Chapter 10 - Team Alpha vs. Team Delta

"Be a star in someone's dark sky." — Matshona Dhliwayo

Third Person POV

Curious whispers from the thirty pup trainees echoed as they stand in a single row. Each trainee represented their families, their hopes, and their dreams of becoming warriors. Many itch to perform well on their test while some tend to the rock of anxiety sitting in their bellies.

"We will place you all into two different teams at random." Kiya's voice demanded the younglings' attention, ceasing all conversation. With Neron behind her, they took extra care to remain focus and attentive to the commands of their trainer. In her hands is a brown, woven basket with small scrolls of white paper. "You will pick a scroll and hold it in your hand. Returns or exchanges are prohibited. Once everyone has their scroll, I will instruct you to open it. Inside lays the name of the team you will be on for this test."

Adamah raised his hand. "Delta Kiya, can I ask

why we are being placed into teams?"

"Well. To add a twist to the test, I, along with your Alpha, turned it into a competition. The prize for the winning team has yet to be determined, but we'll see just how far you've all come."

"Who will be our team leaders?" Another pup trainee asked.

"You'll see," Kiya replied with a wink. She passed the basket to the first trainee in the row. Each picked and passed the basket until all had a scroll. Gasps of wonder and confusion ricochet as they opened their scroll simultaneously under their trainer's command.

"If your slip is labeled 'Alpha', you are on Alpha Neron's team. If your slip is labeled 'Delta', you're on mine."

The pup trainees wasted no time gathering near their respective team leaders. With space between them, both leaders spoke about what is coming within the next few hours. As seconds go by, the excitement between the opposing teams grew. Their newly born wolves itched to compete against their peers and claim glorious victory. Howls echoed within each trainee in excitement, some

loud enough for their leaders to hear.

When they broke away for their hour of preparation, Neron walked over to his mate to hand her thick blue armbands. “Here. For your team.”

“Armbands! Excellent idea.” Kiya remarked, taking the stash into her arms. “They seem pretty excited. Hopefully, glory won’t go straight to their heads.”

“I think it’s healthy. They are naturally competitive; it’s in their nature as werewolves. They won’t stop until they hold the imaginary trophy in their hands.” The Alpha chuckled softly. “Hence why the dodgeball games at school always end ugly.”

Kiya couldn’t help but laugh. A distant memory awoke about her time in elementary school during one of those dodgeball tournaments. She and Nuria were on opposite teams, and the young Alpha accidentally hit her best friend in the face with a red rubber ball. The chaos that ensured after the assault made the young Delta smile warmly. Until a lance of pain penetrated her heart forced a frown.

Another memory. Elementary school was so long

ago, and it saddened her that she never got to finish it traditionally.

"Yeah." She nodded curtly. "Let's hope this competition doesn't end as ugly as the pelting of rubber balls. I still haven't figured out what the winning team's prize should be."

"Kids love food."

"So do I."

Neron smiled widely. "That's good to know." Reaching into his back pocket, he pulled out a blue bandana while he held a red one for himself. "Here. So everyone will know who you're leading."

"Thanks." As an expert in hidden emotions, Kiya hid her worry underneath a stoic mask. Her fingers brushed up against Neron's palm when retrieving the bandana, but the larger-than-life sparks of their mate bond were unfelt. It's as if they never existed. And she didn't like it.

She doesn't recall changing anything regarding the bond. Kiya didn't reject Neron, so the sensations should remain. It's shocking how the sparks have died. And she doesn't know if the same is on Neron's side.

Maybe. Maybe not.

But an unsettling feeling rested in the pit of her stomach.

"...Jackie, I think I know how to put on a damn bandana."

"Shh!" Jacqueline swatted Kiya's hand as she adjusted the bright blue rag on her hair, considering her wild curls. It took a minute, but the result left her satisfied. "There!"

