

Chapter 11 Packlife Before All

Kelsey

“No way! I didn’t believe it when I saw your name on Alpha Max’s schedule,” Lily squealed and pulled me into a tight hug as Alpha Max and I entered the waiting room. Lily was about a year older than I was, she and Asher had dated around the time that Blake and I had, making us quite acquainted with one another. Lily and Asher had ended their relationship on amicable terms when Lily finally met her mate. She was the one that got away for Asher, he was head over heels for Lily but he would never stand in the middle of a mate bond. Somewhere deep down, that guy was a helpless romantic. Lily’s bright red hair was pulled back into a low bun and she even wore glasses now, she looked professional and grown up. She was now Alpha Max’s receptionist.

A smile takes over my face, forgetting that I had just been ambushed by Blake’s little Barbie friend and I chuckled enthusiastically, “tell me about it, it’s so surreal to be home. You look amazing! How are you?”

Lily composed herself, taking a deep breath and grabbing her stomach tenderly with her hands. “Are you…?”, I ask, stepping closer to her. Lily nods and squeals, her excitement unmasked and out on full display, “we just found out! I’m going to be a mom Kels!”

“I’m so happy for you, I always knew you’d make a great mom one day. I better be invited to the baby shower,” I scold. “Of course you’ll be! Your mom is the one organizing the entire thing,” Lily admitted, her eyes twinkling in delight. Lily had lost her mother due to a rogue attack years ago. The pain and anguish had caused her father to start drinking heavily. Lily would often spend nights at our house, making her and my mother rather close. Even when she met her mate, Brad, the two of them still remained close. Lily and Brad would join my parents every Friday night for dinner, I swear it was my mother’s highlight of the week.

Alpha Max interrupted and cleared his throat, standing in the doorway of the Alpha office. “See you soon,” I whispered to Lily and followed him inside. Today was not the day I planned on pissing off the former Alpha of my pack; the man who held my future in his hands. Alpha Max closed the door and sighed, “Kelsey, what am I going to do about that boy? Some days I wonder if I stepped down as Alpha too soon, other days I couldn’t be more proud of my son.” He furrowed his eyebrows together and walked around the desk to his chair, “maybe he’ll settle down one day when he meets his mate, but the day can’t seem to come soon enough.”

I felt a lump appear in my throat as the realization hit me like a ton of bricks, Alpha Max had no idea that I was Blake’s mate. “Was he embarrassed by us?”, my wolf whimpered inside. I pushed Lelia down, while my heart was indeed cracking into tiny pieces, I had to keep my eyes on the prize and focus on impressing Alpha Max so I could be released and return to Arizona as soon as possible.

I gave Alpha Max a small smile, “I’m sure… he’ll find his way. To be Alpha of a pack is a heavy weight to carry for anyone. Some things take time, Alpha Max.” He returned my sentiment with nothing more than a nod but I could see the pride for his son beaming from his eyes.

Alpha Max flipped through some papers in a manila file on his desk. I could read the tab from the other side of the table that had “Kesley Edwards” along the top. There must have been at least fifty pages in there. “He’s got an entire book on us in that folder,” Lelia muttered. I held in my giggle, “I didn’t realize we were so interesting,” I replied back to her. Alpha Max scanned the endless pages in the file until he finally clasped just hands together. “I hear you have a boyfriend Kelsey…”, he stated. While I didn’t want him to know that part of my life, I also knew there was no use in lying to the Alpha.

“I do, we live together now,” I admitted.

His pristine blue eyes glanced up from the paper shooting a shiver down my spine; he had identical eyes to Blake. “And I hear he’s human?”, he continued, his eyes narrowing on me. I cupped my hands together on the desk, trying to hide the fact that my palms were now sweating and nod in response. My mother always said less is more after all.

“and he…”, Alpha Max continued to probe.

“No,” I shook my head, knowing exactly where he was trying to steer the conversation. “He doesn’t know about our kind. Although, he’s a very accepting and kind man Alpha,” I say then press my lips tightly in a line hoping that Alpha Max would accept my answer.

He sighed and pushed back into the leather office chair, “you know the rules Kelsey. It’s too dangerous for our kind to be revealed to humans,” he said and continued scribbling something in the file. “And I have no intention but to abide by shifter law Alpha,” I answered and straightened my posture in the chair.

