

## Chapter 102

I stand in my closet, suitcase open on a table, as I look around, trying to decide what to pack. What does one even wear to an Alpha Challenge? I've never been to this Pack before. Hell, I don't remember the name of it, much less how affluent the pack is. I don't want to bring anything that would be too much, but I also don't want to underdress.

I sigh, unsure what to do. I don't want to bother Seth and ask. He left and went downstairs early this morning to get some work done, asking me to pack for the both of us as he walked out the door, a bagel and a cup of coffee in his hands.

Umm.. Audrey?

Everything OK, Dear?

Seth and I leave today and.. I... I don't know what to pack. I tell my new mother-in-law, embarrassed to admit it to her. Seth asked me to pack for him as well...

I'll be right there.

I feel absolutely ridiculous, but I think that I just need to call in someone who knows what they're doing. It's our first public outing since marking each other, and it's important we look good... I think.

I hear a knock at the door and a few moments later Anna opens the bedroom door. "Princess Molly, Queen Audrey is here to see you," I hear her call in and I feel relief flood over me.

"Thanks Anna!" I call from the closet and hear the door close.

"He made you pack for him on his first trip?" Audrey says, walking into the closet.

I turn and smile meekly, embarrassed to have had to contact her at all, much less have her come here to help. "I don't think he really cares," I tell her, holding up the clothes I'm holding in my hands. "I don't know anything about this pack."

She smiles at me and walks over, taking the items from my hands. "It's ok, Molly. Next time you all travel, have him give you the pack information as soon as he tells you that you're leaving. They don't realize how much of an impact your clothing can have."

"He told me the name of the pack, but I don't remember it," I tell her looking down, knowing now that it was important information. "It's, umm... It's where Lydia is from."

"He told you about Lydia?" she asks, a look of concern covering her face.

"I asked," I whisper as I look at my feet, nodding slowly, too afraid to meet her eyes. "I needed to know."

"Oh, Molly. Are you OK?" she asks, reaching out and gently placing her hand on my arm.

"Yeah. I get it," I tell her, looking at her hand, but still unwilling to look up. "I didn't have my wolf."

She shakes her head. "It didn't matter, Molly. He was wrong."

"It's OK," I tell her, giving her a small smile. "We've talked about it. It's in the past."

"You're a better wolf than me," she says, moving her hand from my arm and walking over to my clothes that are hanging. "I'd have still scratched her eyes out for touching my man."

I chuckle slightly at that, the thought of this refined and poised woman going after someone else. "My wolf is still resting. The shift took away almost all of her strength. She may feel differently about it."

"The Blood Moon Pack used to be wealthy and thriving but, over the years, they've really started to struggle. Their Alpha died a few months ago and his son took over..." she says, turning to me. "He's an idiot."

"Do you know their main export?" I ask, hoping to understand them a little more.

"Gems, but the mines are drying up," she tells me.

Their land dispute is making more sense to me now. They must think there's something on the land they're fighting over- or they know that there is.

"And the other pack? Seth didn't even tell me their names," I say, realizing I should have asked more questions.

She looks me in the eyes and I can tell there's something about this pack that she does not like. "The Buck Moon Pack. Their Alpha is a real piece of work."

"Oh," is all I can bring myself to say at seeing her so angry at just the thought of him.

"Before I met Peter, my parents tried to arrange a marriage between us. Alpha Thomas," she says, looking uncomfortable. "He was furious when I met Peter and we realized we were mates. Thomas was convinced I was lying to get out of our agreement. He... he killed my father as retribution for breaking their deal."

"Oh Gods," I say, covering my mouth with my hand in shock. "I'm so sorry, Audrey."

"He's an old man now- he was 15 years older than me then, but he's strong," she says, shaking her head. "I really hope the kid can take care of him." She looks down at the floor and I think she may be about to cry, but she squares her shoulder and turns back to the clothes.

"So, whenever you travel, you don't want to show up looking TOO nice for the area, but you also need to look a step above because you are the future Queen," she says, pulling a few items from the racks. "You also need to make sure that Lydia knows she's inferior, because you're Seth's mate."

I can't help but smile and offer up a small thanks to the goddess for sending me someone who can understand what I'm going through with everything.

"An Alpha Challenge is just a barbaric fight to the death, but Seth, and you, will be the overseers, so it IS a formal matter. Seth will need a suit for the occasion and you will need to be in a very nice dress- not formal, but nicer than something you'd wear to the office."

I stand next to her and she pulls out a nice black dress with a button front and collar.

"That's really nice," I tell her, touching it gently. "I think I'd like something with a lower neck line, though."

She smirks and hangs it back up. "Making sure that Lydia sees your mark?"

