

Chapter 1

Ava's POV

"I can't decide between the taupe or beige napkins. What do you think, Ava?"

I jerk my head up from the palm of my hand where I had been staring out the dining room window in a daze. I look over at my twin sister who is holding up two napkins that look identical to me.

"Uh...the one on the right?"

My sister makes a face. "Really? Hmm. I don't know." She grabs her cell phone and snaps a picture. "I better ask Caleb what he thinks."

I drop my chin back into my hand and sigh, my gaze drifting back to the open window.

I have no idea why my sister insists on including me on her Luna commencement ceremony planning. She doesn't take any of my advice, and it's at out painful to watch her make plans to spend her future with Alpha Caleb.

Maybe that's why she does it. To rub it in my face that she is Alpha Caleb's mate, not me.

I feel a familiar ip in my stomach and the knot that always accompanies it in my throat.

I blink several times and glance over at my sister.

She's furiously texting away on her phone, a frown on her pretty face.

Lily may be my twin sister, but we couldn't look or act more different.

While Lily is tall, 5'10, super skinny, and has straight white blond hair and blue eyes, I am short, only 5'2, with dirty blonde wavy hair and green eyes. I'm skinny too, but I have more curves than my sister. My sister is actually pretty at chested, but you wouldn't know it with her super padded push up bras.

She has always cared more about her appearance than doing well in school, sports, or even ghting. She's the only female in the pack with acrylic nails and fake eyelashes. Her long hair is perfect, never one hair out of place, and she always wears bright pink lipstick, short dresses, and super tall high heels.

Caleb and I used to call her barbie behind her back.

I look back to the window and swallow back the lump in my throat.

That was before he found out she was his mate.

I'll never forget the day. It was three months ago on our eighteenth birthday. Even though I usually just wear leggings and tees to school, I wore a cute green sundress for the occasion. Caleb always said he loved me in green because it made my eyes pop.

I had carefully ran a straightening iron through my hair, put on some lip gloss, and raced downstairs to meet Caleb who always drove me to school, and I just knew that we would feel our mate spark, I was so certain.

Caleb and I had dated four years. He was two years older than me, but we had basically grew up together, and had always been close. He asked me out when I was fourteen and we were inseparable. I was there for him at every football game, I was there when his dad passed away, and I was there when he took over being Alpha of our pack.

We spent every single day together. I snuck out to meet him every night. When we weren't together, we were texting each other. We talked about everything together, shared all our thoughts and feelings.

But on that morning of my eighteenth birthday when I opened the door, Caleb froze.

I watched in horror as he sniffed the air and stepped past me where he looked up the stairs to see Lily. Lily, who looked beautiful in her hot pink mini dress and nude wedges, at the top of the stares staring back at him.

Then I watched as my boyfriend of four years bounded up the stairs to embrace my sister in a long passionate kiss.

I lean my head back, blinking furiously.

Get ahold of yourself Ava!

"Uh!" Lily's high voice breaks into my thoughts again. She puts down her phone with a ourish and waves a perfectly manicured hand in front of her. She sticks her lips out in a pout. "I don't know why I even bother trying to include Caleb. He either never answers or just says, 'whatever you want sweetheart'. It's like he doesn't even care that this ceremony binds us together forever."

I inch. He used to call me sweetheart, and the thought of them being together forever...oh God, it hurts.

"Ava." Lily elongates the rst A in my name in a super whiney voice.

I look up at her and she's staring at me with her lips still pouting.

"You aren't even listening to me." She accuses, wagging her nger at me. "This is important for you too, it's important for the entire family that I am becoming the Luna."

Lord help us all, I think as she sticks her lower lip out even further looking all of about six years old.

This is how Lily is. She never liked to work hard and discovered early on that if she looked pretty and asked nicely, she could always get her way. She never even had to participate in mandatory pack training. Basically, Caleb thought it would be a waste of a partner to make someone train with her. So, Lily got her nails done and stayed on the sidelines to watch and compliment the unmated good-looking guys when it was nished, not worried at all about taking care of herself, some strong man would do it for her one day.

