m given, I fear the moment of meeting him at the ceremony. Also, facing him without a partner by my side is always the worst thing to live through.

But the things you’d do for your family.

Walking back with my younger brother, who talks non-stop about his sparring classes at school, I reach our pack house pretty fast. Due to my numerous family, just a few of my brothers live with us, as the Beta’s family wouldn’t have room otherwise.

The mansion is ridiculously huge. In the basement are the quarters of the omegas working at the mansion. On the ground floor and the first floor are the quarters of the unmated warriors and guards on duty as well as the dining halls, the entertainment and common rooms, the kitchens, and a small library. The floor above is where my younger brother, Fabio, and my younger twin brothers, Zaccaria and Zeno, live along with me. On the fourth floor, there is my father’s Beta with his family. They will soon have to move into a pretty house near the marketplace as my brother’s Beta will move in with his family after the ceremony. My brother, who currently lives on the fifth floor with his family, will soon be moving up to the highest floor and so exchange quarters with my parents.

I love my family dearly and the only thing making this better would be my elder twin brothers, Cristian and Costa, living with us too.

I find my mother in her office and knock at the open door, making her turn to me with a big smile. “Ah, Missy, there you are.”

“Hey, Ma. Is there a possibility I could help without having to go?”

She chuckles, moving her glasses up her nose by pinching their frame.

“Honey, we have already discussed it. We all must show your brother our love and support. What will people think if you don’t show up?”

I take a piece of paper that she is handing me over her desk and slump into the seat standing in front of it with a groan.

“I need you to memorize the names of the guests, so we can make a good impression.”

“Mom! These are hundreds of names!” I shout, looking at her agape, but she just waves dismissively.

“Oh, I’ve highlighted the important ones, and you have a few days.”

Scrunching my nose, I check the list and murmur, “You have to be kidding me.”

She is humming along happily as my eyes fall on a special name.

“Blackwood,” I whisper to myself, attracting my mother’s attention.

“What was that, honey?”

I turn the page for her to see and she squints her eyes at it. “You invited the Blackwood heir. From the Blood Fang pack?”

She nods as she lifts her glasses to read better. “Yeah. We had to.”

“Why?” I ask, standing from my seat. noveldrama

She sighs, scribbling something in her notebook.

“The treaty that we have with them is really important for us. It is already unstable as it is.”

“Treaty,” I scoff, slamming the piece of paper back onto her desk. “They break that useless pact at every given moment.”

My mother sighs, lifting her finger to my face. “That’s why we have to be extra nice to them. They are just playing with us because they are strong. Imagine if they attacked us for real. That would be horrendous. Now, be a nice little lady, and help me pick out the flowers. Luna Diana showed you the dress she picked, right?”

“I can’t believe you all!” I yell at her, risking getting punished badly for my insolence. “No wonder they keep playing us like a violin! Those arrogant bastards don’t deserve to ruin his ceremonial coronation as well as everything else they show up for!”

My mother looks at me with a displeased expression, pursing her lips. “You are going to calm down this instance and moderate your tone, or I will have a little chat with your father. You are certainly not in the position to evaluate this type of situation. And I warn you, you will behave at the ceremony!”

“Don’t worry, mom!” I scoff, already about to storm out of the door, “I will hold still if they choose to attack me!”

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Artemisia

“All that shouting doesn’t really suit a pretty lady.” My brother chuckles as he walks into my bedroom.

I scoff, rolling my eyes, continuing to sulk while staring outside the window. “It’s just not fair.”

“A lot of things aren’t!” He simply states, getting me to turn around to look at him.

“Aren’t you going to change something as the new Alpha? Will you allow them to continue to just act as they please?” I ask him, clenching the shiny surface of the sideboard I am sitting on.

“Missy,” he sighs, putting his hands into his pockets. “There is not really anything we could do.”

Giorgio takes a step forward, tilting his head at me. “Is there something that is bugging you? To have you agitated like that?”

Shaking my head, I raise my eyes to the ceiling, “Did you hear that they executed a wolfless She- wolf a few days ago?”

