

Chapter 3

Sierra's POV

I pulled into the bookstore parking lot thirty minutes late for my shift. I ran inside and was met by my coworker, Justin.

"You're late Sierra!"

"I know, sorry. It was a crazy morning at home," I told him. I punched into the time clock and headed over to the donation box. It's a gently used bookstore, and we have a box outside where people can donate their books when we're closed. With the digital age, the store wasn't doing as well as it used to. I gured this would probably be my last summer working here before I tried something else.

"You're lucky it's been a slow morning."

"Thanks, I appreciate you covering for me." Justin was a couple years older than me at 21 and was currently going to college online. We both hoped to be book editors one day. That's what we bonded over most. I was planning to major in English at the University of Pittsburgh in the fall. Well, after what just happened, I wasn't sure what was going to be happening with my life.

"What happened this morning to make you so late?" Justin asked curiously. "I don't think you've ever been late."

"Honestly, I don't really know myself. You wouldn't believe me even if I told you."

"Try me," he said as I handed him the couple of books that had been donated overnight.

"I just found out some...stuff about my family," I started. I really didn't know how to continue. "I'm not sure I really wanna talk about it right now."

"Okay," he said, throwing up his hands in defeat. "But just know that there's not much you could tell me I wouldn't believe. I've seen a lot of weird things in my time."

"Your time?" I laughed. "You're only 21!"

"Hey, you can see a lot in 21 years," he said sarcastically. I laughed; Justin really was a sweet person. He and I have gotten close since I started working here 2 years ago. I don't know why, but I felt an instant connection when I met him. Almost like we had known each other for years. I felt like I could trust him, I needed to tell someone, even if he didn't believe me. I certainly wasn't going to tell Aubrey or Jeremy; they'd think I was crazy.

"Okay, but you have to promise not to make fun of me."

"Cross my heart!" He said, making an X on his chest. He leaned onto the counter where the register sat; his brown eyes locked on mine. I stood on the other side trying to gure out how to start my story.

"Well, tomorrow is my 18th birthday," I began. He perked up slightly at hearing that. "I guess that's why my parents decided to dump all of this on me. Apparently, my parents told me that I'm...." I was trying to think of a delicate way to say it. I gured coming out and going 'hey, they told me they're werewolves and so am I!' right out of the gate would be a little much. I opted for part of the truth. "They told me I'm...special...and that they're...special too. And that I might be in danger from someone."

"So when you say special, you mean...." he questioned.

"I guess my parents are from a place called Silver Willow..." I stopped when I saw his face. His eyes went wide and the hand that was resting on his chin fell on the counter.

"Did you say Silver Willow?"

"Yeah... I did."

"What are their names?" It seemed like a weird question. I guess in all the time we spent together I never really told him. I usually just call them mom and dad.

"Nathan and Maria...."

"Bailey..." we said at the same time. He covered his mouth with his hand.

"Sh*t..."

"What?" I questioned. He looked at me now standing up.

"I know what Silver Willow is. I know that it's a werewolf pack. I also know that it was one of the worst massacres in history. Virtually no one survived the slaughter. It was rumored the Alpha and Luna escaped, but no one knew for sure."

"Wait, you do?" I was abbergasted. How could he possibly know?

"I know, because I live in a pack too. I'm a werewolf." I just stared at him, not knowing what to say. Finding out about my parents was one thing, but now this... All in one day. I slid down the counter to the oor, leaning my back against the glass. He came and sat beside me. We sat in silence for a few moments before he spoke again.

"So, I guess that means you're a werewolf too?"

"I don't know. They told me I am, but I'm just now nding out about all of this. I hugged my knees to my chest and sighed.

"But you don't smell like a wolf," he remarked.

"Apparently, they have my aunt helping them cover that up. She's a witch and she's also been hiding us."

"Da*n..."

"Yeah, you're telling me." Then I had a thought. "Wait, if you're a werewolf, why are you working in a bookstore in a human town?"

"Well, my mom's actually a human. My dad and her were fated mates. Humans and werewolves can be mates just like witches and werewolves, vampires and werewolves, there are all kinds of hybrids," he said. I just looked sideways at him. "Did you not know that?"

"Umm, no I didn't." I covered my face with my hands. "God, this was supposed to be just a normal summer..."

"Goddess."

"What?" I looked at him.

"Werewolves say Goddess. We don't have a God; we have the Moon Goddess." I just stared at him some more. "I'm guessing you didn't know that either. Right, shutting up now."

"What am I supposed to do? I'm not even sure I believe this." I pleaded with him for some answers.

"I don't know, I can't tell you what to do or what to believe. I can tell you werewolves are real and if your parents are the former Luna and Alpha, then you've got some strong genes in you. I'm sorry they didn't tell you this sooner. Why didn't they exactly?" I decided it was best not to tell him the entire truth. If I did have powers and one werewolf was after me, who's to say more wouldn't do the same?

