

The King's Mate - Chapter 2

I had tossed and turned for most of the day in my bed. I simply could not get him off my mind. What was it about him that made my wolf come alive? I kept replaying the moment in my head. When our eyes met, I felt like a thousand bolts of lightning had coursed through me. I liked it.

Who is he? And how could he shake me to my very core just by looking into my eyes? Perhaps he thought I was a small child who was stalking the new guests, eager to know what Lycans were.

I must admit that it sounds more like it. I could pass as a teenage boy when my hair was tied behind my back, my features strong, and my nose slightly crooked, a result of not listening to the Alpha when he told me not to go into the forest. I had disobeyed him, and he punished me, causing my nose to break. I instinctively laid my hand on my nose, the memory of the day flashing before my now fully awake eyes.

Deciding that I had had enough, I reached out for my pillow and forced myself to rest. After all, three hours had passed already; he might not even remember those five seconds when he became my strange obsession. Here I am, a silly twenty-year-old girl in her bed with butterflies in her stomach and stardust in her veins, obsessing over a man who will leave the pack in two weeks and probably disappear into the wild, where he'll meet a beautiful mate, have a beautiful family, and live a sickeningly beautiful life. While I'll be here in this little bedroom, with my nose in a book and my mind full of dreams and thoughts of the man I saw on a cold winter's day and the eyes that held the promise of forever.

My life was doomed to be like this, not for eternity, that I'm sure of. I'll have my days in the sun someday, hopefully soon. There was a point when I had considered actually staying in this pack, for it to become my next home, a place where I could grow, make friends, and have a family. However, they did not want me. They made that really clear when they practically accepted everyone into the pack except for me. They were pretty comfortable letting me stay a slave, hidden away, always looming around this sick, demented pack. Often, I wondered why they didn't let me in; maybe it was because I was a Lycan, but then again, they didn't know that.

They had made a mess of the kitchen. Shattered plates, used pots and pans, some cups that reeked of alcohol, and so many dishes littered the gray-and-white marble countertops. The kitchen was a large area, probably the second-largest room aside from the living area. It was all white, with two large French windows, and the large island was in the middle of it all, making the room homey in a way. I enjoyed my time in the kitchen, and it was fun. Not many people would think that cleaning a kitchen, or cleaning in general, was fun, but I find the monotony of said cleaning quite enjoyable, especially when you have so much to think about if you just want to pass the time.

The clock on the wall had just struck ten o'clock as I began scrubbing and cleaning while the sounds of giggles and laughter rang through the house. I had snuck slowly into the kitchen so as not to bring my presence to attention. The Luna's first rule is that I should not be seen or heard when I am working. She often said a good worker should not be seen.

I found that absolutely ridiculous and obviously hard to do since I was a living, breathing creature, so I opted to sneak about and clean up if there were pack members still awake. I detested the woman. As the Luna of the pack, she was the motherly figure of the house; she was supposed to solve minor grievances in the pack and make sure that the members were all happy. Sarah,

however, did none of that. She grew up as an Alpha's daughter; both her brothers were Alphas and Betas in different packs. Her father even got promoted to be an advisor to the King a few weeks back; the woman sure did like to brag. But she was also nosy and an unbearable snob. She found all werewolves to be beneath her. She wasn't satisfied with being an Alpha's wife, so she wanted to be the "who's who" of shifter society. As a result, we had guests coming in and out of the pack every other day and parties every other week. She lived for the attention, and she loved it. Her pitch laughter drifted into the kitchen; that was her "power laugh," as she'd say. She must be with the Lycans right now, probably making an effort to come off as a sweet and good female leader, or perhaps she's sunk her claws into the King. No one really knows with her; she was as ambitious as she was cunning. I sometimes admired her drive.

I was eighteen plates, fourteen cups, and sixteen spoons into my dishwashing when I finally came to terms with the fact that they were not going to bed soon and that I'd have to rush my cleaning for the night due to their lack of time management. Would it kill them to go to bed before midnight?

Oh well, might as well fuel up.

The upside of cleaning at night is that I have full access to cook and eat whatever I want without getting caught, and my favorite thing is ice cream. I don't think there's a human or shifter in the world who can resist the sweet taste of chocolate ice cream—well, apart from the ones who would literally die if they had a taste. Poor people, I wonder how life would be without ice cream.

I sat at the long kitchen island and plopped my bowl of chocolate and vanilla down, and ate in silence, occasionally stopping to hear the soft footsteps heading upstairs. They had finally decided to cut the party short and go to sleep. By the time my bowl was half empty, there was no one on the lower level, and silence had fallen on the pack house. As I had predicted, they had gone to sleep at 1 a.m., leaving me with three hours to clean the house and make breakfast for fourteen—a challenging task, but I could do it.

"Excuse me?"

I practically jumped off the kitchen counter in fright. I hadn't been alone. In the entryway stood a tall man staring quizzically at me.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to frighten you; I was feeling a bit hungry and came to see if there was anything to eat," he said. His voice was soft and appealing, almost as if he were talking to a frightened creature he had rescued; it annoyed me that it worked.

I nodded to him and pointed to the empty island stool next to me as I stood up and made my way to the other side of the counter to see what I could make for the hungry wolf. I snuck a peek at him and noticed that he had indeed taken a seat and was looking at me. I felt his gaze on me—not savage or predatory, but curious and confused, almost a bit hesitant—as I made him a sandwich. He occasionally fiddled with his hands; I could smell that he was uncomfortable and probably didn't feel at ease around me. My silence tends to aggravate them. Werewolves are social creatures by nature, some more than others.

I set the plate with the sandwich next to him, and he stopped fiddling and gazed up at me and then at the plate.

“Thank you,” he murmured, and I gave him a slight smile as I reached out and pulled the now-melting ice cream bowl toward the other side of the counter and started eating it.

He looked strange. I was used to being around werewolves, but never around Lycans, shifters of my kind. He was taller than me, and I was precisely six feet and taller than most of the women in the pack—actually taller than most of the werewolves here. For werewolves, their height ranges from around five to five-nine, which is considered the norm for shifters in general, except for bear shifters and Lycans, whose breed was highly different. He was around six foot five, with blond hair that was cut short, tan skin with bulging muscles almost threatening to rip his gray shirt, and dark hazel eyes with gray freckles adorning them.

For the second time that week, my heart stopped. He had been staring at me, and I was foolishly staring back. I felt my neck growing hot, and, for the first time in my life, I regretted not wearing my hair down. He must have noticed how red my ears were at being caught shamelessly staring.

Deciding to take the cowardly way out of the awkward situation I had dug myself into, I quickly placed my bowl with the rest of the dishes I had left undone to pursue my ice cream desires and proceeded to wash them. It was then that I heard the island stool creak and heard him move. I held my breath, and he appeared to the left of me. I couldn’t find it within me to stare into his eyes.

“Thank you; it was delicious,” he said as he placed his dirty plate with the rest of them.

I smelled yesterday’s scent on him—faint, but there. I stared at him as he slowly walked toward the kitchen door. I wanted to ask him about it, but somehow, I could not form the words.

What would I say to him? That I would love to smell him? That he has a scent on him that somehow brings out the truest emotion I have and intoxicates me to the point that my wolf stirs within me, wanting more of that smell? No. I bit my tongue, and he left. I will not let myself be filled with absurd longings—first the scent and then the mystery man. It is better if I choose one, and I much prefer Mr. Snowman; he is, after all, tangible. The stray thought of him brought a smile to my lips. I busied myself with the work, placing the event in the back of my mind and waiting for night to end and day to begin. Perhaps luck would be on my side, and I’d get to peek out at Mr. Snowman.