“Yes,” he answers, the corners of his mouth dropping. “But it is only a rumor going around. The council hasn’t found anything on it.”

“But they are still investigating, aren’t they?” My voice reaches a high-pitched tone, nearly failing me.

Giorgio shifts his weight from one foot to another, “Yes, but-”

“Nothing but!” I scream, jumping off the furniture. “They are animals. We should stop doing as they please. Having them treat us as puppets to pull off a show with.”

In the blink of an eye, Giorgio is standing in front of me, grabbing my arm brusquely. “You will calm down and refrain from saying anything like this out loud ever again! Do you understand me?”

I whimper and pull my arm up, trying to cover from his intimidating fury. As I nod shyly, he growls, making me wince. “Do you. understand. me?”

“Yes, Alpha.” I say lowly, finally getting him to release me.

I rub the spot pulsating painfully on my arm, pouting. “It’s not just us, Missy.”

Looking up at him, I see that his rage-filled expression has now morphed into the usual caring one that I normally get from my big brother. “It’s important that you know that all of us are in danger. Even if we were to attack them all together, the chances would be

high for them to crush us with a tired smile on their faces. You can't grasp the things that we saw, so please. Don't risk it. Especially not in your condition."

"My condition," I murmur feeling crushed while still caressing my arm with my thumb.

He flashes me his canines as he grins at me. "So, care to change the subject, and act like the shy, weak, and cowardly sister everyone supposes you to be?"

I chuckle, clearing my throat as if I were to impersonate an actor on stage.

"On a scale from one to 10, how nervous are you?" Giorgio acts pensively as he sighs deeply. "Maybe an 8?" He answers indecisively, making me chuckle.

"Are you asking me?" I sit back onto the sideboard, while he moves to stand next to me, and we look out of the window watching warriors train on the grounds below.

"Diana chose a really beautiful dress, I gotta tell you." I say in a whisper, my stare directed into the void.

Seeing him smile in the reflection of the glass, my heart feels so happy that it could burst.

"9 then."

"Mom is already calling her Luna."

"That's actually cute."

"Yeah."

Giorgio turns around slowly, his shy smile still present. "You will be coming, right?"

I wrinkle up my nose and shrug, "Sure. Wouldn't miss it for no reason."

"Thank you. I'll set Zeno and Zack to your side. This way he will not dare to come close to you again."

"That would be awesome, thank you. But I can defend myself, he is just a wimp, let the Zs enjoy their evening with their girlfriends."

He sighs again, holding me by my shoulders. "We are a family, and they will understand. He has to learn that he lost you and has to let you be."

Shaking my head, I grin up at him. "You are already such a stubborn ruler. Don't worry. I'm unmated and there must be some residues of our bond because of that."

"Still not a reason to be an asshole." He grunts, releasing me with a tap.

My heart bleeds as I think of how stupid I have been and am now even troubling my family. They know about everything as I have told them. noveldrama

Well, nearly everything.

Just my brothers and my sisters-in-law know that he is still obsessed with me and whenever he sees me, he tries to get close to me.

My parents only know that I'm still hurting at seeing him, and that is not even a lie.

But just my best friend knows that, a few years ago, I let myself get wrapped around his finger and even spent the night with him. His cheating on his family with me had me feeling sick for days. And until this day, I feel like a piece of shit for my behavior.

At least it was a lesson for me and since then I was cured of feeling attracted to him.

The ick was just too strong.

Thank God.

"I'll be alright. Don't worry!" I say, with a grin.

He nods, and is already standing by the door as he turns around, "You aren't wolfless, Missy! Don't punish you for something you can't control."

I remain looking at the training ground, as I sigh, the first tears falling fastly.

Joyful laughter fills the air while a rustling rises from the floors below us. The preparations for the ceremony are running smoothly and still, my mother manages to hyperventilate constantly about the guests who have to be arriving at any minute.

"Do you feel comfortable?" I ask Diana as she is taking deep breaths with her hands on her stomach.

"Yes. But no. God, I think I'm going to faint."

