



# Omega On The Run (Love Sync Mates Season Two)

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**Category:** LGBT+

**Description:** Running from one fate will sometimes lead you to the one you were meant for.

Jamie didn't believe his family would enforce the twenty-one and mated tradition that had long been the way of their pack. But as one of the few eligible omegas in the region, he was the next in line to be betrothed to the alpha's eldest son, despite the unexplained disappearances of the man's previous two omegas. With no one willing to help him from within the pack, he has no choice but to run.

Cameron is known across the nation as one of the top trackers for hire. As an unmated alpha, he has the freedom to leave home on a moment's notice and track down anyone, anywhere. When he gets the call to find an omega on the run from his family because of a simple misunderstanding, he quickly jumps into gear. It's not safe for omegas to be out in the world on their own, and he puts all his resources into finding Jamie.

What neither of the shifters expect is that their wolves would find each other first along the way and declare the reality that neither man is ready to accept.

**Total Pages (Source):** 13

1

JAMIE

I zipped up my backpack, annoyed that the fabric was straining so hard. “Come on, baby. Don’t burst on me now.” Maybe there were a few too many articles of clothing shoved in there. But I didn’t have time to pack efficiently. My heart was hammering at the mere thought of leaving, but the rhythm it beat out spelled freedom—not fear.

The moon was shining bright, announcing my window of opportunity. If I didn’t go for it now, I might not ever get the chance again. I’d always felt more alive when I was outside and running in the moonlight, but tonight, it meant even more. It was urging me to save myself.

Turning twenty-one was a milestone I had been looking forward to since I was a pup. There were obvious perks that came with maturity, but in our pack, it was officially the age for mating. We were expected to find a mate, settle down, and start contributing new pups to the community. In theory, it was exciting. But as the pack numbers started to dwindle, the elders got nervous.

And fear encouraged people to make bad decisions.

When my dad or the elders told me to “find a mate by twenty-one or we’ll find one for you,” I brushed it off as dramatic nonsense. It was laughable. At least, I always thought it was. But as my birthday approached, I realized my family wasn’t as progressive as I thought they were. They kept talking about traditional values and putting “pack over person.”

The mating law had never actually been enforced, that I knew of.

Unfortunately, I was the omega the pack was making an example out of. Unbeknownst to me, my dad pimped me out to an eligible alpha. Of course, it wasn't just any alpha. They aimed high and chose to hitch my wagon to Roderick Northpaw, our Alpha's eldest son.

Fucking, Roderick. Just thinking his name made me shudder. There was no way I'd allow myself to be alone in a room with him, much less marry the douche.

That dude had all the charm of a buzzing gnat in your ear that you wanted to squish. He had been mated in the past and had several pups, but all of his previous omegas had vanished without a trace. Whispers flitted through the pack about what had happened to them but no one knew for sure. Some said the omegas probably couldn't stand him and ran away, but there were also much darker rumors.

Either way, I wasn't gonna stick around and find out. I didn't have a lot of life goals but ending up as a cautionary tale for generations to come wasn't gonna be my legacy. Not if I could help it, anyway.

Holding my breath, I slipped my bag over my arm and opened my bedroom door. It creaked softly as I pulled on it, but no one in the house stirred. Everyone was still asleep as I crept down the hallway. It was easy to avoid the floorboards that always squeaked because I knew this place like the back of my hand.

The image of Roderick's smug smile as he talked down to everyone kept me moving forward. He was someone who expected the world to kneel at his feet because his daddy was the big bad Alpha. If only Daddy could buy him a better personality.

Roderick was one of the few pack mates who made a chill race down my spine any time we crossed paths.

Despite having broad shoulders and a face that some would swoon over, any flicker of attraction I might have previously had was doused by the reality of who he was. Power tripping with no actual power was a huge turn-off. And his sense of entitlement was disgusting to anyone who met him.

As I reached the back door of the home where I grew up, I had a moment of hesitation. Leaving now would mean never coming back. Never seeing my family again. But they were the ones who betrothed me to a man who didn't have a decent track record for keeping his mates around...so I couldn't trust them anymore.

I had to make the right decision for myself.

I eased the door open and froze at the faint groaning sound it made. Oops. Forgot about that. Then again, I was rarely the only person awake in my house. After pausing to listen for any indication that someone was awake, I slipped out the door. Carrying just my backpack filled with whatever I could grab that felt necessary for survival, I started walking toward the treeline.

The forest beckoned me with promises of sanctuary, but I couldn't shift yet. I needed to put some distance between myself and my pack so they didn't sense where I was heading. I didn't have a solid plan of where that was, but as long as I stayed under the protection of the forest, I'd get far enough away to start fresh.

I'd truly believed my entire future was over when my dad announced I was scheduled to marry Roderick the following week. But that would never happen. I'd attempt to swim across the ocean before I let that asshole anywhere near me. I would not end up like those omegas before me who had fallen for his fake charm and chiseled jaw. I wouldn't become one more missing omega people just quietly forgot about.

When I was finally far enough that my old pack wouldn't be able to track me down, I shifted into my fur and really started to run. The freedom that came with rearranging

bones and sinew and...power was something I would never tire of.

With my bag still strapped around my torso, I sprinted over branches and roots until I decided to hop in the river for a drink and to cool off. My senses were amplified as I stayed alert for any incoming threat. It was possible no one had noticed I was missing yet, so I wasn't too concerned. Then again, I had no idea what lengths Roderick would go to in order to reclaim what he believed was his.

The underlying fear chased me through the waters and then the underbrush again, nipping at my heels as I tried to get farther away. Yet with each leap and bound, I felt like I was shedding the weight of unwanted expectations and a pack that never truly cared about me.

I didn't know where I was going, but it didn't matter. Any place Roderick wasn't was good enough for me. I would never settle for a partner I didn't trust, especially not as part of a tradition I didn't believe in. My heartbeat synced up with the rhythm of my paws pounding over the earth.

I was born an omega, but I refused to let anyone control me. My story wouldn't be a tragedy. I didn't expect it to have a happy ending, but I did expect to survive. Maybe I'd even thrive on my own.

Lone wolves had a hard life, but I wasn't afraid of living hard.

As the sun climbed higher in the sky, my limbs grew heavy and I needed to rest. I shifted back into my skin and climbed a tree. The forest had always been my safe place and that hadn't changed. I just needed some rest and then I'd continue my journey to my new life.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 7:53 am*

2

CAMERON

I hadn't shaved in a week. That was how long I'd been in the rundown pay-by-the-hour motel, pretending it was the same as being on the road. It wasn't, but the mattress took my quarters all the same. The whole room vibrated with the suggestion that I wasn't alone, even though I was.

I always was.

My last job had worn on me more than usual, and I just needed a little more time. I should have gone home days ago, but there wasn't anything waiting for me in my depressing little apartment. At least at the motel, I had the freeview hour on the porno channel to keep me company. It wasn't particularly exciting, but the sanitized and painfully vanilla sex on the TV lulled me into a sense of comfort.

Apparently, I liked knowing other people had it just as bad as me.

I shifted on the bed and listened to the low whirl of the magic fingers that tried to coax life back into my weary limbs. Hell, I hadn't even left the room in two days thanks to the power of food-delivery apps.

Life on the road used to be fun and exhilarating, but lately, it just felt sad. I didn't want to go out anymore, but I also didn't want to go home. Or maybe I just didn't know where home was these days. The futon in my crappy apartment was about as far from homey as I could imagine.

My stomach growled when I glanced at the empty Pop-Tarts box on the dresser. Maybe some fresh air and a walk to the store would do me some good. I kicked my legs over the side of the bed and sighed. The guys back at the pack would laugh if they could see me now. I'd never felt quite so pathetic. Get your shit together, dude!

Grrr . My wolf agreed.

Before I could talk myself out of it, I stripped down to a pair of workout shorts and walked barefoot around the back of the motel and slipped into the treeline. Once I was out of sight of any humans, I shifted into my fur and started running.

My last job didn't give me much closure, and it was still bothering me. I hated feeling like I'd let my clients down. I also hated knowing there was a missing shifter out there who might be in trouble, and I just couldn't find him. His family had hired me because I was considered one of the top trackers in the country. And a few times, I'd gotten close. But then his scent had gone cold and I just never got it back.

The only thing that allowed me to sleep at night was that the lost trail felt intentional. Like he just didn't want to be found. And that made perfect sense to me. There were good and bad packs all around the world. And if his wasn't good—and many weren't—I didn't want to drag him back to an unhealthy environment.

So I took my base fee and walked away.

Branches cracked under my paws as the sounds of the night filled my senses. Running as my wolf was always relaxing and the best way for me to clear my head.

I pushed harder. Faster. Not slowing down until my muscles were shaky, and I knew if I didn't turn around, I'd be sleeping under a tree for the night. I didn't mind sleeping in my fur deeper in the woods, but I was too close to the city. Hikers and bikers would likely be out at dawn with their dogs, and I hated fighting off horny

rottweilers who were looking to get lucky.

It took a few more hours, but I finally made it back to the motel before the sun came up and collapsed onto the bed, still sweaty and dirty from my run. It didn't matter, though. No one would see me until I dragged my sorry ass out of bed to get food. I'd shower then.

My eyes quickly drifted shut and they didn't open again until my phone rang, startling me out of the best dream I'd had in a long time. A dream that involved a sweet omega who looked at me like I wasn't some loser tracker who'd lost his ability to track.

The damn thing had bounced itself off the comforter and was vibrating on the floor, keeping time like the world's saddest maraca. I almost rolled off the bed reaching for it but finally grabbed it and hit the call button. "Yeah."

"Excuse me but I'm looking for Cameron Windridge. The tracker."

No one called me Cameron unless it was for a job. "That's me."

"Hi, Mr. Windridge. I'm James White Senior. I'd like to hire you. My omega... Um, my son. My omega son. He's missing. Can you help?" The guy on the other end of the line choked on a sob and then started talking faster, desperate for me to hear him spill it all out in a single breath. "Jamie ran away two days ago. He was about to be mated to a nice young man. Roderick Northpaw is a successful alpha who is willing to take on my Jamie. Unfortunately, my son seems to have gotten cold feet, but he doesn't know how to be on his own. He needs help. Will you help us find him?"

I threw my head back and sighed into the phone. I wasn't ready to get back out there, but I also couldn't ignore this desperate family looking for their son. "If it's just cold feet, he'll probably be back. Maybe give him a few more days."



As much as I wanted to take this man's word at face value, I'd heard the same thing before. Just because the kid's family wanted him back didn't mean I should be the one to find him. Chances were slim that it was just cold feet that made him run.

