

Chapter 5

The Alpha's Mate Who Cried Wolf

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I look up to see Ryker staring down into my eyes with sadness.

'There's more I need to explain to you, but it can wait till tomorrow,' he says, softly. I nod then look at the clock. It's

late! I should have been home ages ago! Pushing myself out of Ryker's arms, I bolt for the door to leave, impatiently

turning the handle clockwise and counter-clockwise to no avail. 'Where's the key?' I ask. 'Astrid!

You're not going

anywhere yet, and you sure as hell aren't going back to that house!' Ryker argues. 'You said you would

unlock the

door when I'm ready to leave! Please, you have to let me go. He will kill me if I'm late home,' I explain, trying to force the

door open. 'Astrid, I won't let him lay a finger on you again. Do you hear me?' Ryker says sternly.

'He will hunt

me down, Ryker. He will kill me if I don't go home. He will come looking for me here,' I argue. 'Good. Let him come.

Because it's the last time he will ever see you,' Ryker says. 'What are you going to do to him? You can't, you can't, kill him,' I say. 'Why not? If I kill him now, you will never have to fear him again.' 'I know he has hurt me Ryker, but my mother loved him. I'm the cause of her death. I don't want to be the reason the man she loved dies too!' I cry.

Ryker steadies my chin with his hand to make me look at him. 'I think you should tell me what happened that day, the day your mother died,' he says. 'The only person I told is Dad. I don't want to do it again.' I look away in shame. 'Maybe in time you'll tell me.' I give him a small nod. The phone at the diner rings; we look at each other knowing it's Dad asking why I'm not home yet. Ryker nods to Jim to answer it. 'Yes, this is Jim's Diner, how may I help you?' Jim says. 'Yes, Astrid is here. No, sorry she won't be coming to the phone. And no, she won't be coming home,' he says matter-of-factly. 'Let me repeat myself, I don't think you got the message clear enough. Astrid is not

coming back to your house again.’ And after a few moments of Jim just listening, ‘oh really? Well, after what you’ve done to Astrid, my friends and I look forward to your arrival.’ He slams the phone down and looks at Ryker; I look away. I don’t know how to feel. I have mixed feelings; I feel happy and safe knowing Jim just stood up against Dad for me. At the same time, nobody has ever stood up against Dad for me; the feeling is liberating and daunting. ‘He says he is on his way with his shotgun to come and take her home.’ I freeze at his words. ‘Ryker, I don’t want anyone to get hurt; just let me go back with him,’ I whisper. ‘No. If you go with him, it will never end. You’ll be hurt again. Or worse, killed,’ he says. ‘What happens to me isn’t your problem Ryker. I can look after myself,’ I say. Ryker lets out an angry growl.

‘It is my problem because you’re my mate!’ He shouts. We glare at each other for a moment. ‘I know you’re going to tell me tomorrow, but I want to know what a mate is right now, because there is obviously more to it than just

being your girlfriend,' I say. Ryker sighs. 'Promise you won't freak out.' 'I'm not promising anything, Ryker.'

'Maybe we should wait till tomorrow then. You have enough on your mind to process at this stage,' he says. I slam

my fist on the table. 'I want you to tell me now Ryker!' I yell as I sit down on the chair opposite him.

Ryker looks away before inhaling and exhaling sharply. He sits down on the chair and looks into my eyes; his eyes convey a thousand untold stories. Maybe he doesn't know where to begin. He stretches his arms out and opens his hands.

'Give me your hands,' he says, with a soft smile. 'Why?' 'It will make it easier for me to explain what a mate is, and the

mate bond,' he says. 'Okay...' I say, softly, as I place my hands in his. Sparks of electricity ignite in our skin; it feels

amazing; it gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling. He holds my hands and gently massages the backs of them with his thumbs,

shooting warm electricity through my body. 'On our eighteenth birthday, when our wolf awakens, we can sense our

mate when they're near. Sometimes we find our mates straight away and sometimes it takes years. Your mate will have the most amazing scent you've ever smelled. It will trigger your wolf in ways you can't hide, deny or contain. Your wolf will want to be unleashed to follow the scent. Once you make eye contact with your mate, your wolf will announce that person is your mate. We develop an instant connection: when we touch it feels like magic and fireworks exploding. We instantly develop a sense of great desire for each other, and a need to be near each other at all times. We accept each other as mates by marking each other on the neck with our fangs. In other words, we bite each other, leaving our marks, to show others that we are mated. The bond intensifies; we are able to feel each other's emotions and are able to sense each other at all times. Your mate is your life partner, your soulmate, the one you will spend the rest of your life with, and have pups with. It's recommended to consummate the mateship as soon as possible to avoid attracting all the unmated