"Relaaaaax." Caterina yells from her vanity, while she is concentrating on drawing her eyelid line straight. "Everyone has already accepted you as their new Queen. Everything is going to be OK."

"I'm more nervous than on my wedding day." She breathes out, "Is that shit normal?"

I chuckle as I pinch the train of her wedding gown. "I guess so."

With a swift movement, she turns around and grabs my cheeks with her hands gently. “Aren’t you a beautiful creature?!”

She presses a smooch on my cheek, making me gasp. “Your red lips will destroy my make-up!” I skyrocket out of my sitting position and stand behind Caterina to look in the mirror. “You cruel woman. I sat hours for it.”

Diana and Caterina laugh, and Caterina stands up to remove the traces of lipstick from my cheek. I pout as she rubs her thumb on my face, and she dabs the spot carefully with a beauty sponge to recover my make-up flawlessly.

“All set!” She exclaims happily just as my mother’s voice resounds in our heads.

“Ladies and Gentlemen. Let it begin.”

I get released out of the mind link and turn to Diana with a chuckle. Squeezing her hand, I wish her good luck and assure her one more time that all will be fine before I leave the room with Caterina.

“She shouldn’t be left alone.” She whispers as we scurry down the stairs.

“I know, but it will be alright. Tradition asks for her to join us just at the time of the coronation.”

As we reach the ground floor, I halt just behind my mother and feel Zeno laying his arm around my shoulders.

I can feel how everybody is anxious but also extremely excited. My brothers and I stand there to face the first guests with a smile while my parents welcome them officially on our pack grounds. I stare in awe as the elegant representatives of other packs walk in dressed elegantly.

Everybody seems to be working tonight. The organization of the guards, the escorts from the boarders, and the logistics for the party bear witness to my mother’s skill as Luna.

We decide to move with the crowd and go to the back of the house. The big patio leading to the large meadow is now decorated lovingly with garlands and flowers. At the end of the field that is fenced with rose bushes, there has been set up a huge stage where the coronation will be held.

I squeal excitedly as I follow Zeno out to a few bar-high tables that are still free and start snacking on the hors d’oeuvres that are being served.

Zaccaria reaches us with fast steps, and I groan.

“Really, I don’t need your pity. Just leave me alone and go enjoy the evening with your mates.”

Zeno grins as he munches on pretzel sticks. “No can do, sis.”

“I brought you champagne.” Zaccaria beams as he stretches out his arms for me to get my glass.

“Thank you, Zack.”

Even before Zeno can take his glass from our brother’s grip, his expression darkens.

“The assholes are here.”

Zaccaria’s and my head whip to the patio, just in time to see five members of the Blood Fang Pack scanning the crowd with a frown.

Well, no, let me rephrase that.

One of them wears a frown. I couldn’t tell what the others were doing.

And what a frown.

His strong frame lets all the others pale in comparison. Even surrounded by the strongest wolves in the Southern Hemisphere, he seems to tower over everybody. He has his squared jaw clenched as he stares us lowlives down with his glacial eyes and I guess I could cut myself if I was to touch his face, due to his high cheekbones.

And why the fuck would I want to touch his face?!

For the first time after what seems an eternity, I feel my wolf stir and I gasp, tearing myself out of my trance.

My brothers look at me concerned as I grab the material of my dress.

“What's wrong?”

“Cassy... She... I think she just moved.”

“Really?” Their sparkling eyes have my heart bleeding as I think that it might be for an entirely wrong reason.

“Yeah,” I say with a chuckle, straightening my spine with a deep breath.

As my brothers resume bickering playfully, I risk another look at the Adonis that even got my wolf to react, and I must be blushing horribly as our gazes meet.

Oh, my Goddess.

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Artemisia

He can't be my mate. His scent would have overpowered everyone else's easily and signaled me that he was near.

I chew at my thumbnail while my thoughts keep running wild about the fact that all of this just doesn't make any sense.

Also, how bothersome it would be to have a Blackwood as my mate.

So, why am I disappointed?

