

Chapter 103

Seth said we should arrive at the Blood Moon Pack dressed casually, but we seem to have different ideas of what casual is. He's still wearing a collared shirt, and still tucked it in, but he did decide to let loose and rolled the sleeves up some.

Audrey helped me select a nice skirt and a top that buttons up, and a pair of nude heels.

"There's a time for dressing down," she said as I slipped the shoes on. "Never, ever show up to your first meeting with someone, especially an Alpha, wearing anything other than heels. You're small, Molly. You need to make yourself appear bigger."

I nod at her, looking down at the shoes. They really are very nice.

"I'm just used to wearing jeans and being in the kitchen," I tell her as I stand and look at myself in the mirror. "I'll get used to it."

"Want to tell me about the necklace?" she asks me, c****g an eyebrow just like Seth does. I can't help the smile that comes to my face at seeing the similarity there.

"Seth gave it to me," I tell her, gently running my finger over it. "It's a sage leaf. That's my wolf's name- Sage."

She smiles at me and then glances over at him, a look of pride on her face.

"I started reading Cora's journal," I tell her, unsure how she'll feel about that. "I think they really meant a lot to him because as far as I've read, he's continued to treat me the way that she never was. You did a really good job."

"He really loves you," she says, still smiling at him as he looks through the drawers, gathering a few more things to take with us. "It makes me happy. I won't lie, I was a little worried at first since you didn't have your wolf, but Molly, you're the best thing that's ever happened to him."

I smile at her words and he looks up, giving me a curious look. I just shrug and smile at him and he continues getting things together.

"I don't know why he even asked me to pack for him. He's adding a whole month's worth of stuff to take with us," I say to her with a giggle.

She smiles and zips my bag for me. "He gets that from me. I added a few more things for you, as well. Always take extra, just in case your stay gets extended."

I nod, realizing that's probably really good advice given how long they all ended up staying at Lunar Falls after Seth and I met.

"Thank you," I tell her and she looks at me curiously. "For everything, really, but especially for staying at my pack as long as you did. Just... it means a lot to me that you did."

"I wish I could tell you just how much it meant to me to finally have a daughter," she says, giving me a hug. "You'll do great this week. They're probably not going to be very respectful at first, though Seth is fairly feared in that area. Keep your head high and don't take anyone's shit. I've not met the young Luna there but they tend to think they're the most important. You're the Queen, Molly. Don't let them treat you like you're not."

"I'm not the Queen yet," I tell her with a sad smile and she returns it. "I'll keep it in mind, truly."

"Ready to go, Love?" Seth asks and I nod, standing and reaching for my bag that Seth quickly grabs, glaring at me.

Seth leaves the bags by the door and leads me out, down the elevator and through the front doors, passing the office. There's a black SUV waiting for us out front and an older man stands by it, opening the back door for us.

"Sir. Ma'am," he says with a bow and Seth steps in first, putting his hand out to help me in when I see something out of the corner of my eye. I turn my head and can't help the giant smile that appears on my face as I step away from the car.

"Albert!" I say, throwing my arms around him in a huge hug.

"Hey, Molls..." he says and stops quickly, removing his arms and standing up straight. "Princess Molly," he corrects himself and as soon as I release him he bows.

"I didn't realize you came to the Palace with us," I tell him and he nods.

"I couldn't pass up the opportunity when King Peter and Alpha Benjamin asked me to join your guard," he tells me. It didn't go unnoticed that he said Peter and Benjamin asked him, which is interesting, but it's not the time to ask.

I smile brightly, looking back to make sure Seth doesn't look like we're running late, but he's waiting patiently, smiling. "I had planned to ask you myself but, well... it all kind of went to shit."

Albert lets out a laugh. "Best not let them hear you talk like that. You're the princess now."

"Yeah yeah," I say, waving off his concern. "Are you coming with us?"

"I am," he says and starts walking towards the car. "We should leave soon so we aren't driving through human territory in the dark."

He walks me over and offers me his hand to help me in. Seth doesn't look thrilled, but he doesn't say anything, either.

"You didn't tell me Albert came to the palace," I say to him.

He shakes his head. "With everything that was happening, I didn't even think of it. He's training still, but he'll be on your guard as was requested by... well... everyone."

