

14 - First Date

(Willa)

The Alpha Prince, Alpha Dracos stared at me with an impassive face I knew didn't react whatever it was he was feeling.

Part of me wanted to run again, a huge part of me actually.

I already felt intimidated by his career and status within the Crescent Moon pack, but to know that he was the Alpha.

I was mated to an Alpha before, but Alpha Dracos, the fucking prince was an Alpha Alpha.

"You took my seat," I managed to say and one of his real smiles crossed his face.

"It wasn't my intention, nor was it to keep you I am from you." His voice felt raw, I nodded once, "This doesn't change anything," He went on, "It's still me."

It actually changed a whole fucking lot. Would he expect me to be Luna?

"Do you, if we you know," I gestured between us hoping he understood, "Would you want me to be Luna?" I swallowed, that was a stupid question, of course, he would want that of his mate, any Alpha would.

His brows furrowed, "Not if you don't want to, I want you in any capacity I can get. I would love your insight on a few things, but if you don't want to do anything ocially then I'm ne with that. We're managing ne without a Luna," He gave me another of his rare smiles.

"Okay," I thought it over, I hoped he wasn't just saying it so I would accept him, "Is this one of those things that you say now but then inevitably resent me for later?"

He frowned, "Willa if you don't want to talk about it that's ne, but do you mind me asking what happened with your rst mate?"

Great, my insecurities were showing again.

"Um, it's a long story, a very long one, one that I'm still working through. I honestly don't know if I ever will stop working through it,"

He nodded, "And your son?"

"Emmett," I bit my lip, "He's his."

"Okay, well when you're ready, I'll be here." The sincerity in his voice got to me.

"I want to tell you," I surprised myself by how much that was true, "Just not here." I looked around as a few new customers started to come in, the lunch rush was about to start.

"Are you going to let me take you out then?" He asked, a smirk on his face and his eyebrow raised, "Just to talk of course."

I couldn't help but smile, "Sure."

His eyes widened for a second, I got the feeling he was rarely taken by surprise. It made me feel good.

"Okay then, how about tonight?"

"I need to see if I can nd someone to watch-"

"I'll come over, we're off tomorrow for our orientation in the afternoon so we can have a sleepover," Cali cut in.

"How long have you been there?"

She shrugged, "I get bored, what time?" She turned to Caspien, he studied her with a blank expression.

She crossed her arms and returned his stare, "You know you're like The Beast in Beauty and the Beast at the beginning of the movie. Broody, grunts occasionally, doesn't smile."

"You're not scared of me?" He eyed her, an eyebrow raised.

"Sh.it I'm terried of you. You walk in as if you own the place and you very well might, but you also look like you've killed a few people," She shrugged, "But I'm not wrong about the Beast comment." She asked him a smile turning towards the kitchen, her ruby red curls swung behind her.

"She isn't wrong," I bit my bottom lip trying not to smile.

He huffed. I tilted my head an eyebrow raised asking him to deny it.

"Fine," I swore he smiled into his coffee, "I get it."

"Will you ask her if seven works?" He looked at me his expression back to being calm and impassive but his eyes seemed to hold something else, something like laughter maybe.

"Seven works," Cali shouted from the kitchen, I guess she didn't make it far.

I closed my eyes and shook my head.

"Where should I meet you?" I tried to keep my voice even, despite my stomach being in knots.

"I'll pick you up, text me your address." He slid a business card across the counter, I picked it up without looking at it and shoved it in my apron pocket.

He stood up and left a twenty on the counter again, he would really need to stop doing that. I watched him walk out, the way he walked seemed like he owned the world, and I guess he did, at least this part of it.

This was too real, I half hoped I could put this off for a bit longer, but I had to admit I was excited to see him for longer than a few minutes, to actually be able to open up to someone about everything.

I was worried that I would end up not really liking him, and I was even more worried that I would.

Cali and I walked back to her place to get the kids and so she could quickly shower and pack a bag. Her daughter, Loreli, inherited her red curls just a bit lighter in color. Emmett and Loreli had become so close, it was such a relief to me.

Not just to feel better about leaving him when I went to work, but also that he already had a friend so close to his age. His rst real friend.

"I brought a little blow-up mattress for Loreli, she can sleep in Emmett's room," Cali walked off to set it up as soon as we got to my place. She hasn't been here since she picked me up the rst day for work but she walked around like she owned the place. I admired her condence and the ease she seemed to live her life. I knew better than to assume it wasn't a mask, but it was one she wore d.amn well if it was.