"It's our first outing. It's probably best to be sure the whole kingdom can," I say with a small smile as I pick up a black tea length dress that's off the shoulder. "Would this be OK?"

"That would be perfect, Molly," She says with a smile and leads me over to Seth's side of the enormous closet, holding the dress up to find a suit that matches perfectly. "We'll be sure not to pack a tie for the occasion. Wouldn't want to cover his mark." She winks at me and lifts a black suit out and a black dress shirt- making sure to pass over the ties.

"Everything else should be very casual," she says. "I'd stick with something that you'd wear every day at Lunar Falls."

I nod in understanding, feeling better about the situation. I pull out a few outfits for both of us as well as appropriate outerwear. Seth had mentioned that it was to the East, so I'm guessing that it will be fairly chilly.

"You'll both need to wear crowns for the Alpha challenge," Audrey casually mentions, like it's normal.

"The f\*\*k?" I blurt out, very rudely, forgetting who I'm with. I put my hand over my mouth as my eyes widen.

Audrey laughs, like a joyous, side splitting laugh. "It's fine, Molly. But yes, you both have to wear a crown. The Queen's crown is not available to you yet, but everything else belonging to the royal family is yours. I did, however, take the liberty of choosing a few tiaras that I thought you would like and brought them here for convenience. We can always take a trip to the vault though! You never know, maybe you'll find a few things to pick up!"

I open the drawer that Seth had previously indicated to be holding tiaras, but I had been avoiding them. They're beautiful, truly. But they're not me. Audrey walks over and picks up a gold one that's adorned with pearls and gently places it on my head. I turn to the mirror and see my reflection. It's breathtaking.

"It just doesn't feel like me," I whisper. "It's so beautiful, though." I tell her as I begin to smell my mate and hear the bedroom door open. He walks in and our eyes meet in the mirror as he smiles at me.

"You look perfect, Love," he says to me, causing me to smile.

"She says it's not right," Audrey tells him, picking up another that is rose gold and has some pink stones on it.

Seth shakes his head and walks over, looking in. "That's not either. She needs silver. She'll be wearing diamond earrings Randall gave her. They're silver."

Audrey looks up at him, seeming to be a bit shocked that he'd have anything to do with the selection of a tiara, much less that he'd know anything about my earrings.

"He's right," I say, looking up at him with a smile. "It makes me feel like he's with me." I reach for a silver tiara from the drawer but when I lift it, I see blue sapphires. "This is so beautiful..."

"But it's not right," Audrey says with a smile. "Show me the earrings."

I walk over to my jewelry box and lift them out, handing them to her. She surprises me as she lifts them and gently places them in my ears, looking in a drawer for a necklace and pulls it around my neck. She moves to remove the little sage leaf that Seth had given me but I put my hand on it.

"I'll take it off then, I promise," I tell her. "Please don't take it off now, though. It's special."

"OK," she tells me with a curious look. Interesting. I kind of assumed Seth had her help in selecting it for me, but she doesn't seem to know anything about it. "I know just the tiara, but it's in my possession. I'll be back in a moment."

"Sorry" I say to him, giving him a sheepish smile. "I just wasn't sure what to pack for either of us."

"I didn't even think about giving you any information. I'm sorry," he says, kissing me on the cheek and then reaching up, running his finger along the tiara placed upon my head. "This looks good on you. It's not the right one for you, but it looks good."

"I'm nervous," I whisper, chewing on my lip, uncertain.

"I know. If we're being honest, so am I," he tells me. "It's the first Alpha Challenge that I've officiated. I've always been there with Dad. I know people there, though and..."

"Lydia," I say to him quietly.

He nods slowly. "I don't want you to misunderstand. You're all that matters in my life, but that doesn't mean I want her pack to be ripped apart."

I step up to him, gently placing my hand on his cheek. "You're a good man, Seth," I tell him, walking back to the suit case and garment bags. "I, umm.. I may have packed clothes for the challenge that would... umm... highlight our marks."

He smiles at me and shakes his head, walking over to me and pulling me against him. "Good. I want everyone to see that you're mine."

"Here we go, Molly!" Audrey says, walking into the room, holding a black box. She sits it on a counter and Seth walks over, gently nudging her out of the way.

"This one is perfect, Mom," he says, smiling at her and she nods at him. He motions me over and then removes the gold tiara that's currently on my head. He moves me to stand in front of him in the mirror, stepping behind me and gently placing the new tiara from Audrey on my head. It's silver with no gemstones at all on it. It's beautifully understated as it appears to have silver branches intertwined with tiny leaves poking out here and there.

"It's perfect," he says from behind me, our eyes meeting in the mirror. "Princess Molly."