

## Sibling Encounter

Alex's POV

I pranced downstairs dressed in my jean shorts which were digging into my stomach uncomfortably tight and a short crop shirt that showed off part of my midriff, my hair put into a bun with tendrils of hair oating around it messily. My mother sighed as she glanced at me.

"You're growing like a weed," she said drily, noticing just how short my shorts were on me and my shirt.

I blushed. "I can't help it" I protested. It seemed like I had shot up overnight.

She just shook her head, taking another bite of salad. "We need to get you new clothes" she commented "You can't walk around in those, your father wouldn't be too impressed" she added as I glanced down, wondering what the problem was.

I shrugged. I couldn't help but get excited at the prospect of new clothes though. My eyes lit up at the possibility of going shopping. "Will we go to the mall?" I asked excitedly.

My mother grinned. "Yes," she teased "We'll go to the mall. Heaven knows you need a whole new wardrobe" she joked.

I st-pumped the air. She laughed. "You need to put a longer shirt on" she advised.

That was ne with me. I practically raced up the stairs, ring through my drawers until I found a long plain black T-shirt that went down to my knees when I put it on. I put on my thongs and then went running back down the stairs, my mother standing by the entranceway, her car keys in hand, her eyes twinkling with amusement at my hurry.

"Let's go, let's go" I pleaded, tugging her by the hand.

I never really got to go out much, not with being homeschooled so this was a new experience for me. I could count on one hand how many times I had gotten to go to the mall. My mother allowed me to pull her out the front door, carefully locking it behind her and then walked over to the car. I opened the passenger door and climbed in as my mother got in the driver's seat, waiting until I had buckled myself in properly before she started the engine and pulled out of the driveway.

We headed out of the pack grounds, patrol barely even acknowledging us as usual, and headed to the main road. I bounced up and down on the seat, staring out the window wide-eyed, taking everything in. There were cars surrounding us on all sides and it felt crowded. I wound the window down slightly, allowing some fresh air in, and inhaled deeply, feeling the wind on my face as we drove, my mother concentrating on the drive as I took in the scenery that was passing us by. It was a beautiful day, the sunshine was warm and there were uffy white clouds in the sky. It was a perfect day to be out.

The drive was short to my disappointment and before too long we were pulling into the parking lot. I got out of the car and waited for my mother to do the same. We headed towards the main entrance of the shopping mall, my eyes wide open in awe at how large the building was. It was two stories and I gazed around, taking in the numerous stores as we walked inside, uncertain where we would start. There were so many stores, it was dicult to choose where to go rst, and I felt slightly claustrophobic at how narrow the walkway seemed with the crowds of people walking back and forth. My mother could sense my hesitation.

"Let's start with this one," she said herding me towards a small boutique store, that seemed to have some lovely clothes in the window.

We walked inside and I breathed much easier. I glanced around the store and saw the clothes seemed to be aimed at younger people, with cool designs on the t-shirts and the jeans containing rips and holes in them. I saw a leather jacket and headed over to it, feeling it longingly. The boutique seemed to have both boys' and girls' clothing I noticed one side for each gender. The leather jacket was on the boy's side, but it didn't stop me from reaching out and touching it, feeling its softness and smelling its intoxicating scent.

"Honey you need to come over to this side," my mother said quietly, leading me back over to the more feminine clothing.

I sighed. I really liked that leather jacket. There wasn't any on the girl's side, I noticed rather grumpily.

"Where do you want to start?" asked my mother as we glanced at the clothes.

I shrugged. I didn't know. I needed new everything, including underwear.

"How about we start with t-shirts then" suggested my mother, pointing to some racks.

I nodded and we began to dig through them. I ignored the bright-colored ones with happy sayings on them. They weren't me. I went for the ones that had awesome designs on them, including one that had a wicked skull and dagger on it. My mother blanched when she saw it, holding up one that had a cute cat on it as I glowered at her. "Don't you like it?" she asked weakly.

I shook my head adamantly and she reluctantly put it back. "It's your style" she muttered with resignation "and your choice."

