

3 - The Hunt

~Daphne's Point of View~

"Holy cow," I gasped, covering my mouth as the helicopter began its descent.

"We have people to take your bags, you ladies can just hop off and a guide will meet you," the pilot said.

I heard him speaking but my heart thudding in my chest was all consuming. The water below was nearly clear and I could already see fish swimming. My eyes moved to the mountains in the distance, the forest. There was a bit of everything here. It was absolutely breathtaking. Out of a story book.

There were three other women with me, they were Omegas as well. It took a week of Evelyn's hard convincing and my lack of literally any other options to convince me to do this. Two other Omegas, Phoebe and Janet came in from somewhere in Canada a couple days ago and last night Maggie from Florida. They were all younger than me, perhaps far more impressionable. Basically all ready to be baby makers. That part, I wasn't sold on.

All of the ladies were a bit bigger, like me. Curvy or just pudgy? Whatever your word choice might be. But either way, they were all stunningly beautiful, like real classic beauty. Not fake or plastic, clearly all natural.

But common sense and brains? Ehh. They were too baby hungry, it was a bit unnerving.

It was absolutely stressed that I would have the choice about the whole baby thing, they were hardly going to rape me here. So I needed to believe. I had to believe.

When we hopped off the helicopter the other women cheered and shouted. I just kind of looked around, and tried to fathom living here.

This absolutely was ... paradise. Unlike anything I'd ever seen. What I hadn't seen from overhead was many houses.

We were somewhere in the south Pacific, I'd seen it on a map but it was certainly nowhere I'd ever been or learned about. I'd been concerned about bugs and reptiles and things. Evelyn had just laughed at me and said the big strong males around the island would make sure I was safe. Yeah, I'm thrilled.

Giving up my life, my control to a man, a stranger at that... I still couldn't wrap my head around it. The Bachelor, hybrid-human, shifter style is how Phoebe described it.

I had to admit being around them even just in this short time had been nice. Certainly the distraction I needed from my shit show of a life. I felt I already owed Evelyn. She'd helped me with Greta and even paid for the cremation. We dumped her ashes yesterday before we'd left California.

A male and female appeared, seemingly from the trees, both with huge fake grins like Evelyn.

"Ladies! We are so thrilled to have you here. To get started we're going to have a hunt. It's tradition and certainly how the royals like to do things, well all shifters love to hunt no matter what it's for," the woman laughed, a little too excited.

"Whoa, whoa, royals? There are like kings and queens," Maggie asked.

She was the serious ditz of the group. God bless her though she was dumb as a box of rocks.

"Ohh yes! Your Nest friends likely didn't get into all the specifics. But we kind of have a bit of a test for you, a way for the royals and commoners to both have a chance with an Omega. Today, there are no titles. Just the hunt," the woman said, which basically explained nothing.

"Yeah but what the hell are you actually saying, enough with the innuendo," I said, crossing my arms.

Even though Evelyn had given me some new clothes, all designer by the way, I was still my usual self. No \$400 pair of jeans was gonna change that. I barely trusted her and it was looking more and more like I was stupid to. She lied to me, by the looks of things ... badly.

Before the woman could answer something flew through the sky in the distance and distracted me. I took a few steps forward, we were in a large field in the middle of a forest. I blinked fast, several times as my jaw fell.

No...

No freakin' way.

It can't be.

"Holy shit! It's a dragon," someone shouted, as he seemed to get closer.

My god. It IS a dragon. A real, freakin' dragon! A screech suddenly ripped through the air, hurting my ears. I'd always hated loud noises.

My eyes were practically bugging out of my head, my heart was thudding in my ears. I blinked fast again and several more animals appeared across the field.

Okay seeing pictures and now seeing them for real ... not AT ALL the same thing!!

I quickly took several steps back as I gulped.

"You get a ten minute head start ladies! When you hear the air horn the hunt will begin," the man said, throwing his hands up.

Head start? Hunt?

Ohh fuck. They're hunting ... us?

That fucking bitch Evelyn! She didn't tell me about ANY of this!! They're shifters, they have superior senses and we all have strong smells. They'll find us. Not to mention we're on their turf. They probably will get off on the chase!!

How could I agree to this?!

Suddenly the ground below me shook as two... YES TWO dragons landed further back in the field. My eyes darted everywhere, as pure absolute panic set in.

Phoebe was shouting and howling, basically taunting them.

Fuck that.

And fuck this.

Without a second's hesitation I turned on my heel and took off running. I'd had a class in high school about shifters and how their senses work. I hadn't paid much attention to it at the time, there just weren't many shifters in the city. Most lived on the outskirts, close to a wooded area for obvious reasons.

But never, ever in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine there were DRAGON shifters. What the hell??

There are a few things in nature that can mask a scent, water ... and mud. Right now I'd bathe in mud if it helps me.

But how long will it help me? For minutes?

I silently praised myself for picking sneakers when Evelyn had insisted I wear heels. Going at this barefoot wouldn't be good.

After a few minutes of straight running my lungs were already burning, and I knew I couldn't continue. I needed to find water, or mud. My mind raced with what I'd seen when we flew over and I knew there was a small river. Finding it was another story, especially in relation to where I was now.

I changed course a bit and moved left, hoping for the best. Further toward the mountain, that I knew. My mind wanted to race with how this could happen but I had no time for that now. I caught a couple of birds flying and my instincts told me to follow them. I had no clue if it was right or wrong.

AHOOGA

AHOOOOGA

The blow of the horn carried in the air nearly making my heart stop. Suddenly the sound of water distantly sounded in my ears and I wasted no time turning toward it. If one of those assholes is going to try and snatch me, they're gonna have to work for it.

I pushed myself to the brink, running on pure adrenaline now.

"Whoa," I whispered to myself as I came out to a small cliff.

I barely caught myself before going over. I leaned forward slightly, trying to gauge it. The fall was at least fifty feet, but there was no way of knowing how deep the water was there. Could I risk it?

"Don't do it," a voice shouted.

A man.

My neck was practically on a swivel and I moved it quickly until I saw him. He was nearly across from me on the other side of the river.

And he was naked.

Great. That's all I need as my last visual before plunging to my death!

"You will probably smash your head on a rock. Don't do it," he shouted, making me stop.

The sudden shrill of a female's scream in the distance fully put me on alert.

"We're not gonna hurt you Omega," he said, putting his hand up.

He was way taller than a normal man, far more muscular and far more ... well ... everything. He had shaggy brown hair that fell around his face and he was definitely easy on the eyes. What the hell would he see in me outside of this magical scent?

A man like him wouldn't have ever looked twice at me before. Then again in the city, people tend to keep their head down and go about their business.

This was the biggest damn mistake I'd ever made, and I'd made a lot.

"Not gonna hurt me huh? Just want to chase me like a damn animal," I snapped.

I was soaked in sweat, it probably only made my scent stronger. I had to remember, he WAS an animal.

"I'm claiming her," I heard, making my head jerk in the opposite direction.

Another man, a good bit older, this one also naked but further down. Unfortunately, he was on my side of the water.

"The hell you are, you're no better than me right now," the first man shouted.

Fuck it.

Without another thought I ran forward and jumped. It wasn't smart, it was pretty damn stupid. But I felt like it was the only card I had to play.

"NO," I heard from perhaps several voices, as I plunged into the water.