

My New Two-A-Days

After spending the morning in a war council with my family and the leaders of the pack, I made my way back out to the training grounds.

"Captain!"

I turned to find my second—and best friend—Anthony jogging beside me. "How did the meeting go?" he asked, matching stride as we continued down the hill.

"As you'd expect. We'll be sharing the new patrol schedules this evening, and we will be bumping up to two-a-day trainings."

Anthony groaned. "That's the worst..."

I shrugged. "I like two-a-days."

"That's because you're a freak of nature," he chuckled, nudging my shoulder.

"Careful, or I'll put you over training the seven-year-olds."

Anthony winced. "Please, oh mighty alpha goddess divine. Don't make me—"

I pushed him with a laugh. "Much better."

We straightened as we walked past a group of warriors. "Will you be joining patrols then?"

"Yes," I nodded. "My father and the Beta both think it's a good idea. I'll probably be doing splits—half of a morning and evening patrol—so that I can be around if needed."

Anthony nodded in understanding. "And your brothers? Will they deign to help us?"

I rolled my eyes at him. "I don't know why you give them such grief."

"Because I have to do two-a-days, but the alphas don't have to train at all," he shrugged.

"They are training to be alphas!" I hollered.

"Technically, it's Kyle that has to train. What about Connor?"

"Kyle has already decided that since Beta Jonas doesn't have any children, Connor will be his Beta."

Anthony took a stunned step back. "An alpha as a Beta?"

"Right?" I laughed. "Can you believe it? Our pack will have alphas as their pack leaders. It's basically unheard of."

"That won't be an issue?"

"No." I turned to Anthony with a frown. "Connor and Kyle are as close as they come. They would never let the position ruin their relationship. If it came down to it, Connor would leave before ever challenging Kyle. But it won't come to that."

"So... will they be working with us or no?"

I gave Anthony an unamused stare. "No, they will not be joining us on patrols. Unless the alpha orders it."

Anthony grumbled under his breath.

Just as we made it to the training field, Connor jogged down the hill.

"Emma!" he called out, turning my attention to him.

"Hey," I grinned.

"Dad said part of my training as Beta needs to involve knowing the ins and outs of our patrols and training programs. So I am yours for the week."

"What about Kyle?"

"Dad's got him assigned to something else. He figured it would be easier to only saddle you with one of us at a time. Something about keeping his daughter's sanity intact."

I chuckled. "Remind me to thank him later."

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"Mmm," Connor hummed as he threw his arm over my shoulder. "Be grateful it's me first. You've got Kyle in a few weeks."

I shook my head at him as I shrugged his arm off my shoulders. "He thought to do this now? When we are basically at war?"

"No time like the present, apparently," he shrugged. "You know Dad. Never one to give up a teaching opportunity."

My face turned up in a smirk. "You were probably driving him crazy and this is his version of a timeout."

Connor laughed loudly, his head hanging back. "Probably."

"Is there anything else the alpha requires of me?" I grumbled.

He gave a not-so-innocent smirk. "Mom said when you're done you have to go to your dress fitting."

"For what?!" I groaned.

"The big pack gala thing Mom is throwing this weekend, remember?"

"Ugh..." I slouched against my brother. "I hate these things."

"I love 'em," he gave a wide, toothy grin.

"That's because you're a slut," I chuckled.

He feigned offense. "I beg your pardon! I am not a slut! I am a man-whore. Get it right."

Between my two big brothers, Connor was the more playful and lighthearted, where Kyle was the more serious.

You might think it was because Kyle was set to be the next alpha, but they had always been like that, even as children.

"Either way," I laughed, "you better be careful. One of these things is going to bring your mate."

Connor sighed. "If only. I swear I just don't have one."

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"Says the girl who just turned eighteen a week ago. You only just started the search; you haven't become jaded and bitter like the rest of us."

"Oh hush, you'll find her soon. Let's be honest, it's why Mom keeps throwing these big parties."

"That's a fact," he chuckled.

"Well, trainee Connor. Go line up." I motioned to the field and laughed as Connor mussed my hair as he ran past.

"Very professional," my second muttered from the side of the field.

"Shut up, Anthony."

I was beginning to regret my decision to let my brother join me on the patrol. I walked beside him, my wolf shaking the dust off her tan fur as we strolled through the trees near the border.

"Is it always this... uneventful?" he muttered through the mind link.

"You realize it's a good sign when you go through a whole patrol shift bored, right?" I shot back. *"And we're only taking a half shift. Quit being a baby."*

Connor's wolf yawned. *"And you want to do this the rest of your life?"*

"You'd rather sit in the pack house all day? I get to be outside and shift whenever I want!"

"Touche," Connor chuckled.

"Plus, what else could I do? I want to help our people. I'm a part of this family too. I should be able to contribute too," I said quietly.

"You do contribute."

"It's different for me and you know it."

"I didn't know you felt that way..."

My wolf turned to face Connor's dark gray wolf and nudged him.

"I don't resent you guys, Connor. I just... I sometimes feel like as the third child of an alpha—I don't have a purpose. Being a warrior gives me that purpose."

"I see that. I don't know what I would have done with myself if Kyle hadn't decided to make me his Beta," Connor replied. *"Besides, you're a better warrior than any of us. Even Dad. Just don't tell him I said that."*

I laughed brightly. *"Your secret is safe."*

"So... how much longer? I'm starving."

My wolf grumbled in response. *"What, are you a four-year-old?"*

He gave me a big, pleading, puppy-dog eyes stare.

"Two more hours. We'll do a few more passes."

I chuckled as Connor's wolf mumbled and pushed forward through the brush.

I felt their presence before I saw them. The hackles on my neck rose, feeling the threat as it passed through the border.

"Connor!" I called out, my wolf howling into the night air as an alarm to our pack as six wolves charged through the trees. Connor stood beside me, ready for a fight.

"This is because you said you were bored! You jinxed us, you idiot!" I hollered, earning a loud laugh from Connor as he jumped toward the fight.

My wolf launched forward, our years of training kicking in on instinct. My wolf, Aria, fought bravely, tearing through her enemies with razor-sharp focus. I kept an eye on Connor, watching him from the corner of my eye as we fought. I knew he was an alpha and was larger and stronger than most, but I still felt worried for him—especially after losing Grandpa so recently.

I pushed forward, Aria clawing her way through wolf after wolf. It was almost too easy.

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I pushed forward, Aria clawing her way through wall after wall. It was almost too easy.

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"Connor!" I screamed. Aria lunged toward him, sprinting as fast as she could carry us. The wolf dropped Connor to the ground and growled darkly as we barreled into him.

Aria snapped her jaws at him, pacing defensively in front of Connor.

"Connor? Connor, answer me!" I called through the mind link, praying he was still alive.

What kind of warrior am I, now that two of my loved ones had died on my watch?

I can't go through that again.

Connor's wolf panted lightly. *"I'm okay, Emma. I'm okay..."* Connor groaned through the mind link. *"Leave me. Go get help."*

"Help is coming," I whimpered, fighting the urge to cry. Aria nudged Connor's wolf with her nose, wanting to care for her brother.

I shook the tears away. I was a warrior! I clenched my jaw and looked toward the enemy as he rose to his feet again.

"I will protect you, Connor. At whatever cost. I won't lose anyone else," I ground out.

"No, Emma!" he yelled.

Just as the wolf took a step toward us, our eyes met.

And in that moment, the whole world stood still.

Mate.