"Pizza party, movies, wait you don't have a TV," She put her hands on her hips and surveyed my living room that opened to the kitchen.

"Still getting settled," We didn't have a TV at the cabin either, I just got used to it.

"Hmm, well I have my laptop we can use that," She turned to me with a wicked smile, "Now, let's get you ready."

"I don't even know where we're going."

She shrugged and tugged me to the bathroom, "Shower," She pushed me in, "Make sure to wash all your lady bits," She closed the door before I could respond.

Showered and mostly dry she came in and helped me blow dry my hair, making my waves stand out and turn slightly curlier than normal.

The sight made my heart clench, it used to be my childhood friend Lola and occasionally my mom helping me with this. Even having a new mate and a life that I was genuinely enjoying, didn't detract from the dull pain of what I lost and the life that I could have had.

"You good?" Cali asked, I didn't realize she turned off the blowdryer.

"Just thinking, my best friend Lola used to help me do this and it made me miss her."

"When was the last time you've seen her?"

I had to think about it, it was a while. She did come out to the cabin once and we met in town a few times. She went off to college and despite our frequent letters and occasional calls, I didn't really see her in person since I left.

"It's over a year at this point."

"What happened?" she asked, rummaging around a makeup bag she brought.

"We're still close, but life I guess," I gave her a small smile and she mirrored that.

"I understand that more than anything, I had to cut a few people off and it sucks. I'm not saying you should cut off Lola of course," She gave me a half smile, "But paths change and people change, and it fucking sucks."

"That it does," I sighed.

"Close your eyes," She came at me with a makeup brush and I tried to sit still.

"Not too much please,"

A knock came at the door and I jumped.

Cali frowned, checking her phone, "It's only six, stay here," She walked out of the bathroom.

I tried to listen but it didn't sound like him, the door shut and I ventured out behind her.

Cali was trying to balance six massive pizza boxes and two bags in her hands.

"Let me help," I grabbed some of the boxes from her and set them on the table, "This is so much for the three of you, did you forget two of them were kids?" I laughed.

"I thought you ordered this," She set the bags on the table rummaging through them. She pulled out some garlic bread, and two bottles of champagne before handing me a card, "It's from prince charming," She smirked turning to grab glasses from the kitchen.

I opened the card

A small gesture for your snarky "best" friend

Remind her the beast gets the girl in the end

-Caspien

I laughed and she frowned grabbing it from my hand. She rolled her eyes after reading it but was smiling.

"I never said he wouldn't get the girl I'm just saying that he's a bit broody. But I don't appreciate that he put 'best' in quotation marks" She scoffed, popping a bottle, "Your glass selection is dismal by the way."

I had mostly coffee mugs, a few plastic cups for Emmett, and some random mismatched glasses my mom found somewhere.

"Let's nish getting you ready," She pushed me back towards the bathroom, "We have about ve minutes before the kids smell the pizza," She whispered the last part as we walked past Emmett's bedroom where they were playing.

I let her do her thing and what I saw in the mirror was someone I didn't recognize. Well, I recognized her as the future Luna of Blue Ridge. The girl that wore condence even if it was fake, the one that dressed up for every dinner and party that she herself helped plan. I saw a doll, a beautiful one, but it reminded me of when I was nothing more than an accessory. A gloried party planner with a fancy title.

"You don't like it?" Cali frowned, "Is it too much? I thought a soft smokey eye and just a little glitter would bring out your eyes, I think you look absolutely stunning."

"No, it's not that," I came back to the present, trying to give her a smile, "I just haven't been this done up in ages and it brought back some memories that I didn't think it would," I admitted.

Her lips went in a thin line but she didn't ask anything else. I liked that about her. I knew she would always be there but she didn't push it. She seemed to know when to ask questions like about Lola, and when I wasn't ready to open up.

"Well, let's make you some new memories then," She helped pull me up from the kitchen table we dragged in here.

"Thank you, for helping with Emmett and me," I gestured to my face and she grabbed my hand.

"Don't thank me, that's what friends are for, right?"

"Right," I agreed.

I asked Caspien what the dress code was and he just said 'come as you are' so that was no help. I didn't want to be underdressed or overdressed and I couldn't decide which would be worse.

"Simple but elegant," Cali leaned on my bedroom door frame reading my thoughts, "A long black dress maybe? Something comfortable so it doesn't look like you're going to a wedding."

