

Chapter Three

'Hey Leeway!' came an arrogant voice as I try to open the door of my car whilst balancing a coffee in one hand and a pile of les in the other.

Closing my eyes, I pray for strength before turning around with a forced smile to face Caden Star, the future Alpha of our pack and the only other person who doesn't call me Lee. I have no idea why he calls me Leeway, but he has ever since we were kids and the more I reacted to that Goddess awful name, the more pleasure he took in using it.

'Caden' I reply coolly, 'what a surprise, I didn't think an Alpha's heir had to dirty his hands with actual work, don't you have a skirt to chase or something?' I add with a sweet smile.

He's muscular as all Alphas are and his strong jawline and air of authority have most women swooning as he passes. His black hair is a complement to my own long brown strands. Our features are as opposite as our personalities, a physical reminder to everyone about how much we do not get on.

The Alpha's son Caden is an arrogant asshole, and at twenty ve, he still hasn't found his mate which I think he's happy about as it means he can keep chasing the pack she wolves who are all more than happy to lay on their backs for him if the rumours are true.

There is worry throughout the pack, whispers that maybe their future Alpha's mate has died but if Caden was aware of the murmurs, he didn't let on.

It is rare for an Alpha to not nd his mate within two years of maturity and though he is only a couple of years beyond that, with the amount of she wolves that have paraded through the pack lands for the ceremonies with no match, the more the pack members panick.

He frowns as he steps into my personal space, towering over my short ve foot six frame with his six foot three build. Despite him looming over me, I refuse to show discomfort and merely glance up at him, keeping my expression unbothered.

'I just came to wish you good luck tonight' he replies quietly, 'I heard tonight is your ceremony, some low ranking warrior is going to be so happy.'

I snorted, 'wow' I reply, my voice like syrup, 'a low ranking warrior, you think so highly of me, I would have sworn you'd expect me to mate with an omega.'

Caden waves a hand, 'please, you are Beta stock' he sighs dramatically, 'even you couldn't embarrass your parents that much.'

I refrain from rolling my eyes at him, douche canoe. 'Well whoever it is, I'm sure it won't matter once I meet his gaze' I reply, refusing to take the bait. 'When I nd him, he'll love me and I'll love him, it won't matter if he's the lowest Omega to me, he'll still be mine. I also know my parents will accept him whoever he is, unlike some people, they don't judge a wolf's worth on his rank' I add with a smirk.

My grin widens as Caden's jaw ticks, and I take perverse pleasure in getting under his skin. The closer we get to my ceremony the more he's tried to get under my skin about being mated to a low ranking wolf or even not nding my mate at all. I have never told him that I don't actually want my wolf's call to be heard. The asshole would no doubt change tactics and start calling wolves over to stand next to me whilst he makes comments about how well we'd match if he knew.

Caden inches closer and my back presses into the door of my car instinctively as he leans over me, his steely grey eyes boring into mine. 'Well we'll just have to wait and see, won't we Leeway' he growls.

'Back up Star' comes a stoney voice to our right and we both turn to nd, Hadley, the pack's best warrior, standing nearby, his arms crossed over his chest as he glares at our future Alpha with dislike.

Hadley is a foundling, discovered on the pack borders at a few days old wrapped in a blanket with no note attached. The border patrol brought him in and he was handed over to one of the warrior couples that couldn't have pups who raised him as their own.

Normally, a foundling is raised by a ranked family but as both the Luna and Beta female were pregnant and the Gamma was still mateless, the decision was made to give him to one of the warrior couples instead.

Hadley is imposing at six foot four and the muscles on the guy have every she wolf drooling over him. Ashleigh and I might have spent a few of our teenage sleepovers giggling over a photo she snapped of him working out in the gym. His arm is a sleeve of intricate tattoos that stand out on his tanned skin against the white t-shirt he is sporting today. His thick brown hair falling into his eyes as he glares at Caden, who returns his look with venom.

'What's it to you Carrington?' Caden sneers back, not moving an inch away from me.

Hadley steps closer, his eyes never leaving the Alpha's, 'step away before I make you' he growls.

Caden scoffs, 'please, you think you can take me?' he taunts, though he does move back, allowing me enough room to turn quickly and unlock my car door, pulling it open and sliding through the tiny gap into the driver's seat.

Covering the distance between them, Caden gets into Hadley's face, the two squaring off as I throw my stuff in the passenger seat beside me.

'You got a problem warrior?' the Alpha sneers, and even I can feel his Alpha aura radiating from him.

'I have a problem with anyone who tries to intimidate a woman because he's a weak ass b***h' Hadley replies evenly.

Caden growls, inching closer until they are both almost nose to nose, 'I'm just being friendly Carrington, tonight is a big night for our oldest Beta female. Must be exciting to know that there is a mate only hours away from nding you.' He tilts his head, a malicious smile curving his lips, 'are you thinking the same thing?' he asks softly, 'hoping it will be you that hears her call?'

I swallow thickly, my attention solely on the two men beside my car now, unsure why I'm waiting for Hadley's reply. The warrior's jaw ticks before he answers, 'I'm sure whoever is mated to Beta Jamie-Lee will be worthy of her' he growls back, 'which is why it won't be you' he adds with his own smile.