If he'd been betrothed to an alpha he wasn't in love with, he might have felt like running was his only option. Lots of packs still had old-fashioned ideologies about how to keep bloodlines strong. Unfortunately, they didn't always prioritize keeping omegas safe with the same commitment.

"What's the deal with this alpha he's supposed to mate with? Why isn't Northpaw the one calling me?" I'd heard about plenty of bad alphas over the years, and no one was worse than Northpaw. But these old-school packs didn't always care about safety over prestige.

"He's worried sick, but... Well, I'm his father. It's my responsibility to get my boy home. Will you help or not?"

I kept the phone against my ear, trying to pretend I had the energy to say no. But I couldn't do that no matter how badly I wanted to. "Yeah, I'll see what I can do. Send me a photo and as many identifying details as you can think of. I'll also need to pick up some of his clothing. Socks. Pillowcase. Stuff with his scent on it."

"Of course. Thank you." His voice cracked, and then he got quiet. "It was all my fault that he ran. I put too much pressure on him to save the family. I just want him back before he gets hurt."

How many times had I heard that plea from someone who'd dowried an omega to fucking Roderick Northpaw or someone like him? He had a way of misplacing his omegas after they stopped putting up with his shit. I was happy to know his reputation was finally starting to make omegas think twice about mating with him. If only this family had been so smart.

I'd tracked down half a dozen omegas who'd run from Northpaw over the past five years. Why the hell did anyone want to subject someone they cared about to that asshole? Then again, maybe I was the asshole for continuing to hunt down people who were better left in hiding.

As soon as I disconnected the call, a flood of messages came through with photos, stats, and details about Jamie White. No part of me was excited to take this case, but a few grand to just make sure the kid was safe and then tell his family I couldn't find him wasn't a bad gig.

Ten minutes later, I was drying off from a shower and packing up my stuff. It was time to get out of there anyway. Time to get back to the real world. And that world now included a stop at the omega's home to pick up some of his personal items so I could track his scent.

His pack was about four hours away, but it wasn't like I had anything better to do with my time than to make the drive.

JAMIE

The short-term rental I was able to book on my phone looked like a good place to be murdered.

From the outside, it had all the makings of a Dateline episode. A lonely stretch of dirt road, the occasional abandoned car, and several rundown little bungalows. If I were in a movie, a dramatic string orchestra would have been losing its shit the moment I showed up. As it was, I arrived to depressing silence that made me feel like the last living person on earth.

My phone said it was almost eleven but it felt much later, and the growling of my stomach reminded me I hadn't eaten since I came across a blueberry bush early in the morning. I wondered if I could get a pizza delivered to the desolate outskirts of Hell?

The name of the cabin was Grain Silo, and I thought the owner was being creative. But as I crept closer to the front door, I realized the place had clearly been built for holding corn or oats or pretty much anything other than me. It was all part of the adventure...or so I tried to convince myself so I didn't freak out.

The code on the door worked on my first try, and the door lock instantly released. As I pushed open the door, I half expected to find some weirdo staring back with an axe. Or a banjo.

When I flipped on the light, I was still alone, so I went inside and grabbed the list of

amenities on the entry table, mostly to see what it was missing. There was electricity, an outhouse, and an outdoor shower, which was really just a fancy way of saying this place was completely uninhabitable in the cold. Good thing I had fur to keep me warm or I'd probably freeze.

My breath fogged out, and I knew shifting would need to happen sooner rather than later.

But before that, I pulled out a few protein bars from my bag and unpacked my laptop and some clothes. If I slept on them, they'd be warm when I needed to put them on again.

When I powered up my laptop, I was surprised to see a new email in my business inbox. It was from someone named Cameron and had been received just a few minutes ago. Cameron's message was in all caps, which usually meant an older guy or one who was very alpha . He needed a website for his new business.

Apparently, the random ads I'd run for Jamie's Digital Designs were working. He wanted the site finished in less than a week and a budget of a thousand bucks. That was doable, for sure.

I fired back a response with a million questions about the specific content he needed. Honestly, I was terrified Cameron might be someone who knew me or Roderick and was trying to lure me out of hiding. It was exactly the kind of dick move he would make, and I didn't want to be stupid enough to fall for it.

The next email from Cameron came in less than five minutes later. He said he was starting up a private investigators firm and was hoping I could start working with him tomorrow. He was in the city and could meet with me over lunch to hand over all the files.

Hand over digital files in person? Who the hell was this guy? When I asked him to just send a link to his cloud storage drive so I could grab everything remotely, he seemed to have no idea what I was talking about.

Great. A Boomer looking for a website. Would he ask for a flashing “Under Construction” gif with a little guy holding a shovel too?

I wanted to tell him we weren’t a good match, but having enough cash to stay in the city sounded pretty good. And no one from my pack would want to meet me there. They’d want to meet me somewhere remote, like the grain silo I was isolated in, so they could take me by force if needed. And they would definitely need to tie me up and incapacitate me if they tried to get me to go back to Roderick.

My fingers shook so much from the cold that typing was more of a challenge than it should have been. A room with decent coffee, indoor plumbing, and a million alphas who weren’t after me was my best next move.

After a quick search of coffee shops, I wrote back to tell him I’d meet him at the Starbucks in the central train station at 4PM, then I powered down the laptop and shifted into my fur. My body temp was higher as a wolf, and the fur kept me nice and toasty in this miserable tin can. At least it was only my miserable tin can for a few more hours before I headed to the city to collect my next paycheck.

Maybe I’d stay just long enough to get the website done and keep moving. Or maybe I’d stay longer. It was easier to stay hidden in plain sight if there were lots of crowds around. And my scent would be easier to mask. As long as I wasn’t in heat, I’d be fine. And since I’d never actually gone into heat before, I didn’t expect it to be an issue anymore.

I could make it on my own. This new life didn’t have to be a punishment for running. It could be my reward for being brave. Without worrying about pack rules or my

family making decisions for me, I could just be me. Jamie.

Jamie's Digital Designs would finally be my priority and actually pay my bills. It would allow me some freedom to live by my own rules.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 7:53 am*

4

### CAMERON

When I rolled up to the White family home, I knew something was off. There was a dark aura that made me want to get the hell out of there. James Senior did his best to convince me that his son was better off with his family and his new alpha, Rod Northpaw.

But I wasn't that stupid.

I was polite as I walked through the house and into Jamie's bedroom. He'd left everything neat and clean, so I pulled a business card off his desk and grabbed his pillowcase and a heavy coat from his closet, something I knew probably hadn't been washed since he last wore it. Then I headed out with a few school photos and handwriting samples from the guy.

"I'll call as soon as I know anything." I nodded to Mr. White and got the hell out of dodge.

As soon as I was a good distance from the pack lands, I pulled over and inspected the business card I'd pocketed from Jamie's desk. Jamie's Digital Designs. Logos. Websites. Collateral.

Okay, so Jamie had a design business. That could work in my favor. It was a bit of a longshot, but I sent an email and told him I was looking for a website.

The cab of my car was already saturated with the scent of the omega, but I grabbed the pillowcase and took a big whiff. He smelled surprisingly...good. Unlike anything I'd scented before. Weird.

Suddenly, being cooped up didn't work for me, so I headed to a rest stop a few miles off the highway and went for a run. My wolf needed some space, and I needed to think. There was no trace of the omega in the direction I was running, so I crossed a river and doubled back on the other side.

I didn't realize how long I'd been gone, but it was after ten at night when I got back to my car. The first thing I did was check to see if Jamie had responded, but there was no message. "Fuck!" I had no service, and the email was still sitting in my outbox.

With an annoyed sigh, I started the engine and headed to the nearest town. Maybe he'd respond in the morning. If not, I'd run in the opposite direction I went tonight and create a perimeter until I picked up his scent. He was believed to have left on foot, so tracking him would be easy enough now that I knew what I was looking for.

There was a vacancy sign at a no-tell motel, so I got myself a room for the night. Before stripping out of my clothes and taking a shower, I checked my email one last time and saw a response from Jamie's Digital Designs. That was quick.

I was careful not to sound too eager when I responded to a bunch of questions about the job. Fortunately, I really did need a new website for my tracking services, so his questions were all things I'd already put some thought into. After a few messages back and forth, he finally sent me the address of a Starbucks and said he'd meet me there.

For the first time in days...maybe even weeks, I felt excited. Like this was the beginning of something way more interesting than just meeting up with an omega on the run.



After cleaning up and eating a bag of chips and some jerky from the vending machine, I passed out with the scent of my newest target filling my mind.

The next morning, I left early for the long drive to the west. There were a few mountain ranges and valleys I had to pass to get to the city he wanted to meet me in. The kid was smart to choose a place with a lot of people and witnesses. Unfortunately, it also meant a lot of smells to contend with. If he got cagey and bailed, I'd be hard-pressed to catch his scent before he was miles away.

The hum of the highway filled the silence when the radio didn't have a frequency and there was only static coming through the speakers. The drive allowed me time to come up with a plan for how to approach the weary omega. I'd get to the coffee shop early, order a variety of food, and help him figure out his next move. If he wanted to go back home, I'd take him back. But if he needed help to start over somewhere safe, I'd do my best to help him with that too. Either way, I just needed to get to him and let him know he had someone in his corner.

I was less than fifty miles away when fate stepped in and derailed everything I'd been plotting. While on a windy road in the middle of a snow-covered mountain pass, my car let out a sputtering groan and decided to break down in the most isolated location possible. I was barely able to roll off the road onto the shoulder before it just stopped moving and the steering wheel locked up. "You've got to be kidding me!" I slapped the wheel and then bounced my forehead off it. I still had a few hours before I needed to meet him, and if I ran at full speed to avoid humans, I might make it in time.

Knowing I didn't have time to sulk about my shitty luck, I gathered my gear and stashed it in the trunk. My phone didn't have a signal, so with no way to call for assistance and a growing irritability bubbling up inside me, I stripped down to bare skin. I rolled my clothes into my heavy coat and then shifted, letting my wolf emerge.

Instantly, my senses sharpened and the world around me transformed into a bouquet

of aromas that I'd missed as a human. Deep in the woods, my wolf was the more powerful tracker, so I let him take over, propelling us forward by instincts that flowed deep in our veins.

My heart pounded with a mix of adrenaline as I navigated through the underbrush with ease and precision. As I ran, the forest blurred into streaks of greens and browns. I was focused on getting to the city when a scent hit me and made my wolf stumble to a stop. It was a familiar and unexpected aroma that was entirely unmistakable. Jamie.

Why the hell was he out here, far away from the city we were supposed to be meeting in?