Most of the pack gathered in seats or on their feet around the large obstacle course, and the trainees spent a few moments to stretch. Those seated closest to the action were the Beta and Gamma families; Kwame, Lorelai, Mr. and Mrs. Dubois were ecstatic to see Adamah perform.

Raina had Adonis seated in between her legs as Valerian and her parents surrounded her. While they're excited to see the action, most of the attention was on the training leader with her blue crown. The big sister is proud of her younger sibling, whereas the parents tended to the pain in the hearts for their lost daughter.

For Neron, it made him proud to see many come out to support their youngest trainees. Pride in the pack is something he valued, and it's tangible enough for him to grasp. However, for Kiya, it was mind-boggling.

Large gatherings with Zircon Moon still put her mind at unease. The people who once wished for her death and suffering praised her as a trainer and their future Luna. Many look at her with expectant eyes, as if they're looking at the Moon Goddess herself. It was time to see how her expertise shaped their children.

Talk about pressure.

Huffing, Kiya smoothed out her training outfit. Adorned in black with an exposed midriff, she clapped once, and her team surrounded her. Neron had done the same with his team for last-minute preparations. All the pup trainees proudly displayed their colored armbands, ready to fight. To fight for themselves and prove they have what it takes to be pack warriors and future Deltas.

The course comprising six different obstacles, each with progressing difficulty. And they all must do it while drenched with water. They must fight through the impact of wet clothes, the scorching sun, and fatigue to reach the top of the climbing

wall to blow the horns of their triumph.

First, the trainees must swim through the long, luxury pool before climbing the wet two-story cargo net. From there, they must swing on a rope to the scattered floating tiles and get past three metal hoops in which they must use their upper-body strength to maneuver. Relying on their legs, they must get past the large teeter-totter. Finally, the trainees must climb the rock-climbing wall to the top to retrieve the horn and be the first to blow.

It seems impossible. Perhaps brutal on the body. However, the pups have trained extensively since mid-May and must show that they've improved since then. The pressure weighed on them like bricks, but many pushed it to the side.

It was their time to fight.

"May the best team win," Neron said to Kiya when they met up before the start of the event. They shook hands in sportsmanship. The woman didn't miss the slight shivers that shook the Alpha at their touch.

"Yes."

One trainee from Team Alpha and Team Delta competed at a time. It did not matter their gender, age, or other differing characteristics—they were competitors. After Sapphire showed how to get past each obstacle, it was the trainees' turn.

Bombarding echoes of excitement and cheer enclosed the area like a wild stadium. The team leaders were on either side of the obstacle course, cheering on their players with their heart and soul. Jacqueline and Galen stood at the sidelines with clipboards, marking who will move up the ranks and who'll remain for improvement.

Darien didn't care. He's off spending time with Odessa, which has rubbed Galen the wrong way. But it was a conflict to be dealt with at another time.

While competition reigns supreme below the sun, evil marks its territory under the cloak of black. Osiris lurks and slithers through the shadows of the pack house like a cobra on the search for its next victim. His devilish schemes to corrupt the members of Zircon Moon are coming to full effect as the latest to fall under his dark sway are the Omegas.

With sharp nails embedded in their flesh and the dark influence taking reigns of their nerves and

self-control, the dastardly fiend smiled. As much as he detests the pack, it brought his blackened heart joy that, eventually, hell will break loose.

It won't take long before he has the moon's avatar in his arms. And the destruction of all he hates will soon begin.

Back at the obstacle course, Isabella from Team Delta competes but stumbles on the floating tiles suspended by metal and springs. Kiya notices it and immediately urges the young blond to stand up, ignoring the fact that Gamma Kwame's younger brother is climbing the wall to his victory.

"Delta Kiya, I can't do this," Isabella muttered deflatingly as her short stature struggled to get out from between the titles. "Let's face it; I'm not fit to be a warrior."

"Yes, you are," Kiya growled. "Don't tell me you're going to give up now, Bella."