"I'm not sure, they didn't get that far. I had to leave, seeing my mom transform in our backyard was a lot for me." He laughed.

"Yeah, I can imagine seeing it for the rst time would be weird. Me, I grew up in the pack, so it doesn't faze me."

"Can you change?" I asked, curiously. He just laughed at my question.

"Yeah, I can. My wolf's name is Chase."

"He has a name?" This was new.

"Of course! Yours will too when you hear her for the rst time tomorrow."

"I don't know if I wanna hear her." I rested my forehead on my knees, which were still folded tightly to my chest.

"Hey, I know this is a lot to take in," he said, placing a hand on my back. "But this is a good thing. This is who you're meant to be." He did have a point. I always wondered why I loved living in the woods so much. Why I loved nature and hiking, especially at night? I felt so alive basking in the moonlight. Just then, the bell rang, indicating someone had just entered the store. Justin stood up to ask them if they needed help and I went to inventory the new books we had gotten as donations. We didn't have time to talk anymore after that. Before I knew it, it was 5:00 and time to close. As Justin was locking the door, he turned to me,

"Sierra, thanks for telling me your story. I'm happy your parents made it out alive." He smiled at me, and I smiled back.

"You're welcome. Thanks for listening and telling me about you." I gave him a hug before we each headed for our respective cars. I made the drive home thinking about everything I had learned that day.

When I got home, my mom was in the kitchen making dinner.

"Hi honey, how was work?" She asked while frying chicken.

"It was.... interesting," I replied. "I found out something about Justin."

"Oh really?" She didn't look up from the pot as she talked.

"Yeah, turns out he basically conrmed everything you and dad said this morning. He told me he's a werewolf too." At that she nally looked up at me.

"I hate to say it, but we sort of already knew that."

"Wait, how?"

"Werewolves have a very intense sense of smell; you kept coming home smelling like one and, since he was usually the only person you worked with, we gured it was him." I couldn't believe they could smell him on me.

"Do all werewolves smell?"

"They all have their own distinct smell. Rogues smell like raw sewage, hence why we needed to cover that up. Mates smell different to their partners than to other wolves." I was learning more and more information by the hour. I was less angry with my parents at this point. Having had time to take in the information and the conversation I had with Justin really helped.

"Do you want me to go tell dad dinner's almost ready?" I asked, wanting to be helpful after my behavior this morning.

"That's okay, I'll just mind link him. It's so nice to be able to say that out loud!"

"Mind link?" That was a new one. She smiled at me, wiping her hands on her apron.

"It's a way for wolves to communicate silently between the two of them. It's done in your head and can only be done between pack members and mates." So that's why I always got the feeling they were having conversations when they looked at each other; they were.

"You can do it too once you have your wolf."

"So, starting tomorrow?"

"Yeah, it's really convenient because you can do it from miles away. Being in a pack or being mates connects you in a way like no other. You are part of each other. Mates can even feel what the other is feeling through their bond." It seemed like my mom was excited to nally be sharing all this information with me. I'm sure it's been hard hiding who they were for 12 years. My dad walked into the room not long after that.

"So, what's for dinner?" he asked, looking around the kitchen. "Oh yes, fried chicken!" he said excitedly, looking into the pot of bubbling oil. "Listen, I know we told you a lot of information this morning. I'm sure it was all really overwhelming, but if you have any questions, ask away."

"I think I still need some time to fully process everything," I told him, sitting down.

"I understand," he told me. "We can talk about it more in the morning. We'll tell you anything you want to know."

"We have so much to teach you," my mom interjected, now shing the cooked chicken out of the pot. There was one thing I wanted to ask.

"Are we going to stay in hiding forever?" They both looked at each other and then back to me.

"Honestly, I don't know." My dad spoke rst.

"Maybe if you nd your fated mate, we could all go live in their pack," my mom said.

"How would I go about doing that?" I questioned.

"The Moon Goddess has a way of bringing mates together even if they don't want to be," my mom chuckled. She started dishing out the food onto plates to bring to the table. My dad got up to help her and I just watched them. They looked like a well-oiled machine moving in sync, each almost reading the other's mind. Or were they reading each other's minds? They brought the food over and we didn't talk about wolves for the rest of dinner, which I was happy about. I really did need to sleep on the information I had just received.

That night, after dinner, we had our tea like usual, only this time I understood its importance. I was mentally exhausted from the day, so I decided to head to my room to be alone. I was texting Aubrey and Jeremy in our group chat and surng the internet. They wanted to get together for a celebratory lunch tomorrow since we graduated, and I agreed. I was gonna meet them at 12:00 at the local diner.