

Triplet Alphas Gifted Luna By Samantha Doyle Chapter 36

Chapter 36

Swimming The triplets came jogging up to Thea. They nodded to the Delta team encircling her. “We came as soon as he let us out,” Alaric said, rubbing her arms up and down. “I’m sorry. I had to get out of there,” she said. “We know. It’s a lot,” Kai said.

“It is!”

The triplets gathered her in a big bear hug. “How mad is your dad?” “Don’t worry about him,” Conri said. “Are you doing okay now?” Alaric said. “I’m better. I still don’t like what’s happening. I don’t like that people have been lying to me my whole life or that I don’t have a say in any of this.” “Do you understand why, though?” Alaric said. “I don’t want to yet. I want to be mad,” Thea said, almost pouting.

“Okay. You can be mad,” Kai said, smiling. Thea almost never got upset. He liked seeing the vulnerable side of her. “Did I miss anything important?” Thea said. “Nothing that can’t wait. You want to go for a swim?” Kai said. Thea nodded. “May as well take advantage of my time outside,” she said.

Alaric and Kai each took a hand, Conri wrapped his hand around her waist, and they made their way to the river. Delta team wolves circled the group at a distance. When they got to the river, Thea started lifting up her dress. “Woah,” Conri said. He grabbed her hands and pushed her dress back down. “What are you doing? Delta team can see.”

“Haven’t you been paying attention? Delta team was created to protect me. They’ve been watching us our entire lives. We just didn’t know it. Pretty sure there isn’t anything they haven’t seen.”

The triplets looked at each other, thinking. They turned to Thea at the same time. “Starting to put it together, huh?” she said. “Yeah, I got there way before you guys.” “Oh,” they said. “So, really, let’s just carry on

like before,” she said. “I’m sure they avert their eyes,” Alaric said.

“They better,” Conri and Kai said together.

“Calm down,” Thea said. “If I can deal with it, so can you. You’re going to have to make concessions. You realize all of Delta team have given up their own lives to protect mine? They think I’m some kind of magical being, sent to save the world. They deserve something. I don’t know what, but something.”¹ “You’re right, my love,” Alaric said. He pulled her into his arms. “Let’s get you feeling better.” He kissed her then pulled her dress up and over her head. He looked down and saw the latest set of underwear. “You’re killing me,” he said. “You like?” Thea said. “I love.”

He stripped, picked her up, and carried her into the water. Kai and Conri joined them a moment later. Thea wrapped her arms around Alaric and let him drag her around in the water. After a while, Conri cut in and held her close, letting the water flow past them. “You know we love you no matter what, right?” Conri said. She nodded.

“How are you doing?” Conri said.

“I need time to wrap my head around everything. I feel like this impossible standard has been set for me, and there’s no way I can live up to it.”

“Babe, you are the standard. There’s nothing to live up to,” Conri said. Thea rested her head on his shoulder. “I love you,” she said. Kai pulled her from him and positioned her on his back. “How about a piggyback ride, darling?” Kai said. She wrapped her legs around his waist, her arms around his neck. “Sounds great,” she said. “We don’t care if you’re gifted or not. We just want you to be happy,” Kai said.

He swam around until Thea started kissing his neck. He moved her around to his front.

“Should we head home?” Kai said.

She nodded.

After some fun in the bedroom, the four of them lay on her bed.

“How are you?” Alaric said. “Better now,” she said. “What about you guys?”

“Just worried about you,” Conri said.

“There’s a lot to learn before we become responsible for keeping you safe,” Alaric said. “I didn’t realize how much our parents and Delta team have been doing.”

“You mean keeping the whole pack safe?” Thea said. “If we keep you safe, the pack will be fine,” Kai said. “You’ll make sure of that.”

Thea ran her hand through Kai’s hair.

“Did you guys know everyone thinks I’m goddess gifted?”

“No,” Alaric said. “I just thought we were mates. I never wondered why.”

“Maverick said the whole pack got stronger, bigger, and healthier when we were born. The kids all had growth spurts. If that’s the case, maybe you guys being strong and healthy wasn’t from the matebond,” Thea trailed off.

“No, don’t start doubting again,” Alaric said. “Maybe your goddess gift made us stronger, but it doesn’t explain why we’re drawn to you. Why we’ve never been interested in anyone else. Why the three of us can share you,” Kai said.

“That’s the matebond,” Conri said.

“Yeah, okay,” Thea said.

“Do you want to start training with the Delta team again?” Alaric said.