I circled around cautiously, each step deliberate and measured to make sure I didn't rustle leaves or snap a twig. Jamie obviously wasn't as far away as I'd assumed, which was worrisome. Was he hurt or in danger and had resorted to hiding in the wilderness where he and his wolf would be safe?

Scanning the terrain carefully for threats, I considered my next move. Every muscle in my body was taut and primed for action as I edged forward. With a deep inhale, I was able to pinpoint the exact direction of his trail. The cool mountain air filled my lungs as I prepared to intervene.

I could practically hear my pulse pounding in sync with my heart as I inched closer to the scent that unmistakably belonged to the subject of my manhunt.

There was an outcropping of rocks up ahead with a clear opening in the ground. A small cave or den was exposed, and that's where Jamie's scent was concentrated. He was in there.

As I edged forward, the pull to find him and make sure he was safe changed from a financial obligation to...something more.

Something that felt urgent and desperate inside of me.

Something I'd never felt before.

5

JAMIE

Everything seemed to be going great.

My paws chewed up the trail as I sped through the trees on my way to the city. I was starting to feel confident that I'd be okay after all. This job would lead to others and I'd be just fine on my own.

The pack wouldn't find me. Roderick wouldn't find me. And I could start a new life. At least, that's what would've happened if I wasn't so careless.

The air was crisp and thin as I pulled in deep breaths. My wolf surged ahead, eager to make it to our meeting. And then the edges of my vision started to blur as I skidded down an embankment.

We didn't want to slow down and lose the head start we'd gotten, but we couldn't run at that pace forever. Fatigue pushed against my mind and my muscles, dulling the caution I usually exercised when running in unfamiliar territory.

Letting my instincts drive me, we veered toward the creek bed where the water would help smother my scent. My wolf leapt between the boulders, and for a moment, I felt almost safe. Until we started moving again and the ground snatched me up.

The sharp bite of the metal around my left ankle was instant and all-consuming.

I let out a sound that was more human than wolf as I yanked at my leg. But instead of releasing me, the snare clamped down harder. Thick wire twisted deep into my skin, staining my fur with bright red blood.

Panic clouded my judgment as my wolf thrashed and tugged. The trap tightened into my wound, but I didn't care about the pain. I only cared about getting free. Roderick was bad, but there were men—human and shifters—much worse than him.

My body writhed to tear my leg free, but every movement sent a fresh wave of agony up my spine. I was as good as dead if I didn't get out of this wretched thing.

I was starting to feel lightheaded as my body started to give up, but my wolf refused to. He was weak but wouldn't ever let me down.

Then, suddenly, my leg tore free in a mess of fur and flesh as pain radiated through me, burning me out from the inside out. My wolf wanted to howl, but I choked him back as we limped away from the trap. We needed to put some distance between us and whoever had set it.

Panic and pain rose in me like bile, but I swallowed it all back down. I was running out of time, and my leg wouldn't carry me far enough to be truly safe. The forest closed in on us, getting darker until I thought maybe my leg would give out altogether.

And then I saw it.

A dark hole in an outcropping of rocks and brush. There weren't any fresh scents in the area, so I assumed it was an abandoned bear den that would be my best chance at staying alive. It wasn't a great chance, but it was all I had.

The den was more of a hole in the ground than anything, but it might as well have

been a luxury resort. I crawled inside and curled up in a ball on the dirt and stone floor.

For a moment, all the pain I'd been feeling faded to a dull throb. My injury hadn't killed me yet, but the day was young. Maybe I'd live long enough to bleed out.

It was pathetic to continue clinging to hope even as the rest of me knew I was fucked. This wasn't how it was supposed to end, but nothing in my life was the way it was supposed to be. This was just one more reality gone wrong.

I should have been on my way to meet a new client who didn't care about my pack or Roderick or the fucking betrothal that had ruined my life.

I should have been starting fresh in a safe and comfortable new home. Not alone in a hole, bleeding to death in the dark.

Giving in to the darkness, I shut my eyes and let the world fade for a final time.

Some time later, I woke up to the throbbing of my leg. It was bone-deep and insistent, clearly reminding me that some stitches and painkillers were in order.

Curious if I could hold any weight on it or maybe run on three legs, I tried to get up. But when I yelped in pain, a low and guttural growl sounded just outside the den. My wolf growled in response, a feeble attempt to try to echo the threat.

But I could barely move. I had no idea how long I'd been out, but clearly long enough to attract some company.

Now my safe little hole felt like a grave, and I wasn't sure if I should try to fight my way out or just give up. My heart was pounding as I waited for a rough hand to reach in and yank me out. I could almost picture Roderick standing there, smiling like the

asshole he was.

I wanted to face him with my head high—defiant till my last breath—but all I managed was a quiet whimper as my body sagged with pain and resignation.

When I finally saw some movement, it wasn't from the rough hand of a pack member.

A glowing white wolf blocked the entrance of the den, and my breath hitched. But he didn't look like he wanted to kill me. My nostrils flared, and I tried to sense the alpha's mind, but he wasn't part of my pack.

I'd never met him before.

A rogue wolf, perhaps. Or just a stranger out for a run who happened upon me.

Instead of lunging for me, the alpha shifted into an impressive mass of flesh and muscles as he crouched just inside the den. "Jamie, you don't have to be afraid. I'm not gonna hurt you."

I shouldn't have trusted this stranger so easily, but I was completely at his mercy and trust was the only thing I could offer. I shifted too, cowering in a ball in the corner. "Who are you?"

"I'm Cameron Windridge." He scooted in closer and then opened a bundle of clothes I hadn't noticed at his feet. "I'm the private investigator you're supposed to be meeting today."

My eyes were glued to him as he pulled on a pair of pants and then held the jacket up toward me. "What's that for?"

“For you.” He tossed the jacket so it landed on my body, almost completely covering my small frame. “Put it on, and I’ll take a look at your leg.”

His reminder of my injury seemed to reawaken the intense pain as jolts of fire shot through me. “Did Roderick send you?” I shrugged into the jacket because I was cold without my fur and did my best to cover myself while keeping my left leg extended in front of me.

“No, your father did.”

I recoiled, almost more afraid of that response. Being sold off to that awful man by my own father again was just too much for me to handle. “Please, no.”

He held up a hand to calm me. “Don’t worry, kid. I’m not sending you back. I know what kind of alpha Northpaw is. I don’t blame you for not wanting anything to do with him.”

My shoulders relaxed, and I leaned heavily against the wall of the den. “So why are you here?”

He held his hand over my foot, waiting for permission to take a closer look. “May I?”

I nodded and clenched my jaw as tight as my eyelids as I waited for more pain to come.

But it didn’t. All I felt was a soothing fingertip trail around my ankle before gently prodding the skin until I flinched.

“I don’t think it’s broken, but you’ll need stitches.” He grabbed a tie from his bundle and wrapped it around my gash a few times before tying it off. “Do you think you can walk or shall I carry you?”



My jaw dropped open, and I was tempted to let him carry me. But I was still a naked omega with an unmated alpha who smelled ridiculously good, so I knew that was a bad idea. “I can walk, I think.”

He nodded and looked around. “Is that backpack all you have?”

“Yeah.” I’d barely kept that attached to me after the snare, but I hadn’t lost everything. Yet. “Where are we going?”

He inhaled heavily and then rocked back on his heels. “My car broke down, but I have a first-aid kit in it. I can get you safely to the car, and then I’ll run back to call for a tow truck.”

It wasn’t a great plan, but it was better than anything I could come up with, so I held my breath and pushed forward onto my hands and knees, poised to crawl out of the small hole. “Okay, then. Let’s get going.”

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 7:53 am*

6

CAMERON

“Up you go.” Jamie felt feather-light in my arms when I finally put us both out of misery and decided to carry him.

“I can walk.” He was a stubborn one, that’s for sure. He tried to hobble beside me for almost a mile, but we needed to move faster. It was cold, and although he’d slipped on a pair of sweatpants from his pack, he was barefoot and still bleeding.

“No, you can’t.” I held him close and started the long climb back, careful not to jar his ankle too much.

He dozed off after a few minutes of rocking against me, and when a group of squawking birds startled him away, he immediately panicked and tried to climb out of my arms. “Stop. No!”

“It’s me, Jamie.” I spoke softly, doing my best to remind him that he was safe with me. “I’ve got you.”

The fight went out of him and he relaxed into me. For a second there, I thought he might leap out of my arms and bolt on me, but he just sagged and held on tighter. “Cameron?”

“That’s right.” Hearing him say my name like it was the answer to his prayers filled me with an inappropriate amount of joy and relief. “You’re safe now.”

I kept moving, my legs finding their own rhythm as the path twisted ahead of us through the thickening trees.

My phone had been utterly useless in my pocket for miles, but as soon as we hit the ridge, a familiar beep confirmed I had a signal. Careful not to jostle Jamie too much, I fumbled in my pocket and nearly dropped the damn thing over the cliff.

Please work. Please work. Please work.

With a deep breath, I hit the power button and didn't exhale until the screen flared to life and two bars glowed in the connection light.

Jamie shifted in my arms and whimpered. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing, kid. My phone's working, so I'm gonna call roadside service."

He stiffened in my arms and then cocked his head back to look at me. "What?"

I chuckled as I showed him the screen to my warranty service provider. "A tow truck. My car took a shit on the way to see you. We need help getting out of here."

The dispatcher who took the call sounded cheery and nice as I did my best to explain where we were and what we needed.

"Got a car stuck on the side of the road." I rattled off the details while the signal held and did my best to explain where I'd left my car. They were at least an hour out, so I hoped we wouldn't have to wait too long after getting there since Jamie needed food and shelter.

He squirmed against me as I finished the call. Poor kid probably didn't know if he could fully trust me, but I was the only option he had. "The longer we're out here, the

worse it's gonna get."

"Yeah, I know." He sighed as I tucked the phone back into my pocket and scooped him up again.

I was drenched with sweat, but there was no way I was stopping now.

We were almost there.

The tow truck was already putting my car on the hooks when we broke through the tree line. Jamie was still curled up in my arms as I closed the distance to the back of the vehicle where I'd stashed all my stuff.

"Hey there. I'm Cameron Windridge. This is my car."

The driver nodded, but his eyes were glued to the omega in my arms. "Everything okay?"

"Yeah, little hiking accident. We just need a ride into town so we can rest up while the car gets fixed."

He stared at me for a moment before nodding. "Yeah, hop in the cab. I'm almost done here."

"Just need to get my bag." I popped the trunk open with one hand, still balancing Jamie against me. The bags were a little awkward to hold, but as soon as I had what we needed, we went straight to the cab of the tow truck and climbed inside. Jamie scooted to the middle and shivered as I stripped off his wet clothes and put him in clean clothes.

