

## Chapter 3

1767 Words

“Molly, your mate is here.” I hear my brother say. My heart falls to the pit of my stomach.

“How... how does he know he’s my mate?” I ask, so meekly. “I haven’t met anyone but Alpha Blake and Future Alpha Chris. One of them is mated and the other, well, he didn’t say anything when we met.”

“It’s not either of them, it’s Seth. He could smell you on Dad. Dad said you hugged him just before you came down here and I guess your scent lingered.”

“It could be anyone that Dad was near. It’s not me. It CAN’T be me.”

“Molly. It’s you. Come on, they’re all waiting.”

“All? How many mates do I have?”

“It’s just one, kiddo. But we’ve got to get up there. You can’t keep them waiting.”

“No, Robbie. No. I’m not going up there just to be rejected and hurt. This isn’t happening. It’s a mistake. I can’t have a mate.”

“Molly, it’s ok.” Oliver jumps in now as he sees my panic and recognizes my brother does not have control of this situation. “You’ve always assumed you have no mate, or that if you do, that they’ll reject you. Maybe he won’t. Maybe he’ll see you for the amazing wolf you are.”

He’s trying. They both are. Trying to convince me that it’s going to be ok but you can see in their eyes they both know it won’t be. Especially my brother. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a look like this on his face before. He’s so worried about me. My mate must be terrible for him to be so concerned.

I can barely breathe. It feels like the walls are closing in on me and my chest hurts with each breath. My fears come to the surface and I can’t contain them. I slowly slip out of my shoes without either of them noticing. There’s a back door out of here right behind them. They’re both faster than me- my brother having the Alpha gene making him far superior physically to me. So I do what I have to do to get out of this situation, and I begin to cry.

My brother’s face softens as he steps across to me and envelopes me into a huge hug. It’s a move I wasn’t expecting, and it’s making it even harder to remove myself from the kitchen. In all honesty, his hug feels good. I feel so safe when I’m with Robbie, but then I remember that he’s trying to take me to meet my dad and mate and whoever else is there just so I can be rejected and feel that pain but these thoughts make me cry even harder and as Oliver has now gotten up and is coming closer I decide to make my nal move to get out of here.

“Robbie, I need to sit down” I tell him and my ever doting brother does just what I expected this time and immediately releases me and turns to grab the chair that Oliver had just vacated. I make my move and run to the door. My hand reaches the knob and the goddess must be with me because it’s unlocked and I take off to the garden. To my surprise the smell of my brother gets more and more faint with each step. I decide to chance a look back to see both men standing outside the back kitchen door, Oliver’s arm is across my brother’s chest when I hear him say “Just let her go Robert. Give her a few minutes.”

I run a bit further, but since I know they’re not following me, I nally stop and walk. I’m sure that I’ve destroyed all the work I did to look presentable just a few hours ago as I walk barefoot through my favorite place, but I can’t be bothered to care right now.

This was not the plan. This is not the life that I’m supposed to have. My family loves me, I know this. But it’s obvious at every turn, I’m not really theirs. My family always said they loved me so much they couldn’t stand the thought of me leaving when I was small, but who would kick a homeless six-year-old out? I was found under a tree, alone- tiny with no memory of who I was or where I came from. Was I lost? Or abandoned? Did I have a family that loved and missed me? Or did they leave me in the woods in the hope that they’d never have to see me again?

I’d accepted all these thoughts before, but then as I got older and it was obvious I wasn’t like all the other pups, it became harder and harder to feel like I belonged. I couldn’t play with the kids as I got older because I couldn’t physically keep up with them. That’s what made me love Oliver so much. When the other kids wanted to play tag and throw balls, he’d be there to go on an adventure with me. The rst time we made it all the way back to the falls alone was amazing! My dad had taken me once shortly after he had found me but they looked so much more amazing when we’d found them on our own as kids. We got into so much trouble when we got back. I remember Oliver’s mom apologizing repeatedly to my dad and he was angry we’d gone so far without her knowledge and the entire time my mom just smirked and kept telling him we were ne and to calm down.

I didn’t realize it then, but as I got older I realized that my dad has always worried about me more because of my broken wolf. As I got older, he forbade me to go into the woods without a pack warrior nearby- even if I was with Oliver. A few years ago, Robbie had too much to drink and let it slip that dad was worried someone would kidnap me to use it against him because I wouldn’t be able to get away myself. I was so angry when he rst told me, but he was right to be concerned. If another pack did kidnap me, I’d never be able to escape on my own. I’m basically useless and a huge liability.

Useless and a liability to my own pack and now, to the mate I never thought I’d have. There’s no reason anyone would not reject me, short of needing a chef, but I don’t think that’s enough to keep around a broken wolf. I don’t know how I’d ever be able to help a mate. And if my mate is in Lunar Falls now for the Alpha ceremony, he’s likely an Alpha himself and while most she-wolves would be thrilled, this is the worst possible scenario for me.

I stop walking as I reach the back of my garden. This truly is my absolute favorite place in the packlands. It’s so peaceful here as few people ever bother to come here. It’s where I spend so much time doing what I can to help take care of my pack, in my own way. I know it’s not much, but it’s at least something. It’s hot and sunny out now so I climb under the leaning trellis where the squash have grown and hide in the shade. I know that eventually someone will be out here to drag me inside there, but I decide to stay put until that happens.

I stay in the garden for what seems like hours. I am surprised that I’ve been able to stay here alone for so long, but I’m not upset about it either. I peek out from my hiding spot like a small child and see the window to my Father’s study where a man that I don’t recognize is staring outside. I wonder if that’s my mate, for just a moment. He’s attractive, from what I can tell. He has longer dark hair, just above his shoulders, and seems very muscular. He’s holding a glass with something brown in it- probably some expensive bourbon that my dad is hoping will help him overlook my behavior. Maybe he has enough bourbon to have him overlook my brokenness. Doubtful, as I’m not just a broken wolf, but I’m now a lthy wolf wearing no shoes and hiding in actual plants.

I smell a familiar scent of my best friend as he approaches and climbs under the trellis with me. The look he’s giving me tells me he knows the situation isn’t great. Oliver knows me so well and he knows that I’m just not able to articulate my feelings at the moment, so he doesn’t say a word. He just puts his arms around me and holds me, and I let go of tears I didn’t even realize I’d been holding. I cry for the little girl who didn’t get a wolf, for all the times another kid made me feel less than. I cry for all the nights I spent wondering why I was left by a tree, and I cry for all the memories that I don’t have from before then. I cry for the kid who grew up not meeting anyone’s expectations, and I cry for all the times I know I disappointed my parents. But most of all, I cry for the fear of having to face a mate that I never dreamed I’d have and the pain of the rejection that I’ll have to endure.

“He’s not going to reject you”, Oliver tells me. And I know that he truly thinks that, but I know there’s no chance someone would want me.

“I’m going to go up there, but I need to go change clothes rst,” I tell him. He looks at me and nods, but doesn’t say a word about how I look an absolute mess.

I mind link my dad, “I’m going to go change and make myself presentable and then I’ll be there. I’m sorry.” I know I’ve embarrassed him.

“Ok Molly, I’ll let him know.” He tells me. “He’s a good man. You’re going to be ok.” he continues, and I nd a small amount of comfort from the man who would do anything to protect me telling me it will all be ne.