Joining the applause that drags me out of my train of thought, I beam as my brother and his mate step onto the stage. They look so excited and anxious at the same time at what is about to happen that it makes me feel butterflies. The best thing out of all is that it seems like they are happy to finally be able to see each other again the most. Even if in such moments the memory of my rejection hurts the most, I'm glad that the feelings of happiness that I feel for my family overpowers me.

Automatically, my eyes wander over the crowd to find the Alpha Blackwood already looking at me. My eyes snap back to the stage and I gulp.

So embarrassing.

As he is standing rather close by, I guess that the mystery of the mouthwatering scent that I'm smelling is resolved.

Goddess, why me?

The coronation goes by quite dragging as I can't seem to concentrate on the ceremony. I bounce on my heels as my insides won't stop tingling because I keep sneaking peeks to look at Blackwood, finding him already looking at me.

Oh, God, maybe he feels that my wolf is dormant.

As the elder finishes the ritual, and my brother goes to take his Luna's hand, a collective gasp rises. I clench onto Zaccaria, and he puts his arm around my wrist to stabilize me on my feet, even though he must feel the uncomfortable feeling of our bond to our parents as leaders being strapped from us, before our links to our new Alpha and Luna click into place.

As another round of applause disrupts the air, I try to push through the crowd after my brothers to get to Giorgio and Diana to congratulate myself with them. But the people are just too aggressively trying to get there first that I get separated from my brothers and, as I seem not to be able to move any further, choose to step out to the side, waiting for everyone to just calm down after they had their chance to see the beautiful pair.

I take a deep breath and smile at a waiter who brings me a glass of champagne before my nostrils get assaulted by a scent that I had hoped not to smell again.

And just when I'm without my brothers.

How practical.

"Hey, beautiful."

Taking a sip from my champagne flute, I act annoyed while hoping that he will get the hint.

Even if he never does.

"Alpha Riccardo, good evening."

"Come on, Missy." He chuckles, trying to get closer to me. "No need to be so formal. After all we have been through."

I look over the crowd with my tongue pressed to my teeth, trying to spot my brothers, but all I find is a certain someone staring at me.

"If we were talking about what we have been through, it's Dr. Guerrieri for you."

I tear my eyes from Alpha Blackwood to look at Riccardo, who is grinning at me like a moron. And I regret it immediately.

"Come back in with me. Let's talk."

I push out a single laugh, trying to keep my voice down. "You are not really trying to hit on me while your wife is at home, pregnant with your third baby, Rick!"

"You always think too much. Missy, come on." As he grabs my wrist, I snatch it out of his hold maybe a little too aggressively.

"Don't you dare touch me!"

"Why are you acting so ha-" Riccardo is just about to open his mouth the wrong way as he gets interrupted by a deep baritone.

“Missy, is everything alright?”

I have to keep myself from physically shuddering as I turn around to look at the disrupter wide-eyed.

What did he just call me?

Blinking repeatedly as I am still recovering from his voice traveling through me like honey, I put up a smile and shake my head.

“Yeah. Everything is just alright.”

Alpha Blackwood clenches his jaw, his gaze moving onto Riccardo. “Where is your wife, Alpha?”

I nearly choke on my spit as Riccardo’s face pales, and he starts to stutter like an idiot. The way he pronounced his title mockingly, making me feel malicious joy.

“She wasn’t feeling well, so she stayed at home.”

Alpha Blackwood clicks his tongue, totally uninterested in what Riccardo just said, and leans in slightly to talk to me.

“Didn’t you want to congratulate your brother? I guess we could get to him now.”

A shiver runs down my spine as his eyes capture my gaze entirely, making me lose the sense of time and place for a second. Just as I see him lift an eyebrow I finally get my brain to start working again.

I jerk up slightly to look over the crowd and don’t see how we are going to make it as my brother is still closed in tightly by his admirers, but still choose to go with his rescue offer.

“Oh, great let’s go. Bye, Rick.”

He nods his head at Riccardo with his signature frown, before saying, “See you around, Richard.”

I stifle a laugh as I pass the lawn to find an open space where we can get through, but there is no avail.

Alpha Blackwood just follows me leisurely and seems to watch me without wanting to help me.

