

Chapter 1

Blakely's POV

I woke up with a start and sat up, looking around me in the faintly lit room.

It was just a dream. Just another damn dream. Ugh.

I wrestled to untangle myself from the blanket twisted around my legs and torso and pushed back my slightly damp hair off my sweaty forehead.

I sat on the edge of my bed and try to recall the dream more clearly. It was the same every time. I can never fully remember the dream, just that I was in an unfamiliar forest, there was snow with blood red stains all around...and piercing green eyes.

It was becoming alarmingly frequent. The dream, waking in a sweat, trying to remember. Those green eyes...

Was this a warning I was seeing in my sleep?

I stood up and walked to my large bay window to look out over the expansive pack gardens with the dense green forest behind them. The sky was a comforting soft golden hue. It made everything outside look like it was glowing... beautiful and magical.

Magic.

My mother had magic. My mother had seen warnings.

A lot of good that did her.

I shake my shoulders quickly in attempt to shake off these thoughts, a habit I've had since a child, and started to get ready for my morning training.

After a quick shower, I dressed quickly in tight black athletic shorts and a hot pink sports bra and studied myself in the oor length mirror.

I was the shortest female in our South Appalachian pack, but I didn't let that stop me from becoming the best ghter in the pack.

I might be short and skinny, but my entire body was lean, strong muscle. And I'm quick, quicker than any other in the pack, and I have learned to use this to the best advantage in my ghting. Along with all the gymnastics moves from my competitive cheerleading years. My father, Alpha Brad, had taught me. Trained with me since I was three. He knew I wouldn't be as large as others, nor as strong as a man, but he taught me to use what strengths I had. I might ght different than other werewolves, but the end result is the same, I always win.

I studied my features in the mirror. I have long dark brown wavy hair, the same color as my father's and golden eyes, like her mother's. Not that I remember them, just from photos and people constantly commenting on it. I have never repeated it to anyone, but, my eyes are my least favorite feature about myself. I know...they are my mother's eyes...she was beautiful...but on me, well, they just look plain. Boring. I wish I had my mother's straight blonde hair instead, and my dad's huge dark brown eyes.

Oh well. At least I have something of my mother's.

Everyone had loved my mother, Luna Meredith. She was kind, generous, and made everyone feel valuable. Or so that is what everyone had told me. Of course, she was the Luna of the pack, and it would be unwise to ever say anything negative towards the Alpha's deceased Luna, it would practically be a death sentence.

But, I believe Luna Meredith had been these things everyone claimed though. She had sacriced herself to save my life after all, and there is not a more kind or generous thing to do for your daughter.

I felt a familiar lurch in my belly at this thought, shake my shoulders as if to shake these thoughts away, and turn my concentration towards my hair, putting it into a high ponytail and then braiding it so it swings halfway down my back.

Valuable. The word popped into my head again. My mom had placed my life's value above her own. Sacriced herself. My father told me all the time that I was special. That I was irreplaceable to the pack. The most important person in his life. He always said this with such a sad look on his face, distant eyes, pain, almost like regret. And he always used the word valuable.

I nished my hair and threw it over my shoulder, then headed to the dining hall to grab a quick breakfast before heading out, enjoying how the braid swung behind me as I bounced quickly down the long, curved staircase and through a short hallway, into the high vaulted ceiling dining room with the entire wall of windows.

"B!" Trey was grinning at me while leaning with his back against the huge buffet, his long legs crossed in front of him, a rolled-up pancake, with what looked like loads of bacon and sausage pieces sticking out from inside it, in his hand. "Mmm, you look good!"

I smiled automatically as I walked over to Trey. Trey was tall, several inches over six feet. He had black tousled hair and deep blue eyes and was absolutely gorgeous with his infectious smile. He was also strong, one of the strongest in the pack. He towered over me, his huge frame making mine seem almost child-like.

Trey and I have been together for about as long as I could remember. We are only two months apart in age and we both grew up in the packhouse together, as his family were an important elder family in the pack, and his father was a close friend to the Alpha. We have been best friends since toddlers. When we were only six years old, Trey asked me to be his girlfriend. I said yes, but only because he had threatened not to push me on the swing anymore if I didn't. He has grown on me since then.

It just always seemed natural to be together, so, we stayed together.

Natural and easy. Maybe not passionate...but that's ok. I really care for Trey, he is my very best friend, not to mention, he is gorgeous.

But not my mate. I quickly push the thought aside as soon as it pops in my head. I don't know that. Maybe mates felt different for everyone. Trey made me happy. I love him.

Still, werewolves can sense their mate when they turn 17. Trey and I are both 21 now. Nothing changed when I had turned 17 and woke up excited to feel that fated, long waited pull towards Trey. Convinced as I always had been that he was destined to be my fated other half, I had ran down to the dining hall and found him there with owers and a smile, but no enticing scent that I had heard so much about, no electricity when we touched, and no "knowing exactly what the other is thinking and feeling", although, after all this time, we have gotten pretty good at that.