"What's the point?" The defeat in Isabella's voice brought sorrow to Kiya's heart. It panged like a hammer to a thick nail. The tone reminded much of her old self when she wanted to give up on life. Despite the faint inkling of that sadness lurking in the back of her mind; she'll be damned if one of

her trainees falls into that same pit.

"No, you haven't." Her warm hands went up to cradle the youngling's cheeks, gently lifting her head to meet her green eyes. "I know it's hard. The pressure is great; your family is watching; your Alpha and I are watching—your nerves must be like pretzels now! But there is one thing I know: warriors don't give up. Isabella, you are one. Even if you don't see it. I see a fighter in you waiting to come forth and protect those she loves. Have I told you share the same name as my mother's wolf?"

"No..."

"Well, you know now!" Kiya's laughter drowned out the blended chatter of the crowd, blanketing Isabella in comfort. "The former Luna of Garnet Moon, her wolf is named Isabella. And I see her in you. You have potential. Now, are you going to walk away without showing me just how far you came?"

"But..." Her green eyes cast down. "I won't advance."

"So? That means we'll continue training together. It can't be a bad thing, right?"

"No..." The youngling shined a bright smile. "I like you a lot, Delta Kiya."

The woman smirked, blushing gently. "You can show me your appreciation by completing the course. Just focus on me and drown out the noise; that helps me to keep focus. You can do this. I believe in you, Isabella."

And that was all the confidence the young pup needed to complete the second half of the course. Coupled with Kiya's encouragement and the boost of power she gained from her wolf, Isabella proved to her family and trainer that she had what it takes.

She needed someone to believe in her.

After another half hour, the winning team of the competition came out to be Team Alpha. They had the most trainees finishing first, thus crowning them with the victory. Both teams shook hands in a job well done. It took strength and tenacity, and both teams did their best.

"Well." Kiya shot a smile at the trainees surrounding their leader. "Congratulations. Your team fought well. I'm proud of them."

"Your team did as well." Neron complimented. "They have the heart of warriors."

"Yep. They deserve the rest of the day off. They can have their prize tomorrow, but all will take part. What do you think about a pizza party?"

Before Neron can answer, the pups cheered and begged for the party. With dozens of expectant faces from the younglings, it's hard to say no. Like Kiya, Neron also has a soft spot for children. "Alright. A pizza party, then. I'll order out to give the Omegas a break." He looked at Kiya. "Twenty pizzas?"

"Hmm. Nah. I'll be eating too, and I eat a lot."

"Thirty, then."

"Hey! I don't eat *that* much!"

"Yes, you do! You eat three pizza boxes in one sitting!" Jacqueline shouted from the other side, ducking in laughter from a rock hurdled towards her.

"Hey..." One trainee, Israel, perked up. "Can we see Delta Kiya and Alpha Neron compete against each other? It's only fair since we all went!" The

trainees agreed with an incredible enthusiasm that slightly scared the two.

"Nope." Kiya shook her head. "You all had enough excitement for one day."

"Afraid that you're going to lose?" Neron teased while bouncing his eyebrows. Wolves do love competition and sizing each other up is part of the process. That comment irked something deep within Kiya, making her give a double-take to her soon-to-be competitor. "Scared I might beat you?"

"...Don't poke the bear if you're not ready for its claws, Alpha." Kiya proclaimed boldly, fishing a hair-tie out of her pocket. "You *know* I can beat you."

"Oh, really?"

"Yes."

"Prove it." Neron's smoldering look that made her feel warm all over and it irked her. Kiya bit her cheek, her tongue, and her lip to stop from engaging in a verbal battle. Did he want proof? She'll show him proof.

"Get your ass in the water."

"Okay!"

Except Neron grabbed her and plunged the both of them into the pristine waters with a lively laugh.

Chapter Comments

POST COMMENT

Pattie Wyborn

love that man and their way of life ❤️❤️

3

Lindsay Uthaug Degele

just wish they could get rid of Osiris so they could be togeth...

VIEW ALL 2 COMMENTS ›

5

SHARE