“And you’re not worried you’ll miss your chance to meet your mate? That’s an awful pain to spend the rest of your life with,” he asked. I could feel the confusion in his voice like he was racking his mind over my choices. “I’m sure I’ll find him soon. What’s to say I do cross paths with him one day and he rejects me anyways?” I explained, guilt panging my chest. What else was I left to say? Oh hey Alpha Max, your son is actually my mate and he’s already rejected me but for some reason I feel my panties get wet whenever I’m around him like the bond is still there? No chance.

Alpha Max let out a swallow laugh, “If he wants you? How could a wolf deny the mate bond? You’re smart and beautiful Kelsey, I don’t want to hear that kind of talk from you.”

“Time will tell, I appreciate it Alpha,” I respond, my chest heaving in and out rapidly. I know he didn’t believe me though. His eyes were hardening, examining my body language like a textbook.

I thanked the Moon Goddess when he flipped the page, “graduated from Arizona U… 4.0… impressive. Now teaching accelerated science at a local high school…” he said slowly as he read to himself.

“I’m just trying to wrap my head around why you still haven’t returned to pack territory. Crimson Pack is in need of teachers, I don’t see much use in you being on the other side of the country when the pack needs your valuable skills here. Think of the pups. The pack has been blessed over the years with an abundance of pups. Our pack is growing,” Alpha Max said and placed his elbows on the desk, waiting for my response.

I took a deep breath, my heart was hammering so hard in my chest that I could hear it in my ears. I had one chance to prove to him that I wasn’t needed here and was already failing miserably. “Of course one day soon I plan to return but I believe that I’m of more use outside the pack at the moment. I’m still learning what it means to be a good teacher, I’ve also had good progress in tweaking the state curriculum in the state of Arizona which I hope to eventually be able to bring into Blackclaw,” I explained biting down on the inside of my cheek and trying to contain my nerves.

Alpha Max flipped another page in the file, silent as his eyes continued to scan the document for a few moments. “And eight of your students have gone off to full scholarships in the past year, Miss Edwards?”, he questioned, his eyes still shifting from side to side.

“They have but that had little to do with me Alpha, they were all smart and determined kids,” I explained. I could feel the sweat now starting to build on my forehead, where did he get all this information? I don’t even think my principal at the high school knew this much.

“They may have been, but without a supportive teacher, these students may not have been so lucky. I believe you already are a great teacher Kelsey, can you tell me about these additional programs you run?”, Alpha Max asked quizzically.

I bit my bottom lip, my mind reeling at how I could spin my accomplishments in my favor. If it wasn’t for the students I knew these programs had actually helped, I would have regretted being so involved in the school right now. “I run three extracurricular programs Alpha, each with the help of other science teachers in the school. I’d like you to understand that I could never organize these on my own. The first one is a program aimed for girls, it’s been statistically proven that girls tend to steer clear from science so the goal is to find innovative ways to keep them enticed by the subject. The second one is a program geared towards extra help in chemistry, a subject that many of the students were struggling with earlier in the year. The curriculum seems to jump around too much and fails to provide the building blocks essential to understand chemistry. And the third program is a research based program, many students who are looking to apply in the science field for university were looking for research opportunities to be able to put on their applications, that program actually hasn’t been doing too well though. We’re hoping for better results next year.”

Alpha Max pressed his lips together and he raked his hand through the hair at the top of his head heaving out a sigh, “I’m sorry Kelsey. I’m really going to have to think this over. I’ll have a decision for you by the end of the week. I’d like you to meet me at the school tomorrow morning, I’m sure your brother has informed you but we have visiting Alphas coming in today for pack training. Tomorrow we’ll be going over various education plans from different packs and I think your opinion would be useful.”

Fury boiled from within me, my entire life was about to be reset if I didn’t do something quick. “What happens to Eric if my request to leave the pack isn’t approved?”, I ignorantly questioned. Alpha Max belted out a loud laugh, “Eric? Oh the human! Kelsey, I’m not concerned about your relationship to a human as it doesn’t benefit the pack and as Alpha, or a retired Alpha actually, the pack has to be the priority. Now I haven’t made my decision, it’s something that I will need to talk through with Blake. I can see you’ve learned a lot in the human world. But if I do decide to keep you here in Blackclaw, I’m sure you’ll quickly forget about this Eric character. Frankly, he’s keeping you away from your fated mate and I would hate for you to one day have to take a chosen mate instead and miss out on that special bond.”

I closed my eyes in defeat and my head slid back into the headrest of the chair. “Not happy I take it?”, Alpha Max challenged. I gulped, “Even if I disagree, I trust that you’ll make the right decision Alpha. Thank you for meeting with me.” I stood up and rushed for the door, unable to be in his presence any longer in fear that I wouldn’t be able to control the water that was pooling in my eyes.