males in the area who will want to mate with you. Oh, and lastly, I'm the Alpha, and you're my mate, so that makes you the Luna of the pack,' Ryker finishes; my reaction unsettles him. 1 I feel like a stunned deer in headlights. My mouth is agape and I'm staring straight at him. My mind goes into shock registering all this new information. Very slowly I stand, inhaling and exhaling. I look at the back door through the kitchen. I'm as calm and as quiet as a mouse. 'Astrid? I--' he starts. I raise my index finger for him to be quiet. This is met with his confusion and a raised brow. All eyes are on me as I calmly walk toward the kitchen. I run like the wind as soon as I get to the back door. He wants to bite me. Have sex with me. Make me carry his babies. Be his Luna. And stay with him forever. I only met him two days ago. This is not happening; they have all gone crazy! Or is it me going crazy? I don't even know anymore. If he thinks I'm going to go back home with him to be his lifelong mistress he has another thing coming. 2 All these thoughts and questions

envelope my mind as the pack chase after me. I run as fast as I can through the trees in the woods. I don't get very far before I'm grabbed and pushed onto the ground, by Ryker's very quick arms. He is as gentle as possible, but I'm in a lot of pain from the beatings. Ryker lets out a small growl. 'Why did you do that? Why did you run from me?' He asks. 'If you think for one second, I'm going back home with you to be your lifelong mistress and let you bite me and carry your pups, maybe I'm better off back home, with my Dad,' I say. Ryker flinches at my words. 'It's not like that at all. When you turn eighteen, you'll understand it better,' he explains. 'Get off me!' I yell; I'm pinned to the ground on my back and his face and his breath are inches from mine; our breath is misty in the cool night air. 'Will you run if I get off you?' He asks. 'Probably,' I mumble. He lets out another low growl. The sound of a shotgun goes off in the direction of the diner; Ryker stands and takes my hand to pull me up. Our skin-on-skin contact is magical; I don't ever

want to let go of his hand. I'm scared of what is about to unfold, as we run back to the diner, holding hands. My Dad is sitting on the bonnet of his car with his shotgun pointed at some of the pack members outside. He watches me step out from the concealment of the woods, holding Ryker's hand. 'I always knew you'd turn out to be a slut, but you have surprised me. How many men here are waiting their turn? Fourteen? Fifteen?' He spits. Ryker lets out a growl.

'Astrid, you need to train your pet dog to behave, otherwise I'll have to put him down, like the bad dog he is for touching my daughter.' A warning shot is fired toward Ryker's feet, purposely missing them, but warning him nonetheless. I jump at the gun shot; Ryker doesn't flinch. He maintains a steady resolve and holds my hand tighter. He glares at my father. 'The only one around here who needs to keep their hands off Astrid, is you! I'm going to rip you to pieces,' Ryker yells, letting go of my hand and tackling my father to the ground. I try to grab his arms but I'm useless; the scuffling is too unpredictable and quick for me to make any difference. 'No, please, Ryker. You can't kill him!

Please!' I plead; my eyes well with tears. Ryker lets out a growl. 'I won't kill him. I'll just hurt him badly like he hurt you.' Ryker throws himself at my father; the shotgun goes off. 'No!' I yell. I go to help Ryker on the ground.

'Astrid, no. Stay back. Our pack will help him,' Jim says, holding me back. 'He's been shot Jim! I need to see if he is okay.' I try to struggle out of Jim's hold but it's no use: he is too strong. My Dad is laughing. Ryker is still on the ground and Dad thinks he is dead. Ryker begins moving, stands and throws himself at Dad. Bang! Another shot resounds in the night air. Ryker runs and tackles him off the bonnet onto the ground. Ryker snaps the shotgun in half, tosses it aside, and commences a succession of punches on Dad's face. I can see the blood escaping each time he hits him. Dad swings back at Ryker but only a couple of attempts make contact. Dad tries to stand, but is very unsteady. He falls over. Seth holds Dad up, with his arms pinned behind his back, while Ryker punches him in the torso. Dad looks at me

and grins, while blood trickles from his mouth and nose. I can see gaps in his teeth where Ryker has knocked a few out.

Ryker breaks Dad's ribs and beats him to near-death. My Dad stares at me with a sick look on his face; taking every

hit like they're not affecting him, before speaking.

'This isn't the last time you'll see me, Astrid. You're the reason your

mother is dead. I'll make you pay for killing her!'

Sick with emotion, I drop to the ground on my knees, unable to

keep myself up. Dad laughs. With one look of sympathy for me, from Ryker, he knocks him out cold. Seth

drops him

and he falls to the ground. Ryker is swaying; he is weak from all the fighting. He is drenched in sweat and blood; is it his

blood? He falls to his knees.

'I tried my best not to

kill him,' he says, deliriously.

