

1 Another Day

It's just another day. It's my anniversary, the completion of the first year of becoming mates, but it's just another day. One just like any other.

This morning I woke up to an empty bed, no owers or love notes. Nothing to mark the occasion. Just cold sheets beside me and the scent of my mate faint, like he had been gone for hours.

He probably didn't even remember. He isn't the sentimental type. Even on the night that his parents, the alpha and luna of the Fire Moon Pack, announced our bond before the entire pack and we mated for the first time, I woke up the next morning just like this.

To a cold and empty bed.

If I were the more optimistical thinking type, I guess that made this sentimental in some way. Maybe this will be like some sad form of a tradition between us. I have had few positive thoughts since the beginning of this union. It's truly just another day for me.

I crawled out from between the sheets, wincing from the pain between my legs.

Non-sentimental and rough. That's what I am mated to. The cold, distant, and unbearably rough alpha heir of my pack.

His s****I appetite is extreme. Cruel, even. I used to ask him to be gentle, and to act more loving, but he always just snarled and went harder. It's my job as his future luna to give him an heir, and making love won't get the job done. At least, he doesn't believe so.

If I was a human, I wouldn't have survived our first night together, especially as a virgin. Waking up to him not beside me the morning after our first mating was a blessing, because it gave me a chance to cry in peace for hours on end, my wolf helping to heal me, soothing and comforting me as best she could in the process.

I wrapped a blanket around my body and walked to the window to stare at the training grounds below. It was the women's training hour, but the ranked wolves stuck around to give pointers and help where needed.

I think they all just stood around to ogle the women, all of the female warriors scantily dressed in the assigned training outfit of micro shorts and sports bras.

There on the eld in the middle of it all was my mate, Cameron Haine, standing with his arms crossed next to his future beta, whispering to one another with smirks on their faces while staring at the ass of a she-wolf in front of them.

Cortina, my wolf, whimpered in my head, feeling hurt by his actions.

If not for her, I might have left months ago. She still wants our mate. She still craves the bond that I am starting to loathe. She could not yet see this fated pairing for what it is.

A sham.

We are his fated mate, which is the only reason we are still here, sharing his bed and enduring his neglect during the day, and abuse at night. He knows, as well as any alpha, that the strongest heir will only come from their fated mate. I'm a breeder to him. Nothing else. The fact I haven't conceived a pup yet just worsens the abuse every night.

The day before I turned eighteen, he never once noticed me, though I was one of those women down there on that eld during that time. I was a warrior, training to join the ranks of elite warriors to defend our pack. I never really paid much attention to him either until that morning at training.

I had just changed into my training clothes, moving to the center of the eld towards the front for the best vantage point. I wasn't paying the ranked heirs any mind. None of us really did, except for the weaker ones that showed up for training out of obligation and not because they were actually trying to get better.

Those she-wolves hung out in the back near them, aunting their asses and hoping for a chance to be taken aside for some one-on-one attention to get out of any of the real physical labor and training drills.

Those girls ended up working support jobs for the pack after their time was up attending the mandatory training required of all wolves for two years after becoming an adult. It's enough time for our deltas to determine the ones best suited for warrior life, something I always strived for. Support roles were closer to the packhouse, usually at the digression of the ranked members. Warriors could travel and worked to guard the borders. It was a more lenient job and far more rewarding.

The day that I turned eighteen, during my stretches before our commander took her place at the head of the eld, I heard a deep growl resigning behind me. I turned to see Cameron with steamy breath hung out of his arid nostrils in the cold morning air. His dark eyes were trained on me, glowing with his beast right at the surface.

It didn't register with me until he was just 10 feet away the reason why he was acting so hostile. As he came close, the others on the eld parted to make a path for him, his scent washed over me and those dreaded words slipped from my lips before I could stop them.

Mate.

That was something I never desired to be.

It was another three months until we were mated. He wanted to wait for some reason, and his mother thought it best, since I was a warrior and needed time to be groomed to be the submissive luna they expected me to be.

