

The Broken Wolf

Chapter 1

“Deep Breaths, Molly. Deep Breaths.” I say to myself in the mirror as I place my white gold and diamond ear ring in my ear. My dad gave these to me on my 18th birthday, the birthday they hoped I would find my mate, but that was 4 years ago. I’ve spent every day since attempting to avoid meeting anyone who could possibly be my mate to be sure I avoid the pain of their rejection. I check my hair, falling in perfect dark waves down my back and touch up my nude lipstick one last time before I slip into my sage green dress and head downstairs. Today my brother Robbie will officially be named Alpha Robert of the Lunar Falls Pack. All the Alphas of nearby packs are expected to be in attendance, and some from further decided to make the trip when word spread that the Royal Wolves would be in attendance. I had hoped to just stay in the kitchens, avoiding anyone of any importance, but since the Royal family will be here, I’ll be put on display. This is how I ended up here actually looking presentable in a dress my mother selected because it “really brings out my eyes”. I roll my eyes at the memory of my mother coming in with an arm full of dresses for me to try, acting as if the King and Queen coming was something special and that she wasn’t the best of friends with Queen Audrey and my father didn’t complete his Alpha training with King Peter 30 years ago. She was right though. The color of the dress did make my light green eyes pop, and the cut was very flattering on my curves. My mother doesn’t understand though, just how much I hate my eyes to shine their light green when we’re all together. I’m the oldest child- they think. See, my birthday isn’t my actual birthday, but my gotcha day as my dad likes to call it. 16 years ago my dad was helping on patrol and found me curled in a ball asleep under a tree right on the edge of the pack territory. There was no one around, and no scent to follow. He took me back to the pack house and I stayed with them while they searched for where I came from. Days turned to weeks, and weeks to months, but there were no leads- no reports of packs of a missing child. After a year, my parents decided to adopt me and with a blood adoption blessed by the King. This is my family, and I have the scar on my hand from the adoption to prove it. But when we stand together, my eyes always say how much I truly don’t belong here. My brother Robbie has always treated me just like a real sister, probably even more so. They think I was around 6 when Dad found me, judging by my size. Robbie was 5. He’s younger than me, but as we got older,

he definitely took the typical older brother role in our relationship as he grew into his alpha powers while everyone was realizing I was a broken wolf. My family never treated me any differently, but I know it was probably really hard to be the family of one of the kingdom's strongest alphas with an adopted daughter who was basically a human. I AM a wolf, though. I smell like one- no one has ever questioned that. But I never had my wolf inside communicating with me. I have advanced hearing and smell- but that's as far as my wolf abilities go. I think my family had hoped that once I reached 16 a switch would flip inside and my wolf would wake and I'd be normal, but that day never came. "Molly, maybe we were wrong on your birthday. Just wait, someday you'll shift" my mom would say to me every full moon. But here I am, 22 years old. Never shifted, barely helpful to my pack. But still, my parents love me. High School was hard once the other kids realized I wasn't shifting. Robbie tried to protect me from them, but I remember one time during my senior year the pack was attacked and while everyone went to protect the pack and our land, I was shuffled into the safe room of the pack house with the kids too small to shift and the elderly, utterly useless to my pack. I decided then that if I wasn't able to protect my pack physically, then I would make myself completely indispensable to them. My dad was pretty unhappy with my choice at first. He said cooking was the job of an omega and not the Alphas' daughter, but my mom and brother saw how much I just needed my pack to need me and convinced him to let me learn. I spent so much time learning from the previous head cook. When she passed away 3 years ago, my dad let me take over the Head Cook position for the pack, though he insists the job title now be called Head Chef of the Lunar Falls Pack. Generally, the job would go to an Omega who is less likely to leave the pack if they find their mate. Being the Alpha's daughter, I'm more likely to find my mate in another pack, but being the Alpha's adopted daughter means no one has any idea what will happen. I'm a broken wolf, and I don't think I even have a mate, but my mom is convinced that I do. Or she could just be holding out hope because the reality of being mateless is too sad. If my mom is right though and I do have a mate out there, you can be sure that they will reject me as soon as they realize how useless of a wolf I am, which is why I tend to stay in the kitchen and avoid any outsiders when they visit. Whichever theory you prefer, I'm not in much danger of ever leaving the pack and I'm sure that's the only reason my dad let me have the job. There is a knock on my door and I immediately smell my dad. He always smells of cedar and tobacco- the most comforting smell. "Molly, Love, you look absolutely beautiful" he tells me,

looking at me in the mirror from my doorway. He's wearing a black suit, with a white shirt and black tie. Very classic, very Dad. His dark hair is sprinkled with some gray now, matching his gray eyes. He looks handsome as he always does. "Thanks dad. I'm almost ready, I promise. I just need to put my shoes on and run down to the kitchen to make sure everything is ready to go for dinner" I reply with a smile. "You have staff and have been down there all morning, kiddo. What else could you possibly need to check on?" "I know Dad. They're great. But it's Robbie's big day- and it's YOUR retirement, too. Don't you want your meal to be perfect?" "It will be fine, but go ahead and run down to check. Meet us out front in 10 minutes- the guests should start arriving soon. I know it's a big day for your brother, but who knows, maybe you'll meet someone special and it'll be a big day for you, too." "It won't be. But I'll be there in just a few minutes", I tell him as I slip on my nude pumps. They really are the perfect addition to the dress as it wraps and falls with a little ruffle just below my knees. I fully expected him to say something about how low the top was on my chest but he didn't, which means he's either desperate for me to find my non-existent mate or he's worrying about handing the pack over to my mateless brother. I head down into the kitchen and as I get to the door I can smell that everything seems OK. My dad is right, I do have a staff capable of handling this. With one more sniff of the room to verify all is well, and I decide not to enter and head outside to greet our guests.