Exhausted in every sense of the word, Jamie was limp and pliant as I maneuvered

around him, keeping this as professional as possible while tamping down my extremely interested wolf. Not now, boy. He's not ours. This is a temporary setback.

Ours.

I scoffed and shook my head at the insistent voice in my head. We'll figure it out later. Just need to get his wounds cleaned and his body warm .

The peroxide I poured over his leg made him gasp, but he didn't flinch away from me.

I put a hand on his cheek, wiped a smear of dirt from under his eye. "Almost done." Those words were meant more as comfort than truth, but I truly hated causing even more pain to the sweet omega. "You're doing great. These butterfly stitches will keep the wound closed for now."

Jamie watched with curious eyes as I secured the adhesive strips to his skin and then ripped open a pack of gauze to keep them clean and dry. "Are you a doctor too?"

"Nah, just picked up a few things over the years." I was happy with the results then put a sock over his foot and climbed into the truck beside him. "We'll get rooms for tonight and I can take you to the city tomorrow, if that's where you want to go."

He nodded his head, too weary to do much more than blink at me.

I wanted to hold him until he understood that he didn't have to run or fight or disappear anymore. He could be safe with someone like me. Or...me. But I knew better than to think it would be that easy.

"Warm enough?" There was air blowing through the heater vents, but it was on low. "I can turn it up."

“I’m fine.” A shiver ran through him, and then he drifted off again.

I cranked up the heat as the truck thudded beneath us. My car was fully attached, so I quickly got into my own clothes and settled Jamie against my side. There was more space in the cab than I expected, but when the driver climbed into his side, I was grateful to have Jamie so close to me.

The driver kept sniffing the air like he was more interested in Jamie’s scent than he should have been.

While he drove us over the mountain pass, I watched the trees flash by and blur together in a way that was oddly settling. I’d always felt safe in the woods, and despite the day I’d had, that was as true as ever.

Jamie slept until a roadside motel came into view. As soon as I saw the flickering vacancy sign, I pointed to the window. “You can drop us off right there.”

“I’m gonna.” He hit his turn signal and slowed down. “The garage is about three blocks down on your right. I’ll leave your car there, but you’ll need to go in tomorrow to authorize whatever work they need to do.”

The driver left us in the motel parking lot with a business card and a charge slip and then took off down the road.

Jamie was able to hobble against me as we went toward the office, but I kept one arm around his waist and the other holding all our bags.

“I think I can walk on my own.” His voice was hoarse but steady and that was a relief.

“I know.” I gave him a little squeeze and steered him toward the glass door. “Humor

me.”

He rolled his eyes, but let me steer him through the door without another word. The office smelled like stale smoke and lemon cleaner, and the guy behind the counter barely looked up when we went in. “What can I do for you?”

“We need a room.” I kept Jamie close, almost shielding him from the man’s hungry leer.

“Single or double?” He snapped his gum and squinted at a stack of papers like they were a mile away.

“Double.” I didn’t bother checking with Jamie. Even though he was leaning into me and his breath felt like a warm puff against my shoulder, that didn’t mean he wanted to share a bed with me.

He sighed and hit a few buttons on his ancient computer. “Only got a king left.”

“Yeah, fine.” I pulled a credit card out of my wallet and tossed it on the counter with my driver’s license. “Might be a couple days.”

He shook his head and pushed the key across the counter without taking his hand off it. “Cash only.”

I forked over enough to get us through the night, but I’d need to hit an ATM if my car needed longer than that.

As soon as I signed what I needed to sign, I grabbed the key in one hand and wrapped my arm behind Jamie then we made our way to room 5.

“Did you hear what he said about the room?” I tried to sound casual, but I was having

mixed feelings about the close quarters for the night.

“Yeah.” He stopped at the bottom of the stairs and looked at me. “It’s fine.”

“We’ll see if you’re still saying that tonight.” I winked and lifted him into my arms to carry him up the stairs to our room.

He didn’t argue, but there was new tension in his body. He was too still. Too quiet.

The room was on the second floor, and Jamie winced with every step I took. As soon as we got to the door, I quickly opened it and helped him limp inside. I looked around while he went straight to the bed.

“Not bad.” Jamie sat down and gave the mattress a test bounce. “Better than the ground.” His voice was strained, but he was projecting optimism, which was better than I could muster.

“Yeah. It’s fine.” I locked the door and sat in the chair to take off my boots. “A shower might be tough, but I can run a shallow bath and you can sit in with your ankle on the ledge.”

“Yeah, that sounds good. I ran through a river yesterday...or maybe the day before. Not sure anymore, but hot water sounds amazing.”

“I’m gonna rinse off while the water heats up and then I’ll fill the tub.” I reached for the remote and held it up. “Wanna watch TV?”

Jamie shrugged and nodded. “Yeah, I guess. Whatever’s on is fine.”

I flipped through the channels until I found some silly sitcom and then excused myself to the bathroom. I turned on the water and was glad I didn’t mind a cold



shower because it took a full five minutes to heat up. That was more than enough time for me to wash off and get the tub cleaned so I could start filling it for Jamie.

Despite only being gone a few minutes, when I went back into the room wearing just a pair of boxers, Jamie was passed out on the bed. I considered letting him sleep, but he was coated in dirt and blood, and I knew the bath would do him some good.

“Hey, there.” I sat beside him and gave his right calf a shake. “The bath is ready for you.”

He inhaled and opened his eyes. “Yeah, okay.”

I nodded and reached for his shoes. “Let me help you.” I expected him to tense up or maybe even push me away, but he didn’t resist at all. Maybe I was starting to grow on him. He was certainly having some kind of effect on me.

“Thanks.” He stretched out his arms and then sat up. “I’m so tired, but I also feel chilled, so I’ll just soak for a minute to warm up and then be right out.”

“Take your time.” I stood and helped him pull his shirt over his head. “I’ll help you inside and then be right out here if you need anything.”

A minute later, I was steadying Jamie against the bathroom wall and helping him out of his pants. I kept my eyes up as I lowered him into the hot water and put a towel under his calf so he could fully recline.

“This is so nice.” He closed his eyes and didn’t seem to have any qualms about his nudity. That wasn’t uncommon for those who grew up in packs and were used to seeing naked people every day, but as an unmated omega, he needed to be more aware of the dangers around him.

I wasn't a danger, per se, but I was an unfamiliar alpha who had needs. And by the state of his thickened cock pointing right out of the water, he had needs too. "I'll leave the door open. Just call me when you're ready to get out."

"Mm." He sighed and then sat up. "I'm gonna fall asleep if I don't hurry." He reached for a wash cloth and lathered it up with the small bar of soap I'd just used.

I took a step out but could see him through the reflection of the mirror as he quickly ran the towel over his body and then dunked his head to wet his hair. With exhaustion quickly setting in, I brushed my teeth until I heard the water drain from the tub. "You done?"

"Yeah." He pulled himself out by his arms and was about to hop up on one foot before I stepped in and grabbed him.

"I told you I'd help you get out." I held him up with one arm and shook out the towel I'd left on the hook. "Don't try to move until I get you dried off."

He smelled good as I rubbed the towel across his clean skin. Without the layers of nature coating his body, his natural scents came through, and they were fucking enticing. Not just the steam wafting off his skin but the distinct scent of arousal I knew was coating his backside.

Fuck. He was going to be the death of me.

"I'm sleepy."

"Me too." And horny. And weak. And fucking hungry for you, omega .

He slipped on some shorts but wouldn't let me put any other clothes on him because he said he was too hot. There wasn't any heat blowing into the room, but his skin was

still warm to the touch from his bath, so I tucked him into one side of the bed and stretched out on top of the covers beside him.

My plan had been to sleep in the chair or on the floor, but I couldn't bring myself to be that far away from him, and I figured a few layers of fabric between us would be enough to keep me from taking advantage of the boy.

I was wrong.

JAMIE

Sweat trickled over my ribs and the sheets twisted in a stranglehold that made it even harder to breathe. My skin felt both clammy and boiling hot. Something was very wrong. Every exhale was ragged and burned my throat like I hadn't had a drink in days.

My eyes popped open and the room spun as I tried to get a grip on what was happening to me.

Cameron. I'm with Cameron.

I rolled over and kicked wildly to untangle myself from the blankets. Even in just a pair of shorts, heat seemed to radiate off my skin.

And then the scent of alpha hit me like a brick and I gasped, looking for the man who had saved me. Every instinct in me told me to get up, but I couldn't make my body move.

My breathing was wild and shallow, like I couldn't pull enough air into my lungs. I felt lightheaded and disoriented until I finally locked in on the white wolf standing at the far end of the room. "Cameron?"

He watched me with a nervous focus, like he wasn't sure if he should bolt or shift. Actually, why wasn't he in his skin? Was there a threat? That thought brought on a

new anxiety. “What’s wrong?” I pulled the covers over me and clutched at my stomach at the same time. A sharp pain ran up my spine as I pulled my knees to my chest.

Cameron started pacing back and forth across the room.

“Did he find us?” I had to know what was so upsetting. Cameron wasn’t like that when we went to sleep, and I couldn’t take not knowing what had changed. “Are we in danger?”

The white wolf looked back at me and shook his head. His blue eyes were pinned to me like I was the only thing in the room. Which was almost more disturbing because of how worried he looked.

It made me even more frantic. More itchy. More frustrated.

I kicked off the blankets, hoping the cooler air would help me breathe. “Did something happen?” My voice came out desperate, like it was coming from someone else. Someone just as confused as me.

After a few more tense moments, Cameron stopped at the end of the bed and shifted into his skin. I watched intently as he grabbed a pair of pants and stepped into them before finally facing me.

“You’re in heat, Jamie.” His voice was strained and low, like it hurt to push the words out.

He reached for a shirt and pulled it on over his head. “I’ll be outside.”

Before he got to the door, I stopped him, unable to let him go. “No, Cameron.” I needed help before my skin peeled right off my bones. “Please don’t go.”

Cameron sucked in a deep breath and looked back at me. His expression was unreadable, but everything else about him was tight and restrained. "Jamie."

"Help me." I reached toward him like I could pull him closer despite the half-dozen feet between us. "It hurts." The ache was everywhere, and I felt like I was dying.

Cameron exhaled heavily, like he was torn between staying and going. After a second, he looked at me over his shoulder. "Are you sure?"

"Yes." I didn't know exactly what I needed, but my wolf told me my mate would fix everything. "Yes."

His eyes were dark and deep as they bored into me. Silence hung between us for a moment before Cameron pulled his shirt over his head and stepped up to the side of the bed. "Tell me what you need."

