

Mom's Secret

Alex POV

It was nighttime. I could see the moon in the sky through the large open window as the curtains uttered in the breeze. The distant sound of wolves signaled pack members either going for a run or patrolling the pack. I looked up at the stars twinkling in the sky and heaved a sigh. I couldn't sleep again. It was becoming a recurrent occurrence. It was like my whole body became lled with energy the second it was supposed to sleep. I wondered whether I should face my mother's wrath for going downstairs when I had clearly been told not to, or to stay upstairs in my room and lay here for hours, willing for sleep to come with no success.

I'm only six years old but I'm home-schooled by my mother Clarissa. We live in the Crimson River Pack but on the outskirts, near the border. I have never understood why we are so far away from the pack house. I would have loved to have been able to play with other children my own age, but there are no other houses nearby and I'm not allowed to go into the grounds on my own. My mother says it's too dangerous.

I get up and walk over to the window. I can make out the faint outlines of wolves in the far, far distance as they run and frolic in the woods. I smile to myself. I can't wait until I get my wolf. It's a long way away but at least then I'll have a friend and somebody to talk to. Besides myself of course. I have my mother for company but it's not the same as having a friend. I close my eyes and breath in the fresh air, smelling the pine and dirt coming from the forest, the smell as intoxicating as ever. I step out onto the balcony and rest my hands on the balustrade, taking in the view.

I could see the pack house in the distance. Pack houses, clustered together, the forest, patrol, you name it. I felt the cool air on my skin and shivered slightly. Perhaps being outside wasn't the best idea if I was trying to sleep, I mused to myself. What was the remedy mother always said helped? Warm milk, I remembered with a sigh. I would have to wake her. She would be upset. I wasn't supposed to go downstairs once I'd gone to bed, but I would be up all night if I didn't go to sleep and then she would be angry that I was bleary-eyed and tired during the day. I shook my head. It was all so confusing.

I turned my bedroom light on, illuminating the hallway. I slipped on my thick and warm slippers, and slid out, looking both ways, but my mother's bedroom was downstairs, so I had my doubts she'd be upstairs and walking around. I made it to the stairs. Strange, I thought, there were two sets of plates on the dining table. Two glasses and two sets of cutlery. Had Mother had a visitor over? As long as I had known, my mother had never dated anyone, even though I knew of several shifters who had asked her out. At rst, I thought it might be because she wanted to get back with my father, but she very quickly assured me that he was merely an acquaintance that she wanted to forget. Whatever that meant. I tried to push her to date because I wanted a father, what girl doesn't? I even told her that I hoped she would nd her mate. My mother had looked repulsed by the very notion of that idea.

"A mate" she had hissed at me, a look of disgust on her face "Whatever for?" she added.

I had been confused. Didn't everyone want to nd their mates? Live happily ever after like in a fairytale? I knew my father hadn't been her mate so hers had to be out there somewhere.

"Well," I had stammered, dgeting with my hands and going a little pale "I just thought that. . ." I trailed off, feeling a tad bit miserable.

"Thought what Alex?" prompted my mother.

"That you could get married and I could have a father" I nished weakly.

Silence. You could have heard a pin drop to the oor. I stared at the ground. My mother inhaled sharply.

"Alex," she said kindly "that's never going to happen. I don't wish for a mate, in fact, I couldn't think of anything worse," she said "and no man is ever going to accept the profession I've chosen for myself. They would be repulsed by it" she muttered.

I had been confused. My mother didn't have a profession. She stayed home all day taking care of me. She even home-schooled me so I didn't even get to attend school with the other shifter children. I had once asked her how we survived without her having a job and she had casually told me not to worry about it, that it was all taken care of. I mean, she didn't even sit at a laptop for hours on end. It was perplexing. A mystery, one that I fully intended to solve. If she ever let slip any more information that was.

I was intrigued by the fact there had been two of everything set at the table. Maybe my mother was nally dating? As I moved closer, I heard sounds coming from her bedroom and even though I knew it was wrong, I placed my ear against it, eavesdropping on what was happening inside. I could hear mued noises and make out both a man's voice, alongside my mother's as well as a loud smacking noise. I frowned. What was this strange noise, that kept repeating itself? The man gave a mued cry and my eyes widened with curiosity as I stared at the door debating with myself. Did I dare open it? Some instinct screamed at me not to, but another part of me was full of mischief as I stared at the door.

