

Alpha Zac

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Chapter 1 - Isla POV

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Settle down and line up!” the guard yelled, snapping me back to reality. I glanced around the lobby of the Tri-River Transition Center, and I saw a gray bus pulling up. The other “graduates”, as they like to call us, and I were headed to the Clear Creek pack to begin our new lives.

Tri-River Transition Center or TRTC was where pups with no living or willing relatives were sent until they found a career in one of the Tri-River packs. Pack life is common here for Shifters. Werewolves aren’t just things of make-believe, we are real. Living normally, well for the most part, in the safety of our pack towns spaced away from human civilizations. TRTC is on a patch of neutral territory at the center of three packs within the Tri-River alliance, Clear Creek, Cedar Falls, and Red Rapids.

I felt the warm stale breath wisp past my ear before I heard him. “Gonna miss you around here Isla...you could always come to stay with me,” Kyson said in a breathy whisper. Yuck. “Yeah, that will be a hard pass.” I spat out, not bothering to hide my disgust. Kyson was 27, un-mated, and a predator to the girls here. I don’t know who let this fool be a guard. Mates are who the Mood Goddess bonds us to. They are your other half, the bond becomes noticeable once you turn 19. You can accept your mate, or reject them, I don’t know why anyone would reject a built-in best friend that will love you deeply and stand by your side. I used to dream of meeting my mate, but that was before my mom died. The Mood Goddess hasn’t exactly been fair to me, so no reason to believe I’ll be lucky enough to find my mate. You can choose to mark anyone and forgo the fated mate bond, but those bonds were never as strong, your shifter healing was slowed and the bonds could be undone by another mark or rejected after the fact. I turn 19 next week and he has spent the entire last month trying to convince me to let him mark me. Anger flashed in his eyes as they changed from light blue to the deep chestnut brown of his wolf back to crystal blue. He went to reach for my wrist right as the guard released the locks on the main door, as he said “Grab your bags and get to your bus, don’t want to keep the Alpha waiting!”

As I headed toward the door, an idea popped into my head. I slipped past the others as they were filing out the door before Kyson could lay a sleazy finger on me. I pulled the straps of my satchel tight on my shoulders and I ran. I ran straight past the bus, the forest in the distance was my freedom. I was going to cross the border on the other side and well, I hadn’t that that far ahead. I’ll figure it out. I couldn’t risk shifting to my wolf and losing my belongings, this run was all me. I just want to get away from here, it was never really my home. I don’t even remember what it was like to feel at home, to belong, to be wanted.

My lungs burned, the crisp breeze slapping against my skin as I pushed my legs harder. My wolf lent me her strength as we closed up on the tree line. “Just a bit further and the trees can hide me,” I told myself. “WATCH THE BORDERS, WE’VE GOT A RUNNER” a male’s voice rumbled through my mind link. Shit, now all patrols were going to head back this way. Distracted by the mind link, I didn’t notice the low growl coming from the brush ahead when suddenly a large sand-colored wolf breaks into my path. “ FUCK OFF KYSON” I wheezed over my shoulder as I quickly changed direction. Still looking over my shoulder as his wolf bounded towards me, pain erupted in my shin, a yelp leaving my lips as I tumbled and skidded through the dirt.

Spots danced across my eyes as I looked around to see who took me down. You’ve got to be fucking kidding me, a stump.

Literal animals surround me and a stupid old half-rotten stump was the one to take me down?? Kyson waltzed up having witnessed the entirety of the comedy hour I just provided. He snickered, the cracking of his bones as he shifted back.

Pulling the shards of bark from my bloody shin, there was no way I could get free now. Kyson was within arms reach, patrols had been notified and the adrenaline was waning away allowing the pain to come fully forward.

“Tsk tsk you naughty, naughty little wolf,” Kyson said, shaking his head as he pulled on a pair of basketball shorts he grabbed from the patrol basket. Nudity was normal with shifters, but Kyson’s body was not one I wanted to see more of. Kyson grabbed my wrist, pulling me up as Mr. Andrews approached.

Oh, goddess, my leg hurt when I tried putting weight on it. “Isla, I thought we were past this. You’re lucky to find a spot in a pack with such a kind Alpha,” he said, shaking his head. “I don’t feel lucky” I mumbled. Mr. Andrews sighed, rubbing his temples slowly as he tried to figure out his next move. He was looking at me, his eyes swimming with sadness and irritation. He sucked in a breath, “ I get it, you haven’t had it easy, but you are so strong. Clear Creek is going to be your home, you can make a new life there, a good life.”

Rolling my eyes as I sighed, I slowly started limping along back toward the bus.

A new life, hmmm. I mean making a salary and being left alone wasn’t the worst deal in the world.

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