Relief washed over me in one crashing wave after another. I'd never had a full heat before, and this was way worse than anyone had ever described. Having a strong and sexy alpha like Cameron willing to help me through it was a dream come true. Maybe too good to be true. "I don't know." I grabbed my shorts and pulled them down to my knees. "Everything, I think. Just make it better."

The corner of his mouth turned up in a crooked grin. "You need a knot, baby?" He dropped his pants and kicked out of his boots, completely naked in just a few moves. "You need an alpha to make you feel good?"

"Yes!" My hand closed around my dick and I started pumping, but it didn't help at all. I needed an alpha, and he was taking too damn long. "Now, alpha. Please."

My body was like a bonfire, and each second I was empty made me feel hotter than the last. Need clawed through my gut, and my ass was slick and ready for Cameron's

big cock to fill me.

“I’ve got you, sweetheart.” Cameron lowered his body over mine and groaned when our dicks pressed against each other.

I loved feeling his strength over me, protecting me and taking care of me in a way that felt completely natural. “My wolf says it has to be you. Is that true?”

He groaned and pressed his mouth to mine. I don’t know if he was shutting me up or just wanted to kiss me as badly as I wanted to kiss him, but all logical thoughts left my mind and I just followed his lead. Cameron knew what to do. He kissed me soft and tenderly, like he was doing more than a favor to a stranger in need.

When he finally pulled off, his eyes were different. He looked at me like something was starting to make sense to him that still made zero sense to me. “Roll over, baby. This is gonna be fast and hard.”

Fuck, yeah. I flipped over and arched my back so my ass was at the perfect angle for him to slide right in. My body had been prepping for him all night and didn’t need anything else. “I’m ready, alpha.” The throb in my body got sharper and heavier as I squirmed between his arms. “I need it.”

Cameron’s hand trailed down my back, making shivers race along my spine. I wondered if he felt it too. This thing between us felt more than physical.

My wolf kept sending thoughts to me that I wasn’t sure how to interpret. He called Cameron our mate. As much as I wanted to believe that was true, I also didn’t know if it was just our heat-addled mind confusing fantasy from reality. "I don't know how much longer I can wait, Cameron."

"You don't have to wait any longer." He kissed the back of my neck and then my

earlobe. "I need you too."

Thank fuck. A tiny part of me felt guilty for forcing Cameron into this position. He was hired to find me, not fuck me. But if he needed me too, then I was all in. "Then let's go."

Every inch of me blazed under the weight of his body, waiting for him to connect us in a way that I was starting to feel would be bigger than this night. Bigger than a job.

Finally, after a million years of anticipation passing in just those few minutes with him, he pressed his hard cock to my opening and slowly pushed in. "Tell me if it hurts."

"Okay." I wasn't worried about the pain of penetration. Nothing could hurt more than being so close to him without feeling him inside me. "I will."

He continued to slide in until his chest was against my back and he was fully inside me. "Fuck, you're tight, Jamie."

I sighed and finally started to believe the end was near. Or maybe it was the beginning. My head was still fuzzy, so I just nodded, unable to form words.

Our bodies locked together for several seconds before he started moving with more intention. Purpose. He pulled out and then slammed back in, scratching the itch inside me that I knew only he could reach.



### CAMERON

The motel bed squeaked and groaned like it might fall to pieces beneath us, but I didn't slow down. I couldn't. His tight and slick channel formed a perfect sheath around my cock that felt like it was made for me.

And in turn, my body completely wrapped around his in my own way of claiming him. Keeping him safe and protected while giving his body what it needed.

Jamie moaned beneath me, his skin hot and coated with sweat as he clawed at the pillows. "Don't stop, alpha." Each word he choked out was raw and broken.

Exactly the way I felt.

I pulled his hips back as the mattress thumped against the wall, relentlessly pounding out a rhythm to our joining. But I didn't care who heard us. Nothing mattered but him and me. My mate. My wolf had been trying to convince me since that first whiff of his scent, and I couldn't deny it any longer.

Jamie was mine.

The world around us was stripped down to the pleasure shared between us and the filthy sounds of our bodies slapping together as we chased our releases.

Jamie's scent filled the room in a way that made me wish I could bottle the dizzying

aroma of his lust. I thrust deeper and faster, clutching his hips like a lifeline. This was his first full heat, but his body knew how to take what it needed. He was like a wild bronco beneath me, bucking up around me and then back down onto the mattress.

It was so much more intense than I'd ever imagined. More all-consuming than I was prepared for. I didn't know how long we'd been tangled up together, and I didn't care. I could've lived in that moment forever with my cock buried inside him as he writhed and squirmed around me.

He gasped and sucked in a sharp intake of breath. "Cameron."

"I've got you." I stayed in tune with him and kept up the wild rhythm we set, even as my hand slid under his body and closed around his weeping dick. He was so ready, it didn't take more than a full pull before Jamie was shooting a puddle of cream onto the bed beneath him.

I was on fire as my nerve endings all seemed to be focused on my balls. With just a few more thrusts, Jamie's convulsing channel coaxed my own release out of me. I exploded inside him with a cry of relief. "Fuck, Jamie."

"Knot me, alpha."

I didn't think about anything else as my knot swelled inside him, locking us physically together. But it was more than that. I felt it, and I was sure he had to feel it too. If he didn't, his wolf did. Fated mates weren't the norm, but there was no denying that he was mine. "It's yours, omega. Only yours."

Even with him completely caged in place by my large body, all I wanted was for him to stay. I wanted him to want to stay. Which meant I needed him to be so full of me that he'd never want to leave.

For several long moments, I just listened to him breathing as he pulled my hands under his chest to keep me wrapped around him. And when my knot finally released his body and I slipped out, the loss I felt was instant.

“You okay, sweetheart?” I kissed the back of his neck and then scooted to the dry side of the bed and pulled him close.

“So much better than okay.” He looked drunk, with cheeks flushed and a smile on his face. “That was amazing.”

I squeezed him closer to me so he was lying half on top of my chest. “You’re amazing.”

He curled around me and sighed. “Do you feel it too?” His eyes opened long enough to meet mine as I nodded. “This thing between us?”

“I do, mate .” I winked and kissed his forehead. “We’ll talk more in the morning.”

There were a lot of things we needed to talk about, but we were both exhausted and it wasn’t the time. There would be time for the heavy decisions later. Even if I wanted to talk more about the fact that we were mates, it wouldn’t have happened before Jamie’s soft snores filled the otherwise silent room.

For a long time, I watched him. Despite being bone-tired, I was unable to look away. My arms stayed wrapped around him, holding him like I might never get the chance again. The air smelled of sweat and sex and something else I’d never experienced before.

Happiness.

It was something I’d never be able to wrap my head around, and that was okay. As

long as he wanted me the way I wanted him, we'd be fine. I just hoped he'd always look at me the way he had when we finally fell into bed together.

Like I was all he needed in the world.

I wanted to stay awake all night and watch him sleep, but the heavy lull of exhaustion was catching up with me. Too much had happened the past day...or had it been two? I couldn't keep track and didn't need to.

All that mattered was that I'd found him before that son of a bitch Roderick got a hold of him, and I'd do anything in the world to keep him safe.

9

JAMIE

It was the first morning I'd woken up next to someone, and I actually thought they'd still be there. Before my eyes even opened, I reached out for my alpha, expecting to find warm skin covering thick muscles, but there was nothing.

Just cold sheets where he'd been the night before.

Panic quickly set into my gut, gnawing at me to accept that it was all just a fantasy in my head. Did any of it actually happen?

I began to question whether the alpha was real or just a figment of my imagination, even though there were signs of him all around the room. "He was here." I sat up, determined to find the man who had stolen my heart and saved my life, when the door to the room swung open.

And there he was with his arms full of takeout bags and a carrier of coffee balanced on top.

"Morning." Cameron kicked the door shut behind him and then put everything on the table before approaching me.

The smile on his face was infectious, so I smiled up at him as relief filled my body. "You're still here?"

“Of course I am.” He leaned down and kissed me. “Figured you’d be hungry, so I got breakfast.”

My wolf whimpered, urging me to get some answers. We were both confused and afraid as I blinked back tears. “I thought you left me.” I was pathetic, but I didn’t know how to hide my emotions. Just because he did and said things in the spur of the moment during sex didn’t mean he meant it. I was probably just a job to him. A stray he was paid to track down.

“Jamie.” His tone was a low rasp, and I wasn’t sure if he was hurt or angry by that. Maybe both. “Why would you think that?”

I shrugged my shoulders and stared at the sheet gathered in my lap. I didn’t trust myself to speak, but I couldn’t sit here and wonder what it all meant. I needed to know what happened next. “I know I’m just a job to you, but you’re not just a job to me. What happened last night... Did it mean anything to you?”

He sat on the bed and pulled me onto his lap, enveloping me in his big arms as he blew hot air on my head. “It meant everything to me.” He tilted my head up and forced my gaze to meet his. “You mean everything to me. You’re my mate, and I’m not going anywhere without you.”

Relief and joy warred for dominance inside me as I collapsed against his chest. “I knew it was true. My wolf kept calling you mate, and I wanted so badly for you to feel it too.”

“I do, sweetheart.” He kissed me gently but held his lips against mine for a long moment. “You’re it for me.”

My wolf was as happy as I was when I wrapped my arms around Cameron’s neck and held on tightly. He was so solid and real against me, I truly did believe I’d always be

safe with him.

“Thank you for getting breakfast.” My stomach chose that moment to growl almost as loud as my wolf. “It smells so good.”

Cameron repositioned me beside him and stood up. “The diner across the street was packed, so I took that as a good sign.”

We sat together on the bed with a variety of breakfast options spread out around us. Cameron didn’t seem bothered by my panic, but I knew the conversation wasn’t over.

I picked up a slice of bacon and took a bite. “So, what happens now? What will you tell my father?”

Cameron chewed a big bite of his egg sandwich then shrugged. “That’s up to you. You have some options, and I’ll support any one of them.”

I went still, not sure I wanted to know what kind of options he might suggest. “Like what?”

“Well, I can tell them you’re gone. That I didn’t find you.” He put his arm behind my back and held me close enough that I could feel his breath against my neck. “Or I can tell them you met your mate and aren’t coming back.”

I grinned, loving that idea. “That sounds good.”

He kissed my temple and then took a sip of his coffee. “Or I can take you back and tell them we’re fated mates. We can live there or at my place, but if you want to have a relationship with your family, that might be the only way to do it.”

I swallowed hard and thought about each of those scenarios.

Cameron was right. I did want some contact with my family, especially my little brothers. They were alphas, so I didn't worry about them in the same way I would have worried if they were omegas. But I still loved them and wanted to have them in my life. "I'm okay with that if you are."