“Or hire some new experts? Something to keep your mind and body busy? I know you feel more in control when you’re beating someone up.” He smiled at her.

“Mmm. Maybe,” she said. She nuzzled Alaric. “Yeah. Yeah. That would probably be good. I better get as much training in as I can before you guys start getting me pregnant, and I can never fight again.”

All three of them turned and stared at her.

“I’m kidding! You know, since everyone is already planning for that.”

“Don’t you think about it?” Conri said. “Of course I’ve thought about it.”

I think about it all the time,” Thea said. She put her hand on Conri’s chest. “Seeing little versions of you guys running around.” “I want little versions of you that I can spoil,” Conri said. “We’re not raising spoiled brats, Con.”

“No, little versions of you are bound to be badass warriors, beating up their brothers,” Kai said.

Thea turned to Kai and smiled. She leaned in for a kiss.

“Just talking about it makes me want to get started making one, but we’re not even mated yet. This is way off in the future. We’re still in high school! Well, you guys are in high school. I’m in prison.”

“It won’t be forever,” Alaric said.

“I wish I could fast forward time to our birthdays, shift, and get everything figured out,” Thea said.

“Well, I know something we can do to make the time pass faster,” Alaric said. Thea smiled as the triplets all started kissing her again.

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Chapter 37

Homecoming Thea went all out for the welcome home party for the pack members returning from their military service. Now that she knew they had gone into the military to join her protection detail, she felt even more obligated to make them feel appreciated.

Signs were made and placed outside as well as inside the pack house.

“You Belong Here.” “Welcome Home.” “Glad You’re Back.” “We’re Proud of you.”

She oversaw the preparation of their individual rooms in the pack house. Even though it made her uncomfortable, and she was sure she would end up disappointing them all, she understood that they saw her as some kind

of demi-god, savior, or angel incarnate. She knew being in their rooms and leaving her scent there would mean a lot to them. Proof that this person they think the world of had been there, thinking of them. She didn't believe she was whatever they thought she was, but she knew they venerated her. It was the least she could do to repay the time they'd put into keeping her safe.

She made sure their closets were stocked with clothes. She found out their favorite colors, styles, and had the rooms decorated to suit them. She put a welcome basket in each of their rooms with foods they didn't get to eat overseas. Toiletries—if their preferred was known, that's what she put in—if not, something nice. A nice grooming kit for their trademark clean cut looks. A pad of stationery and a fancy pen with their name on it. On the first page of each pad, Thea wrote "Bucket List" at the top. She put a sticky note on it and wrote: "Write down all the things you want to do now that you're home. We'll do our best to make them happen." She encouraged all the pack members to do something—writing a note of thanks, or "glad to have you home," or something personal if they knew the returning soldier. Those notes went in their rooms as well. Some were sticky notes she put on their walls.

She dedicated a wall in the Dining Hall to the returning soldiers. The four fresh from the military—Anders, Shaw, Channing, and Kurt—and the men doing private investigation, security, and bodyguarding—Dolf, Callan, Dillon, Ryker, Ethan, and Garrin. She put up a picture of each of them, surrounded by remembrances of each one. Nice things people have said about them. Anyone could add to it. She was glad so many people had nice things to contribute. She didn't remember much about them.

She continued researching goddess gifts, matebond info, doing her school homework, and reading relationship books. She started leaving little gifts, notes, or surprises around for the triplets to find. She had Lizzy stick love notes she'd written beforehand in their lockers. She rubbed the notes against her neck so the triplets could smell her scent on them. On the day the soldiers returned, the whole pack dressed up.

Adults wore nice clothes to show respect. The kids dressed up as their favorite superheroes to show the returning soldiers that's how they saw them. They prepared an outdoor banquet, so they could shift freely and run around the woods at their leisure.

The pack waited for the men to arrive. Finally a convoy pulled up. The men got out of the vehicles to roaring applause, howls, and shouts of "Welcome home!"

Alpha Ulric and Luna Ada received each man with a handshake and a hug. As the future leaders,

the triplets were next to their parents in the receiving line. Now that they knew these men weren't just elite soldiers for the pack but intended to be part of the team that protected their mate, they had a bigger interest in them. Were they good enough to be on the team? Did they care enough? If so, how do they best honor them and keep them motivated? The men knew they had to impress and prove themselves too. A lot was going on in each handshake and greeting

Thea was last in the receiving line next to the triplets, representing her absent parents and as the assumed future Luna. When the first returning soldier got to her, he froze. She could tell he wanted to kneel before her, but she didn't let him.