We pull off and Seth pulls out his laptop almost immediately, placing his right hand gently on my leg as he waits for it to open. I guess this means he has important work to complete, so I reach down and pull out Cora's journal, eager to get back into her stories.

"Are you finding it helpful at all?" he asks.

I nod at him and open the pages, searching for where I had left off. "You just wanted me to read it so it would make you look more amazing."

He laughs at that and starts to say something, but glances up at the two men in the front and stops himself. "Honestly, I thought it might help you to know you're not the first princess to feel overwhelmed and trapped."

"Why does she always refer to him so formally? It's always Prince Joseph," I ask him and his face falls.

He gently squeezes my thigh and sighs. "He was horrible to her, even on his best days. He never saw her as an equal because of the pack she came from, or because she was the daughter of a Beta. That's one of the reasons I told you to never refer to me that way as soon as we met. I wanted to be clear that it didn't matter that you were adopted and didn't know who your parents were- you're my equal."

"Turns out though," he continues with a smile, "That you're not my equal, you're better than me. And you come from the only wolf around that could possibly challenge my father or myself."

"What?" I say, shocked at that new piece of information.

He nods slowly. "I've now read my father's journal he kept during that time. To be clear, I will never make that one available to you," I nod, a bit irritated that he's keeping that from me but also knowing that he'd never keep anything from me unless it would hurt me. "When everything happened, Benjamin was one of the strongest wolves in the kingdom. You've seen how big he is, even now. Think about how big and strong he was that night you saw him shift. It had been almost 15 years since he had shifted- he should have been frail."

"He wasn't though," I whisper. "His wolf was almost bigger than Altair."

Seth nods. "I'm glad we've worked things out because if I ever had to go against him, I don't think I would win. Thankfully for me, he loves you more than anything. And the goddess blessed us with a bond that will keep me safe from him."

"Was that part of the issue between our dads?" I ask, hoping he'll at least tell me some of it, even if he thinks I shouldn't read it.

"Absolutely," he says, moving his hand from me and typing something. "Benjamin was the only wolf who would have been able to usurp my father. I was growing to a point that it was clear I would be bigger than my father, and your brothers weren't exactly small pups."

I nod in understanding. Andrew was small, but he was the youngest. I think back to any time I can remember of the boys with other wolves and there just aren't many. Jason always seemed so big to me though. Maybe he really was and it wasn't just because I was so small.

"Will our children be in danger?" I ask quietly, looking down at the journal resting on my lap.

"Hey," he says, taking my hand. "We're royals. There's always some amount of danger, but we have the guard. I know you don't know them, but you know Albert, and you know he'd do anything to protect any kids we have. They'll have both of us, too. Besides, our son will likely be the strongest wolf in generations with the two bloodlines coming together. After that, I'd say the next strongest around are your dad and Rob. Our kids will be safe and well protected, Love."

"You'll protect my kids, right Albert?" I ask him, knowing that they're listening to us even if they're staying silent.

He turns his head to me and smiles. "You don't even need to ask, Molly. Most anyone from Lunar Falls would."

Seth doesn't say anything else, so I take that as my cue to let him concentrate. I lift the book again but all I can think about is what he's said about Benjamin. I guess I did realize he was a large man but he wasn't strong at all when I met him. When he shifted, I just didn't think anything of it at that moment. He really did give up so much just to keep me safe.

It doesn't sound promising for me to have a pregnancy tolerable enough to have multiple children. I wanted so badly for my children to have siblings, to have that connection with each other, but I should probably calm my expectations now before I even get pregnant. One is enough, my heart will still be full with only one.

Prince Joseph assures me this baby will be a boy, because royals and alphas always have a boy first. At first, I had hoped for a girl, but now I hope it is a boy and I never have to go through this again.

I am so hungry, all of the time, but when I eat I just get sick and start the cycle over again. Every part of my body hurts, and I am so incredibly tired. I'm only a third of the way, but I don't know how I will make it four more months. Every day, though, I thank the goddess that pregnancy is only 6 months for wolves, because I could not handle 9 months like humans do.

Prince Joseph has been a bit kinder to me. I'm unsure if it's because we completed the bond physically or if it's due to the heir that I carry, but I am thankful for the change in his attitude toward me. Queen Judith, however, still hates everything about me and chooses to continue lessons to make me a better queen daily. She tells me constantly that I have learned nothing and that I'm not fit to be queen, but I really am trying.

