

## Chapter 2 Sleepless Nights

Morgan

It has been three months since my Sweet Sixteen, and I'm not sure if I should scream or cry. Every morning, I wake up on an empty Alpha floor. My entire family is already out the door by the time I wake up, and no matter what I try, they either ignore me or tell me they're too busy.

For as long as I can remember, I was always with one of my Brothers when I wasn't in school, helping in any way I could and learning a lot over the years. During my first year in school, I learned quickly that girls only wanted to be my friend in hopes of meeting one of my Brothers. They'd find no excuse to leave if none were around.

Some people didn't want to be my friends because of who I was but because of who I knew. Because of my lack of real friends, I would help my Brothers however I could—filing papers or getting coffee as a young Pup, and when I got older, I would help them with more important things. Dad let me sit at a small desk of my own in his office as long as I was quiet. I'd just sit there reading, writing, or drawing.

Mom always said that by watching my Father and Brothers work, I'd understand the kind of work my Mate would have to do on a daily basis. She said that's something most Lunas don't understand anymore—they're too busy with their parties and dinners.

By spending so much time in Dad's office or my Brothers' offices, I know every nook and cranny of our Pack-house. I know every position of our Warriors that are not running patrol and I know every route our patrols run. They never run the same route twice in a row, and our hidden Warriors serve as extra security.

I know which Packs we have an alliance with, which ones are friendly, and which ones we need to avoid. I also know who the Wolves and Lycans are in each Pack's leadership and who is set to take over in the future.

I know more about our Pack than all my Brothers combined. Sometimes, I'd hear Dad talk about other Alphas spoiling their Pups rotten, giving them everything they asked for. Dad wasn't like that—he made us earn our “extras,” as he called them, which were usually things we didn't really need.

I earned them by spending time in the kitchen, helping prepare meals throughout the day. I love being able to cook or bake. At first, I would measure the ingredients for the Omegas. When I got older, I helped cut fruits and vegetables. Over the past few years, I've been helping with the cooking and baking for our Pack-members, and Mom is really proud of what I've accomplished so far.

Spending so much time with Dad and my Brothers made Mom decide that we'd have a Mother-Daughter day once a week. It could be a day at the spa, a shopping spree, or just sitting in the garden talking about significant events in my future.

I'd rather spend my days on the training grounds with my Brothers and the Warriors than with Mom and the other Lunas talking about whatever it is they talk about. As I've already mentioned, I'm not a girly girl, and this was her way of bonding with me. I think she secretly wrote down everything I told her so she'd know how to organize every event to my liking. I really enjoyed my days with Mom—so long as it was just the two of us. If other females joined us, the conversation would always end up as a discussion about parties and their do's and don'ts.

But we haven't had a Mother-Daughter Day in the past three months. After about two weeks, I tried to bring it up with her during lunch, but she brushed me off, saying she was too busy. She's always off somewhere with our Beta and Gamma females. She even stops talking when I walk into the room.

I tried to talk to my Brothers and Dad during those first two weeks, but I got the same response from them. Dad barely says a word to me— even a simple “Good morning” or “Hello” seems too much. All I get from my Brothers are “Not now,” “I'm busy,” “Don't have time,” and other remarks like that. Even my training has stopped since our Gamma never shows up anymore.

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are spent in silence, even though I know they talk to each other through the mind-link. I can't use it since Dad still hasn't initiated me into the Pack and every time I try to bring it up, he cuts me off. Every Pup gets initiated into the Pack on their sixteenth birthday, but for some reason, Dad forgot to hold the ceremony after my Sweet Sixteen party.

After a month, I stopped going to the dining room for meals, but I doubt anyone has noticed.

About a month ago, I was wandering around the territory, just contemplating what to do with my life, when I found a small cottage near our northern border.

If I'm not on the training grounds, I'm at the cottage, trying to find a new purpose in life—and I think I've seen it. I will sign up for the King's Army, but I am not sure yet what kind of position I would like to get.

Over the past month, I've moved quite a few things to the cottage, and I spend my days there taking tests.

I hope those tests will help me determine what I'm good at and which positions in the King's Army best suit me.

Today, I'll head to our Archive before going to my sanctuary. I'll take my file out of the Archive and update it myself.

I doubt anyone has looked at it in the past three months, or someone would have noticed that I wasn't initiated into the Pack.

As every morning, I make my own breakfast. Once I'm done, I erase every trace of having been there. I place a few items from the pantry into my backpack before heading out the door.

Walking down the stairs, I notice that even the Pack-members are too busy to greet me. No one stops me when I enter the Archive. It only takes me a few minutes to find my file. As I expected, the last entry is from my sixteenth birthday, written by Dad. It just states that I turned sixteen that day.

I slip the file into my backpack and head out the back door toward my cottage. I don't run into anyone on the way, and a week ago, it would have made me sad—but not anymore. I'm going to live my life the way I want and stop hoping my family will finally notice me. Those days are behind me.

I've cried enough tears and had enough sleepless nights. I'll focus on my future—a future away from this Pack and my family.