'Ryker!' I yell. I rip his

shirt open

to find a bullet wound near his heart. I hold my hands over the wound; putting pressure on it. My hands are covered in

his blood.

Jim, Seth, and the others, gather around Ryker, shouting 'Alpha!' and 'can you hear me?' and 'quickly!'

Carry him into the diner. We have light there, and we can see what needs to be done.’ I remove my hands from Ryker's chest while a few of the pack members lift him up and carry him into the diner. Seth pushes the condiments off one of the tables, clearing it, and the others place Ryker on the table; there is blood everywhere. I'm shaking with shock.

‘He's going to be okay, isn't he?’ I ask, distressed. Everyone turns and looks at me. ‘We will try our best to save him Luna. We need to remove the bullet so he can heal,’ Seth explains. Jim runs back to the table and gives Seth a knife, towels and other tools. ‘Astrid, maybe it's best you don't watch; I can sit with you over here,’ Jim offers. Not wanting to leave Ryker's side, I hesitantly sit with Jim away from him. Jim puts his arm over my shoulder, pulling me into him. I'm shaking from all the trauma and sobbing. ‘Luna, we removed the bullet. He should have started healing by now, but nothing is happening.’ Seth says, turning away as his eyes well up. ‘No. He can't die. Seth! I can't have

someone die again because of me!' I say. Pushing past Seth, I run to Ryker. The pack members move like I'm someone important; they give me some time with him. I lay my head on his chest and burst into tears.

'Ryker, please. I'm sorry. Please don't die. I'm sorry. It's all my fault. Please wake up.' His breathing is faint. I sit up and put my hands over his wound. 'Please Ryker,' I cry. 'I promise I'll come home with you, if you wake up.' Placing my arms around Ryker, I return my head to his chest and cry. After a moment, warmth flows through my body. 'Astrid, none of this is your fault,' Ryker whispers, as he caresses my back. 'Ryker,' I say, sitting up to look at him. The pack members race over to see Ryker waking up. I run my finger over the healed wound, now a scar. Ryker's eyes go completely black for a moment. 'It's healed!' I announce. Ryker holds my hand and brings it to his lips, giving me a kiss that sends a hot shiver down my spine. 'It's because of you, Astrid. And our mate bond. If you weren't here, I probably would have

died,' he smiles. 'If I wasn't here, you wouldn't have been shot in the first place,' I say, tears still streaming down my face. Ryker pulls me into his chest, wraps his arms gently around me. Nuzzling his face into my neck he sweetly whispers. 'It's going to take more than a bullet to take me away from you.' I want to melt into the floor at his words. I lean my forehead affectionately against his. Suddenly, I realise what I'm doing and push myself away from him, blushing. Ryker lets out a small chuckle. 'That is the mate bond,' he explains, smiling. I cross my arms and glare at him. Everyone laughs. 'You two definitely make an interesting, cute couple,' Seth laughs. 'We aren't a couple,' I say. Ryker is more dismayed than he should be. It's really awkward and quiet after that. Seth follows me out the front door but I'm not planning on running. Walking over to where Dad lies unconscious, I take in his blood-stained body; he is breathing but definitely not going to be waking up anytime soon. Seth and I walk over to some grass and lie down

to look up at the stars and the moon. Ryker has a glum look on his face and the diner is probably full of chatter about

what I said. 'Seth, I'm sorry if I upset you, and your Alpha, and the others,' I say, sincerely. Seth sighs.

'We need

to remember, this is all very new to you Luna. You haven't turned eighteen yet. I think once you've settled into Shadow

Crest, and adjust to the way we werewolves live, everything will settle down for you,' 'This isn't the life I wanted; this

isn't what I thought it would be Seth,' I confess.

'That may be true, but it's a life that the Moon Goddess herself chose

just for you, which is a great blessing, and an honour bestowed to you,' he reassures me, with a gentle smile.

Ryker and

the others come outside. Ryker puts his hand out to pull me up from the ground. 'How are you feeling?'

I ask. Ryker

smiles, 'Well there's a hole in my heart. But it's alright because you came along and filled it.' Pushing him

away, I

giggle, he smiles and opens the car door. 'Luna's in first,' he says. I roll my eyes and hop into the back

seat with

Ryker; we're sitting as close as we possibly can. 'Are you trying to sit in my lap?' I joke. 'Can I?' He asks. We laugh. 'Let's get the hell out of here,' Ryker says. Seth drives toward Shadow Crest. 'How long does it take to get there?' I ask. 'Depends who's driving, I guess,' Ryker jokes. I give him a look. 'Okay, okay. Just under an hour,' he answers. I yawn loudly against his chest. 'Sleep my Luna, you need rest,' he whispers, holding me tightly, as I drift off to sleep.

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