Today Queen Judith slapped me when I accidentally dripped tea on the table while serving it. Prince Joseph was upset when he saw how red my face was and asked me what happened, but I am sure nothing will change.

-Cora

Today I was finally able to eat and not be sick. I had no clue that plain, unbuttered toast could taste so good, but it truly was the best thing I think I have ever eaten.

After breakfast, I decided to walk to my lesson early in an attempt to please the queen, but when I arrived, I overheard her speaking with King Franklin about how she wants him to have me killed after the baby is born and weaned. I could hardly believe what I heard, and that neither of them smelled me. I quickly removed myself from the area and have been hiding in my room since.

I'm so afraid, and I don't know if there's anyone that I can trust here. They're going to take me from my baby.

-Cora

Prince Joseph was upset that I have moved back to my room and stayed with me here last night. I told him it was because of the pregnancy and that I'm not comfortable, which isn't a complete lie. I'm not comfortable anywhere in this vast palace, though.

He insisted I see the doctor today and I've been placed on bed rest earlier than expected as the strain on my body has been extensive. My heart is struggling to beat properly and I am so so swollen. To his credit, Prince Joseph has not pushed me to move rooms and has made sure I have everything I need here.

I have been able to eat a bit more, though not much, but he has made sure that what I have been able to keep down is brought to me in abundance. The maid, Hazel, told me that he has instructed her to check on me every half hour while he is away, so I guess he plans to stay here with me.

I wonder if he knows of his parents' plans, if all of this is just to ensure he has a healthy heir. I want so badly to believe that some part of him actually cares for me, but I'm truly unsure if he is capable.

-Cora

"I have a surprise for you," I hear Seth say, bringing me from my reading.

"What's that?" I ask him, placing the journal gently in my lap.

He smiles at me, a mischievous smile that makes my insides tingle. "I think it's about time I took you on an actual date."

"Our first date?" I say with a silly voice. "And only after we're both marked?"]

He chuckles at me, taking my hand in his. "You deserve the world, Molly. And I would like to take you for a lunch date today. In the human world."

"Oh," I whisper, unsure what to think of being in the human world. "Is it safe?"

"I wouldn't take you there if it wasn't. I've stopped here quite often on my way to the eastern packs," he says, running his thumb gently along my knuckles. "They are under the assumption that I'm just a business man passing through and we've never had any issues."

"OK," I tell him with a wary smile. "If you're sure."

"I am. I would never, ever put you in danger," he says, reaching up and buttoning my shirt up more. "I'm not sure how to explain the marks, so we need to keep them covered as much as possible."

He releases me and buttons his top button, pulling a tie out of his bag and tying it. He reaches back into his bag and pulls out a small black box, holding it gently in his hands.

"We don't marry, we just mark our mates. It's more eternal than what humans do," he tells me, still looking down at the box. "But you'll be queen, and you're mine. I want you to have the best of everything. I don't expect you to wear it often at all, but, well, I got rings for us," he finishes, opening the box to reveal a dainty gold band holding a giant emerald with small diamonds to the sides of it.

"Seth," I say, shocked at the beauty of it. "I can't. That's too much."

"It was Cora's," he tells me with a lopsided grin. "You'll read about it eventually, but when I asked her if I could give it to you, instead of it just staying in the royal vault, she was elated. As you keep reading you'll learn that it gets a little better for her, but this was the ring that my grandfather gave her when my father was born."

"But it's hers," I whisper, taking it from his hand to look at it more closely. It's probably the most gorgeous ring I have ever seen. "I can't take something that's special to her."

"Just wear it today, and while we're at the Blood Moon Pack," he says, taking it from me and gently sliding it on my finger. I note that it fits perfectly and wonder how we're the same size, but I realize that Audrey had my jewelry box and probably checked for my size. "You can talk to her about it whenever you meet. But she'll tell you what I already have."

I look at it on my hand and look over to Seth to thank him, noting that he's slipping a gold band on his own finger. "I'm pretty sure I was supposed to get you a ring, not that you get your own."

Seth smiles at me and leans over, kissing my cheek. "I'll take you to the vault when we return home and you can pick whatever you'd like for me."