

CHAPTER 1

First Impressions

What did she do to my hair?

She told me this is going to be the most special day of my life. I am going to meet him finally, but I look kinda weird in the middle of my head. Maybe he just won't notice. Maybe he is as tall as me, so he won't see it. Everyone else is so much bigger and I have to look up. I can just bounce a little and he won't be able to see it.

I AM GOING TO MEET MY LIFE ALPHA!

What will I say to him?

My current alpha, Mr. Keith, said my new alpha is going to need me. He has been through so much in his life, but I am going to be there now. I was born for him. I was made for him. I am molded by the Great Alpha. I am to be like Him and to heal wounds, be light in the dark when he needs me. My family said to show him how to not only smile but laugh until his belly hurts. I am not sure how I do that, and I wonder if it actually hurts. That doesn't sound like a job I should be doing but if belly laughs are good, maybe I can get some of those too!

I am nervous but, fortunately, I learned how not to pee when I'm nervous. I still do sometimes but I just show Gabby my eyes and she takes care of it for me. My alpha's wife said that is M-A-N-I-P-U-L-A-T-I-O-N but I don't know what that means. It works and keeps me out of trouble.

What is he going to think of me? What will he say to me?

What if he DOESN'T like me? What if I do something wrong and he doesn't want me? Mr. Keith says that won't happen. My momma assured me it will be okay. She said I will know my purpose when I see him and when we make eye contact.

I was told I have a name now. What am I going to be called? I have heard them say Gunner over and over. Maybe that is my name? I had better listen closer when I hear it. Everyone says it a little different. High and low sounds and even louder if I do something wrong. I don't understand why chasing the cats is wrong. They run when I chase them.

The grass is tall here. I can't see everything, and I stumble. My momma and papa are here. There are a lot of animals here. I wonder if he has a lot of animals. Are they big like the ones we have? Sometimes my people ride the animals we have here. Maybe he has ones like my momma and papa.

Oh, HERE WE GO! We are headed to the big metal thing which makes people go fast and throw up. It's also where my current alpha tells me to "GIT!" when I am too close to it. He says "GIT" a lot. All the others know what that means but I still just run in circles.

We are off! It is a little bumpy and we are moving around a lot but Gabby has me and is holding me tight. It's a little too tight but I pee'd before I left so I'm ok.

Mr. Keith is talking to Gabby about my new Alpha. I'm listening close so I can learn fast. Mr. Keith said he was hurt a long time ago and has been trying to get stronger. Maybe I can help with making him strong. Is he going to look like Mr. Keith or is he hurt and looks different? It doesn't matter. He will be MY Alpha.

He also said my new Alpha has decided to speak about things which have happened in the past which hurt him. My new Alpha is doing this so he can help people like what I want to do with him. Mr. Keith said I can't see that hurt the same way I can when the body is hurt so I will have to watch and pay attention.

Do you smell that? I smell something and it smells GOOD! I also hear a lot of noises which sound like loud pops when we hit bumps. My momma taught me that is the sounds of “gravel” or “pebbles” when something heavy rolls over it. That makes sense because Gabby told me we are in a car which is the heavy thing I always get told to “GIT” from so I don’t get squished like a bug. Bugs are tasty but I don’t want to look like one or be squished.

I’m shaking. Will that bother him? I don’t want him to think I am nervous to meet him or afraid of him. If he is hurt, it might upset him to see me shy away. I need to start working on what I learned about courage. This will be a big change to me but also to him so that makes us the same, I think. If being nervous or afraid is something we both do, maybe we can help each other; maybe it happens to a lot of Alphas. I know it happens to animals a lot. Cats act like they are nervous all the time but not me. I am going to be brave and behave. My momma taught me that too and so did Gabby.

The smell is getting stronger. It smells like the kitchen at home. Wait, my old home smells that way. I wonder what my new kitchen will smell like. I love the kitchen. It means my belly is about to be bigger as long as I can eat on my own. I used to eat from my momma. It was really crowded though and I was never the biggest one. Do you think this is his kitchen? If so, I like my new home already.

I’m getting a little tired. Gabby held me like she wanted to pop me but I stayed close. All the bumps and the snuggling and now I’m starting to yawn. “Ooooohhhhhhhaaaahhhhh”(shaking head repeatedly). Now I have a headache too. Maybe I should rest up before I meet him. I am not too hungry yet and this blanket is the best.

(An hour passes)

Wait, one more stretch...maybe two.

Ok, let’s do this! I’m rolling my neck around everywhere but I can’t see him yet. I am glad I don’t have to pee or poop. My momma said it is all about first impressions. I want to be my best.

