

Chapter 2

Caleb Foster's POV

We had only been on the road for half an hour of our six hour drive when I glanced over and noticed that Cleo had fallen asleep. Her long black hair was mostly covering her face but if I listened closely I could just about make out her soft snores.

That was good. She hadn't been sleeping well recently and the quiet gave me more time to organise my thoughts. Cleo was always so much better at this kind of thing than I was. She was good at making plans and playing the long game whereas I was emotional and prone to act on impulse. If it wasn't for her I would have gotten myself killed three years ago in a futile attempt to exact revenge.

I didn't know back then how much we would end up meaning to each other. How the pain we shared would bring us together. All I knew was that it was my responsibility to make sure she made it to safety. That night will always be the worst of my life but it hadn't started out that way.

Three years ago

My family is a distant member of the royal family. Not enough to be invited around for dinner but close enough to get invited to the larger celebrations. It was an offer that we rarely accepted but when the invite arrived to celebrate the peace treaty my family decided to accept.

I had turned eighteen a couple of months earlier and there was no sign of my mate in my pack or any of the packs nearby. I was starting to feel frustrated and upset. My family hoped that my mate would be at the party but they thought it would be a pleasant distraction even if she wasn't there.

I knew something was going to happen the moment my dad parked the car outside of the palace. My wolf was acting unusual, pacing around and trying to push his way forward. I don't know how I knew it but I knew that my mate was nearby. I was excited and happy.

I walked quickly into the palace, leaving the rest of my family behind. I could smell her the moment I walked into the banquet hall. My mate. I was currently standing only a few metres away from her.

She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. Her long blonde hair looked like spun gold in the way it caught the light as she turned to face me. I was in love and I hadn't even spoken to her yet. She was smiling as she walked towards me, she was so graceful it was almost as though she was gliding across the room.

"Hi, my name is Hope and it looks like you are my mate." She said.

She slipped her hand into mine and blissful tingles covered my hand and spread over my arm. She giggled. It was such a nice sound, I wanted to hear it every day for the rest of my life.

"Hope is a beautiful name. My name is Caleb." I said. I cringed at how cheesy that sounded. It wasn't exactly the kind of first impression I had wanted to make.

"It is getting quite loud in here, maybe we should go into the gardens so we can talk." She suggested.

"That sounds perfect." I replied.

Her smile intensified and pulled me out of the banquet hall. We walked through a long corridor together until we reached a door which led to the gardens at the back of the palace. The garden area was only a few hundred metres in length before it blended with the forest.

Hope and I sat down together on a bench at the edge of the forest. We spoke about our lives and our dreams for the future. Anything that came to mind. It can't have been more than a couple of hours since we first met but I already felt closer to her than I ever have to anyone else in my life.

I had been smiling so much that all the muscles in my face ached. I hadn't even noticed how dark it had gotten around us until a column of light appeared in my peripheral vision. I looked over in time to see a woman in a ballgown slam the palace door closed and run towards us. She looked distressed and there was mascara running down her face. Hope gasped and stood up next to me.

"Cleo, is that you? What's wrong?" Hope asked. She was visibly worried about this woman, she clearly knew her.

"They killed them, we have to get out of here they are looking for me." Cleo cried. She glanced over her shoulder to check that nobody was following her.

"What? Who killed who?" I asked, I was suddenly alert. If there was danger then I had to protect my mate and her friend.

"Alpha Alexander and his son Mars, have killed everyone." Cleo said. She was trying to pull Hope into the forest. I could hear shouting and hurried footsteps from inside the palace and they sounded like they were getting closer.

"Hide, I will throw them off your trail and join you." Hope said, signalling towards the forest. Cleo ran a few feet into the forest and hid behind a tree.

"No, you hide with her." I said. I didn't know if what Cleo was saying was true but if it was then I didn't want her anywhere near them.

"We don't have time to argue about this. Protect my cousin." Hope said. I didn't like the idea of leaving her but she was right, there was no time to argue. I went into the forest and hid next to her cousin.

Hope was standing next-to the pond acting casual when five men came out of the same door Cleo came from. They surrounded Hope in seconds, it took every ounce of self control not to go out there and help her.

"We are looking for Cleopatra Yates, have you seen her?" One of them asked.

"No Mars, I haven't seen her since this morning. Why are you looking for my cousin" Hope said.

The one she called Mars smiled at her but that smile was the opposite of comforting.

"It's Prince Mars now." His smile got even more unnerving.

Mars pulled a knife out of his jacket pocket and sliced my mate's throat. I felt the mate bond snap accompanied by the worst pain I have felt in my whole life.

"I am sorry but we can't let any of the royal family live." Mars didn't sound sorry, he was cold. He sounded like a sociopath. I wanted to kill him for what he did to Hope but the pain was so debilitating I couldn't even move.

I was laying on the floor. Pain radiating through my chest and tears streaming from my eyes. I felt someone pulling me to my feet. Cleo wrapped my arm around her shoulder and started dragging me away from the palace and into the forest. I tried to pull myself out of her grasp but she was too strong or I was too weak.

"I know you want revenge. I do too but now is not the time." Cleo continued to drag me away, I didn't want to go but she was right. Saving this woman was Hope's last wish so that is what I would do.