

## Chapter 72

“Hey, it’s time to wake up,” I hear the gentle voice of my mate.

I roll over and wiggle, realizing that Seth is lying behind me now. I wiggle back so I’m completely against him and I feel his arms tighten around me.

“Alex’s wife is home now,” he says in my ear and I finally crack my eyes open, remembering where we are. I yawn and stretch, turning onto my back.

“I’m sorry I fell asleep,” I say, looking up at his face.

Seth smiles at me. “I’m glad you did,” he says, brushing some hair off of my face. “You were so tired after working with Lily.” He’s right. At that moment, I felt exhausted, but then I got so angry and I think it just fueled me to keep going.

“I think I made a mistake with Benjamin,” I whisper, unsure what to do.

Seth smiles at me and gently cups my face with his hand. “You’ve been through so much. He should be more understanding about how difficult everything has been for you.”

“I think maybe he needs me to be more understanding about how difficult everything has been for him, too, though” I say, chewing my lip.

“Perhaps,” Seth says, still looking into my eyes. “I think you two are a bit more alike than anyone had realized.”

I nod at him. “I think you may be right. We can worry about fixing it tomorrow though. Let’s go meet Della.”

Seth releases me and we both get up, put our shoes on and he’s helping me to fix my messy curls some. I can’t help but smile at him, at how thoughtful and kind he can be. The Goddess certainly knew what I would need in a mate.

We exit our tent in the side yard and I can’t help but smile. Alex has his own little pack here, with what feels like a thousand kids running around and laughing. I see Stevie kicking a ball with a boy who looks a year or two older. Sitting on the porch are 2 little blonde-haired girls playing with their dolls, the occasional sound of their sweet giggles in the air.

“They look, and sound, quite happy,” Seth says, placing his arm around my shoulders.

I smile, thinking about Alex’s words from earlier. “They are”.

We smell smoke and follow the scent to the other side of the house, where the picnic table was. I realize now that the area was an outdoor kitchen and dining room which makes sense, because I didn’t notice one inside. There’s a blonde woman standing over a counter made of old rocks and plywood chopping items while Alex is over a firepit, stoking a fire under a pot that’s hanging there. I can’t help the smile that spreads across my face at how happy everyone seems, even though they seem to have so little.

We begin to approach and Alex looks up at us with a smile. “Molly!” he says and he moves to stand and walks over to the woman. “This is my mate, Della. You met her when you were little, but I doubt you remember it,” he says, putting his arm around the beautiful blonde haired woman. She’s has her hair tied back behind her and is wearing worn-out jeans and a blue, faded flannel shirt that is too big for her.

“I’m sorry, I don’t,” I say and I move to extend my hand in greeting, but she looks up at me with wide, dark blue eyes that match her son's and bows.

“Princess Molly. Prince Seth,” she says, not standing back up. “It’s an honor to have you at our home.”

“Thank you, Della,” Seth says, knowing how uncomfortable I am with having people bow to me. “We are honored to be here with you all. What are you making that smells so delicious?”

Della straightens herself and looks at Seth with a smile, a bit more relaxed now. “I’m making corn chowder for dinner. I hope you both like it.”

“I’m sure we will!” I tell her. “Do you always cook over a fire?”

“Oh, yes, Princess,” she says with a small smile. “When we built the house, I wasn’t much of a cook. I didn’t want a kitchen inside because I was worried I’d burn the place down.”

I can’t help the laugh that escapes me. “Yes. We can’t learn to cook without burning a few things. I can see how that would be a wise choice.”

“Oh, yes,” she agrees. “I probably would have burned the house down a few times if I was cooking inside.”

“Is there anything I can help with?” I ask her.

Della just shakes her head. “Absolutely not. You’re our guests.”

“Molly, “ Alex starts to say but Della quickly interrupts him.

“It’s Princess Molly, dear,” she says with a kind smile. The way they look at each other, you can tell that they truly love each other.

I smile at them both, happy to be here with them. “It’s OK, truly. Just Molly is fine.”

“I can’t do that, Princess,” she says and returns to her work.

Seth squeezes my hand, knowing how uncomfortable the formalities make me, and leads me back around to the front of the house to see the kids. He steps behind me and wraps his arms tightly around my waist.

“Maybe growing up out here wouldn’t have been the worst thing to happen to you,” he says in my ear and I nod, watching the two boys sword fight each other with branches.

“You’re right,” I whisper to him and lean back into his chest.

“Maybe we’re looking at how to help them all wrong,” I say with a small sigh. “Clearly many of their houses need serious repairs. But maybe we can help them form a pack and learn to support themselves easily enough.”

Seth smiles and kisses my cheek. “I think you may be on to something. But let’s just enjoy getting to know this family tonight and see what we learn tomorrow.”

“You’re right,” I tell him. “How long do you think you can stay out here?”

“I’ll stay as long as you need.”