"Anders," she said, recognizing him from the pictures she'd hung. She held out her hand. He looked at her outstretched hand like it was the Holy Grail, and he would burst into flames if he touched it. She felt the burden of all the time they devoted to her, sacrificing so much of their own lives for a cause they believed in. It weighed heavy on her shoulders, especially since she didn't think that cause was real. Now wasn't the time to burst their bubbles. They were proud right now. They were being welcomed home as heroes. She had to act the part. She bit back the dread that she would greatly disappoint these men. 2

She reached with her other hand, grabbed Anders' wrist, and guided his hand into hers. She gripped his hand firmly with both of hers and shook it. She noticed he seemed to get taller and stand straighter.

"On behalf of my parents and myself, thank you for your service," Thea

said. "Welcome home."

He looked at her with adoration in his eyes, like deigning to speak to him had made the last decade worth it. She hoped he didn't see the guilt in her face.

"Thank you, Luna. It's good to be back," Anders said, a huge smile growing on his face. She couldn't help but smile back at the pure joy he emanated. "I can already feel the energy of the pack strengthening me." Was that why he seemed to grow taller? Just being back in your pack gave you a breath of life? How difficult it must have been being away the last eight years.

Then it was the next man's turn. Anders reluctantly let go of the hand he didn't think he'd be lucky enough to hold again. He was sure the boost of energy he received came from her.

The greetings went about the same for the rest of the men, until the last man, Garrin.

After her greeting, Garrin smiled big and kept her hand in his.

"Last time I saw you, you were only this tall," Garrin said. He put his other hand out at hip level. "You must have been only five or six years old. Now, look at you. Little Thea, our future Luna, all grown up and about to shift. I hear you're quite the fighter."

"I train," Thea said.

"Can't wait to see it."

She smiled, and Alpha Ulric put a hand on Garrin's shoulder. Garrin let go of her hand.

"Let the festivities begin!" Alpha Ulric called out to the crowd. He pushed Garrin forward into the waiting crowd. "Let's get these men some food!" The triplets each took their spot at Thea's side. "You hungry?" Alaric said. "Always," Thea said.

She had the kitchen prepare all the men's favorite dishes, plus staples from all the major holidays they missed over the past decade. It was a strange combination of foods on the banquet tables, but everyone enjoyed

everything. Lizzy found Thea and the triplets in the crowd.

“You look so good in that dress,” Lizzy said. “Elegant but unassuming. I have excellent taste.” Lizzy had picked out a long-sleeved, A-line, off-the-shoulder, asymmetrical cocktail dress made of burgundy chiffon and lace for Thea.

“Thank you for getting something appropriate for the occasion and all your extra help this week preparing for this,” Thea said. She leaned in for a hug. “That’s my job,” Lizzy said, smiling. Thea laughed.

Thea’s security detail flanked her. They officially doubled the men on her, but every member of the Delta team kept their eyes on her that night. They were worried it would be easy for her to disappear in the crowd, but the triplets didn’t take their hands off her the entire night, so they worried for nothing.

Overall, everyone had a great time celebrating. Wolves ran around, shifted to their human forms to eat and talk, then went back out in the woods in their wolf form. People stayed out late into the night.

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Oath Ceremony The next day the Delta recruits got down to business. Liam debriefed them on their military tours, experience, and what they learned in private security or private investigation. He asked them each individually what their plans were and if they still wanted to join Delta team. They all answered in the affirmative. “You’ll have to be interviewed and vetted by the Alpha,” Liam said. “We’ll go through the basics of how the team operates and see if you want to specialize in a particular area. If everything checks out, you should be able to take your oath before Thea’s first shift.”

After their debriefing with Liam, each man went straight to the Alpha to be interviewed. As expected, every man was trustworthy, loyal, and

ready to commit.

The potential members spent the next couple of weeks training with the Delta team, shadowing the guard detail, contributing to surveillance, and investigating leads. Each man showed competence, devotion, focus, and adapted quickly. They also joined Thea and the triplets for their early morning training sessions. They were all very pleased with all four of their skills. Thea enjoyed having fresh blood to spar with her.

The time came for them to take their oath. Thea's parents flew in for the day. Now that Thea knew about the real purpose of Delta team, they expected her to be at the ceremony. Alpha Ulric called her and the triplets into his office with Beta Walter and Liam to go over what was expected of her.

