

Chapter 4

River

I woke up pretty tired today. I had to stay up late last night after I got off the phone with Ava to nish the nancial papers. Ever since my sophomore year of high school, when my parents had found out from my teacher just how advanced I was in all my math classes, they decided to put my brain to good use. I have basically been the accountant for the pack since I was 15 years old and I will be 18 tomorrow. They asked me to keep it quiet because they didn't want anyone to be upset about the fact a 15-year-old girl was now in charge of the money coming in and out of our pack. I had a couple other things I needed to nish. I help mother with some of her duties also, and I had to nish the schedule for the daycare so I could turn it in today. I also had to go through the applications of people wanting to book out the ball room for activities to make sure we weren't double booking anyone. I had nally fallen asleep around 2AM when I had gotten all caught up. Now all I will have to do is my usual duties and I still have to help my old cheer squad get through tryouts and pass off my captain's spot to someone else. I don't have to cheer again until tomorrow, so today I can just enjoy time with Ava and shop to nd myself a dress.

I crawl out of bed and head toward the bathroom to take a quick shower. When I nished, I decided to play it simply today, because I would be trying on dresses. I put on a pair of skinny jeans and a gray t-shirt. I braided my honey hair into two braids, wanting it to be crimped for tomorrow. I slipped on my converse and pulled out my phone to tell Ava to meet me out front of my house, when I had another message pop up rst.

Greyson: Hey, were out front waiting for you when you are ready. Ava is here also.

I sent back a quick "On my way" before I grabbed my wallet and walked out my door.

Once I stepped outside, I saw our black SUV waiting for me to climb in. Greyson was driving with Noah in the passenger seat and Ava was seated in the back waiting for me to jump in.

"Come on Blondie, let's roll!" Noah yelled out his window.

I shook my head and climbed in. I got in the car and immediately apologized, "Sorry you had to wait for me. I didn't nish my work until after 2am. I was exhausted and over slept." I expressed.

"Pff, yeah, because coming up with a new dance routine for the cheer squad is so tiring and hard work." Noah mumbled and I saw Greyson chuckle behind his hand.

Ava reached over, taking my hand to squeeze it and gave me a knowing look. She knows how stressed I can get sometimes. She is the only person besides my parents and Noah's parents, Aunt Olive and Uncle Todd, that know how much I help with the pack and all the responsibilities that have seemed to fall into my lap. All because Greyson has so much other stuff to do before he can take his rightful place. I don't mind helping, it just sucks because I saw the look Greyson gave me when my parents had said I had been super busy along with him. It was like he couldn't believe I would have anything to do, ever. It was also super irritating because I shouldn't have to defend myself to him or anyone anyway. I refuse to do that ever.

I just shook my head, disregarding their words and focused on the mall. If I have learned anything over the years, it's that stooping to someone else's level won't change their opinion. If anything, it only gives them more ammo. I may be shy, independent and not the strongest female in our pack, but I can promise, emotionally and mentally, I am the most secure and level-headed person there is. I take pride in the fact I refuse to feed off other peoples emotions and reactions. That alone makes me strong. It takes a strong person to ght back and nish a ght, it takes a stronger one to negotiate on common ground or know when to walk away.

We entered the mall and I turned toward Greyson. "I know mom said we had to hangout, but honestly, I think it would be best if, while we're here, we just went our separate ways. Ava and I are going to go nd dresses for the ball. How about we plan to meet back in the car in about 3 hours?"

Noach seems happy about this revelation, and bumps his shoulder into Greyson. Grey scratches the back of his neck and just nods his head, saying, "Ugh, yeah. Yeah, that's ne. 3 hours?"

I held up 3 of my ngers to him as I slowly started to walk away. "3 hours."

Once we were out of ear shot I turned to Ava. "There was no way I would have been able to spend the entire day here with them. No stinking way." I grabbed her arm and pulled her to the rst store. Mission one - nd a dress.

.....

Three hours went by in a blink of an eye but here Ava and I stood waiting by the SUV for the boys to meet up with us. I ended up nding a dress, after I almost gave up. Ava and her mom had already been shopping a few weeks ago and picked hers out so she was pretty much just moral support through the entire thing. Ava stood next to me chatting up a few boys that were passing by and decided to stop and make conversation with us. I wasn't much of an outgoing person. I stayed in my circle and that's about it. By circle I mean Ava, and my family. My bag broke loose from my hand and some of the items I purchased were scattered on the ground. I fell down to start picking it all up when I noticed an unfamiliar hand reaching out in front of me handing me a pair of golden hoop earrings I had bought. I grabbed it from him, our ngers gliding across each other during it. I don't know why but I felt a blush creep up my neck. I looked up at him through my eye lashed and he had a light smile on his face knowing full well he is the cause of my reddened cheeks. We both giggle at each other before standing back up.

"I'm Ian." He sticks his hand out to me. I glanced at it before looking back up at his freckled face and blonde hair.

I wrap my small hand around his giant one. "River." I smile.

"River....River?" He seemed to be testing my name out. "I like it. It's different." He beamed at me.

"I get that a lot." I laugh, "Then the jokes follow. calling me pond, lake, ocean." I shake my head.

"I think River's better. It's pretty. Very tting for a beautiful girl." Great. I blush again. What is wrong with me?

"What's going on over here?" I heard a familiar voice. Both Ian and I snap our heads in the direction of the said voice.

"Nothing, Greyson. I dropped my bag and Ian was helpful in picking it all up." I looked around for Ava while she said bye to Ian's friends. Ian started to move slowly toward his friend's direction. "Thanks for your help, it was really.....kind. It was really kind of you."

"It was my pleasure, River. It was nice to meet you, maybe we will run into each other again sometime?" I gave him a nod with a smile, putting one on his face also.

Maybe. Maybe not. I tell myself as I climb into the SUV. I probably won't run into him again. Even if I did, it wouldn't matter. He's human. I would never be able to bring him around my family, not when were going to be directly related to the Lycan king. Besides, tomorrow is my birthday. I will ocially be 18 and be able to nd my mate. If anything, that's something to look forward to. I secretly hope I nd my mate before the ball, then I won't have to attend it. Wishful thinking anyway.

The rest of the evening I spent catching up on my work, and practicing the routines I have to teach to the upcoming cheerleaders tomorrow. I love cheering, but honestly, I can't wait until I am nally done. There will be one less thing on my to-do list for this summer. Deciding I would be there for the night around 11pm, I laid down in bed waiting for sleep to take over. Before drifting off to sleep, I realized in less than 1 hour I would nally be able to nd my mate. Maybe I would nally feel like I didn't have to live in the shadows anymore and I could nally feel like I would be front and center in someone else's world, because I knew.... I would never be that in mine.