

Chapter 118

Seth leads me to the car and we make our way to the location of the challenge. My heart feels heavy at the gravity of the entire situation, but especially knowing the dangers we will face personally should Stephen not win. The car pulls up to a clearing that's deeper in their pack territory. I know we're still on their property, but it's closer to the border with the Buck Moon Pack... and farther north which is definitely not the direction I want to be.

My stomach lurches and I'm unsure if it's caused by the baby, the drive, or my fears. Honestly, it could be from all of it. I close my eyes and take a deep breath, trying to will myself to not be sick. When I open my eyes, I see Seth looking down at me, his face showing his deep concern.

"I'm fine," I tell him with a weak smile. "Just a little nausea."

He squeezes my hand, looking around outside the car. "I have such an uneasy feeling."

"I do, too," I tell him, watching people walk up to the clearing, forming a circle.

"Remember, stay with Albert if anything happens," he tells me, still surveying the area. "Benjamin will be close, too."

I smile at that, knowing that the man who had already done so much, and given up so much to protect me is here, ready to jump in and continue to protect me if needed. Truly, he's had to give up too much, but he's continued to push back his feelings and pride to be there when I need him, no matter how uncomfortable the situation is for him.

Seth finally steps out of the car and walks around, stepping in front of Albert to open the car door for me himself. I take his hand and step out and he gives me room, but continues to block me from view. He reaches up, adjusting the ruffle on the top of my dress and I look down, smoothing out the silk fabric.

"You look amazing," he tells me quietly, leaning down and placing a gentle kiss on my forehead. "Ready, Princess?"

"Yes, Prince Seth," I tell him with a small smile. He looks as handsome as he always does, wearing a black suit with a white shirt that he left unbuttoned, leaving his mark on display. He left his hair down, which has become more rare for him in the past few weeks. I do note, though, that he hasn't been shaving his facial hair off completely, and had been trimming it, just because I said I like it.

Albert closes the car door behind us and I catch our reflection. We look good together. Really good. I'm wearing a black silk, tea-length dress with a ruffle up top that is off the shoulder and drapes in a way that's really flattering. Thankfully, it has tiny straps to hold the dress up, because this material is flowy and clingy and I'm not sure how it would stay up without them. It's not something that I would have ever bought myself, but it really does look good.

Seth offers his arm to me and I take it, as we walk across the ground to our places. I look around at everyone in attendance. Most are wearing their normal, everyday attire, though I note that a few did wear some nicer clothing. Probably because they knew we would be in attendance and that makes me smile. I look down at the ground and wonder if all alpha challenges are just outside in clearings, or if larger packs have better places that would warrant the Princess wearing 4 inch heels, because it feels ridiculous to be walking in them here.

We approach an area with four chairs. Peter and Audrey are seated on the two outside chairs, as opposed to the inside ones, as you would assume. Seth leads me to sit next to his Mother, and then takes his seat next to me.

I look to Audrey but before I can say anything she smiles. "You and Seth are officiating this one. You are the head royals in this situation."

Head royals? I don't know what that even means. I furrow my brow in confusion. "You look lovely, Molly. Truly. You two are picture perfect."

"Thank you," I tell her and she takes my hand.

I hate these. She says through the link. They're barbaric and disgusting. Remain stoic, don't let your facial expressions betray you. Look away if it's too much and you feel sick. Just don't leave.

I nod to her, understanding. This is my first official event as Seth's mate, and I must act the part properly.

If Alpha Stephen loses, you can NOT heal him. We'll remove you as quickly and safely as possible, but you can not use magic.

I nod again, knowing that she's right. It seems she knows me fairly well, because while I'm not planning to even think of using magic, there's a chance that I would do something impulsive.

Benjamin walks up and stands next to Audrey, though neither of them acknowledges the other. He looks at me and smiles. "You look lovely, Princess," he says and bows to me.

"You look very nice, too," I tell him with a smile and his eyes almost twinkle. Looking at him outside now, in the sunlight, he looks even better. Maybe being marked and removing my adoption really did give him his strength back, because looking at him, he looks to be one of the strongest wolves here.