Is that him? Wow, he's not as big as Mr. Keith. His hair is ORANGE! I thought Mr. Keith said he didn't have much hair. Wait, I think I see him. He's HUGE and look at THAT! He has a belly just like me. His is covered though where mine always pokes out and sometimes the grass tickles it.

I can't stop thinking about momma, Mr. Keith, Gabby, Mrs. Kelly and Mr. Brandon. I know I shouldn't, but I am feeling it in my heart. I'm sad. I know I am whining some but will I see them again? Momma said I am loud when I sleep. She said my legs are always going crazy and kicking her or the others(I don't mind kicking them since they do it to me). She said that means I am looking forward to getting to where I belong.

See, people think dogs can't talk. We make noises which they don't understand most of the time, but we also communicate other ways. We speak through touch. I know what it means to feel safe when I am touched slow and soft. I also know what time it is to eat and to play. Usually, we all rush to the food and pile on but, when Gabby wants to play with me, she grabs my face, tickles my belly and rolls me over.

I hear everything. It is difficult sometimes because there are so many noises at once and we try to figure out which one to listen to, what commands we are given, dangers and celebrations.

We learn in different ways. I can't wait to learn more about my new alpha and maybe I can use our ways without him saying a word.

My nose is more powerful than almost fifty humans, just like my ears. I know this is hard for some to understand and humans think our noses are always looking for food but that is not exactly how things work(unless we are hungry then that is EXACTLY what we do). Our noses recognize danger, emotions and sickness plus more.

I promise I will teach you more about all of that but right now there is a powerful sense of everything at once. I have to focus in on this only.

It is him. It has to be him. I smell multiple things at once but that isn't going to help me right now. I feel it. I feel his heart. WOW, it is strong! I can tell he is struggling as he is moving. His feet sound like the gravel did and he's pressing hard. His breath is fast. It must be from what he is wearing. The sweat his body gives off has layers to it but right now he is tired. I hope he isn't too tired to hug me.

There he is. He is tall. Mr. Keith was right; he has some hair. My eyes aren't as strong as everything else but maybe someone cut his hair like Gabby did mine? HE HAS FUZZIES ON HIS FACE LIKE ME!!

He's closer to me now. His arms are out. His hands are almost as big as me. I still feel his heart even though I am not at his chest. He needs to rest. His shirt and pants smell like ours do when they bring out the baskets at home but more like the wildflowers we have. I love those wildflowers except when they make me sneeze. Fuzzies are nice but I forget, when I get too close, it tickles, and my head wiggles a lot and my nose itches.

His body is hurt but Mr. Keith was right: it's what I can't see which is more important. He's strong as I see his arms and he is still smiling. His face will sometimes move without him wanting it to and that hurts him too. His chest and back do the same. His legs are shaking.

I am worried this is too much for me. I know it is ok to be scared but what if I am not enough? What if I fail him? I have lost so much already too and soon I will say goodbye to the only family I have known to start a new one. Will he need more than me? What does he have already? The boy is very much like him. He must be like Gabby is to Mr. Keith and Mrs. Kelly. He must be like Mr. Brandon and Mr. Dustin too. The boy is family to him.

Whoa, he has me now. He isn't holding me too tight but is bringing me closer. His fuzzies need help. Maybe Gabby can help him with the fuzzies? Maybe he works on his own fuzzies on his face. I'm getting closer to him. I can feel him more now. I feel his heart bumping through his arms. I need to work fast. This is the moment.

Wait for it...Waiting for it...calm down...slow down...

Now.

My arms are around him. I can only reach the front of his neck on both sides. His eyes look like mirrors. They could be getting bigger while I am watching but I am not sure. I smell it, the similar smell to his sweat but cleaner. Yes, that is it. He has tears, first one and then more. His cheeks are shaking a little. He doesn't want the tears to come.

It worked just like momma did with me. My heartbeat is matching his. Ours are slowing down together and he isn't keeping his muscles tight in his shoulders. I feel him relaxing. Good, I can rest my head on his fuzzies(I think Mr. Keith said it's a beard). He pulls me back just a little, so we are close. Tears taste good but not when you are licking them off your nose.

My alpha opens his mouth to say something.

He said, "Hey buddy."

Wait, I thought my name was Gunner. Then he says it.

"Gunner, I'm your dad. I'm your Alpha now. It's nice to meet you."

What do you do at that moment? All I could do was whine a little as this was important for him, just like it was for me.

He spoke again. "Gunner, we have a lot of things we need to do together. It's time to get to work. Let's go home."

I knew then what I know now. As long as I am with him, I am home.

We are one.

I am his and he is mine.

What an adventure life is going to be....