

The Luna's Choice (theo and ayla) by Kat Silver Chapter 1

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Chapter 1: Ayla

"Ma," I called down the hall. "Come on, Ma. They'll be here soon. You need to get out here."

"I'm coming," my mother yelled back. "Don't rush me."

She came out of her bedroom and down the hall. I was grateful that she didn't seem to sway at all, and as she approached, the only scent wafting off her was mouthwash. And she actually seemed presentable. It was the first time in weeks.

Although, I shouldn't have been surprised. She always managed to look presentable in front of Kylee. Goddess forbid her precious baby learn the truth about her.

No, that was my burden to bear. And in truth, I accepted it willingly. I wanted to protect Kylee from that reality as much as Ma wanted to hide it from her. However, I will admit we had different reasons.

I waved Ma to the armchair in the living room while I went back into the kitchen to check on dinner. I was making Kylee's favorites. It had been two months since my little sister had been home, and we were both excited. Even more exciting, she was bringing home her mate for the first time.

I was so happy for her. They had apparently met almost two. Years ago, when she visited the local college campus with her high school. I had no idea they had found each other until her freshman year of university. I had asked her why the secrecy, and she told me they needed to wait to make their relationship public because of his position in the pack. They announced their relationship a few months into her first year. Still, she kept putting off us meeting him even though they were only a couple hours away. Don't get me wrong, she told me all about him. Whenever we talked, she would just gush about how perfect he was. But it wasn't until a month ago that she finally admitted to us that he was our future Alpha.

Ma and I were ecstatic. We couldn't be more pleased. Especially me. Our current Alpha, Alpha Torin, was a good leader, a fair leader, and a good man. We were very blessed to have had his support after our father died.

Not that we knew him all that well, but he was the one who helped me get the family back on its feet after such a terrible loss. I knew he had a son, but I had never met him before. Again, it's not like we were exactly close to the Alpha at all. I doubt he ever really thought of us. He was just taking care of the members of his pack, and for that, I will always be grateful.

But I had heard that his son, Theo, was promising to be just as good an Alpha as his father. So I really couldn't have been more relieved that he was my sister's mate. She would be properly looked after and taken care of, and she would be happy.

I was pulling the chicken out of the oven when I heard Ma from the living room.

"They're here," she sang.

I moved quickly. Getting out our nice serving dishes that were gifted to my parents at their mating ceremony, I started to plate dinner onto them. I was still transferring the food when I heard the front door open and the squeals of my mother and sister as they embraced. I finished my task and moved the dishes to the dining room table that was already set neatly. I smiled at my presentation and excitedly hurried to the living room.

I froze at the threshold. A scent overwhelmed my senses, causing my stomach to knot and my heart to race.

The tall, broad man standing next to my sister turned toward me and we locked eyes.

Mate.

I practically gagged trying to stifle the word from slipping from my mouth.

What the hell was happening?

This was my sister's mate.

Not mine.

This man was fated to Kylee.

So why was I having this reaction?

Better question...

Why did HE seem to be having the same reaction?

His eyes were wide, pupils dilated, and they held my gaze with a vice-like grip as he, too, seemed frozen to where he stood.

Dasha, my wolf, bounced excitedly in my head, recognizing him and his wolf just as I was. It took a minute for her to understand the situation, but once she did, she started whimpering in the back of my mind.

This couldn't be happening.

What the hell was happening?

I forced myself to address the situation as a whole. Fine, this was happening. Now, what is the best way to handle the situation? I wasn't going to break my sister's heart. Absolutely not. I wouldn't let him either. Not right now. We'll just get through dinner, and I'll find a way to speak with him in private later.

I cleared my throat and plastered a smile on my face.

"Kylee, I'm so excited you're home," I said, opening my arms so she could jump into them like she had since she was little.

"I've missed you, sis," she said.

"I've missed you, too," I said quietly.

We separated, and she turned to the male behind her. "Theo, this is my sister, Ayla. Ayla, this is my mate, Theo."