I look around, finally locating my parents next to Alpha Stephen and Luna Daphne. That seems odd, but before I can ask, Alpha Thomas approaches the clearing. He stands at the edge, looking at Stephen and removes his shirt, stepping into the cleaning, making his way towards the middle.

Daphne releases Stephen's arm and leans over, kissing him one final time before he also removes his shirt and walks to meet Thomas in the Center. Unfortunately for him, though, he doesn't make it to the center as Thomas quickly attacks him, knocking him to the ground.

Seth was right, he would start early. There's no rules, anything goes, and the winner will be the Alpha of TWO packs by the end of the day.

Stephen gets back up, pulling his shirt off as well and tossing it to his mate. He approaches Thomas and as Thomas moves to him, he dodges him and goes for his legs. Thomas falls hard and tries to get back up, but Stephen kicks him in the ribs and then scuffs his shoe into the dirt, throwing the dirt into his face.

Thomas rolls and pops up, but is clearly thrown off as he quickly blinks his eyes trying to clear them, but he's met with a hard right hook to the jaw. I hear a popping noise, and everyone else seems to as well as I hear many gasp. I look around at the people watching, members of both packs, and realize that no one really expected Stephen to fight this well.

Stephen moves and manages to pull Thomas into a headlock, but he's able to bend over and flip Stephen onto the ground on his back, and he leans down, throwing a few punches to his face. Thomas seems to have fully recovered from the nasty blow he was dealt, no doubt that his wolf is so strong that he's already healed completely.

The fighting has picked up and I'm not even sure exactly what I'm watching, or how to gauge who is winning. Every time Stephen is thrown on the ground he manages to still land a kick, and I note that Benjamin smiles with pride every time. I'd be willing to bet that it was a tip he had given him this morning, because he looks like a proud dad.

Stephen has somehow gotten the upper hand and has landed so many blows that Thomas' face is now bloody and he appears to be tired. Stephen makes the mistake of letting him step back and before he can register his mistake, Thomas shifts into his wolf form and comes at him with full force.

Thomas' wolf is now on top of him and as he moves to sink his teeth into him, Stephen is able to move just enough to place his shoulder into his mouth instead, saving his life. He looks terrified, but he reaches forward and sinks his thumb into the brown wolf's eye and pushes, causing him enough pain that he releases him and moves back, giving the younger Alpha the time and space he needs to shift into his wolf form.

There's a sound of collective shock when he shifts and everyone realizes that Stephen is, in fact, the bigger wolf. He pounces quickly, pushing Thomas back and bites his back leg, hard. I see blood start to pour from his leg and when he turns, I realize that I cannot see his eye from where Stephen had pushed him, just blood.

I gasp a little, but catch myself and as I turn and make eye contact with Audrey, I can tell that she is also uneasy with the violence we're watching. The two brown wolves raise up on their hind legs, locking into each other and come down, rolling around a few times on the dirty ground as each tries to dominate. Thomas lands on top and he raises up to bring his teeth down with the intention to rip Stephen's neck open but as he does, he moves just enough that Stephen is able to rise up, biting him before he has the chance. The young Alpha sinks his sharp teeth into his neck, biting down and pulling away, allowing the blood to flow out freely. Thomas falls over on his side and Stephen moves back, watching as the blood flows out from the wound at a pace his wolf is unable to heal as he slowly takes a final breath.

Stephen's wolf walks away towards his Mate, shifting back to his human form as he reaches her and pulls her into his arms. I can see her body shaking with sobs, knowing how close she came to losing her mate. I feel Seth place his hand over mine, squeezing it gently as he stands to address the two packs and formally announce them as one.

"Wait," I hear Stephen say as he pulls on a pair of shorts and comes to stand before Seth. He bows, not as he slightly does from being so familiar with Seth as a friend, but a deep, respectful bow that I have not seen from him since we've been here. "I wish to speak with you and King Peter first, please."