I was grateful for that. My mother was a rm believer in allowing me to pick my own style and clothes. Even if she hated it.

I went into the nearest changing room and tried the shirts on, quickly. I didn't bother to show my mother, wanting to get this done as soon as possible. The skull shirt t and I loved it, keeping it on as I came back out and went towards the jeans section. My mother sighed and helped me to grab some dark jeans. The sales assistants were keeping a close eye on us but seemed satised we were going to purchase everything. I grabbed a really cool pair of jeans with tears on the front, they were black and had studs down one side as well. I was just about to walk away when I hesitated and then wandered back to the leather jacket. My mother gaped at me as I took one off the hanger, walking back to the dressing room with it.

"Alex" she protested "that's for boys."

I glanced at her "I don't see why I can't wear boy's clothing" I said with a shrug "And I like it."

She shut her mouth and grimaced. I grinned. She looked defeated. I skipped into the dressing room, a lot happier now.

I put the jeans on and they t me like a second skin but were surprisingly comfortable. The leather jacket was next. It was black, and it ts me, stopping right at my hips. My dark purple hair was loose, cascading down my back in ringlets, and with my dark eyeliner, I looked stunning and very goth-like. I turned every which way, admiring the effect. I almost danced in happiness at how I looked. My locket shone in the light, and my hand clasped around it, the only jewelry, besides the bangle around my wrist that I ever wore. I wondered what my father would say about my outt when I saw it and then decided I didn't care. I saw my father far less often than I would like and lately, I was getting angry about it. I still hadn't met my brother Logan and it was playing on my mind. I hated being kept a secret, hated that my father wouldn't leave his chosen mate and I'd had countless arguments with him about it. Mother tried hard to defuse the situation, certain it was just puberty that had me feeling this way but I knew differently. I wanted a father to be with me all the time, not one that visited every fortnight or so. Part of me was tempted to visit the pack house and tell the Luna myself what her husband had been up to. I was growing that resentful of it.

I walked out of the dressing room with the other clothes as well as the ones I'd been wearing. I wanted to wear the outt I'd put on. The sales assistant walked over to me and took hold of them. I handed her the tags for the clothes I wore. "I'd like to wear these please," I said politely as she smiled at me.

"Sure. I'll put your old clothes in a bag with the new ones" she said easily, as my mother joined us.

We walked over to the counter and my mother paid for the clothes, both of us now laden with bags. My mother had grabbed shorts and skirts as I'd tried on the jeans and pants.

Now all that was left was underwear and my mother wanted to take me to a proper lingerie store for that.

As we walked out of the store, I bumped into something hard and almost fell on my behind, strong arms gripping me and keeping me on my feet.

"Are you alright?" asked a voice and I glanced upwards to see a concerned-looking boy who couldn't be any older than teen glancing at me. He had sandy blonde hair and bright blue eyes and was smiling down at me. Boy, he was tall, I thought a bit dazed.

"Y..Y.Yes" I stammered "Sorry I wasn't looking where I was going" I apologized.

"It's all good," he said easily "Cool outt by the way" he added as I blushed.

"Logan" I heard a voice call and then out of the crowd came my father, coming up behind the boy and clapping him on the back "I've been looking all over for you. Where the hell have you been?" he demanded.

My mouth fell open in shock. This was Logan? The brother I hadn't gotten to meet in so long? Standing right in front of me? My heart began to race in my chest. My father, perhaps realizing something was wrong, glanced over at me, stiffening as he recognized who Logan had been talking to, my mother turning pale.

"I accidentally knocked this poor girl over Dad," Logan said quietly "I was apologizing to her."

My father was silent, pale now. He was shaking. My mother was tugging on my hand but I was refusing to leave, my feet planted on the oor. Logan was glancing at all of us perplexed, wondering why everybody looked so tense.

Do I dare tell him the truth? I might never get the chance to speak to my brother again. I might never see him again. I opened my mouth, not sure what I was going to say when another voice cut in "Logan dearest, we've been looking all over for you. You know better than to wander away from us" chided a musical voice.