"All in all, we have four joining straight from their military tours and six who also spent time in private security or private investigation. That's ten new team members, bringing the total to twenty-two," Liam said.

"They'll be swearing their allegiance directly to you, Thea," Alpha Ulric said. "You'll be expected to accept their oaths."

"How do I do that?" Thea said.

"There are a few ways, traditionally. You can simply say, 'I accept.' You can swear something back to them if you feel so inclined. You can cut yourself and give them each your blood." "What?"

"Dip your finger in your blood and wipe it on them. They may make a small cut on their foreheads for that purpose."

"Eesh." Not likely.

"Blood oaths tend to be more powerful, but with your magic, you may not need it. I think the important thing is to follow your instincts," Alpha Ulric said. Thea nodded. She hoped her face didn't show the repulsion she felt at the whole situation. "The old members would like to reswear their oath to Thea personally if you're okay with it," Liam said.

They all looked to Thea.

"I," Thea said. She knew the Alpha expected her to go along with this.

"Of course. I would be honored." More like awkwardly uncomfortable.

Goddess, why did all these people have to believe she was something she wasn't?

"The oath will be to protect you, but also to serve you," Alpha Ulric said.

"As you prepare to become Luna of this pack, as you start to take on those responsibilities, you will start to utilize them as more than just guardians. They will be your task force." Her eyebrows scrunched together.

"With your gift will come responsibilities. We don't know what they'll be yet, but you won't be able to do everything yourself. When you need something done, when you want something investigated, you'll send someone from Delta. You'll likely be a target your whole life. It may never be safe for you to travel freely. Let them do it for you."

"Yes, sir." She regretted not leaving the pack lands more when she had the chance. No. What was she thinking? She loved this pack and these pack lands. There was something about not having the option, though. No wolf wanted to be caged. Alpha Ulric turned to his sons.

"It's important you three know what the Delta team does, how they work, and that you maintain a good relationship with them," Alpha Ulric said.

"You will work together your whole lives. You will swear a different oath to Thea, and she to you, when we pass the titles to you. Together, you'll protect and lead the pack through whatever unfolds." "Yes, sir," the triplets said in unison. "Ready?"

Thea and the triplets nodded.

Alpha Ulric, Beta Walter, and Liam led the way to a room no one ever used at the far end of the pack house. Everyone changed into ceremonial robes. Thea changed into a flowing gown the color of the moon. They sat Thea at the front of the room, facing the Delta team, who were all kneeling and staring at her. The triplets, Luna Ada, Naomi, and Beta Walter sat in chairs off to the side of the group. The Alpha made a speech about the sacred nature of what they were about to do, the permanence, asked if anyone wanted to back out. No one did. He went on about the

specialness of Thea, the importance of keeping her safe. Then, when it came time, he prompted each of them to come up, kneel before her, and speak their vows. One by one, they came up, knelt in front of her, and said these words.

“I swear by the moon goddess to protect you with my hands, my wolf, my life. I vow my life in service to you, to do what you ask of me, to keep your secrets, to act as an extension of you, to act only in ways that bring you honor.”² She told each man that she accepted his vow. By the last one, she was overcome by the energy in the room. It felt like the moon goddess was in the room with them, binding them all together. The last man took his place with the rest of the group, and Thea stood up. She felt compelled to speak. She didn’t notice it building inside her while each man swore their oath to her, but she was glowing. Everyone in the room was mesmerized.

“I promise never to ask anything of you that would bring you dishonor,” Thea said. “I promise never to ask you to do something I wouldn’t do for you. I promise I will do everything in my power to make sure you live long, happy, fulfilled lives. Today, you become my family, my blood, my brothers and sons. I swear it by the moon goddess.” She noticed a dagger hanging at her waist. She didn’t remember it being there before, but it felt right to take it and draw it across her forearm. She walked to the first man and kissed his forehead. He instinctively knew to cut the skin where she kissed. He extended a claw and made the incision.

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“My brother,” Thea said. She dipped her thumb in her blood and pressed it against the open wound, mixing their blood. “My son.”

She walked to every man kneeling on the floor and repeated the process. She made her way back to the front of the room and faced the men, their cuts already healed. Her glowing seemed to expand.

No, it was moving to the side.

Thea turned and saw a woman step out of her. Everyone in the room instantly knew it was the moon goddess. Standing side by side, the

resemblance was striking. They were beautiful, dressed similarly, and had the same glowing aura. The two would be forever synonymous in the mens' hearts now—Thea, their Luna, avatar of the moon goddess herself.