“His name isn’t Richard.”

“Really? I don’t pay much attention to names.”

“But you called me Missy.”

He shrugs nonchalantly. “He was practically screaming it all over the field. Didn’t like how uncomfortable he made you look.”

I let my shoulders slump and turn around to look at him with a smile. “Thank you!”

Seeing the corner of his lips twitch, has butterflies erupting in my stomach even though I don’t get the smile.

I’m such an idiot.

“Doesn’t seem like we will be getting anywhere near my brother.” I sigh sadly and purse my lips.

“Yeah.” He states frowning, staring towards the crowd, and I’m actually surprised that he is still around.

“Well, can’t be helped,” I say, turning around to face him. “Have you already had a tour of the grounds?”

My heart beats into my throat as I wait for him to crush my invitation like it would be appropriate for the lowlife, he must be thinking that I am.

“That would be lovely, thank you.”

“Oh,” I say, taken aback. “Nice, come with me then.”

Trying to put up a non-awkward smile, I start walking out through a gap in the rose bushes.

“Be careful. They have nasty thorns.” I realize how stupid it must sound to say that to the strongest Alpha in the range of miles even before I hear him chuckle.

Well, at least he doesn’t take it as an insult.

We walk back to the pack house more or less silently. The silence is only disrupted by me commenting on the garden or the house. As we reach the front yard of my home, I gesture along the paths splitting in front of us.

“This way you reach the back of the house.” I look up at him, expecting his gaze to be directed to the house, only to find him looking at me.

And as the massive flirt I am, I blush terribly while I stutter, “Erm... There is like a garden with high bushes designed as a... well... like a... around a set of fountains...”

I remember my brother telling me how he saw Alpha Blackwood punish a warrior for having stuttered in front of him when he had visited the Blood Fang Pack territory. So, I’m a bit frozen at seeing a slight smile on his lips.

“And over there would be the lake.”

I clear my throat, trying to shake off the feeling of his eyes burning into my skin. “There are a few benches and flowers and a playground for the kids.”

Oh, Goddess. Shut up!

“It’s nice there.”

I press my lips together as I avoid his gaze to look at the path that leads to the lake.

This is so embarrassing.

“Show me then.”

“Huh?” My eyes dart up to his, and he makes a small gesture with his head.

“Show me.” He says, his deep baritone making my heart skip a beat.

Goddess, I’ve been engaged. When did I get back to act like a lovesick teenager?

“Sure. This way, if you please, Alpha Blackwood.”

As I walk in front of him on the dirt path, I concentrate on not tripping over my dress with my high heels as I feel his overwhelming presence following me closely. Reached the lake, and I let go of my skirt to turn around to him. “Tadaaan,” I say a bit too enthusiastically.

“You really like it here, do you?” noveldrama

I nod, making him chuckle.

Again, I find myself drawn to him as I think of how I could listen to him chuckling for hours.

Oh, no! Am I crushing on our tormentor’s Alpha?

We walk to a bench a few steps away from us and stare at the lake silently. I push down the urge to say something just to end the silence as it will definitely be embarrassing.

Thinking about how it's not awkward at all and how much I feel at ease with him, has me worrying. I bite the nail of my thumb thinking about the last time I felt like this in the company of a man. But seeing all the horrible dates I had after breaking up with Riccardo, there is really no surprise.

Oh, Goddess! He isn't my mate, is he?

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Artemisia

Before my panic can rise drastically, I calm myself down, as his scent must have been enough for me to spot him as my second chance mate. And even if his scent is mouthwatering, it isn't screaming mate.

"Is that a quirk of yours?"

I look at him confused, finding him smiling.

The hell?!

"Erm... what?"

"You do that pretty often. Also, during the ceremony." His eyes fall to my lips, and I remove my hand swiftly.

"Oh, yes. Sorry, it's... I do it without thinking."

"Don't worry." He says, directing his eyes back to the lake as he leans back on the bench. "It's adorable, actually."

My heart beats so fast, that I risk deafening at the loud thuds in my ears. "Oh... Thank you."

