

Chapter 5

“As our pack gamma, your responsibilities will also include participation in pack ceremonies,” Tony explained patiently as Brad and he made their way from Dylan’s mansion to Silver Creek Pack Temple.

As Crimson Phoenix pack Beta, Tony was in charge of training Brad to be their pack gamma. So Tony had decided to bring Brad with him to witness Ricky’s Beta ceremony.

“This is where Xavier was defeated by the previous alpha of the Silver Creek Pack,” Brad said tonelessly as they stepped into the clearing near the temple.

Tony nodded, remembering how his alpha and older brother had been defeated by the neighboring pack. He shuddered to think what would have happened had Xavier not come back and challenged Alpha Alistair and defeated him. Thankfully, now Dylan was the Alpha of the Silver Creek Pack. But Dylan had his own problems to deal with. He’d been issued a few challenges, mostly from lower ranking wolves. Things were uneasy amongst his pack. They didn’t like the fact that he’d banished Alyssa, Alistair’s daughter, from the pack. Especially after some pack members had circulated rumors that Alyssa was his mate. Brad couldn’t help but think that that was ludicrous. Especially since Alyssa had been dating Xavier. They’d broken up and Xavier had eventually gotten with his destined mate, Luna Rose. But Alyssa was four years older than Dylan. It would be beyond weird for any girl if your mate ended up being your boyfriend’s younger brother. Brad had brushed off the gossip as malicious rumors to try and put Dylan in a bad light in front of his new pack.

Brad froze as he smelt the familiar mocha coffee aroma wafting towards him. His brows furrowed. What was Melanie doing here? And then he felt like smacking himself for not putting two and two together. Melanie was Ricky’s sister. Of course she would be present for her own brother’s beta ceremony. Brad’s hands steeled against his sides as he fought his wolf for control. His dark blue eyes finally landed on her, blood and lust pounding in his ears as he took in what she was wearing. The dark green dress clung to her curves, making her look like a Christmas toffee wrapped in green. Brad blinked twice, wondering why he’d never noticed the full pout of her bottom lip before. He squeezed his eyes shut, trying to think back to the times he’d thought she was annoying. But super-imposed over all those memories was the one of her last year inannel pajamas and wild frizzy hair. It was the first time Brad had thought she actually looked kind of cute with those awful, black-rimmed glasses perched low on her button nose. He shook his head back and forth, trying to fight his wolf, trying to fight himself.

He’d spent the better part of his entire life hating her. He couldn’t just pull a 180 now. Could he?

Brad opened his eyes to see Melanie swirling a tendril of her black hair that was framing her round face. His eyes narrowed. He f*****g hated when she did that. It made her look all quirky and innocent when really, she was just stuck up. He looked away quickly when Melanie tilted her head to look his way.

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Melanie could have sworn Brad had been looking at her. Maybe it was just the relight playing tricks on her. Torches were lit up in a circle around the temple clearing.

Ricky stood in the middle with a shirtless Dylan. Melanie watched her father speak as he stood next to Dylan, a dagger in his hand.

Melanie watched her father enacting the ritual to transfer his Beta rank to the next worthy wolf.

“We are all gathered here today to witness the Beta Ceremony. Betas are second-in-command to the alpha of the pack. If something were to happen to our alpha, it would be the beta who would take over and command the pack. Ricky Santiago has been found worthy and undergone extensive training to adapt the skills required for the role of pack beta. If anyone believes that they have a more worthy claim to the rank of beta, step forward now to issue a challenge.”

There was pin drop silence as no one contested Ricky’s claim to the beta rank.

Melanie watched the relight dance across the planes of her father’s face as he spoke again, “Do you swear your allegiance to our Alpha, Dylan Sinclair? Do you swear to protect your pack no matter the cost? Forsaking all other ties for the betterment of the future of your pack?”

Ricky looked up at his father nodding solemnly.

“I swear it in blood,” he said on a whisper, extending his right hand, palm up.

Dylan took the dagger with a copper handle and made a cut in Ricky’s palm, extending from the base of his palm to the top. Blood spilled forth, spattering into the grass.

“You’ve made your blood oath,” Dylan said quietly. “I accept you, Ricky Santiago as my Beta and second-in-command. There will be no other I trust, aside from my Luna, above you when it comes to protecting our pack.”

Dylan suddenly shifted, his dark grey wolf looking expectantly at Ricky. Melanie let out a small gasp of surprise. Dylan’s wolf was huge and quite beautiful. From the looks of it, he still had a bit of growing to do until his wolf reached full maturity. Ricky shifted into his deep brown wolf and kneeled, baring his neck to Dylan in submission.

Dylan howled and his high-ranking pack warriors also shifted, bowing down to the authority of the new beta and acknowledging Ricky’s new rank.

Slowly, everyone around her began to discard their clothes and shift. Melanie was all too aware that she was amongst the few that couldn’t shift yet. She watched Selene shrug out of the dress she’d been in and turn into a chocolate brown wolf with white patches on her ears. Selene then pranced off to go join Dylan as all the wolves went for a run.

Melanie jumped when she felt a small nudge near her calves. She bent down to see a wolf with dark metallic grey fur speckled with tiny white dots across his paws.

“Aren’t you magnificent,” Melanie gushed, patting the wolf behind the ears.

The wolf rumbled appreciatively, leaning into Melanie’s touch. She looked into his glowing yellow eyes that momentarily ickered to blue.

“I think I know you,” Melanie mused, letting her hands rub against his ankle. “Do we go to school together?”

The wolf nuzzled his nose against the crook of her arm in response.

“Hmmm...” Melanie trailed off absently as she enjoyed the feel of the soft fur against her hands. She inhaled, enjoying the deep scent of a freshly cut grass and wood. Melanie almost groaned in response to the wonderful smell.

There was a low growl from off to the side. Melanie looked to see Dylan’s wolf looking straight at her new friend. He didn’t seem to be too happy with his pack member being near Melanie. Melanie realized Dylan probably felt a bit protective over her since she was Selene’s younger sister.

“It’s O.K.” Melanie said honestly. “We were just getting to know each other.”

Dylan’s wolf looked at Melanie with an expression of disbelief before looking at his subordinate sternly. After a moment of rebelliousness, in which the metallic grey wolf seemed loathe to leave Melanie alone, he finally acquiesced and followed Dylan to join the run.

Melanie giggled as she made her way to Dylan’s mansion where a celebratory dinner was going to be held after the wolves had their traditional run around the pack lands to celebrate Ricky becoming beta.