

## Chapter 1: Grace

*Ten years old*

“How’s my beautiful girl?” My dad asks me as I walk down the stairs of our packhouse on my 10th birthday.

“Good morning Daddy. I’m good. I can’t wait to get my wolf today!”

I’ve been the apple of my father’s eye for ten years. He is always proudly taking me around, introducing me to our pack members and other pack members through the years. I walk over and hug him as he kisses the top of my head.

“Happy birthday sweetheart.” My mother says, coming up and kissing my cheek. “How do you feel? Any different yet?”

“Not yet. Should I feel different?”

“It can happen at any time today, Gracie. Don’t fret.” My father tells me, chucking me gently under the chin.

My parents have a big party planned for me tonight. I’m hoping that I can shift before my party and maybe I’ll be lucky enough to run into my party as my wolf. As an Alpha female and my father’s only heir, it would be fitting. The pack would love it.

Everyone in the pack adores me, or at least respects my position as their future Alpha. As I go through my day, I’m continually wished a happy birthday and everyone asks if I’ve heard from my wolf yet.

As my party draws closer, I express my concern to my mother. “Mom, what if she doesn’t come before the party. What will I do?”

“Grace, honey, it’s okay. Your wolf will come when she’s ready. Just be patient. If she’s not here tonight, maybe she’ll come tomorrow.”

I get ready for my party. My mom helps me with my hair, adding a little makeup and then the dress that we bought last weekend specifically for tonight.

She walks downstairs with me, looking regal in her own matching gown. My mother is an amazing Luna. She looks after everyone in the pack, making sure that their needs are addressed and that they know how important they are to her and my father.

My father is a good Alpha, strong and patient, at least with me. I’ve seen him during warrior training and he can be fierce and intimidating, but that’s what a good Alpha is. He leads by example and I plan to do the same.

My mother guides me to the stage and I can tell my father is a little disappointed that I haven’t gotten my wolf yet. But he wishes me a happy birthday, giving me my favorite drink, a Shirley Temple, and makes a toast to me, the pack’s future Alpha.

As the days go by after my birthday, I become more and more concerned that my wolf hasn’t made an appearance. Every day my father asks if she has awakened, and every day I have to tell him that she hasn’t.

As the weeks go by, my relationship with my father changes. It’s as if he blames me for not having a wolf, as if I am purposefully keeping her from him. I begin to dread the mornings, when he asks me if I have my wolf.

Eventually, it becomes the only question he asks me. “Did your wolf awaken?” When I tell him no, it’s the last thing he says to me until the next morning when he asks again.

I find myself crying to my mother every night. “Why? Why hasn’t she shown up mom? Why don’t I have my wolf? Did I do something wrong? Is the Moon Goddess angry with me?” Every night, my mother holds me as I cry, rocking me and trying to soothe my anxiety and frustration. But there is nothing that can calm me, especially when my father continues ignoring me.

As the weeks turn to months, my father’s anger only gets worse. I notice him snapping at my mother now too. “This is your fault.” He snarls at her one day. “I should never have taken such a weak wolf as a mate. I should have rejected you and taken an Alpha female as my mate.”

I dread my 11<sup>th</sup> birthday. My father starts the day as he always does. “Did your wolf awaken?”

I swallow my tears, they only make him more angry. “No father.” His lip curls in disgust.

“Well, we won’t be having a party to celebrate tonight since there is nothing to celebrate.” He tells me before walking out.

One night, not long after my 11<sup>th</sup> birthday, I wake to sounds of violence. I rush out of my room to hear things slamming around in my parents’ room. I rush into their room, thinking we are under attack but what I see nearly stops my heart. My father has my mother against the wall, holding her by her neck. She has a bruise darkening on her cheek.

My father turns and sees me standing there. “Get out!” He yells at me. As much as I want to move, I can’t make my feet work.

He turns to my mother. “Tell her to get out unless you want her to watch as I force you to give me another heir, one worthy of being Alpha.”

My mother looks at me, her eyes showing the pain that she’s feeling at my father’s abuse. “Go on sweetheart. Go back to bed. Everything is fine.”

“It’s not fucking fine.” He snarls at her and begins ripping at her clothes with his free hand, still holding her against the wall.

“Go.” My mother mouths to me and I turn and run from the room, closing the door as I do. I don’t want anyone else to see what my father is doing to my mother.

The next morning, only my father emerges from their room. He asks me the usual question and when I say no, he mutters something about me being useless like my mother before heading downstairs.

I go to my parents' room, knocking before opening the door. My mother is limping toward the bathroom, her naked body riddled with bruises and dried blood on her thighs. She turns, her eyes haunted. “Grace, honey, you shouldn’t be here.”

I close the door and walk to her. “He’s gone, let me help you mother.”

She nods and I help her walk to the bathroom. I start a warm bath for her and help her to get in, letting her body soak. While she does, I go back out to the bedroom, seeing the blood-stained sheets. I rip them off and replace them before the house omegas can see. I don’t know if this is the first time, but no one should know what has happened in this room.

I go back into the bathroom, leaning against the tub.

“Mom, I’m so sorry, this is all my fault.” Her eyes were closed, but when I speak, she opens them and cups my face in her hand.

“Don’t ever take the blame for what happened to me. You have no control over when your wolf emerges. I love you and I do not now, nor will I ever regret having you, my beautiful daughter.”

Over the next year, I find my mother in this state nearly every morning. My father begins asking two questions every day, one of me and one of my mother. “Has your wolf emerged?” and “Are you pregnant?”

This becomes our life, until my 12<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## Comments (3)