"I am." Cameron nodded and kissed me before holding a piece of bacon to my lips. "Keep eating. You burned a lot of calories over the past few days."

There was so much I wanted to say, but I didn't know where to start. I kissed him instead, trying to physically tell him what I couldn't say verbally. He tasted like coffee and safety and...forever.

"You really want to live together?" I wasn't sure if I heard that correctly or if my mind was just projecting what I wanted him to say.

Cameron stroked my hair and pressed his lips to my mouth. "You're my mate, Jamie. I meant what I said, but if you need some time to process everything, I understand. I just don't think my wolf or I can handle being too far away from you while you do it, so yes, I'd like to stay as close to you as possible."

"Inside me?" I smiled up at him. "As often as possible."

He growled and kissed me harder. I thought he was gonna push all the food aside and take me right then, but he pressed his forehead to mine and took a deep breath. "Eat first and drink lots of water. Then we can talk about me being inside you again."

I sighed and turned back to the food, so happy we both felt the same need for each other. He was the only solid thing in my whole world, and I couldn't imagine a single day going by without him close to me. "Can we stay here a few more days before we deal with my family?"



“Well, we kinda have to. I stopped by the garage and they need to order a new transmission. They can’t get it before Thursday, so this is kinda like our first apartment together.”

I looked around and gave a nod of approval. “Yeah, that works. Not big or fancy but definitely works for us.”

I took a bite of the pancake that had been calling out to me. Mmm, it was delicious. My wolf was also a ball of joy and relief, and for the first time since we left the pack, we were safe. “My wolf knew right away.” I stabbed another piece of pancake and popped it into my mouth. “I just didn’t know if you’d want an omega with so much baggage.”

He shook his head, like he couldn’t believe what he was hearing. “Jamie.” He brushed his lips over mine. “Of course I want you, baggage or not. I know what I’m signing up for, and I can’t wait.”

10

### CAMERON

A stripe of late-morning sunlight fell across Jamie's sleeping face, warming my heart as much as it warmed his skin. I stayed still and traced the path of golden freckles on his neck with my eyes. We'd been there for two days and they were heaven. I didn't even mind being stranded in the sad excuse of a motel while the local mechanic sorted out my car issues because it was the perfect chance for us to get to know each other better.

Every time Jamie looked at me, he grinned like I was his whole world. I was pretty sure I did the same when I looked at him.

As the light in the room brightened, Jamie stirred and instinctively reached across my chest to feel for me. Nothing could possibly be better than being the first thing he reached for in the morning.

His eyes blinked open and locked on me. "You're awake."

"Hard not to be when someone's kicking like a rabbit." I kissed his nose and tightened my arm around him.

Jamie chuckled, a low and happy sound as he nuzzled closer. "I'm definitely as horny as a bunny."

"I can attest to that, not that I'm complaining or anything." I inhaled deeply,

breathing in the scent of him. "So, what do you want to do today?"

Jamie propped himself up on one elbow, looking down at me with a grin. "Um, continue to not think about my family or having to explain anything to them."

I knew what he meant. I wasn't looking forward to that conversation and certainly not facing his father or the psycho alpha Jamie had been betrothed to. Fated mates had a claim that usurped any other agreements, but that didn't mean Northpaw would take the loss easily. Then again, maybe he'd already moved on to his next omega.

I stretched out my arms above my head and sighed. "I saw a flyer in the lobby for a waffle place nearby. You wanna check it out?"

He sat up with hair ruffled and a completely serious look on his face. "That's a joke, right? Of course I want waffles. And for the record, you never have to ask. The answer is always a hard yes."

Well, damn. When he put it that way, waffles sounded pretty good to me too. "Well, then, get your sweet ass outta bed and let's get going."

The air outside was cool as we strolled down the quiet streets. The town was small and old, with peeling paint on the storefronts and wildflowers growing between the cracks in the sidewalk. It felt like the kind of place people stayed in forever.

At the diner, we slid into a booth with sticky seats and a Formica table, but Jamie was practically salivating. "It smells so good in here."

"Cinnamon rolls." A server appeared at the table with a carafe of coffee. "Should I bring you one?"

"Yes, please!" Jamie dumped half the sugar dispenser into his cup as he glanced at

the menu. "And waffles with...strawberries."

I ordered a veggie omelet and orange juice for both of us. Not that he needed any more sugar.

"Are you drinking that or making candy?" I asked, raising an eyebrow as I eyed his mug.

He grinned and poured in some cream. "If only candy were this simple, I would. But who wants to drink something bitter in the morning? It'll ruin my palate for the cinnamon rolls and waffles."

That was some backward logic if I ever heard it. "You might want a few bites of my omelet too. Protein and veggies aren't bad words, ya know."

He shrugged. "I'll have a salad at lunch. Breakfast should be sweet enough to jumpstart your day."

If that were true, he was about to jumpstart his month.

The waffles arrived a few minutes later and they were bigger than his plate. He pushed the cinnamon roll to the center between us and waited until he'd eaten all his strawberries to dig into the center of the roll. "I like to start in the middle since that's the best part." He stopped with his fork stuck in the gooey dough and looked up at me. "Unless you want the middle."

I chuckled. "It's all yours, sweetheart. But I think we're gonna need to go on a run today to burn off some of these calories."

"Okay." He dug out the gooiest part of the pastry and shoved it into his mouth. His eyes practically rolled back in his head as he enjoyed it.

“Good?” I couldn’t resist cutting off a piece for myself as he moaned almost orgasmically.

“Mmmm...”

We ate slowly and enjoyed every bite of the food and the company. It was so easy to imagine doing this every morning. It had only been a few days, and I was already completely addicted to the omega.

Back at the motel, we lounged on the bed with full bellies and not much else going on. I’d responded to a few client emails but told them I was on location for a few weeks, so I didn’t have anything pressing. It was the first time in a long time that I was just present in the moment.

Jamie flipped through channels on the TV and paused on anything that looked like it was made before either of us were born. There weren’t a ton of options, but that was fine with me. I was perfectly content to lay with my head in his lap, watching him more than the screen.

This. I wanted so much more of this.

After an hour of midday sitcoms, we decided to stretch our legs and go for a walk. We wandered into a little park that had a large field of grass and swings from the playground creaking in the distance.

Jamie dropped down onto a bench and pulled me with him then rested his head on my shoulder. "It’s kinda perfect here," he murmured, lacing his fingers with mine.

I pressed my cheek to his hair and sighed. "You tryin’ to make me forget we’re on the clock?"

“Kinda.” He laughed softly, then sighed. "What if Roderick doesn't let me go? His family has a lot of money and power."

The idea of him with anyone else was unthinkable. "Fated mates trump money or contracts. You don't have to worry about him. "

"I hope not." He looked up at me with complete trust. "I know you'll take care of me."

Clouds started to cover the sky, and we didn't want to get caught in the rain, so we headed back to the motel, quickly stopping at a deli for salads and sandwiches we could eat for dinner if we didn't want to go out again.

The mechanic working on my car left a message that he got the parts he was waiting for and should be done with the work before the weekend. That was great news, but it also meant our little bubble of solitude would be bursting soon. We needed to take full advantage of the peace we had in that little motel room, because once I took Jamie back to his family home, we might not have peace for a while.

I handed Jamie a pair of stiff shoes and a little pencil. “You ready for this?”

“I guess.” He looked at the pencil and frowned. “What do we do with this?”

“Keep score.” I chuckled and led him to lane 4. “You’ve really never been bowling?”

He shook his head as he made a face at the shoes. “I don't think so, but if I did, I can understand why I repressed the memory.”

I smiled and kissed his cheek. “I'll try to make it a memory you don't need therapy to unlock someday.”

The bowling alley wasn't modern or fancy, but it reminded me of the place I went to as a kid, so I was excited to teach Jamie how to bowl.

Jamie pulled my too-big jacket tighter around him and gave me a look that was somewhere between incredulous and amused. It hadn't been either of our first choice for date night, but neither of us wanted to spend another night locked in that dingy little room, so here we were.

"Ready to have your ass handed to you by a rookie?" He stretched his arms over his head as if he were preparing to run a marathon. "I'm feeling lucky tonight."

Brat . "Oh, you're gonna get lucky tonight. Just not sure it's gonna happen on this lane, sweetheart."

Jamie glanced around, his eyes bright with mischief. "There aren't many people around. I can be quiet..."

Okay, now that was funny. "You definitely can not be quiet. I'm sure every person in the motel would attest to that."

His jaw dropped and his cheeks flushed. "Really? Do you think people can hear me?"

Was he joking? "Uh, yeah." I laughed out loud. "You haven't noticed the banging on walls?"

"I guess I thought they were having fun too?" He lifted one shoulder and then seemed to be over it. "Oh, well. They're probably just jealous."

"Anyone who has seen you is definitely jealous that you're mine." I pulled him to my chest and gave him a quick kiss.

“Aww.” He rested his head on my shoulder for a second and then sighed. “Okay, enough with your distraction attempts. Show me how to win this game so I can claim my reward.”

“And what reward would that be?” I walked to the wall of balls and picked one that felt like it might be a good fit for Jamie. “How does this feel?”

He took the ball and bounced it in his right palm. “It’s fine. And my reward will be your knot.”

I raised an eyebrow at that. “You get that twice a day anyway. It’s not much of a reward.”

He scoffed as if offended by such a remark. “It’s the most precious reward I could ever ask for. Besides, if you win, you get an extra-long blow job. The way I see it, no one will leave a loser tonight.”

I liked his logic. “Let’s get to it, then.”

He stuck his tongue out at me and started setting up the game. The way he bounced around and hummed as he moved made my heart full of joy. It was like every worry he’d previously had about our looming trip back to his family was forgotten.

The first ball I rolled ricocheted like a drunken pinball, and Jamie cackled so hard he nearly toppled over. “Remind me to get you a set of bumpers,” he choked out, dramatically wiping his tearing eyes.

I glared at the lane as if it had insulted my honor. “It’s all part of my strategy.” I clenched my jaw as I waited for my ball to emerge from the return. My second throw knocked down half the pins, but it was still a pathetic showing.



Jamie took a few practice swings that I thought might result in a broken window or my skull, but then the ball skated down the center of the lane and dropped every damn pin. “Strike!” He turned back to me, shrugging like it was nothing. Punk .

A competitive fire stoked inside me as I wondered if I’d been played. “Okay, show-off. One lucky throw doesn’t mean anything.” I lined up for another shot and focused on the path I wanted the ball to take. Only three pins went down, but my second throw was a spare...along with a sliver of my dignity.

