

## Chapter 2

From Alessia's POV

My body trembled in fear as I sat there. I had no idea what I had done to cause Jared to treat me that way. I could not think of anything that would have made him hate me so much in the last ten years. No matter how often I thought about it, I could not figure it out. As I sat there in tears, I heard Jackie call my name.

"Alessia, come on, let's go. We are going to be late," she exclaimed as she opened my bedroom door. The moment her eyes landed on me, she rushed to my side.

"Alessia, what happened?" She asked with concern written on her face. I stayed silent, remembering Jared's last words. I shook my head and forced myself up off the floor, grabbing my backpack.

"Alessia," Jackie's voice was soft. "Tell me we're best friends," she said.

"I can't," I told her as I walked out of the room and down the hall. I heard Jackie's footsteps as she ran up behind me.

"Hey," she said as she grabbed my arm and turned me to face her, "You know you can tell me anything, and I won't judge you, but keeping it inside isn't going to fix the problem. You have to talk to someone," she said as she wrapped her arms around me and held me tightly.

Goddess, I love her. She was more than my best friend. She was a sister to me. I had told Jackie my plan about leaving Crestview and asked her to come with me, but she declined. I understood; after all, this was her home. I was just taken in. I knew I would find it difficult to leave her when the day came, but until then, I chose to enjoy our remaining days together.

I pulled out of Jackie's embrace and smiled at her.

"Thanks, Jackie; let's get to work," I told her, heading for the front door.

We made it to the restaurant with just enough time for me to run to the restroom and splash water on my face. After freshening up, I headed to the register and started to count the money.

"Alessia, can you come to my office, please?" I heard Miguel's voice down the hall.

"Jackie, can you?" I asked her, gesturing at the register. Jackie smiled and nodded as she placed the tray she had in her hand down. After handing her the money, I headed to Miguel's office. I knocked on the door before pushing it open.

"You wanted to see me?" I said as I entered.

Miguel nodded. "Please sit," he said, pointing to a chair. I sat down and waited for him to explain why he had called me.

"Alessia, I know your father worked here many years ago, and he was a great man, and you are a fantastic worker; it's just that." He paused and looked at me, empathy in his eyes.

"I'm sorry, but we just don't have the resources to keep you on payroll right now." He sighed. "I'm sure you understand."

My heart dropped. I looked down, trying to hide the tears that were welling up in my eyes. I nodded.

"I-I understand. Thank you for everything, Miguel," I said as I slowly stood up and left the office, feeling defeated. I headed to my locker to collect my things when Jackie ran in.

"Tell me this isn't true," Jackie pleaded.

Dropping to the ground, I shook my head. Sobbing, I said, "This job was the closest thing I had to my father; now I have nothing." I sobbed.

Jackie hugged me tightly and said, "You still have me. Even if you don't have the job, I'm here for you." I hugged her back, grateful for her support.

"Thanks again. You better get back to work. I'll see you later," I said, standing up and leaving the restaurant. I wasn't ready to return to the packhouse. I didn't want to explain to Luna Helen what had happened, so instead, I walked to my favorite place in Crestview.

I made my way to the far end of the western border, crossed the stream, and climbed on top of the little hill that was there, which overlooked the surrounding fields. Having run away many times as a child, I found this place, and I've always come here to clear my mind.

I loved the tranquility it brought, and best of all, no one knew about it. As I sat there, I looked up at the sky. I often wondered if my parents were up there watching over me.

How I wish they could be with me now. I knew they were gone forever, but I still felt connected to them, especially in moments like this. Sitting on this hill, I found solace in the secluded spot and felt like it was the only place I could be myself.

I gazed out into the fields, wondering what lay beyond the Western border. I wondered if there was a place where an Omgea could build a life and find a home.

As I sat there, lost in my thoughts, I also lost track of time. After briefly closing my eyes and sighing deeply, I stood up and started downhill. I heard something rustle in the trees. I stopped in my tracks and saw a pair of gold eyes in the distance; whatever it was, it was just staring at me. After a short while, it finally left, and I was thankful. I hurriedly returned to the packhouse and began my chores; Jackie was still at work, so I would also have to do her job.

As I folded the laundry, Luna Helen came in, "Alessia, I heard about what happened at the restaurant today," she said, her eyes burning into me, "Please explain why you didn't come back and start your duties here."

"Forgive me, Luna, I-I just wanted to clear my mind; it won't happen again," I replied, my voice just above a whisper.

As she stood in place, she asked, "Have you decided what you want to do when you turn eighteen?"

I was about to respond when she added, "You were taken in as a child because the accident happened close to our pack, but you have never become a pack member. Alpha Markus has tried to keep this between us, but it seems that when my son Vince becomes Alpha, you will have to become an official member of the pack, renouncing all ties to wherever it is you came from. Your birthday is in two days, so be ready because at the same Alpha ceremony, you will become an official member of Crestview, do you understand?" she asked.

I nodded; Luna Helen walked away. There was no point in saying anything else as this was not up for discussion. As I continued to fold the laundry, I realized that my plans to leave were starting to become non-existent.