I'm glad that he is looking at the lake as I must be looking like the most embarrassing tomato on earth. noveldrama

As I risk a look, I find him watching the surface of the lake concentrated. And I must say that he is quite the eye-catcher. It's not only that he is tall and broadly built but also his squared jaw, the dark

expressive eyes, and the high cheekbones that must set every she-wolf under a spell. The way the moon shines on his features has him looking even more gorgeous.

And now you are drooling.

He clenches his jaw shortly before he turns to me, lifting his brow. The action tears me out of my daydream, but I guess it is too late to regain some of my decency.

Goddess, he must be able to hear my heartbeat go crazy.

So embarrassing.

“You are the daughter of Alpha Franco, right?”

“Yeah.” I spit out, maybe a bit too loudly.

As if I was answering the question of my favorite teacher enthusiastically.

“I’m his favorite, actually.”

Goddess, can’t you stop me?!

His chuckling anew makes me feel less stupid, even if it doesn’t take my wish for a black hole to swallow me this instant away.

“I bet on that.” He jokes, making my heart sing.

“But honestly, I’m so lucky. My brothers are the best, even if they are too protective most of the time.”

“Well, if I had a sister like you, I would probably lock her up somewhere to keep her from all the creeps around.” I laugh out loud, and he shakes his head. “Seriously. I would have nearly started a

war at Ricky-boy just breathing in your direction.”

I’m fighting for air as I crack up while he just smirks at me. “Oh, Goddess!”

I push out a deep breath and wipe a tear from my eye. “I don’t think anyone wants to risk a war with you, Alpha Blackwood.”

“Cayden.” He growls, making me stare at him wide-eyed.

He didn’t really ask me to be on a first-name basis with him.

‘And we will be thankful for this opportunity and not decline it to bring shame upon ourselves and our pack.’ My wolf says disparagingly, and I gasp as I haven’t heard from her since the day we were rejected.

“Sure, erm... Alpha Cayden.” I feel my face heat up as he leans in, growling. “Drop the Alpha.”

Oh, dear.

Caressing a strand of hair behind my ear, I push down Cassy whimpering in my head.

“I’d be honored to, Cayden,” I say, feeling as if my tongue had become numb.

“All my pleasure, Missy.”

Shivering pleasantly, I force myself up to escape this situation before I do something to trouble my parents even more.

“Do you have a place like this on your pack lands too?”

As he catches up with me leisurely, my heart starts beating faster in my chest.

The moonlight touches the surface of the lake, creating a romantic scenery. His face gets kissed by the rays of light that illuminate his left side, taking my breath away.

It takes me a few seconds to realize that his looking at me as well. We stay silently for what seems like an eternity, and at one point I think that I must be dreaming. His eyes get black, leaving just single golden flecks to swirl in his irises.

I gasp, and as I’m about to take a step back, he is faster to stop me from it, grabbing my forearm gently. I get captured by his intense gaze, losing myself completely.

As he takes a step forward to stand even closer, I gulp. I’m a bit confused that I don’t feel any sparks on my skin as his touch feels heavenly.

“Cayden?” I whisper, watching him leaning closer.

But he stays quiet, his lips nearing mine slowly. My heart hitches in my throat, and I close my eyes waiting for his lips to touch mine. I feel his warm breath fanning me, making me heat up even more.

His lips have barely grazed mine as a loud growl tears me out of my trance.

Cayden seems unfazed by the threatening roar as I look at him but looks just deadly annoyed. Turning my head to the origin of the sound, I find one of my brothers clenching his fist with his chest heaving.

“What the fuck, Blackwood!” He shouts, his wolf fighting for dominance.

Cayden straightens his spine unimpressed, while I panic.

And what stupid timing, idiot!

‘Go away, idiot! What are you doing?’ I mind-link him, getting his angry expression to turn on me.

“Don’t dare to talk to me like that after I found you in such a bad position!” He roars, making me mewl.

So embarrassing.

But Cayden chuckles, apparently unaware that my brother is about to attack him. “Chill, Guerrieri! You are interrupting! Don’t you have some cake to eat?”