By the third frame, it was clear I’d lost my childhood skills and Jamie had been downplaying his lack of experience. But we had a great time, which was all that mattered to either of us. Every time I looked at him, something light and soft cracked open inside me, and I felt nothing but gratitude for my time with him.

JAMIE

I told Cameron I'd call my dad after lunch, but then lunch came and went and I still hadn't picked up the phone. The hours drifted by, providing even more time for me to stress over what he would say. I didn't care if he approved or not, but what if he told me not to come back? What if Roderick threatened Cameron? Maybe it would be better if we just went back without warning anyone. We could just show up and deal with the fallout then. It was a tempting idea, but I knew it would only delay the inevitable.

Besides, Cameron thought calling him was the right thing to do, and I trusted my mate.

Cameron came back from the store with a case of water and the nacho chips I'd been craving and sat in the chair. "Did you do it?" It was unfair how relaxed he was about something that was making my stomach turn.

If I didn't get it over with soon, I was going to puke. "I'm getting there." The phone felt heavy in my hands, but I hit the call button anyway, ready to face the music.

"I can stay here while you talk to him, or I can go for a walk. It's your choice."

I scowled as I listened to it ring. "Do you have to say it like it's a life-or-death decision?"

He smirked. “It kinda is, right?”

I rolled my eyes, even though he was right. “Please stay.”

My dad answered on the third ring. “Cameron? Did you find him? Is Jamie okay?”

“Hey, Dad. It’s me.” I cleared my throat of the lump that suddenly took up residence there. “I’m with Cameron.”

“Jamie!” He sounded genuinely happy to hear from me, which was a huge weight off my shoulders. “Are you okay? Where are you? I’ll come get you.”

I’d practiced my speech for days but nothing sounded right. If I just blurted out that the tracker he hired to find me was actually my fated mate, I wasn’t sure he’d believe me. I still had to pinch myself now and then to make sure it wasn’t all some realistic dream I was trapped in. “Uh, I’m fine. We’re in a motel right now because Cameron’s car broke down, but we’ll be heading back in a day or two.”

“I’ll let Roderick know. He asked to be released from the contract, but now that you’re coming back, he doesn’t have to.”

Cameron growled from the other side of the room, obviously able to hear what my dad was saying.

“No, Dad. You have to cancel the contract.” My nerves bubbled over and pushed out all the words I’d been holding back in a rush. “I’m not gonna mate with Roderick. I’ve found my mate. My fated mate.”

My dad was silent, but I could hear the quiet hum of the TV in the background, so I knew he was still there. “You’ve found your fated mate? How is that possible?”

I chewed my lip and took a deep breath. “It’s Cameron. He’s my mate.” I met his gaze and held it. “And I love him.”

Cameron’s breath hitched and closed the distance between us, pulling me onto his lap as I held the phone to my ear.

“Are you sure?” Dad’s voice rose to a pitch I’d never heard from him before. “Maybe you’re just imagining it?”

“I’m not imagining anything. My wolf told me before I went into heat, and well, that made it even more clear to both of us.”

“So you’re pregnant?” The speed with which he went from disbelief to assumptions was dizzying and that earlier nausea was back.

“What?” I panicked at that comment, not sure how I felt about it. “I didn’t say I was pregnant.”

Cameron stiffened beneath me, and his palm automatically moved over my belly. He held his hand against my bare skin as his breathing picked up its pace.

“Just come home, okay?” Dad seemed to come to terms with the situation faster than Cameron or I were.

“Yeah, in a few days. Bye.” I hung up before he could say anything else and looked up at my alpha. “What do you think?”

Cameron swallowed hard and his eyes got glassy. “He’s right. I can hear two heartbeats.”

“You can?” I placed my hand beside his and focused all my attention on my body. It

was faint, but when I heard a fast flutter that definitely wasn't my heartbeat, I gasped. "Oh my god!"

"I can't believe it." He kissed me and then leaned down to kiss my bare belly. "Hey, little one. I'm your papa. Be gentle to Daddy. He's the most amazing man you'll ever meet."

Tears were already streaming down my cheeks as I took a shuddering breath. "I'm gonna be a daddy?"

Cameron wrapped his arms around me and kissed the tears away. "You're gonna be the best daddy."

"And you're okay with this?" I fisted his shirt, making sure he didn't try to run. "We haven't talked about pups yet."

He cocked his head and smiled. "The moment I entered you, I was thinking about filling you with my pups. That's not uncommon during heats. I guess I've been a bit distracted by everything to bring up the topic sooner, but it's been in the back of my mind since I first realized you were my mate." He cupped my chin and then kissed me slowly, tasting my mouth until we were breathless. "I'm so fucking happy right now. Every day, you continue to make me the luckiest alpha alive."

For the next hour, we talked about our future. All the questions that had been floating around in our minds were laid out on the table and discussed. I didn't want to live with the pack, but I wanted to be close enough to my family to visit them. Cameron wasn't in a lease on his apartment and was happy to move for me. We both had job flexibility, but he'd need to hire someone to do field work so he could stay home with me and pups once they came. By the time our dinner was delivered, I felt a million times better about our future.

Things were decided. Plans were in place. We were gonna be fine.

As I was eating fish and chips, I remembered something else that had been nagging at me. “Was that whole story about needing a website true or just part of your ploy to find me?”

Cameron popped a fry into his mouth. “True. I really do need to fix mine. It’s basically a single page with my name and phone number. Maybe you can still help me with that someday.”

“How about now?” I wiped my greasy fingers and reached for my laptop. “I bet it’s not that bad.”

He chuckled. “That’s gonna be the fastest money you ever lost because it really is.”

I typed in the URL he spouted off to me and tried not to let the horror I felt show on my face. “Um...wow.”

“See? I told you.” He bit into his burger and then pointed to the upper corner. “Login there. The password is 1234.”

I rolled my eyes as I logged in to his back office. The site was as basic as they came, and the contact form was broken. “How are you still in business with this?”

“Pure talent.” He winked like that was all that needed to be said. After a second, he added, “And word-of-mouth referrals from past clients.”

I started typing, making up stuff that seemed obvious for a tracker to have on their site and using some other investigator sites as inspiration. “It’s a good thing you found me or you’d be out of clients by next year.”

“That’s not the only reason.” He watched over my shoulder as I set up a new template that was more professional than the geometric shapes he’d had across his navigation. “You’re really good at this.”

“Thank you.” I focused on getting the color palette just right after doing some research on what people found soothing when they were under stress. “Do you like navy or hunter?”

He growled in my ear, causing a shiver to go down my spine and straight to my cock. “Definitely hunter.”

“Stop distracting me with your foreplay.” I laughed and curled away so I could concentrate. “We’ll get to that when I’m done.”

He chuckled and stretched out beside me, close enough that I could feel the warmth of him. “When will that be?”

“An hour or two.” I worked on setting up the new content, but he really needed my full design and branding package. “I’m fixing your branding, too. What is this Alpha Enterprises?”

Cameron shrugged but didn’t look away from the TV. “It was available.”

“You might as well call it ‘Generic Shifter Business, Inc.’” I pulled up my domain provider and started trying out different names.

“Okay, Mr. Website Genius. What should I call it?” He tickled my side and then rolled and pretended to bite me.

“I don’t know.” I typed in his name and thought about what his clients might find appealing. “Cameron’s Catch?”

“Am I a fisherman now?”

“You’re catching clients.” I shook my head and then waited for him to make eye contact. “I think it’s cute, but I can keep looking.”

“Nah, use it.” He smiled at me, bemused. “Good thing you’re the creative one.”

Once I was in the zone, everything fell into place quickly, and he had a brand-new site that not only functioned but would be spidered by the search engines so people could actually find it. “Now you might actually get some business.”

“You’re amazing.” Cameron’s eyes were warm as he looked up at me.

“Told you.” I leaned down and kissed him. “What’s my reward?” I closed the laptop, feeling light and accomplished.

He rolled over so he was hovering above me. “How about an extra-long blow job and my knot.”

“Yes and yes.” I wrapped my arms around his neck and kissed him hard.

“Oh, and Jamie?” He looked me right in the eye and waited for me to focus.

“Yeah.”

“I love you too.”

My alpha always knew just what to say to make me happy.



### CAMERON

Neither of us spoke much on the drive as we both seemed to be lost in our thoughts. The mountains spread along the horizon while fields and trees blurred past us on either side.

I looked over to Jamie and saw his fingers fidgeting with his hoodie cords, stretching and twisting the fabric like he was as nervous as I was. “You doing okay over there?”

He blinked as if he were waking up from a trance, and gave me the sideways smile that always made my heart beat faster.

“Yeah, I’m good.” His grin stretched wider but didn’t reach his eyes.

He was quiet for a moment before he turned in the seat to face me. “Is there any chance they won’t let me leave with you?”

I reached over and grabbed his hand, then pulled it to my lips and kissed it. “I think they can try, but there’s no way in hell I’m going anywhere without you.”

He watched our fingers tangled together like they were some kind of promise. “You’re right. It doesn’t matter what they say.” His hand went to his belly where I often saw it resting. “Besides, no one can deny you’re my mate with your cub in my belly.”

Fuck, I loved hearing him talk like that. My cock went hard and my lust ramped up. Maybe we'd have to make a quick motel stop just before getting to his family home. I needed just a little bit more alone time with my mate. "No one will."

The road curved, and the car lurched to the side. "I know this is all a surprise because it happened so fast, but fate doesn't mess around. When it happens, it happens."

Jamie leaned over the console and placed his head on the side of my arm. "I'm glad it did."

My heart beat so loud I was sure he could hear it over the rattle and hum of the engine. "Me too."

"Cam."

I smiled and glanced over at him. "What?"

"Do you think they'll be excited?"

He'd asked me so many times I knew exactly what he meant. "Yes. After they're a little bit shocked."

"And a big bit angry," he said, teasing again. "But they have nine months to get over it."

"Nine months?"

"Maybe it'll take less than that." I didn't want to set him up for disappointment but I truly did believe his family would be happy for us.

His eyes got soft and serious. "Maybe."

We hit a straight stretch of highway, and I let the engine open up, anxious to just get there.

When I finally pulled up in front of the house I'd visited just a week earlier, the place looked different. Modest but homey. Jamie's dad stood on the front porch with his arms crossed over his chest, staring down at me like he wanted to take my head off.

My palms were sweaty on the wheel, and I barely had the car in park before Jamie bolted from the cab. I watched his dad's face relax and then crumble as he pulled his son into his arms and held him.

"Come on, Cameron." Jamie waved me over and then turned his attention back to his dad. "Meet the family."

Alright, Cameron. Get it together.

His dad glared at me as I approached. "You mate all the omegas you're hired to find?"

