

Chapter 5

2385 Words

We arrive at the side yard of the house where the ceremony is to be held in silence. Everyone is seated and ready to begin, and both our seats are up front. Seth continues to hold my hand, leading me forward when I suddenly stop and refuse to continue on.

"Are you OK? What's wrong?" He says with concern on his face.

"I can't hold your hand. They can't know I'm your mate." I tell him and look away. He won't want me tomorrow, or maybe next week it will hit him. I don't know when, but at some point he'll be able to see past the bond and know he can't do better.

I hear him growl, and he steps towards me. He gently grabs my chin and tilts my head up to look into my eyes. Seth starts to say something but then stops himself. He's towering over me and it's intimidating, but I feel safe with him. It's probably just from the bond.

"OK, Molly, I won't hold your hand. But they will eventually find out. You win for now, but we WILL talk about this later tonight." he says to me, and his eyes have a glint of danger at the end. I realize that I've probably hurt him.

"I'm sorry, Seth. It's not that I don't want to be seen with you" I begin. "But you're the Prince, and if people know, word will spread. It will just hurt me when you finally decide to reject me if everyone knows". I wish at barely a whisper and I feel so awkward and vulnerable.

His free hand lands gently on my hip while the other moves behind my head and he leans to place a kiss on my temple. "I will not change my mind, but I won't hold your hand in public for now. After the ceremony we can talk about it and figure everything out." He releases my hand and moves his hands to both my hips now.

"It's a full moon. You'll be expected at the run tonight. It's not every day a fancy pants prince graces Lunar Falls with his presence", I half joke with him.

"And where will you be? You can't be alone."

"I usually lock myself in my suite. It's by the kitchen in the basement, and right across from the safe room just in case."

"Alone?" Seth asks me, concern evident in his voice.

"I've lived my whole life without a wolf. This isn't my first full moon. Sometimes I go and stay with the young kids who aren't old enough to shift, but I think I just want to be alone tonight." I tell him with complete honesty.

"We have a few hours until we need to worry about that. Go on and take your seat. I'll follow behind in a moment." Seth tells me, releasing my hand, but not before grasping and squeezing my hand. Honestly, he seems like a really nice man. I've caused him more headache today than I'm worth, so I do as he told me and head down the aisle to take my seat.

My dad is sitting on his Alpha throne on the stage, mom standing behind him and Robbie beside him. Since it's the passing of the alpha, no other family members are on stage and I'll be sitting alone.

As I'm walking to my seat I hear the whispers start. I've gotten used to it from my own pack- and they all know I got the wolf hearing. These guests, though, don't seem to know.

"That's the wolless one that Alpha Bardulf found and adopted."

"I heard she's human."

"Do you think I could make her my w***e? She looks too good to go to waste. Too bad she's not a wolf."

And with that whispered comment, I feel overwhelming anger, but it's not my anger. It's not like I haven't heard these kinds of comments before. I realize then that it's Seth's emotions I'm feeling through our bond. I know I can't turn around and look at him, so I look up and see my brother coming straight to me in a hurry and my dad with a murderous look on his face. Robbie reaches me and to my surprise he continues past me to a younger looking man sitting where I had just walked past. He grabs him by the collar of his shirt and lifts him up. "You would do well to remember she's the daughter of an Alpha." Robbie tells him and releases him unceremoniously back into his chair. By this time, my brother's new Beta and Gama are headed to us.

I can feel Seth relax some, though he is still very mad. George, Robbie's Beta, offers his arm to me and escorts me to the front row to be seated next to Queen Audrey. We both bow our heads to her and King Peter. She stands up and, to my absolute surprise, pulls me into a hug and kisses my cheek.

"You look absolutely stunning Molly, dear." She says loudly while she releases me but holds my hand as we sit down and squeezes it. It would seem that everyone in the room heard the comments. I smell Seth as he gets close and realize that I'm in his seat right next to his mother. As I stand to move down, he shakes his head and motions for me to sit back down where I was.

The pack Elder stands and walks up to my dad and Robbie. He welcomes everyone and as he begins, I feel Seth's arm come up and rest behind my shoulders as he rests his hand on his mother's shoulder beside me. Queen Audrey looks over at Seth and smiles before turning back to my Dad and Brother.

The ceremony is beautiful. I know today is hard for my dad, handing over his pack to someone else, even if it is his own son. I know Robbie will do well, and his Beta, Delta and Gamma are all great guys and will do what's best for the pack. The Elder instructs everyone to stand as Dad stands and Robbie finally sits on the pack throne, officially becoming Alpha Robert of the Lunar Falls Pack. As I stand, I feel Seth bring his arm across my shoulders and back before completely releasing me, leaving me to feel suddenly cold and alone. I've avoided acknowledging the bond thus far, but after feeling Seth's anger and the loneliness at the lack of his touch, it's really hard to ignore that it's there.

