

Strawberries and Chocolate on Patrol

Alex POV

Every day is so similar to the last that I start to lose myself in simply existing. But today, today is my birthday - and today, I get a small break from the monotony. I smile lightly to myself as I stretch in my bed.

“Goooooooooooood MORNING!” Dalia yelled, dropping down on me from the upper bunk bed. What started as a startled yell on my end ended up sounding more like the gasp of a sh

feebly opping as she knocked all the air from my lungs.

“Dalia” I gasped, “why.”

She gave me a toothy grin and laughed, “It’s your birthday, All! You’re 18! And you know what that means…”

“Cake?” I asked hopefully, my ears pricking up.

“Mate,” she responded.

I felt my spirits fall. I would be expected to keep an eye out for my destined mate now, wouldn’t I. Dalia babbled on and on about how excited she was for me, and how as soon as I found him, I’d better tell her everything about him, how the mate bond feels. But all I felt was a sense of dread. More often than not, nding a mate caused some kind of issue in the pack. If I were to be mated to a ranked pack member, odds were he would reject me. If I were mated to an omega, my parents would get upset and beg me to choose a ranked mate and reject my destined one. While the idea of nding a mate left most wolves in a state of excitement, With all the politics and stress surrounding it, I simply felt dread.

“Ow!” I yelped. Dalia withdrew her hand where she was poking my chest. “What was that for?!”

She rolled her eyes and demanded I get up. By this point, the most of the other omegas were glaring at us. The omegas in my pack, Oak Forest, all shared a common sleeping, living, and bathing space. Ranked members held their own homes at the center of the forest where they had omegas build large houses with modern nishes. Our Beta, Logan, for instance, requested his be built with an endless waterfall owing down the side and creating a beautiful mist. His mate, Laura, loved it. It took about half a year to get it made for them, just that detail. Our Alpha lives in his own massive home near his parents. He hasn’t yet found a mate, and will likely pick a chosen one if he doesn’t nd her soon. Alphas without mates are considered unt for rule if they cannot even nd the wolf the moon goddess made for them.

I stretched once more before grabbing Dalia’s strong little hand and pulling her with me to the showers. We had compared hand sizes before, and her hand was quite small for a werewolf! Satised I was nally taking the day seriously, she didn’t even notice I was taking us to the showers in the morning, before we had time to heat the water. She let out a howl as I pushed her under the nozzle, but she deserved it. We were both soaked in a few minutes, splashing in the cold water, shivering and playing around when my mother poked her head inside and snapped “Girls, your clothes are ruined. Take them off and put them out to dry immediately.”

Dalia drooped, “Sorry, Ms. Stephan.”

Mother scowled at me. She wanted me tolook nice in case I met him today. I shook the water off of me and dragged us to the changing room.

I wonder what cake I’m gonna get, I thought to myself.

I hope it’s lemon poppy, a voice responded.

“Lemon poppy isn’t a bad idea,” I murmured.

Dalia stared at me. “What?”

I looked around. We were alone. “Didn’t you just suggest I get lemon poppy for my birthday cake?”

She shook her head, rolled her eyes, swatted me playfully on the shoulder, and took her clothes outside. Dalia was beautiful. Long brown hair, soft gray eyes, and a smattering of freckles on her face. I watched her leave the room, lost in thought.

I don’t know what is happening, but we just got mooned.

“What the f**k? Who’s there?”

Dumbass, it’s me. Your wolf. Lily.

I’m such an i***t.

Yeah kinda, Lily laughed.

I can’t believe I forgot I’d be getting my wolf. Between Dalia’s wake up call and my mother, I haven’t had a moment to breathe.

“It’s nice to meet you, Lily,” I murmured, before turning to Dalia, “guess who got her WOLF.”

Dalia scowled, “who cares? It’s your mate that matters. I don’t care if I never get a wolf if I’m mated to a ranked member of the pack.”

She was basically drooling over the idea. Lily scoffed. We like her?

I sighed. We don’t have much of a choice, do we. Not like people are clambering to befriend me. Plus, she’s sweet. She just knows that the only way to get ahead is to mate up. Honestly, she’s probably pretending to be ok with it, what’s the alternative?

Are you like that? Waiting for a chosen mate, someone to raise you from your lowly status? Lily said, unable to keep the disgust from her voice.

I thought for a moment. No. I don’t think so. I just don’t think I ever cared. I’ve never felt strongly enough about anyone to think about if they would or would not be my mate.

Maybe, Lily responded with hesitation, you just haven’t met the right wolf yet. It’s not like you haven’t thought other wolves are cute.

Right. I forgot we shared memories. She knew everything I know. Yeah, but the ones we like we can never have thought we were cute.

Lily huffed in agreement and I shrugged. Dalia pulled me towards the training ground. Today we had training, followed by a patrol, then dinner preparations. When we entered the training room, I paired up with some of the larger pack members. Derek nodded at me, indicated he wanted to pair up. I joined him. At 5’8”, I’m on the taller side of she wolves, but not by much. I tied my dark, curly hair in a ponytail and quickly stretched before crouching, ready to spar. A few hours later, sweaty, a little sore, the howl of our Beta ended the session and Derek and I sprang apart. I waved a quick goodbye as I grabbed Dalia’s small hand and pulled her to the Beta who was snapping out patrol orders.

Beta Ken glared at me. He never liked me much. I don’t pay him much attention whenever he passes by, and he is used to she wolves begging to date him. Hoping to be his mate.

“Alex,” he said smoothly, “why don’t you patrol the south east border? You can surely handle that alone now that you have a wolf. Not like you like company anyways.”

Some wolves snickered and I blushed lightly. Dalia looked at me with surprise in her eyes. The south east border is one of our more dangerous borders, on the other side of which is the Hidden Valley pack, known for their ferocious, uncivilized wolves. Dalia whimpered, “Beta Ken, she shouldn’t go out alone, it’s not safe along that border.”

Ken smirked. He wanted me to beg him for protection.

I gritted my teeth and bowed my head, “Happy to oblige you, Beta.” I turned towards the door and called out as I left, “it’s not that I don’t like company, I just don’t like yours.”

Springing out of the pack house, I reached out to Lily. Let’s do this!

She let out a howl before taking over and shifting into wolf form. We took off towards the border. I had never felt the wind as freely ying through my hair, or the taste of the fresh grass and growing woods. Lily chuckled as we panted. It will never get old. I’ve been waiting for this for 18 years.

Suddenly, we skidded to a halt. Lily sniffed the air, haunches raising. We had reached the border of our territory, and we smelled non pack members had been through here. As I tried to identify where the scents were heading, and how many there were, Lily kept bothering me, trying to grab my attention.

What? I snapped. Let me track, this is important.

Lily quieted for a moment, then whispered, do you smell that?

I closed my eyes, c****d my head, and then caught the faintest wisp of strawberries and chocolate. What is it?

Lily replied excited but also somber, aware of the consequences of a mate outside the pack, especially one from this particular pack, I think it is mate.