"Or a funeral," I added turning to my closet. I hadn't updated it in years and I left behind anything nice. Even though Nolan had my things packed up, I didn't want the reminder of the clothes he purchased for me, not like a ballgown would have worked well in the cabin anyways.

"I should have brought you something," Cali crossed her arms coming up next to me, pointing at the sweaters, annels, and jeans.

"I don't even know where we're going," I went to lie on my bed.

"Probably somewhere fancy," Cali responded, that I already could have guessed.

She went rummaging through a box of things that I still hadn't unpacked. I added that to my mental list of things I needed to do.

"This could work," She pulled out something dark green, a dress I hadn't seen since high school.

"I doubt that will t me," I propped up on my elbows.

Cali threw it to me, "Try it," She went back to rummaging through the box.

I sighed slipping off my clothes and tugging up the soft fabric.

"We also need to get you a full-length mirror," Cali stated, "But wow, yes that, no other options,"

"Not like I have any other options," I gave her a blank stare.

I looked down at the simple emerald green dress, the fabric was stretchy thankfully. It was from ages ago, I think I wore it to some menial dance in high school Lola dragged me to. It didn't me the way it used to, I was skinnier back then, but this fabric was forgiving and hugged my new curves.

I have no idea why my mom packed it, or maybe I did for some reason when we went to the cabin, those days before we left were still blurry.

"It's not too dressy?"

Cali shook her head, "It's perfect, elegant but simple, exactly what I was looking for."

"Fine," But I didn't feel ne, my head felt light, and nerves coursed through me. I didn't want to be overdressed or presume that we were going somewhere nice.

"You look like a princess," Emmett stopped in his tracks as he ran into my room.

"A fairy," Loreli said, almost bumping into Emmett's back, "I'm hungry," Her attention turned to her mom.

"Lucky for you I ordered pizza," Cali winked at me and I ushered her and Emmett to the kitchen.

"Wow, this is enough pizza to feed an entire dinosaur!" Emmett's eyes were wide.

"Something like that," I smiled at him grabbing plates from the kitchen before I took a seat next to him.

"Emmett?" I asked him but he was half distracted by the pizza, "Baby?" I touched his arm.

"Yes, Mama?" His green eyes turned to me.

"Mama is going out for a little bit, but Cali will be here and Loreli. Is that okay?" He nodded.

"Take care of them will you?" I winked at him, "Help Cali and show her where everything is."

"Yes Mama, are you coming back today?" A small frown crossed his face.

"Yes," I rued his hair, "We're all having a sleepover."

"Finishing touches, I got it from here," Cali said swabbing my hand away where I tried to grab a piece of pepperoni, "You're about to eat, something," She shrugged.

I rolled my eyes but left the table. I slipped on some ankle boots which were the only thing I had that had a little heel on it, and debated a light jacket but left it. It was warm but I wanted to cover myself for some reason, especially if I ended up in an almost oor-length dress at a burger joint.

"Okay, I think I'm good," I came back to the table.

"Better than good, you are a goddess," Cali smiled at me

A sharp knock reverberated through the hall and I jumped, Cali nodded towards the door. I didn't expect him to come up here, I thought he would have texted me when he was downstairs.

I forced myself toward the door, I felt out of breath and tried to take deep breaths as I stood in front of the door.

"Protocol is to actually open the door," Cali shouted, I was glad that the dining room table was out of view, I wasn't ready for him to meet Emmett yet, or Emmett to meet him.

He knocked again.

I wiped my hands on my dress and thankfully my body remembered how to open the lock. I wasn't prepared for what I saw in front of me.

Caspien stood in the doorframe, taking up almost the entire thing. He was wearing a dark shirt and gray pants. His jacket was slung over his shoulder and he looked casual somehow but still had that authority and effortless condence I've only ever seen in movies.

I've seen him dress up before, I actually haven't seen him in anything besides a suit, but in this, he was mouthwatering.

His shirt was perfectly tted to his body, like he had it tailored, and I'm sure he did. It clung to his body showing the mass of his arms and that he was a trained warrior under perfectly tailored suits. I felt heat course through me and tighten my stomach at just the thought of seeing what was beneath.

When my eyes nally made it to his he was looking at me hungrily. His gaze raked up and down me and it made me feel good.

"You look, Goddess, Willa. You are incredible," A lump formed in my throat as his icy eyes met mine. They were lled with something I hoped was lust but it was deeper than that, there was an affection that went deeper than the hunger, something I rarely saw with Nolan in the year we were together.