Just Trey. Good ole familiar, sweet Trey. And that's ok, I think, (for about the 900th time), I am happy with Trey.

As I get closer, Trey reaches out with his free hand and grabs my bottom, pulling me tight against him.

I laugh and stand on tip toe while he leans down automatically for me to kiss him on the cheek.

"Such a healthy breakfast," I say teasingly when a piece of bacon falls out of the pancake as Trey takes another bite.

"Big boy, big appetite," Trey grins, winks, and gives my bottom another squeeze before letting me go to grab more bacon.

I wander past him to the end of the buffet and grab a piece of toast, glancing around the large dining hall. It doesn't seem as lively as usual this morning. There is a kind of subdued atmosphere that seems out of place.

I nibble on my toast and let my eyes drift around the room, looking for an a clue on this change in atmosphere, feeling on high alert. I pause when my eyes fall on the Alpha table. My father, Alpha Brad, is leaning forward, talking low, with a somber look, while his elders were doing the same, listening intensely.

"What's that about?"

I don't answer Trey, who is now standing so close behind me, he is probably dropping crumbs in my hair.

What was that about? What would my father, my Alpha, be discussing so intensely with the elders without his beta?

It was highly unusual for a girl to be a beta, who is technically supposed to be the second strongest after the Alpha, and even more unusual for it to be the Alpha's child, as they usually are the one's to take over for the Alpha.

I have been the beta of the pack for as long as I can remember. My dad had always told me, "I trust you more than anyone, and I would rather you have my back anytime."

So, he had made me the beta. And he had spent hours upon hours a day training me in ghting, studying, and on how to lead a pack.

This was unusual. It had caused some tension in the pack at rst, since this meant that another family was deprived the honor of beta to the alpha.

However, in time, everyone had accepted and grown accustomed to it, not that they really could do anything about it, not if they wanted to stay in the pack.

"Should we go over and nd out," Trey had nished his food and was wiping his hands on a napkin, his eyes xed on the Alpha table.

Trey is part of the council. He was to take over for his father this year. Technically, his father was supposed to step down when Trey turned 21, but he was such a close friend to Alpha Brad, he stayed on to help Trey "get adjusted."

I hesitated, which was so unlike me. If anything, I might be over-condent, being both an Alpha's daughter and beta in the pack, hesitation is not something I usually do, now reaction, that is more my style. But, I have worked hard to be respected in the pack, to be respected for my ghting abilities, my wisdom from hours upon hours of studying hard, and my dedication to the pack, and I had proven myself, I was respected.

So, why did I feel nervous right now?

Trey put a hand on my upper arm, squeezed it, and guided me towards the Alpha table. This is why I'm with Trey. Isn't that what a mate does, feels what the other is feeling and seeks to comfort? That is exactly what Trey is doing right now, taking charge.

I keep my eyes on Alpha Brad as we approach the table. Without even looking at me, Alpha Brad sits up straight, picks up his fork and starts to eat his eggs. All the elders followed suit.

"Good morning, Alpha Brad," Trey nods to Alpha and each of the four men at the table, who all nod back and smile kindly at both of us.

I smile back at everyone at the table. Was it just my imagination, or was everyone avoiding making eye contact with me? I gently shake my shoulders, as if to shake away the weirdness that is weighing heavily on me today. I feel Trey's hand tighten on my arm, but the moment I move forward, his hand drops.

I take two more steps away from Trey and give my father a hug around his wide shoulders and a kiss on the top of his head, feeling slightly more relaxed at his familiar woodsy scent.

"Good morning, Father."

I take a step back to look at him.

"Good Morning, Blakely," my father smiles vaguely without making eye contact. "Did you sleep well?"

I hesitate again. No. I think. I slept horribly, again. And YOU are acting weird, father.

I think this, but, kept it to myself. After all, I was to be Alpha of the pack one day, I don't need people thinking I'm going crazy, weak, or paranoid.

Or...that I'm like Mother.

"It looked like you all were discussing something important just now," Trey has casually wrapped his arm around my waist and pulled me back against him. He had a habit of doing this. Werewolves in general loved to touch, but Trey's feels more like a protective move. He was always protecting and looking out for me. Surely, this is another thing that mates do?

I am expecting my father to look caught out or make some telling guilty glance towards the elders, but of course, he looks completely calm and casual as he puts his fork down and reaches for his glass of water. He takes a small sip, while Trey and I watch, patiently...ok...somewhat patiently.

When he puts his glass down, he folds his hands in front of him on the table and looks calmly at me.

"We are to have visitors in the morning." My father locks eyes with me and holds my stare.

"The North Appalachian pack is on their way here and will arrive early tomorrow. Alpha Jake will be with them. We were discussing preparations."