The goddess came to sanction the oaths and strengthen the bond between them all. She used the blood Thea gave them to establish a connection and seal Thea's soul to theirs. They could sense Thea now, almost like the matebond, and they would be able to protect her more effectively for the rest of their lives. It was a gift from the goddess. The men on Delta team were honored to feel the woman they revered.

“What you have done here is more important than you can imagine,” the goddess said to the men. “Thank you for your sacrifices and devotion, my sons. You will be honored by all and blessed for eternity.” She looked to Alpha Ulric, Beta Walter, Luna Ada, and Naomi. “Thank you for all you have done and continue to do. I chose you four for good reason.” She smiled at them. She looked at the triplets next. “You're perfect. Keep it up, my sons.” They nodded. She turned to Thea.

Thea noticed the dagger hanging from the moon goddess's waist. Thea felt for it at her own waist, but it wasn't there anymore. She wondered if the moon goddess had taken over her body during the ceremony or just influenced her, whispering what to say and do.

The goddess held her hand in front of Thea's arm and healed the cut. Then she took her face in her hands and kissed her forehead. She looked into her eyes. “Be patient and have faith, my chosen one,” she whispered to Thea. “Follow your instincts. Yours is not an easy path, but you are the one to walk it.” Then she disappeared.

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Waiting After the oatla ceremony, they noticed everyone in that room had grown another inch. Their senses grew keener. They were all stronger. The men could feel Thea's emotions, sense where she was. There was no doubt in any of their minds or hearts that Thea was goddess gifted and that they had made the best decision they could to pledge their lives to her. They didn't know what was in store, but they were certain they would follow Thea to the ends of the Earth.

Even Thea knew it was somehow important to the moon goddess that it be this way. She didn't know why, but it was undeniable that the moon goddess was in that room with them.

The new Delta team members rotated into the schedule for guard detail. When they weren't on guard duty, they followed up leads, trying to figure out who was after Thea. They continued joining in on early morning training sessions. Thea requested all the school's curriculum on the matebond and went through it, scratching out the harmful, outdated, and untrue ideas. She organized her own stacks of Xeroxes about the matebond and mates, combined it into a coherent curriculum, and shared it with Alpha Ulric and Luna Ada. They agreed with the changes that needed to be made and set up the meeting with the school. Since Thea couldn't leave the pack lands, Alpha Ulric invited the school officials to the pack house. Some of the officials pushed back, but once the information was laid out in front of them, they couldn't deny it made sense.

"The curriculum has already been prepared for you," Luna Ada said.

"You don't have to do a thing but get rid of the old curriculum."

"I've thought for a long while that something was missing," the matebond teacher said. "This clears up so much. It fills in the gaps the old curriculum left. Thank you for seeing the need for this and doing something about it. I didn't think anyone would listen to me if I said it needed to change. I apologize for that."

"You should thank Thea," Alpha Ulric said. "She's the one who came to me about it. She did all the research and put the new curriculum

together.”

Everyone in the room looked at Thea.

“You’re sorely missed at the school, Thea, but I can’t deny you’ve been spending your time away very well,” the headmaster said.

“Thank you, sir,” Thea said.

“We will implement the new curriculum right away and get rid of all the old texts,” the headmaster said.

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Lizzy had gone to most of the bars within a three-hour drive, video chatting with Thea so she could see them. Thea finally knew how she wanted the bar to feel. It was time to pick a location and meet with an interior designer. She contacted Davie, and he came to the pack house at lunchtime. Thea met him at the front doors, and they walked to the dining hall together.

“I hope you don’t mind. I have an entourage now,” Thea said.

“Not at all. Delta team is always a welcome presence,” Davie said. “You were responsible for this, I assume?” He motioned to the wall honoring the returning soldiers.

“There were lots of people involved.” Davie nodded, used to her trademark humility. They got their food and sat down at a table to talk shop. “I’ve been keeping an eye out for potential locations for your bar,” Davie said. “I have a list of places for you to peruse. Some vacant buildings, some empty real estate if you want to build from the ground up.” “That sounds like it will take a lot longer to get up and running.”

“Yes. Hopefully, there’s something in here that could work.” He opened his laptop and showed her the places he earmarked for her as they ate.

“I’m interested in these three the most,” Thea said, pointing them out.

“I’d like to see them in person, but I’ll have to see if I can leave the pack lands. Maybe next week it won’t be such an issue.”

