

Chapter 6

Calvin

"Why are you putting up a tent?" I ask. "There aren't any kids, are there?"

"No, there aren't any kids," Peter says, turning to me in confusion. "Where do you plan to sleep?"

I shrug. "Just shift and sleep on the ground."

He laughs a little. "I'm an old man and got used to the ner things while I was the king, like shelter. I'll be sleeping in the tent. You can join me if you'd like."

I shrug again. "Maybe. I'm going to go hunt."

"I have food," he calls after me. "And pans to cook. There's water in the SUV, too."

"Could have just stayed at the packhouse like this," I tell him. "You know you're a wolf, right?"

He nods as he lifts a pole, bringing the tent up. "But I'm half wolf. The other half is human and civilized. I'll not be sleeping in wolf form outside and eating raw meat that my wolf kills. And neither will you."

I want to argue, but he holds his hand up. "We're part human, Calvin. We can enjoy the quiet and outdoors without being full wolf."

I nod and sit down. "I didn't get to shift often and run outside our bubble. It was big, and there was space inside, but I just wanted to run free for so long."

Peter nishes the tent and moves to sit across from me on another rock. "I think Molly can relate to that feeling."

"I know," I explain. "That's why I wanted it so badly for her. I could still shift, even if I couldn't run through the woods more than every few months. It was only allowed when Gus was home."

"How does it feel now that you can run whenever you want?" Peter asks.

I sigh. "I don't know. It just feels strange. There are so many things I can do now that I couldn't do before, and sometimes it's just... overwhelming. I've not been allowed to just exist for so long."

"I'm sorry," he tells me.

I nod. I know he is, but it doesn't change how bad things were for me and Molly. And especially for Jason and Andrew.

"I'm going to gather some rewood," I tell him, standing and leaving him there to do whatever it is he needs for this.

I walk through the woods, taking deep breaths and enjoying something I couldn't do for so long. It's nice, but it's still so strange. Arms full, I return to the campsite where Peter sits in a chair and roll my eyes. I don't know what I'd expected from the former King, but it should have been this.

I kneel and stack some wood, pulling some leaves in for tender and light it. It doesn't take long before it's lit and roaring, ready to cook our food.

"I don't know how to do this part," Peter says with a shrug as he presents me with a cooler and an iron pan. "It's all for you."

I kneel back down and get to work. There are steaks, potatoes, and a small container with some seasonings. I use a stick to drag out some coals and place the potatoes between them before stacking another hot log over them. I sprinkle some salt and pepper on the steaks, and after some time, I place the steaks directly on the log.

"Calvin, there's a pan!" Peter exclaims.

I reach behind me and shoot him the bird. "Don't f****g need one. We'll have to clean it."

He looks so uncomfortable, but when I nish and hand him a plate of food, he still takes it and eats it.

"Calvin, this is probably the best steak I've ever had," he tells me.

"I know," I tell him with a shrug. I knew it was going to be good. "Molly isn't the only one who can cook."

He laughs. "I'll be sure to tell her you said that."

We eat in silence, and once we're done, he takes the plates from me. "Listen, you need another lesson."

I swallow hard. "Going back for Mrs. Audrey already? Am I that hopeless?"

"Not at all," he tells me. "This is one she can't help you with. You need to learn how to control your Alpha aura."

"My what?" I ask. I have no idea what the man is talking about.

"When you are uncomfortable, it rages, and it's intimidating. Many Alphas will release their Aura as a power move, trying to be bigger than who they are meeting. Your aura is raging on its own and, paired with your rm handshake, makes it seem like you are trying to intimidate them."

"I'm not," I defend.

"I know, which is why we're going to work on it," he tells me. "It's hard because it's been so long since you were around an actual Alpha. Close your eyes and look inside yourself. Look for your wolf. Your wolf is large, Calvin."

I nod. "Mace," I correct him. "My wolf's name is Mace."

"Well, Mace is physically an Alpha wolf, and he has an aura as big as he truly is," he tries to explain. "Can you feel that around him?"

"Maybe?" I... I think that I can feel it from him.

"YOU control that," Peter tells me. "Not completely. Mace can control it, too. But the two of you need to learn to pull it together and bring it down when you're uncomfortable."

No, Mace tells me rmlly. How can I protect you if I tamp the Aura? You are more Alpha than any of them.

"Mace says no," I tell Peter, opening my eyes.

"What?" he asks.

"He says it's how he protects me," I explain. "So no. I won't go against my wolf."

Peter pinches the bridge of his nose. "I know you're uncomfortable around them, but you have no need to be. You are a born Alpha and are at the top of the list to take a pack should any of them falter- and on your own merit, not because your sister is the queen. You don't need to be uncomfortable around them. You can hold your head high and know that you could kill any of them if it comes down to it."

I nod, taking in his words.

"You could kill me if you decide to," he continues, and I try not to let on that it's been my plan, but he has to know that. "You could kill the King if you wanted. You are big, and you are strong. Do not let these Alphas intimidate you."

"I'll try," I tell him. "Mace will try."

I will not.

I resign myself to sleeping in the tent in human form to appease the former King. He seems bothered enough by my aura as it is. I think sleeping as wolf would push him over the edge.

I pull my shirt and pants off, lie on the ground, and tug a blanket over me before I roll away, but as I do, it starts again. It's a feeling I've felt for a year or so now, and it comes and goes, though it has been happening more often. It's almost a pain but more of an overwhelming sense of dread.

I take a deep breath and exhale slowly, and then another. There is nothing wrong. There is nothing to worry about. Is it happening again because I have to meet another pack tomorrow?

"If you're trying to suppress your aura, you're doing the exact opposite," Peter says from behind me.

This is the worst it has ever been, though, and I sit straight up, clutching at my chest as I take deep, heaving breaths.

"Calvin?" Peter asks me, concerned. He eyes me cautiously, taking my hand in his. He doesn't say anything as he squeezes it.

Finally, it passes, and I take a few more breaths. "Gus said it happened because I get nervous. It started around a year ago."

Peter shakes his head. "A year? So, while you were still in the bubble?"

"Yeah," I say awkwardly. "Sorry. I can't control my Aura now. Mace tries to help me through them."

He nods. "He feels helpless?"

"Yes," I say, surprised that he realized it. "It's like I'm expecting pain, but it never comes."

"Do you ever have dreams about it?" he asks.

I think hard about his question. "Sometimes I wake up because of it, but I don't remember any dreams."

"I don't think this happens because you're nervous," he tells me, and he's so cautious about it.

"What is it, then?"

"I think you can feel your mate," he tells me gently. "I think she's scared or hurt."