My hand trembled as I reached for the knob. Slowly, I turned it, expecting it to be locked as usual. It opened with ease and I opened it just a crack peering in, to see what was no doubt something shocking and unexpected to a poor innocent, and naive little girl. My mother was dressed rather provocatively in a leather corset with leather pants and boots. Her purple hair, so like my own was pulled back in a sleek and long ponytail and her lips were made up with ruby red lipstick. She held a black leather whip in her right hand. It looked dangerous and I shrunk back a little, my mouth forming an o in shock as I looked over to see a half-naked man in the room, his arms restrained above his head and attached to the four-poster bed, his bare back facing the door. There were large red gashes along his back, where my mother had whipped him.

I c****d my head. Shouldn't the man be screaming for help or shouting out in pain? That looked like it hurt, a lot. But the man was quiet. Something was at play here. I felt confused as I stared. I knew I needed to keep quiet. My mother looked condent, and brazen even as she raised her arm and whipped him across the back.

Thwack. The sound was loud and deafening. I cringed.

"Take that" she snarled.

"Thank you Mistress" panted the man.

I raised an eyebrow. Mistress? What on earth did he mean by that? My mother's lips curved into a smile. I didn't like it. She looked like she was enjoying herself. Did she like hurting this man?

Thwack. Another strike across the man's back. This one was so painful that it drew blood, tiny droplets forming across the wound. I winced.

"You're enjoying this, aren't you, you naughty little boy" purred my mother.

"Yes Mistress" answered the man.

It stunned me. It was like this whole new world had appeared right in front of me. Everything was topsy-turvy. I found myself getting distracted as I glanced around at the room that had always been locked and denied to me.

My mother's room was decorated in bold shades of black and red. The bed was black and a four poster with strange holes in them. She had a black dresser with an assortment of strange items and a large black cross with chains in the corner of the room. It was very different from what I had imagined her room to look like. I personally didn't like it. It was too bright. How did one sleep in there?

My eyes darted back to my mother who was grabbing hold of the man's hair and pulling it roughly so that he was forced to look upwards at her. "You've been very naughty, haven't you?" she asked him harshly.

"Yes Mistress" he gasped "I've been so naughty" he moaned.

I heard another thwack as she let go of his hair and then struck him with the whip. He let out a small whimper of pain. I was amazed at how brave he was being. I didn't have any desire to watch anymore. The longer I stayed there, the more chance I had of being caught out by my mother. I slowly, painstakingly closed the door with a shaky hand, turning the knob ever so slowly in my grasp so it didn't make a single sound to alert her to my presence. I stood there for a minute, terried she would come rushing out of the room and demand to know what the hell I was doing and I breathed a sigh of relief when she didn't. I was in the clear for now, or so I hoped. What if she had seen me out of the corner of her eye and just not said anything? I felt anxious now as I slowly turned and made my way toward the kitchen.

I no longer wanted warm milk. I stared at the refrigerator and shook my head. I climbed the stairs, each step feeling like my limbs were becoming heavy and like they weighed a ton. Was I becoming tired? I reached the top of the stairs and headed into my sanctuary, my bedroom, climbing into my big warm bed. It was then that realization struck. Was this my mother's secret profession? What she had meant when she said that men would be repulsed by it? Sure I hadn't liked what she had been doing but if the man liked it then wasn't that meaning it was an enjoyable experience he was paying for? My mind was whirling with all sorts of questions, questions that my naive brain realized I could never ask my mother. Not without giving away the fact that I had gone downstairs against her wishes.

I sighed and rolled over onto my side. I had gotten the answers to some of my questions but had it been worth it? The image of that man being whipped by my mother would remain in my mind forever and I doubted I would ever forget it. It would be burned in my memory and I would never be free of it. Part of me wished I had stayed upstairs, that I had heeded my mother's warnings to remain in my room so that I might have been spared the horror of tonight and all that I had seen. A small voice admonished me for being deant, for breaking the rules and that I was the punishment for it. I pulled the covers over my body and closed my eyes tight, feeling the warmth of the cocoon I had created, and my body beginning to relax. I would never tell my mother what I had seen tonight, I thought to myself, and she would never know I had gone downstairs and discovered the secret she had been hiding from me for so long.