“Ah, is your shift happening soon?” Davie said. “Yeah. My birthday is

Friday.” 2

“Many happy returns, and congratulations.” “Thank you.”

“Okay, I’ve favorited these three. I’ll look into getting tours set up, and I’ll wait to hear from you about when you can go.”

“Worst case scenario, I’ll have to send my assistant.” “Okay. I already sent you the contact info for Jane, the interior designer.” “Yes, I have that. Thank you.” “Until next time,” he said. Thea walked straight to the Alpha’s office and knocked.

“Come in,” the Alpha called out.

She walked into his office.

“What is it, Thea?” Alpha Ulric said. “Sir, is it possible for me to leave pack lands and visit a few potential locations for the bar?”

He leaned back in his chair.

“Let’s revisit this next week. You’re so close to shifting, let’s wait until you do, and we’ll go from there.”

“Okay.”

“How are you doing since the oath ceremony?”

“Good.”

“Did that help you get your mind around things?”

“Yeah.”

“It was special.”

Thea nodded. “Yeah. Kind of difficult to deny.”

“Indeed. Anything else?” “No, sir.”

The rest of the week went by slowly. Misty and Thea had been texting regularly, and she had come to New Dawn a few times to visit. She tried to be positive for her, raise her spirits. Misty was keeping her up to date on anything going on at school. Xavier had come back. She said he was acting subdued. He didn’t mention Thea or gossip about anyone. It felt like he was trying to be on good behavior. Misty sent Thea a countdown text each day the week of her birthday. Thursday night at midnight, she sent a text. “Happy Birthday!! Happy shifting day!! It’s here!!” The

triplets and Thea couldn't sleep. At midnight, the triplets got out of bed. "What are you doing?" Thea said. "We're going outside," Kai said.

"Don't worry. We got permission. The whole Delta team is going to be surrounding us, watching out," Alaric said.

They packed up blankets, extra clothes, food, and water and headed outside. All of Delta Team was waiting for them outside. The triplets took Thea to a small secluded meadow. They set up the blankets on the ground then laid down on their backs, facing the stars. "Now we wait," Alaric said.

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Shifting Delta team circled them all night. They stayed far enough away to give them the illusion of privacy.

Thea fell asleep around two in the morning. She woke up when she heard Alaric making pained noises. She sat up and saw him on all fours, fur sprouting out of his arms. Joints popping, bones cracking. Kai and Conri sat watching next to her. His shirt ripped in half as his back changed shape and grew. The rest of his clothes followed suit as he morphed. It seemed to take forever.

Finally, it was complete, and a beautiful, big black wolf with a silver-white undercoat on his paws shook out its coat. He sniffed the air, turned, and stared right at Thea. One leap, and he landed in front of her. He put his muzzle against her neck and breathed in deep. Thea reached up and ran her fingers through his fur. "Hi, handsome," she said. He shivered then licked her marking spot. She shivered. He gently put his teeth against her skin.

"Hey! No!" Thea pushed against him.

He growled and came back toward her neck. She put her arms up to

block him, and he bit into her forearm going for her marking spot. He immediately released her and backed away. It looked like he was fighting with Alaric inside.

Kai and Conri stepped in front of Thea. The wolf looked at them and growled, then whimpered. Then he laid down. Ears down, tail down, chin on the ground.

“It’s okay, guys,” Thea said. “I think Alaric has control now.”

They stepped aside, keeping an eye on him. Thea beckoned him, and he inched his way over on his belly, keeping a submissive posture. When he reached her, he looked up at her, then at her bleeding arm. He inched closer and looked at her again, asking permission. She nodded.

He started licking the wounds. They immediately began to heal, sending pleasurable shivers throughout Thea’s body. This was another thing mates could do. It was an intimate thing, and it didn’t just heal. It felt amazing. He kept licking until the wounds were closed, and her skin was clean of any blood. Her dress still had bloodstains on it. He rested his head on the ground, ears down.

Thea maneuvered, so his head rested on her lap. She stroked his face and head. “Wow,” Conri said. “If Alaric had trouble taming his wolf, what chance do we stand?” “Just remember to be prepared,” Kai said.

About an hour later, as the sun was rising, Conri stood up suddenly. “I think it’s happening,” he said. He hunched over. He kept his cries of pain in for a while until he couldn’t. It looked like he was fighting the shift.

“Conri, babe,” Thea said. “Relax. Let it happen.”