Theo's hands were clenched into fists, and he forced a tight-jawed smile toward me. At least I was better at faking it than him. Geesh.

I nodded to him with a broad smile. I knew it didn't reach my eyes, but at least Ma and Kylee wouldn't notice.

"It's lovely to meet you, Theo," I said. "Dinner is ready in the dining room. Why don't you guys go take a seat, and I'll be right there. I need to tend to dessert first."

"Don't take too long," Kylee said brightly. "We have some big news, and I don't think I can wait much longer."

"I promise I'll be right there," I assured her as I rubbed her shoulder.

Kylee grabbed Ma by the arm and led her to the dining room. Theo followed a few steps behind. He had to pass me to get through. Right as he approached, I turned my body to ensure we didn't touch. He paused in front of me for a moment. I looked up to meet his eyes.

There was anger, confusion, desire, and possibly even hurt reflecting in his eyes that I couldn't help but notice were the color of honey. He had questions. I subtly shook my head at him. Hoping and silently begging that he knew we couldn't do this here.

The sound of Kylee's laugh from the other room made me jump and then quickly retreat to the kitchen. I grabbed the homemade cheesecake from the fridge and set it on the counter for later. I listened to the others conversing in the next room and quietly slipped out the back door.

I stood on the porch and took several deep breaths. I felt a lump start to form in my throat and quickly pushed it down. This wasn't the time to cry. So, I did what I usually do instead of crying.

I released a string of curses.

"What the f*ck is happening? Why is this happening? This ISN'T happening," I whispered with the force of a yell.

'Our mate.' Dasha insisted.

"No, he's not," I said back to her. "He's Kylee's. There must be some kind of mistake. Just get through dinner like nothing is going on, and we'll figure that out later. Easy."

I didn't believe myself, neither did Dasha, but I didn't have time to deal with that. So, I took two more deep breaths and went back into the house. I was almost to the dining room when I heard the last part of what Kylee was saying, and again, I was left frozen at the threshold.

"... our mating ceremony is in three months." Kylee looked up at me. "Oh, Ayla, I'm sorry. I just couldn't hold back any longer. Aren't you happy for us?"

I put the same fake smile back on. "Of course I'm happy for you," I said. "You deserve the best."

I took my seat at the table, ignoring the fact that I was left sitting directly across from Theo. His eyes were boring into me, and my face felt like it was on fire. I started dishing out food and passing plates. I didn't say much over dinner. Instead, I just listened to Kylee and Ma talk about all the ideas they had for the mating ceremony. Theo didn't say much either but slowly started to do a better job hiding his discomfort with the situation.

It took everything to ignore the touches they shared, pushing down the jealousy that kept surging through me. As soon as I saw the opportunity, I started clearing the plates. As I was bringing in the dessert, my phone dinged in my pocket, and I had never been more grateful.

I pulled it out and checked the screen.

"I'm so sorry. Please, excuse me. This is important. I have to take it."

Ma waved me off, and Kylee didn't even seem to notice. Theo glared at me, but to be honest, I didn't really care.

I answered the phone as I left the dining room and exited out the back door again.

"Hey, Zeff. What's up?" I said as I walked to the back of the yard.

“How’s the dinner going?” Zeff, my best friend and colleague, asked.

“It’s full of excitement, that’s for sure,” I said, hoping he didn’t catch on to the kind of excitement I was feeling.

He chuckled on the other line. “I can’t wait to hear all about it,” he said with a hint of sarcasm. “I hate to interrupt, but Carla wanted me to check if you were done with those chapters.”

“Oh, um, yeah, I just finished them up this morning. I was going to run through another round of editing, but I can go ahead and send them over tonight.” I doubted I would have the mental capacity to deal with editing today.

“Perfect. I’ll let her know to watch for them,” Zeff said.

“Mhmm.”

“Hey, you okay, Ayls?” Zeff asked.

I stiffened as a mouthwatering scent hit my nose. I knew who was standing behind me.

“Yeah, I just gotta go. Talk to you tomorrow.”