Now, a year later, I feel trapped on the other side of this window, the world outside looking so much more appealing than my fate to my Alpha mate.

I turned away from the window without another glance at Cameron. Cortina is still whimpering and wanting her mate. Watching him stare at the asses of others would do her no good.

At least our beasts get along. That is really the only thing keeping me here at this point. Cortina's connection to Cameron's wolf, Rome.

Rome, unlike his human counterpart, seems to actually like his mate. When they go for their weekly runs every weekend, Rome is playful and attentive. He's sweet. All the things Cameron is not. Cortina loves her half of our pairing. I can't stand mine. I dislike not only Cameron, but the entire Alpha family now too.

"Chloe!" My mother-in-law, Luna Klarissa Haine, yelled at me as I was getting out of the bath.

I rolled my eyes, hearing her pace around my bedroom, not bothering to answer her call. She would barge into the bathroom any moment anyway. There was no point.

As if on cue, she swung open the French doors and gasped as if she was completely caught off guard at seeing me naked in my own bathroom.

Clutching her chest, she simpers, "Why, my goddess. How can you still be indecent at this hour?"

"At this hour?" I checked the clock on the counter. It isn't even eight yet.

"Yes, well, come, child. Hurry and dress. Ready yourself. There are to be visitors this evening, and as future luna, there is a lot to prepare."

"Visitors?" I dried my hair with a towel, then walked into the massive closet, mostly lled with Cameron's things, to get a pair of underwear and my bra. My clothes took up one small corner of my side. His are overwring on his, stuffed to the brim thanks to his mother's frequent shopping trips for him.

As I was about to pull on a pair of jeans, she stopped me.

"Oh, no. Not that one, Chloe, dear. It's much too informal for a luna." She sighed deeply, shaking her head. "My, my. If only you had parents to teach you such things, it would have made my life so much easier."

Cortina huffs at the reminder angrily as I grit my teeth, standing back as Luna Klarissa picked out an outfit she deemed more fitting.

A dress. A boxy, a-line dress in blood red.

Figures. Red is the pack color after all.

The rest of the day was lled with the endless tasks of getting ready for a stiff dinner with a visiting alpha and his family. His daughter is about my age, and I'm reminded multiple times that Luna Klarissa was hoping she would turn out to be Cameron's mate. She didn't say it, but I could tell she was thinking, not a classless orphan like me.

Cameron didn't show himself to me the entire day until I was back in our bathroom, changing into a formal gown his mother had again picked out. A gown that I found wildly impractical with its tight fit and the way it restricted my leg movement, despite the slit up the back of it. The neckline was stiff, but plunged almost to my belly button. It reminded me of a tacky corset with its strapless design and wireframe. She had it read with heels that looked far too high to walk in. It looked like something she would wear to a cocktail party. Not my style at all. I was pinning my hair up on one side, showing my mark on my neck like I had been instructed to do, declaring my ownership to Cameron, when he came up from behind me with a disgruntled look on his face.

His eyes roamed my body, looking full of disapproval.

"Your mother picked this out. Not me. If you don't like it, take it up with her."

His lips curled in disdain, but he didn't say a word. He just turned towards the shower and stripped out of his clothes.

I hurried out of the bathroom, not wanting to be in an enclosed space with the man after all the talk from his mom about how he should have been mated to someone else.

I wish he was. Then I could be enjoying my evening with the other warrior women in the annex on the west wing of the packhouse instead of enduring what was already set to be an uncomfortable night.

I made my way down to the foyer, standing patiently off to the side to wait and welcome our guests. I was the first one down, Alpha Carlton and Luna Klarissa in their suite getting ready as well. The alpha family, vain as could be, always took far too long to ready themselves. When you are the utmost authority in a pack, making others wait for you isn't considered rude. It's your right. At least that is what they thought.

To my dismay, the guests arrived early, and I was the only one there welcoming the visiting Alpha couple, Marvin and Bernice Wright, and their son and daughter, Kevin and Odette.