Alaric’s wolf whined in sympathy. Conri tried to relax, and that’s when fur started sprouting from him. He began to morph, then stopped. It started again, and suddenly another big, black wolf was standing before them. His tail had a silver-white undercoat.

This time, Thea decided to be proactive. She stood up. “Hey,” she said. “Want to play?” Conri’s wolf turned toward her, and she took off. He chased after her, got in front of her to cut her off. She faked left and went

right. He bounded back to chase her again. This time he encircled her, curling his body around her. She ducked and ran under him. He turned, watched her, and laid down with a whine, moping.

Thea walked back and sat down in front of him. He scooted closer and wrapped his head and neck around hers, like a hug. She reached her arms around his neck and hugged him back. She raked her fingers through the fur of his shoulder and neck. He breathed in her scent. He licked her neck and put his incisors on the skin of her shoulder, giving little nibbles up and down. "Ow! That hurts," Thea said. She pushed against him just as he reached her marking spot. He froze there. She could sense Conri battling his wolf for control. "Not again. You can't mark me!"

He nibbled with his incisors a little more aggressively. Alaric's wolf came up behind Thea and stared down Conri's wolf. Kai stood off to the side between them.

"Hey, guys," Kai said. "Why don't you go for a run? Huh? Burn off some of that energy? You know what Dad said. You can't mark her yet." Alaric's wolf lunged, and Conri's wolf released Thea to take the hit. Thea rolled out of the way and stood up. Alaric got Conri to chase him, and they ran around for a while.

Thea looked at her shoulder.

"That's a nasty bruise," Kai said.

"I'll get him back."

Kai laughed. "No doubt." The two black wolves came back a while later, laid down next to Thea, and panted as she pet them. Not long after, Kai began his shift. 1

His was the quickest. He was already practiced in submitting to Thea. It was second nature for him to let his wolf take control and handle the shift for him. He didn't fight it at all.

He was black too, with a silver-white undercoat on his chest. He turned to Thea and slowly stalked toward her. He walked right into her, pushing her down onto her back. He crouched down and laid on top of her.

"Oof. Really? Like what chance do I have of overpowering you right

now ?” Thea said.

He licked her face, buried his nose in her hair, and breathed in and out.

He stayed like that for
a while.

“You’re really heavy,” Thea said. She tried to wiggle out from underneath him, but he wouldn’t let her. She tried harder, and he clamped down on her marking spot on the other shoulder. He didn’t puncture the skin. That wasn’t his intention. He was telling her to be still. The pressure on that spot sent tingles throughout her body, and she relaxed and moaned involuntarily.

Kai’s wolf bit a little harder, trying to tell her something else. The pleasure she felt was interrupted by pain when he bit harder still. Thea cried out, and Conri and Alaric growled right as Kai whimpered in apology. He loosened his grip, stood up, moved over, and laid next to Thea. He looked at her, then looked at his back.

“You want me to ride you ? You want to go for a run ?”. His jaw dropped open, and his tongue rolled out of his mouth, hanging out the side.

“Okay,” she said. She climbed onto his back, and the three black wolves took off. Delta team surrounded them as they ran around the pack lands. They stopped at the pack house, and the Alpha and Luna came out to see their sons’ wolves.

Thea slid off Kai. The triplets’ wolves licked their parents. Their father looked at Thea’s bloody dress and bruised neck and shoulders. He looked at his sons, mind linking them. The three black wolves hung their heads and tucked their ears and tails. Luna Ada also spoke her piece to them in mind link.

“Are you okay, Thea ?” Alpha Ulric said. “Yes, sir.”

“You should heal quickly after today. You were born a few hours after them. Shouldn’t be long.”

“Alpha ? Can you tell me what their names are ?” “Axel, Caleb, and Damon.” He pointed to Alaric, Conri, then Kai. “They all said to tell you that you’re mates. Their wolves are very adamant about it and want to

mark you if that wasn't clear. Alaric says he's sorry he didn't get control of Axel in time. Axel also says he's sorry he bit your arm. You bit her arm?" Alpha Ulric said something to Axel and Alaric in mind link. Axel hung his head.

Luna Ada went to Thea and checked her arm out. A faint outline of Axel's bite, raised and white, scarred the skin of her forearm. "Well, you'll have a story to tell your children, I guess," Luna Ada said. Thea walked over to Axel and ran her hand over his back. "It's okay, my love," she said. "I understand."

He crouched down.

"He wants you to get on," Luna Ada said.

Thea climbed onto his back.

