

A Warrior's Second Chance

Chapter 1

FAYE I raised my stick just in time to block Sage's next swing. I laughed at the look of frustration on her face. "It's not my fault you're too slow, Sage. Stop dragging your feet," I teased. She rolled her eyes, obviously annoyed. "No, but it is your fault for always getting the better deal and leaving me with the scraps. We're twins, Delta Faye, learn to share." "That's not true," I said, ducking under another swing. "We both have our strengths, Sage." We were fraternal twins, but you wouldn't know it by looking at us. Sage had blonde hair and green eyes; I had black hair and grey eyes. Despite our differences, we moved in sync. Years of training had turned us into a perfect balance of attack and defense. Sparring had always been calming to me, even if Sage's words sometimes made me uncomfortable. "So, your mating ceremony is tonight," Sage said, breathing heavily as she leaned on her stick. Even though her tone was casual, something in it made me pause and stare. "Our mating ceremony, Sage," I corrected her. "You're getting mated too, remember?" I caught a look pass through her eyes before she nodded. "Yeah. To a stranger that I only know by name. Lucky me. How about you, Faye? Are you nervous?" I shrugged, playing with my stick. "A little," I admitted. "But it's nothing compared to what we've been through as warriors, Sage. I'm sure we'll be fine." Sage nodded, but her laugh sounded empty. As she lowered her stick, my eyes drifted past her, down the path from the training grounds to the pack house. I noticed two men walking together. But it was the taller one who held my attention. It wasn't just his height or his good looks. It was how confident he looked—like someone who was used to being obeyed. I didn't recognize his face. It made me wonder who he was. "Faye? Are you even listening?" Sage's voice snapped me back. I turned to her. "Sorry, what?" Sage shook her head. "You always zone out when something catches your attention." I smiled. "I just thought I saw someone unfamiliar," I murmured, then gestured with my head toward where I was looking. "Do you have any idea who that

is? The tall one?" Her eyes followed my gaze, and she shook her head. "Doesn't look familiar. They're probably among the guests visiting for tonight's ceremony." "I see," I said, and Sage sighed, looking slightly annoyed. "I can't believe you were busy lusting after a man while I was here baring my heart to you about tonight." I frowned at her words. "I wasn't lusting after anyone, Sage. I was just curious. That's all." She nodded. "Of course. But you know, Faye... you've always been lucky. So it probably doesn't even bother you much." My brow knit in confusion. "What do you mean?" She shifted slightly. "I mean, we trained side by side, Faye, and I'm the older twin—even if it's just by some minutes. But when they chose the new leader for the warriors, they picked you, and I had to settle for second place." I tried to keep things light, smiling a little. "Sage, the elders had their reasons—" "Sure," she cut me off. When she looked at me, there was something bitter in her eyes—something that had always been there, even when I tried to ignore it. "And now tonight," she went on, "you're about to be mated to the soon-to-be alpha. His father steps down tomorrow. Then you'll be Luna. That's quite a jump, Faye. Isn't it? Delta to Luna." Her words hurt me more than they should. I felt guilty, even though I hadn't asked for any of it. "Sage..." "You're lucky, Faye," she cut me off. This time her bitterness was obvious. "At least you got to choose." My heart sank. I dropped my stick and stepped closer to her. "I know it isn't fair. You never got to pick. You were promised to someone you've never even met." Sage had been promised to Alpha Alexander of Blood Crescent a couple of years ago. We'd only ever heard his name, but we'd never met him. Sage shrugged stiffly. "The pack needed it, or so they said. And Father agreed, as always. Always putting his job as beta before his own children." Her voice cracked at the end. It made me feel worse. I placed a hand on her arm. "Maybe it won't be that bad. You're strong, Sage. Maybe he'll turn out good." She forced a small smile, but her eyes stayed distant. "Maybe," she whispered. "Maybe I'll learn to love him." We stood in silence for a moment. I wanted to say more, but nothing came. Then I heard footsteps approaching. "Delta Faye," a guard called, stopping near us. "Your father wants to see you in the alpha's office." I glanced at Sage. "Will you be okay?" "Of course," she smiled. But her eyes kept drifting toward the woods. "Hey, Faye, have you seen Jason?" she asked. I shook my head. "No, not tonight. Why?"

I asked, wondering why she was looking for him. Sage smiled and shook her head. "No reason. I was just wondering." I frowned in confusion, then nodded. "Alright, then. See you later." As I followed the guard, I noticed Sage walking toward the trees. For a moment, I thought of calling her back but stopped. Maybe she just needed space before tonight. We reached the alpha's office, and I stepped inside. My father stood by the window, and Alpha Wells and a few elders were gathered around. "Faye," my father said, turning to me with a small smile. "Come in." I bowed slightly. "Alpha. Elders." "Delta Faye," they greeted. Alpha Wells's expression softened. "How are you feeling, Faye?" "Very well, thank you," I replied politely. My father studied me. "The ceremony is only hours away. Are you ready?" I nodded. "Yes, Father. I am." I truly was. Jason and I had been together nearly two years. But Sage's situation still bothered me. My father's gaze softened. "Tonight is about more than just you and Jason. It's about uniting families for the good of the pack." "I know," I nodded. He placed a hand on my shoulder. "You've made us proud as head warrior, Faye. I know you'll do the same as Luna." His words should have comforted me, but Sage's hurt expression kept flashing in my mind. "Father," I began, "about Sage—" Before I could finish, he shook his head. "That isn't your concern, Faye. The council decided what's best for the pack." I lowered my gaze. "Yes, Father." Alpha Wells turned from the window, picking up a dagger with ancient runes and a black stone in the center. "Take this to Jason," he said, handing it to me. "Before the ceremony, you and Jason must each offer a drop of blood on this dagger. It seals your bond." I nodded, then hesitated when I remembered something. "But... I haven't seen Jason tonight." Alpha Wells smiled. "He's at the cabin in the woods. It's tradition. That cabin has been used by my family for generations, and tonight it's for you and Jason. He's likely making sure everything is ready." Elder John chuckled. "Or maybe he's just eager for tonight," he teased. Their laughter sounded far away, but I forced a smile. "When does the ritual begin?" "In a few minutes," Alpha Wells replied. "Go now, Faye. We'll join you shortly."