Everyone in the room is looking at my brother, so I take a chance and reach my left hand over just enough to find Seth's as he wraps his around mine and gives it a gentle squeeze. He's so comforting and I start to think that maybe, just maybe, we can make this work. My parents start to descend the stage and I realize now that people may look our way so I reluctantly release his hand.

Robert sits on the pack throne with his men behind him and releases his first roar as Alpha, causing all but the royal family and present Alpha's to bow their heads and bare their necks in submission. I notice though that I'm not affected, but I had always responded to my dad's Alpha commands. I guess Seth has noticed because he leaned over slightly and, in the lowest of whispers in my ear, said "You're the mate of a royal. Alpha commands won't work on you." It definitely wasn't what I was expecting him to say.

The ceremony is complete and as we stand to leave I realize my being between Seth and the King and Queen has complicated our exit now. Typically, the new Alpha would exit first with everyone after in order of hierarchy, but since the Royals are here, the three of them must exit first. As they turn to leave first, King Peter turns back to us, "Seth, why don't you escort sweet Molly out. I'm sure our new Alpha Robert won't mind." He turns to Robbie, who just smiles and says "Of course I won't mind the Prince escorting my sister" but not without shooting a look at the guy he mildly assaulted just 40 minutes before.

Seth steps before me and offers me his arm while wiggling his eyebrows and says "my lady" and I honestly can't help but giggle and his face. I catch my mom's face out of the corner of my eye and she's simply beaming at the entire interaction. I take Seth's arm with my hand and he reaches his other hand over to place it on mine as we walk out behind his parents. We reach the end of the aisle and out of view of everyone when my brother reaches forward and grabs both Seth and I. He leans forward behind us and says to Seth "watch your hands, bro" with a smirk.

"Oh, I will absolutely be watching where they go." Seth returns to Robbie and for a moment I think my brother might actually lose control of his wolf. "I'm joking Rob. I'll always take care of her." he tells him, and I'm touched by the sincerity in his voice. He barely knows me, though. It's an empty promise, but he's trying.

With the ceremony being over, it's now almost time for the reception. Hopefully, my actions earlier and the delay haven't hurt the dinner service too much. I know I'm not supposed to be in the kitchens today, but Dad has already sent me down once and it would look terrible on the pack if things didn't go smoothly. I make up my mind and decide to head down.

"Seth, I need to go down to the kitchens and make sure things are ready. I'll meet you all in the dining room once I know they're settled." I tell him and his brow furrows. "I'm the head chef for the pack and while my sous chef is handling everything since this was a family gathering, I'd feel much better if I could go make sure everything is ready and they don't need extra hands." I continue on, realizing I'm not sure if he even knows I'm a chef.

"I can come with you if you really need to, but I don't want to leave you."

"I'll be here, honestly. It's just my staff down there, and you met Oliver earlier, I think. I'll be here and head up once they're all ready."

"Molly, you're the future Queen now. You don't have to work any more." he tells me, and I know he's trying to be kind, but that really hurts.

"I've never been required to work. I actually had to convince my dad to even let me have this job. I really enjoy it. It's how I'm able to contribute to my pack." I tell him, but I realize that in my hurt I've said more than I meant to. I have complicated feelings about my role in this pack and I didn't mean to spill them out before him.

"Ok, Molly. I understand. At least let me walk you to the kitchen so I know you're safe, please." and I know his request is genuine and he just wants me to be safe, but with more people leaving the ceremony and coming around, I don't want anyone to see. I nod at him, but release his arm. "It's this way, I tell him and start walking toward the direction of the service stairs."

I can feel his irritation at me for releasing his arm through our bond, but I continue and he doesn't say anything. We reach the bottom of the stairs when he suddenly grabs my arm and slowly. His body is pressed gently against mine. He's so close and towers over me and his scent has enveloped me and I'm beginning to feel completely overwhelmed.

"Everything down here smells like you" he finally tells me. "It's so strong."

"Oh, uhh, yeah. I spend all my time down here. The kitchen is down that hall and my office is there. The door behind me is the one to my suite." I tell him.

"Show me. Please" he says, and I consider it for a moment. He's so close and it's making my heart race, and then he pushes his mate's mark against me the slightest bit more and I close the spot on my neck where a mate's mark would go. I almost gave, but we're too close to think clearly and I need to tell him the endless list of problems with us being together.

"Later" I whisper out because it's as much as I can squeak out with him so close. I hear him take a deep breath as he pushes his weight off me, but he still stays where he is towering over me.

"Later" he whispers back to me while we both take a moment to regain our composure. "Are you ready?" he asks after a moment, and all I can do is nod. He steps back and waves his arm out motioning for me to go in front. I walk to the kitchen door with him behind me and turn to him "Thank you for walking down with me", I tell him.

"You're welcome. Are you sure you'll be up for dinner?"

"Yeah, Dad will drag me up there if I try anything." I tell him and he smiles.

"Good. I can't wait to see you again." He says, grabbing my right hand and bringing it to his mouth for a kiss.