I stiffened as a woman with long ice-blonde hair in a plait, came walking over, her blue eyes twinkling as she smiled at Logan. My father wrapped his arm around her waist, making my mother stiffen.

"Sorry Mother" Logan apologized "I wanted to check out the clothes in this store."

My mother was bowing her head in submission. I did the same, although my body was trembling. This was the Luna, Logan's mother, and my father's wife. The one he cheated on. The one he wouldn't leave. The one I despised and hated for having him to herself. I glared.

"Who are these people?" the woman said sharply.

"I bumped into the girl and I was just apologizing," said Logan hastily.

I looked up and met the woman's eyes as my father glanced at me apoletically. He shook his head at me, warning me not to say anything. I bit my lip so hard it bled. My hands clenched into sts. My mother grabbed my hand, squeezing it. She knew me so well. Knew how much my anger was controlling me.

"My name is Alex," I said evenly.

Logan smiled at me. "Well sorry about that Alex." He offered his hand and I shook it slowly. I could feel the warmth of his hand and was reluctant to let go.

"Come on Logan let's go. That's enough apologizing" said his mother sharply, looking down at my mother and me haughtily.

Logan sighed and turned to go, glancing over his shoulder. I fumed as my father turned around, his arm still around that dreadful woman's waist, never looking over his shoulder, not once as they began to walk away. I stared longingly at my brother and felt tears prick the corners of my eyes. I had been so close to him and yet he had no clue who I was.

"I'm sorry sweetheart" murmured my mother in a hoarse voice and I turned to her, seeing that she too, was close to tears.

"I hate him" I scowled and she sighed.

"No you don't," she said wearily "You're just upset. Let's go pick out the underwear and bras that you need and then get something to eat" she suggested.

I wasn't in the mood to go clothes shopping anymore but I agreed to it for my mother's sake. But the entire time all I could think about was Logan. Why hadn't I just spoken up and told the truth? Was it because I was protecting my damn father or was I protecting Logan who was the real innocent in all of this?

By the time we made it home, I was in a really foul mood and I stormed upstairs, slamming the door behind me. My mother left me to my own devices, sensing I needed some time alone. The hours passed and my anger grew. Later on, there was a knock on my door and my father popped his head in. I saw red as I sat up and glared at him. He had the good sense to look guilty. It wasn't enough to placate me though.

"Pumpkin" he began and I shook my head.

"Don't call me that" I said between gritted teeth "Don't ever call me that."

He sighed and came in further. "I'm sorry about today," he said "but I couldn't tell them who you were, you know that."

I looked him in the eyes. I was sick of the secrets, sick of him skulking around "Then stop coming around" I said quietly "because it's not fair to Mother and me."

He was silent. My mother gasped from the doorway, tears streaming from her eyes.

"You don't mean that," my father said hoarsely.

I was silent. I didn't mean it, I was just angry. He reached over and stroked my hair. "Look, I promise when you're older, the truth will come out, you just have to wait."

I nodded glumly. He reached into his pocket and pulled something out, handing it to me. I eyed the small box as he gave me a smile. "Open it," he said quietly.

I opened it. It was a ring, a skull ring, to match the shirt I was wearing. I put it on my nger and admired it as my mother groaned out loud. I giggled. "It's beautiful," I said admiring it.

My father grinned. "I did notice the outt," he told me sincerely "and you look gorgeous. I love your style baby girl," he told me.

I felt a bit better. My mother wiped the tears from her eyes.

"I like Logan," I said solemnly "He seems nice."

Well, at least I gured he was. He had apologized for bumping into me after all.

My father looked relieved "He is nice" he agreed "and I'm sure when he knows you, he'll love you."

I settled against my father, feeling tired as he hugged me tightly to his body. He kissed me on the forehead. "Get changed," he told me as I groaned "We have a training session to do before dinner."

I changed but I refused to take off the ring no matter how silly it looked with the gold bangle and locket. It too became a piece of jewelry I never took off.