Oh, you can’t be serious.

Seeing my brother about to pop off, I stand in his way, trying to calm him down. “Zeno, please. You have to calm down. Don’t...”

“Don’t tell me what to do!” He growls, charging past me.

“No!” I shout panically, as I turn around, not able to stop my brother, who is shifting midair.

Turning around, I’m just in time to see Cayden blocking my brother and swinging him into the lake as if he were made out of hay.

He didn’t even shift partly, turning to look at my now struggling brother swimming in the lake back in his human form.

I run to stand next to him wide-eyed as my brother reaches the shore on the other side of the lake slowly.

“Oh my God! I’m so sorry! He is such an idiot!”

Cayden flashes me a gorgeous smile, his canines flashing in the moonlight. “Don’t worry. You told me you were their favorite!”

That makes me smile, and I shake my head while lowering my gaze to prevent him from seeing me blush. As my eyes set on his arm, my breath hitches.

“Oh, no! You are hurt!”

He clicks his tongue, lifting his arm. “Ah, no. It’s just a scratch. Don’t worry.”

I slip my stole from me to wrap it around his arm.

“Really, Missy. Don’t worry. There is no need to ruin your dress!”

Pressing the cloth to his wound which probably has already closed by now, I feel strangely agitated.

“Really!” He repeats, laying his hand on mine. “Missy.”

Taking a deep breath, I feel his touch calming me, and slowly but surely this is creeping me out.

He smiles as I look at him, feeling excruciated.

“You smell nice.” His husky whisper, hits me right in the heart, making my chest squeeze.

A clearing of a throat gets me to jump once again, meeting my brother’s eyes. “Are you alright? What happened?” Giorgio asks worriedly.

His eyes narrow as he sees Zeno walking back around the lake slumped and dripping wet.

“It’s my fault, Alpha Guerrieri,” Cayden says, and I look at him surprised. “I made a stupid joke. And he just wanted to protect his sister’s pride. I’m sorry for the fuss I created!”

Giorgio doesn’t seem to be convinced about what Cayden is saying, but he knows better than to accuse an enemy pack’s alpha of lying.

“No worries, Alpha Blackwood. I’m sorry if my brother wasn’t able to react like a grown adult to a joke.”

After a lot of diplomatic back and forth between the two, Zeno finally reaches us.

“Chiedi scusa!” I hiss at him, making him distort his face. [Apologize!]

Zeno sways back and forth, acting childishly, but as more and more people join us at the lake, he finally gives in. “I’m sorry, Alpha Blackwood!”

“No, please. I apologize as well.”

Cayden taps my hand gently before he steps away to meet his pack members standing a few steps away from us.

I watch him, rooted to the ground while Giorgio is reprimanding Zeno. As the group of men has reached the side of the house, about to disappear, I detach myself from the ground and run towards his broad back.

“Alpha Blackwood.” I cringe internally, as I call him, reaching him with fast steps. He turns around looking at me unamused, and I get immediately what angers him.

“Cayden, sorry.” While he smiles lightly, my stomach turns at the hateful glances I get from his entourage. “Thank you. For what you said to Giorgio. I hope you can forgive my brother and not think that badly of us.”

“Of course, Missy.”

He is about to open my stole bandage when I stop him. “No, please. You can keep it. I won’t be wearing this dress anymore anyway.”

I force a smile as he sighs happily, “What a pity. It looks stunning on you.”

“Oh, thank you,” I say, feeling my cheeks heat up.

With another smile and a slight bow, he turns around, his baritone seeping through my skin.

“Good night, Missy. Thank you for the tour.”

I blink several times before I get myself to speak. “All my pleasure, Cayden.”

“Good night,” I add in a stutter, hitting my leg with my fist repeatedly.

So, embarrassing.

When they touch me (Shelagh Milano)

Artemisia

“They were kissing!” Zeno shouts, making me gasp.

“Liar!”

Giorgio groans, passing a hand over his face. “This is enough! Zeno, I’ll be thinking about an appropriate punishment for you, and you will apologize to Alpha Blackwood appropriately.”