I've never even seen Lily shift since she rst could at sixteen. (My rst shift was at fourteen.) She's probably worried it would mess up her nails.

"Could you pretty please talk to Caleb for me?" She tilts her head and smiles at me as she reaches across the table to grab my hand. "Just tell him that it would be nice of him to show a little more enthusiasm? Tell him that I feel like he doesn't even love me when he acts like he doesn't care about my ceremony." She bats her eyelashes at me and sticks out her lower lip.

This is another thing Lily always does. She seems to think that the moment she mated to Caleb that all my feelings for him, and his for me, just completely evaporated into excitement for her. She is always asking me to talk to him about their relationship, "since we use to be such good friends."

Well, maybe his feelings did evaporate for me, but it wasn't that easy for me. I still think about him all the time. I miss him and I miss talking to him.

Ever since he mated to my sister, we've barely talked at all, unless it was something Lily wanted me to ask or tell him, which I always did through text.

"Lily...Alpha Caleb is away ghting right now." I emphasize ghting. I feel like I am dealing with a self-obsessed toddler sometimes. I try not to roll my eyes.

"I can't believe he is even texting you at all right now. Aren't you worried more about him even making it home safely?"

Lily straightens up and ips her hair over her shoulder.

"Of course, I worry about him, but he's an Alpha, he can take care of himself." She waves her hand dismissively at me and then starts shuing through different colored ribbons on the table. "He has beta Ralph to watch his back too. He'll be ne." She says this last bit casually, but she steals a glance at me to see my reaction to her mentioning beta Ralph.

She's been trying to set me up with Caleb's best friend and beta, Ralph, ever since she mated with Caleb. She keeps dropping all these hints on how perfect it would be if we both got to live in the packhouse together. And oh, what fun we could have on double dates.

No thank you. I will only ever see Ralph as the annoying third wheel on countless number of dates over the years. Not to mention, I know that Lily use to hook up with him. I mean, eww. No thank you. And I really don't nd the idea of living in the packhouse with my sister and my ex-boyfriend that appealing.

I'll wait until I nd my mate before I date anyone else. Or, I'll just be alone forever. That's better then spending four years in love with someone just for them to mate with someone else.

I sigh and watch Lily separating different color ribbons into sections in front of her.

She glances up at me. "Well?"

"Well...what?"

She sags her shoulders and rolls her eyes upward. "Uh! Ava! Caleb...?"

"Oh." I ddle with a bronze napkin ring on the table. I hear Lily strumming her ngers impatiently on the table. "Fine."

I reach for my cell and hesitate. I look over at Lily who is watching me.

I sigh again. I click on Caleb's name and am trying to decide what exactly I should say, when all of a sudden, Caleb's voice is in my head.

"Ava." His voice is soft and slightly hesitant. "Are you alone?"

I look over at Lily who is back to studying the napkins.

I stand up, pretending to be typing on my phone, go to the screened in porch, and take a seat on the swinging bench. The same one Caleb and I spent cuddled on or making out on countless nights.

"Yes, I'm alone."

There's a pause. "We have visitors coming tomorrow."

I'm surprised, but I try to keep it out of my thoughts. "Who? Are you on your way back?"

"No. We can't leave yet. We were instructed to stay here and wait for reinforcements."

"Instructed?" Since when is an Alpha instructed?

Another pause. "Yes. We came to help the Blue Moon pack defend itself against the Red Night pack, but it looks like the Red Night pack has reinforcements, and they are pretty erce and growing fast in numbers. Now they've caught the attention of the elite."

"The elite? The Lycan royals? I'm shocked. The Red Night pack must be gaining a lot of power to draw the Lycans down from the North.

"But what does this have to do with visitors coming here?"

"King Cameron will be bringing some of his pack to stop over on the way to joining us."

The Lycan King Cameron, here? I start to feel panicky. We've never had any Lycan royalty here before, now the king himself?

"Ava, I know you've helped plan a lot of visitors before..." I've never heard Caleb be so hesitant when speaking before. "I was wondering if you could help Lily prepare for the guests."

"Of course."

"And..." It's the longest pause yet. "Can you make sure Lily wears something appropriate?"