Caden scowls, raising his st and swinging for the warrior, stopping just before his knuckles connect with the other man's face, his eyebrow raising when Hadley doesn't even inch.

Turning back to me, Caden walks over to my open window, leaning down to rest his forearm on the door frame as he smiles. 'Like I said Leeway, good luck tonight' he whispers before turning on his heel and sauntering away.

My gaze returns to Hadley who is still glaring at Caden's back until he disappears around the side of the building before his gaze moves to me. My face ushes as he stares at me silently, making no move to approach me as I fumble to get my keys in the ignition and start the engine. Throwing the car into drive, I pull out of my space and head toward the packhouse, sneaking a peek in my rear view mirror to nd the warrior gone.

Pulling into the parking garage, I slow to a stop in my space, cutting the engine and opening the door, grabbing my travel mug and les before climbing out and heading inside.

'Hey Leel!' the voice of Caden's younger sister Ellen has me turning to nd the black haired beauty making her way toward me. She's best friends with Bailee, and unlike her douchebag brother, she's really sweet.

Smiling, I juggle my handful to give her an awkward wave. 'Hey' I reply, 'where's Bails, I thought you two had been sewn together by Doctor Meadows' I tease.

Ellen laughs, shaking her head, 'your dad insisted she train' she replies, 'she's managed to skip every session this week so he hunted us down and dragged her out to the eld.'

I grin, it's common knowledge that my sister is not sporty, yes even in the werewolf world there are some that just don't embrace the physical side of existence. 'She must be thrilled' I reply as Ellen falls into step beside me and we climb up the stairs toward the ranked bedrooms where Isaac and I now live after moving out of our father's house at twenty. That is the rule for all ranked wolves, a year before reaching maturity you have to move into the pack house to be trained up. I miss my younger siblings, but it's nice to have my own space.

'The last thing I heard as the door shut behind them was Bailee complaining that her hair would get sweaty' Ellen is saying making me laugh.

Reaching the top of the second set of stairs, I bid Ellen goodbye and head toward my room, pushing the door open as my mind link opened up and my mother's voice led my head. 'Sweetie? Where are you?' she demands impatiently as I deposit the les on my desk and take a sip of the luke warm coffee in my mug before pulling a face and walking into the joining bathroom to dump it in the sink.

'I'm in my room mom' I reply grumpily, 'I just got in from work.'

'What? I told you to nish early' my mother growls in annoyance, 'you need to get ready.'

I scowl at myself in the mirror, the blasted ceremony, and the worst part is, I'm the only damn she wolf who turned twenty one this moon phase so I'll be led out there by myself. 'I can't just leave work Mother, I have a job to do' I retort, stomping back into my room, my good mood wiped away. 'Plus it's only six o'clock, we have six hours before this s**t show. I'll get some food in the hall and then come over about ten.'

'Jamie-Lee Sparks' my mother's voice comes through the link sternly as I wince. 'You will get your backside over to this house right now. You are a Beta's child, the rst to go through the claiming and you will not shame your father by presenting to the Alpha like you've been dragged through a hedge backward.'

'But Mommy' I try again, turning on my little girl's voice, 'I wanted to see Ashleigh before tonight, I'm going to be out there all on my own, I'm nervous' I add in for good measure.

'Hmphf, don't try that crap with me child, I raised ve children, I'm not the sucker your father is' my mother retorts as I curse to myself. 'And watch your language, you are not too old for a bar of soap in your mouth' she adds as an afterthought.

Grumbling to myself, I shut down the link, quickly changing into a t-shirt and sweats, pulling on my sneakers, and heading back out the door, down the stairs, and out the front door.

Moving across the lawn, I break into a jog, my gaze ickering over the training grounds to nd it empty, looks like my dad nally let Bailee pack up and go home. Sniggering, thankful that I no longer live under my parent's roof so my training schedule doesn't fall to my father anymore, I hurry toward the quaint houses that are built to the right of the pack house, making my way up the path of one of the largest and pushing open the door.

'OK I'm here, someone better feed me' I call out in a huff, kicking the door shut with my heel behind me.

'Jamie-Lee, hands were made for shutting doors, not feet' my mother scolds as she appears in front of me, casting her gaze over my attire before rolling her eyes. 'This is why we need six hours' she adds, waving a hand toward the stairs, 'towels are in the shower, wash and shave everywhere sweetie, no one wants to be digging through the undergrowth looking for treasure.'

'Mom!' I yelp, staring at the woman who gave birth to me in disgust, 'never ever say that again!'

'What?' my mom asks innocently, 'you think I ended up with ve pups with an overgrown wilderness between my legs?'

'Stop! Goddess, I'm going!' I yell, sticking my ngers in my ears as I run for the stairs as fast as I can to avoid any more of my mother's pep talks. Shuddering in horror, I enter the bathroom at the top of the stairs, nding a towel already waiting for me on the rail. Locking the door, I let out a slow breath, let's get this nightmare over with.