"Remember, you can't mark her when she's in wolf form either," Alpha Ulric said. He added something in mind link.

Axel stood up, made sure Thea was secure, then trotted off. Caleb and Damon followed with Delta team surrounding them.

They did another lap, running through the woods, then came back to the meadow where they set up the blankets. Axel laid down, and Thea slid off. She put her forehead against his.

"I love you," she said.

Caleb nudged her back with his nose. She turned and did the same to him. Damon patiently awaited his turn. He was rewarded with an extra kiss on the nose.

The three black wolves with silver-white patches shifted back to their human forms. Thea smiled at them.

"How was it?" she said.

"Amazing," Kai said. "I'm so sorry," Alaric said. "Oh, honey, no, it's okay," Thea said. She held her arm out. "See? All good." She pulled him into a hug.

"I'm sorry too," Conri said. "I think Caleb thought he was giving you a massage."

"Maybe only do that when I'm in wolf form?" Thea said. "Yeah," Conri

said.

“Damon was using the marking spot to calm you, then to try to get you to shift,” Kai said. “I’m sorry he was too rough.”

“It’s okay, guys,” Thea said. “Tell me about mind linking and how it feels to run as a wolf!”

“Let’s eat while we talk,” Conri said. “I’m starving.”

They each put on a pair of basketball shorts and cozied up to Thea. They pulled out food and drinks and ate while they described things.

“The first thing was smelling you, Thea,” Alaric said. He took a bite of his peach. “By the way, I think I figured out why we all love peaches.”

“Yeah,” Conri said. “Your scent. You smell like peaches.” 2

“It’s delicious,” Kai said. He leaned in and took a whiff of her neck.

“Axel went crazy,” Alaric said. “He took the reins before I could figure out how to take them back All he wanted was you. He kept saying,

‘Mine. My mate. Mine.’ Things along those lines.”

“Yeah, you were smart to distract Caleb,” Conri said. “When he got to your marking spot, I had a difficult time stopping him. Good thing Axel was there. Caleb’s in here, just staring at you, adoring you. ‘My beautiful mate. We need to mark her.’ He can’t get you out of his head.”

“Yeah,” Kai said. “More of that from Damon. ‘Mate this, mate that.’ I don’t think they’re going to be able to think about anything else until we mark you. They’re relentless.”

“Alphas,” Thea said, shaking her head. “And not to rub it in your face and say I told you so, but we told you we were mates, and we are,” Conri said. “Okay, you were right,” Thea said. She smiled. “We’re mates.”

“We’re mates,” the triplets said together.

“Do you guys feel different? Are there more tingles when you touch me?”

“Oh yeah,” they all said, lust in their eyes. “I can feel you more too. I can’t hear your thoughts yet, but I think I feel them,” Conri said. “I really can’t wait to mark you... and finish the mating process.” “It’s so weird to think everyone will be watching us,” Thea said. “And feeling it too.” 1

“It’s supposed to be a big deal for the pack under normal circumstances,” Alaric said. “But considering it’s you, I have a feeling it will be pretty spectacular.” “Not to mention the fact that there’s three of you. That’s got to triple whatever magic goes through to the pack,” Thea said.

“Who do you want to mate you first?” Conri said.

She bit her lip. “It’s going to be painful for me, so which of you—”

“Is okay with hurting you?” Conri said. He shrunk back. “It’s not fair.

Why do you have to be the one who hurts? I wish I could take it for you.”

Thea rubbed his back

“Thank you, Con,” she said.

A tear fell from his eye. She kissed it from his cheek and shivered at the tingles that ran through her.

“I think I already feel more tingles too,” she said. “You don’t have to be first, Con.” “I’ll do it,” Alaric said. “I don’t want to hurt you, but I’ll bear the burden.” 3 Thea wrapped her other arm around Alaric and kissed him. “Kai? Are you okay with that?” Thea said.

Kai nodded. “Honestly, I would have a difficult time with it, and I’d look weak to the pack. Alaric should do it. Plus, he is the oldest. He should go first.” “By an hour,” Thea said, smiling and shaking her head. “So then Con goes second because he was born next?” “And I’ll go last,” Kai said.

“Because you’re the baby of the family?” Thea said. “Technically, you were born last,” Kai said. “I was born first,” Thea said. “In my family.”

“But after all of us,” Kai said. He smiled at her.

“Come here,” Thea said, beckoning him closer.

He came and nestled between her legs. They all laid down and enjoyed the tingles while they waited for Thea to shift.