After what had happened at the lake, and the members of the Blood Fang Pack retreating immediately after the protection of my pride, as my brother eloquently put it, Giorgio panicked.

He sent home everyone right away and declared the party as over.

Naturally, he used me as an excuse, telling everyone I was feeling unwell.

As if anybody cared.

Fearing a looming war because of my brother's reckless behavior, he proceeded to execute his first agenda item as Alpha and ordered everybody into our living room.

Which had been the perfect thing to do. Because this way I could discuss directly with everybody in my family and the higher commanding staff in our pack, that I was caught by my little brother while I was trying to get some sugar from the enemy pack's Alpha.

Cool. Cool. Cool.

"But I already did!" Zeno wails, having my brothers snicker around us.

"This was some lame excuse for an apology." I snort, looking at him with my arms crossed over my chest.

He sticks his tongue out at me, "Well, thanks a lot, sister! I was just trying to save your dignity!"

My jaw literally hits the floor, and I slap his chest. "Don't you dare!"

"Okay! I've had enough! Everybody out!" Giorgio shouts, and we all stand up to leave the room as he points his finger at me. "Not you!"

I hear my brothers snicker while leaving the room, my mother and their mates look at me with a pitiful expression.

As I get left alone in the room with my new Alpha and Luna, I sit back down with a sigh, while my brother takes a chair and sits down in front of me.

"Missy, what happened?"

I shrug, pouting. "Nothing! I showed him around the lands as we couldn't get to you guys. And then we landed by the lake. But we were just talking."

"Okay," Giorgio says calmly, pressing his hands together. "And was he mean or aggressive towards you?"

I shake my head repeatedly. "No, he was very nice."

Diana's suspicious hum, makes me groan, and I throw my head back. "Listen, there wasn't anything to it. He rescued me from Rick a few moments before, so maybe he got his protective sense reawakened. I don't know."

I throw my hands in the air, while Giorgio and Diana flash me the same confused expression. "He rescued you?"

"Yeah. Well, he saw me being uncomfortable with him and came to my rescue."

I sigh as their expressions morph into shock. “Like I told you, he was nice.”

“What about what Zeno saw?”

Rolling my eyes, I chuckle awkwardly. “I don’t know what he saw, but I would have noticed if we were kissing.”

My heartbeat accelerates as they stare at me, and I clear my voice as if it could fool their heightened senses.

“Do you think he is... you know...” My brother begins to stutter.

Diana gasps, slapping him on his arm. “You can’t ask her like that!”

“He isn’t my mate,” I say with a sigh, and they look at me mortified. “I didn’t feel, smell, or sense something special.”

“Oh, I’m sorry, baby,” Diana says soothingly, making my brother hiss at her. “What are you sorry for, now? A moment ago, you were scared for her.”

They start bickering, and I slump back against the backrest of my chair.

If she was scared it is a good thing I hid the fact that I sensed Cassy stir.

“Look, I was just being nice,” I say while twirling the fabric of my dress around my finger.

Giorgio takes a deep breath, looking at me with a serious expression.

“Well, if it wasn’t just that we will find out soon enough anyway.” He says, making my heart skip a beat.

After reaching my room feeling drained, I let myself slump onto my bed.

“They must be fucking kidding me,” I groan, my face buried in my pillow.

The image of Cayden standing right beside me while he is staring at the lake, and the moon gives him all the advantageously light, appears before my inner eye.

Oh, I’m fucked.

Of all the cute or handsome partners I could find in the pack and our ally pack my wolf has to get fuzzy at the only Alpha who is off-limits.

Nice, Cassy. Thank you for that.

‘It is not my fault that his scent had me wake up from my nap.’

I jerk up as I heard her talking to me clearly.

‘Cass!’

‘Leave me alone.’ She simply says snippy, ‘Just try to not fuck it up this time.’

Turning around on my back, my hand goes to my lip automatically, and I gulp. “I must have misinterpreted what he was about to do. That is for sure.” noveldrama

I chuckle to myself, but my head starts spinning before I can even stop my panicky thinking.

What did Giorgio mean when he said that we would find out?