

Chapter 1

??? POV

Years Ago.

"Move! Move! Get them out of here! Now!"

My father runs out of the packhouse carrying my sister and yells at someone behind him while I do my best to keep up with him, resisting the urge to grab onto the bottom of his shirt in my fear.

That is not something an Alpha's son would do.

When we reach the tree line behind the large house, he pushes my sister into my waiting mother's arms, then gives me a shove in her direction as his eyes go out of focus.

Stumbling slightly under my father's large, strong hands, I stagger back up straight and turn to face him, my silently crying mother putting a hand on my shoulder.

My father looks behind him again, then crouches beside me, his bright blue eyes meeting mine."Son, go with your mother and help her take care of your sister. Never let her out of your sight, understand?"

I nod, trying to be brave, as my father grabs my sister from my mother's arms and puts her down beside me, placing her hand into mine.

"You have Alpha blood inside of you, and you need to use it to protect them, and if something happens to me, you are the new Alpha, and your priority is to protect your pack. Can you do that?"

I nod again. I always knew that I would be Alpha one day, but that was supposed to be in the very distant future. This is all happening too quickly. It can't be real.

My Alpha father's eyes burn into mine. "Promise?"

"Promise."

I look down at my sister. She turns her large, bright blue eyes, exactly like my father's, to look up at me, then back at our father.

She reaches her tiny hands up at him in a silent plea to be picked back up, but he ignores this as he throws his hands to his head in pain.

He looks up at our mother. "They are here. It has started. I have got to go. Move fast. Stick to the plan, and you should be safe."

He steps over us and he embraces her, giving her a quick, but passionate, kiss. When he goes to step away, she jerks him back into another, tight hug, and gives a mued sob against his shoulder while he buries his face in her hair.

I grip my sister's hand tighter and work to keep my face straight.

Alpha sons do not show fear.

And we do not cry.

My father releases our mother and places a hand tightly on both my sister's and my own upper arm, and looks back and forth between us. "I love you both. Stay together. Remember, you are stronger, together."

And then he is gone.

My mother sniffs, straightens her shoulders, and picks up my sister, making her break her grip on my hand, which I don't like, so I try to grab it as my mother turns away, but my mother blindly grabs my hand instead.

"Hurry!" Her voice is surprisingly steady.

She starts running, practically dragging my feet as I try to keep up with her much longer stride.

"Just up ahead. We just need to reach the tunnel!"

But she's cut off.

A giant, dark gray, matted furred wolf jumps in front of her and she lets out a terrified scream and thrusts my sister into my arms so hard that I struggle to hold on to her as I watch my mother shift into her much smaller, white-furred wolf and stand between us and the threat.

"Go! I will hold them off for as long as I can! Go, son!"

But I don't want to leave my mother.

I want to help.

I can ght.

I just need to nd a place to put my sister so that she is safe...

Looking around, I start to run, somewhat awkwardly as I grip tightly onto my little sister, ducking under a low hanging branch, deeper into the forest, until I nd what I am looking for.

An overgrown bush, hidden behind a downed tree and several berry bushes, a place I had used to play hide and seek many times before, but with much lower stakes.

I pry my sister's small, but surprisingly strong, ngers out of my hair and place her under the bush inside of a tiny opening.

She objects, trying to cling to me.

"Mmm! Mmmm!"

She still hasn't learned to speak very well, even at nearly three years old. Everyone always jokes that it is because I get her everything she needs before she even has to say anything.

"Shh!" I place my nger to my lips and glance behind me, the sound of ghting growing closer, louder.

I do my best to push down the fear that is growing every second.

Turning back around, I lean down closer to my little sister, who is lovingly called my little shadow by those closest to us, and point at the ground with a stern look.

"Stay here, okay? I will be right back, I promise. I am going to go help mommy, okay? Just... just be quiet and stay here!" I try my best to keep my voice rm, but it still comes out a little shaky.

She nods, her dark hair stuck to her wet cheeks as the tears fall freely.

"I promise, I will come back for you. Just stay here."

I grab and roughly kiss her tiny hands, then back out from the bush, pung my chest out, ready to ght.

"Mom, I'm coming!"

I ignore the fact that there is no response and pull off my shirt to shift.

No other kid my age can shift yet, and they won't be able to for many more years, but I am an Alpha's son, and my wolf arrived early.

And what is the point of having a wolf if I don't use it to help save my pack? To help save my own Luna? My own mother?

Shifting into my white-furred wolf that looks like a miniature version of my mother who I favor, I go as fast as I can, weaving through the trees.

I can just make out the clearing where she is ghting and I go to leap into it to join the ght, but just as I do, something heavy jumps on top of me, slamming my body into the hard ground.

No!

I shift back and try to wiggle out from under the much larger body holding me down. But almost immediately after I hit the ground, a white blur ew past where I had been about to emerge.

The huge black wolf walks over to it and places a paw on the now naked and very still, human form of my mother, and lets out a loud howl of triumph, blood dripping from his snout. Then he takes off, at least a dozen more wolves running behind him, as he races in the direction of our packhouse.

"Mom!" The word comes out in a choked sob.

"Shh!"

"Mom!"

I try to get up, to go to her, but strong hands grip tightly onto my shoulders and hold me back.

"No! We need to leave! Now!"

I try to shrug away the hands, to ght this strange man off and to go to her, but I am being pulled further away.

"Let's go, I can help you escape, but we have got to go now!"

Snng, I give one last look towards the clearing where my mother just gave her life for mine, and nod. I really don't have a better option than to listen to this unknown man who just might have saved my life.

"O-okay."

I turn towards the direction where my sister is waiting for me in the bush.

"No, this way."

The strong hands redirect me, and I try to resist, grabbing his wrists and trying to yank his hands off.

"My sister! Let go of me! I need to get my sister!"

I try to bite, punch, whatever I can to get released.

"She is gone, boy. They are all gone. We need to move if you don't want to die too. Let's go!"

Gone?

"No! She can't be! I was just with her! She is hidden, just over that way! Let me go to her!" I struggle against his grip to move in the direction that I point towards.

The gruff-looking man shakes his head dispassionately. "They have reached her, have taken over, and are showing no mercy, taking no hostages. We cannot go back there now. All it will accomplish is your death and the end of your bloodline. I can keep you safe. But we need to move! Now!"

My little sister...is gone?

My mother?

My father?

My entire pack?

I stop struggling, the weight of all that I have lost making it impossible for me to even lift one foot in front of the other.

The strange man half drags, half carries me away, and I do not know where we are going, nor do I even care anymore. There is only one thing that keeps repeating itself over and over in my head.

They are gone.

All gone.

I failed.

I failed them all.