Jamie's face fell and he took a step back, closer to me. "Dad! Don't talk to him like that. Neither of us knew this would happen but we're grateful that it did. I hope you can support us but if you can't we'll leave now."

I wrapped my arm around Jamie and held him at my side. "I'm sorry if this is upsetting to you but I love your son and we're happy. That's all that should matter to you."

He stared at me for a long moment before he exhaled and nodded once. "Yeah, okay. Come inside then."

"Thank you." I kept Jamie close to me. He probably thought I was just supporting

him but the truth was that I was drawing strength from him. “I appreciate your hospitality.”

“You don’t expect me to pay you for this, do you?” Mr. White had the faintest hint of a smile, and I knew he was testing me.

“Not at all, sir.” I gave Jamie a squeeze. “I’ve got everything I need right here.”

His dad chuckled and clapped a heavy hand on Jamie’s shoulder. “So I was right, huh?” He pointed to Jamie’s belly. “I’m gonna be a grandpa?”

Jamie nodded as his eyes swelled up.

“Good.” Mr. White pulled his son in for another hug and then did the same to me. “Thank you, Cameron. For bringing my boy home and fulfilling his responsibility for mating.”

Jamie broke the moment with a frustrated sigh. “Dad, we didn’t mate to make the pack happy. We did it for us.”

His dad looked at him with a level of respect that I thought might be new. “Well, then, I’m proud of you. Both of you.”

A moment later, two blurs raced through the back door and landed on my mate. “Jamie!” one of them yelled as he practically climbed up Jamie’s torso. He was small but stocky. Definitely alpha. The other was right behind him. Probably a few years older and a little calmer. I could already feel the mischief pouring out from those two.

“Told you he’d come back,” said the bigger one before he crashed into Jamie like they hadn’t seen him in years.

“Took long enough.” The little one pushed in between his brothers, giving them no room to breathe. “We got bored.”

“You’re always bored.” Jamie ruffled the smaller one’s hair then looked at me with something like triumph in his eyes. “Cameron, these monsters are my brothers. Jesse is the one hanging off my neck and Jack is the mature one. He’s thirteen now and doesn’t get excited about stuff anymore.”

“I get excited about stuff.” Jack looked over at me and shrugged. “Just not people.”

I grinned. Just wait, kid. It’ll happen so fast you’ll have no idea what hit you.

They studied me, curious about why I was still there after delivering their brother like I was hired to do.

“Hi, guys. It’s nice to meet you both.”

They edged back with their eyes flicking back and forth between me and Jamie. “Are you his friend?” Jesse seemed to be the talker.

“He’s my mate.” Jamie sounded proud to say it and I sure as hell was proud to hear it.

Jesse narrowed his eyes at Jamie. “And your friend?”

“Yes.” I took Jamie’s hand and held it to my chest. “My best friend.”

Jesse cocked his head and then smiled. “Cool.”

Jamie laughed, big and bright. “Know what else is cool? Cameron and I are having a baby so you’re gonna be uncles.”

“Yes!” They tackled us both like it was a game for them. “Are you gonna be our other brother?”

It was the first time anyone had accepted me so easily. “Yeah, I think I am.”

Jamie was asleep next to me, curled up with his head on my chest. He’d never looked more peaceful, and I couldn’t imagine ever wanting to be anywhere else. Not in the city. Not in the mountains. Just here, close to the family he loved so much.

I kissed the top of his head, breathing him in because I couldn’t get enough of him.

He stirred and opened his eyes with a smile. “I’m dreaming of sexy times.”

I chuckled. “The walls are pretty thin here. Not sure how we’re gonna make that happen.”

Jamie rolled over and stood up from his childhood bed. I caught him around the waist and pulled him back to me. “We need to find a place of our own.”

I held on to him, carrying his weight against me. “I’ve already found a few options. We can go look at them now, if you’re up for it.”

That woke him up. “Really? Where? Not too close, right? But not too far. I need my babysitters close by.”

I brushed the hair from his eyes, running my thumb along the line of his cheek. “Ten minute drive, max. Not too close but not too far.”

“I’ve gotta pee and then we can go.” He got up again and headed to the bathroom. “Cameron?”

I looked up from the text message I was writing to the realtor. “Yeah.”

His eyes met mine and I felt exactly what he was about to say. “I love you.”

I could hardly breathe whenever I heard him say that. “I love you, too.”

We looked at three houses before finding the perfect little house in the perfect little town. It had more room than we needed, but not more than we wanted. The second we walked inside, Jamie’s eyes were huge and I knew he was in love with it.

I was too. The best part was that the woods backed up to the yard so we’d have plenty of space for our pups to run. It was going to be our home.

“Think it’ll work?” I squeezed Jamie to my side as we looked in the room that was already decorated as a nursery.

He nodded and kissed my shoulder. “It’s perfect.”

And it was. The house. The man. Our life. Absolutely perfect.

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 7:53 am*

JAMIE

It was supposed to be beautiful. The miracle of life and all that shit alphas like to spew at innocent omegas who have no idea they're gonna be split in half just to get the baby out.

My hands clawed at the bed sheets as Cameron tried to wipe the sweat off my brow before it stung my eyes. As if that was the pain I cared about when another contraction hit.

"You're doing so good, sweetheart. Deep breaths." Cameron leaned over me, focused on trying to keep me calm.

Good luck with that, buddy.

"You hate me, don't you?" I squeezed his hand until I could imagine bones breaking and popping right out of his skin. Maybe then he'd have a tiny hint of what I was going through. "This is what hating me feels like."

He shook his head calmly as if I was whispering sweet nothings to him instead of death threats. "I know it hurts, Jamie, but you're so strong."

The doctor chimed in with some nonsense about how close we were, but he wasn't the one trying to push a boulder through a pinhole. Damn alpha-splaining.

Another contraction was building and I knew a monstrous tsunami was about to crash over me. The anticipation made me want to laugh and cry at the same time. "I'm



being punished for stealing candy when I was a kid." I groaned and arched my back away from the bed as if I could escape the alien punching its way out of my body. "Punished for being an omega. For choosing you. For being an omega who chose you."

"Now, now." The doctor peeked out from somewhere below my knees. "You're doing just fine, Jamie. I need you to focus on breathing."

Cameron was nodding but he had sweat dripping down his temples too. Maybe my grip was tighter than I realized. Good. It still wasn't close to what his spawn was doing to my insides. "Just breathe, sweetheart."

"You breathe!" I would have thrown something if I could. "This is your fault. You come breathe and see if that makes you feel better."

"I love you and I know it's the pain talking." Cameron had been warned in advance to ignore my threats to murder him in his sleep. Dummy . He should definitely sleep with one eye open. "It's just the pain talking. We'll have our baby soon."

His little positive mantra rolled over me, and I didn't even bother with the insult on the tip of my tongue. I'd have been angrier if I wasn't so sure I was dying. I pulled Cameron's hand toward my chest and held it with both hands, not out of affection but to make sure I took him with me. "It was fun while it lasted..."

Another contraction hit, and I saw black. It was bigger. Stupider. How did anyone survive this kind of torture? The whole world shrank to that one insane point of agony and I gave up. I wanted to shift, run, gnaw that baby out of me like a trapped animal. "I can't do it. I'm out." It was more like a whimper, and it pissed me off that I was whimpering. "Just let me go in peace. You'll find someone else. You'll be happy again..."

"You're not going anywhere, Jamie." Cameron's voice was annoyingly calm, even

softer than before. "You're strong, Jamie. You're so strong."

He kept nodding and holding on to me and being unbearably sweet. It made me want to rip his head off and kiss him all at once.

"Let's get you into position." The doctor stood up and started arranging my legs like they were on a mannequin. "You're ready now."

Cameron looked stricken like he wasn't sure I would ever forgive him.

I wasn't sure either.

And then pain like I never knew possible washed over me and I pushed like my life depended on it. I was in charge now. The doctor could shove his 'almosts' and 'not yet's' right up his own ass because mine was about to deliver a baby whether he liked it or not.

Time moved in slow motion as Cameron and the doctor both moved between my legs and all the pain and pressure I'd been feeling disappeared. I could breathe again. It was over.

Holy shit. It was over. My baby was out. "Cameron?"

"She's perfect, sweetheart." He choked on his emotion as he cradled a bloody mess to his chest. "Our daughter is perfect."

"Our daughter?" I shook out all the rage I'd felt just a second ago and welcomed the flood of joy filling up my entire being. "She's really okay?"

She was bright red and furious and howled louder than me. "Our little wolf." I meant it as a joke but I choked on tears that had nothing to do with pain. "She really is here."

"You did it, Jaime." Cameron was so full of awe it was like he didn't believe we could bring something so beautiful into the world. His eyes were wet, and I knew mine were, too.

"We did it." I blinked down at the squirming, screeching miracle. "And it didn't even hurt that bad."

He choked out a laugh and pressed his forehead to mine. "I'm gonna need a cast while a few hundred bones fuse back together, but I don't even care. You were amazing. As always." Cameron kissed the side of my face, oblivious to everything except the little red ball of fury we'd brought into the world. "She's about as pissed at me as you were thirty seconds ago, but I hope she forgives as easily."

"She does." I kissed him and then kissed the top of her head. "She just need a nap and a snack. It's all anyone really needs when they're mad."

The doctor still had his gloves on and was doing stuff that I didn't pay much attention to. "Congratulations, Dads." He was smiling like someone who didn't just witness me trying to kill my mate. "You did great."

She quieted after a moment as if really committing to a nap. She was obviously a smart kid.

"What should we name her?" We had a list of options but none of our favorites felt right.

Cameron looked at me then back down at her. "We took a chance on each other and it was worth it."

I looked at him and nodded, in complete agreement. "Chance."

"I think it suits her."

And it did.

We wouldn't have found each other if we hadn't taken chance that put us in the right place at the right time. But sometimes life was just a series of turns and times and chances that all met up right where fate wanted us to be.

For more sweet and sexy shifters in heat by Aria Grace, check out these that you're sure to enjoy.

Mateo was one of the few omegas who had climbed the ranks of the West Coast Coyotes. Most of that was the result of his hard work and above-average strength, but the other guys still attributed it to his other position...as Esteban's best friend. They grew up together and Este never treated him like an omega. He respected Mateo and trusted him with his life, which is why Mateo was the only person who could step in and help out with Stella after her mother's death.

Esteban just needed some time to figure things out before getting back into the groove of his daily life again, but when the rumors of a threat became more serious, he quickly realized that Mateo was more than just his friend and nanny. He was...more. Always had been. They just needed to get out of their own ways to accept the fact that they were meant to be mates all along.