

ONE | IT'S MY BIRTHDAY???

Alaia POV

Stormy gray eyes, dirty blonde hair reminiscent of the most beautiful silk, and the sexiest smile on the planet; Alexi was perfect in every way imaginable, and somehow, he was all mine.

My body trembled as his ngers teased their way up my arm then danced across my neck. Was this really happening, nally?

"Angel, one day, I'm going to put my mark right about here. I can't wait to sink my teeth into this awless skin of yours. Do you taste as sweet as you look? As sweet as you smell? I hope you do," he whispered against my parted lips.

He then icked his tongue out, just barely grazing the corner of my mouth, making me moan and internally beg for more. Having him so close was intoxicating, and my brain was being clouded in fog. I reached up and ran my ngers through his hair, gently tugging it, making a sexy growl rumble in his chest. This man was everything, how did I get so lucky?

His long and nimble ngers began to fumble over the buttons on my dress, and I cursed myself for dressing like an extra in Little House on the Prairie. What was with this out anyway? I'd never in my life seen it before, but that didn't matter. I'd tear the thing to shreds if it meant getting Alexi's body closer to mine.

"Alaia!"

After what seemed like an eternity, he nally freed the nal button and pushed the fabric back, exposing my shoulders. "You're so beautiful, Angel. Thank you for being mine," he whispered as he seductively kissed the bare skin.

"Alaia Noel Miller! If I have to call your name one more time..."

I looked for wherever the voice was coming from, it sounded so familiar, but the sight of Alexi removing his shirt quickly pulled all of my focus. "Don't worry about her, my love, just focus on me. I promise to be as gentle as I can." He lowered me down to the bed, and as he leaned over my body for a kiss, his exquisite face was replaced with a blinding light. His voice, so smooth and deep, morphed into the shrillest, most annoying blaring I'd ever heard in my life. How had heaven so quickly turned to hell?

"Alaia, get out of bed now! Don't make me come up there!" yelled my mom from the bottom of the stairs. I shot up and looked around my room; where had Alexi gone? Where was that hideous burlap sack dress? Where was my sexy time? Was it all a dream? God damn it!

I had hit the snooze button one too many times, ghting to stay in dreamland, and now I was going to be late for the last week of my senior year. Why did school have to start so damn early in the morning? This had to be a crime or something. I peeled myself out of bed and slowly walked into my bathroom in an attempt to make myself look more like a human than a walking zombie. The third snooze clearly wasn't enough because my brain was still a foggy mess. I turned on the shower, stepped in, and cursed out loud when the icy water hit my body. Well, step one, 'waking up,' is complete, I sarcastically thought as I adjusted the temperature and begrudgingly pushed through my morning routine.

Once I was adequately scrubbed, shaved, and scented, I stepped out and wrapped myself in my favorite uffy bath towel before taking a look took in the mirror. Everyone always said how much I looked like my mom, and even that morning with the massive bags under my red-rimmed eyes, I saw it more and more every day. I had her large, golden honey-colored eyes and smooth caramel skin. My long, chocolate-brown hair almost reached my waist—again, just like mom—but mine was curly while hers would have been considered wavy. I had plump, pouty lips, and a small button nose, which I loved, but I would say that my favorite feature would have been my curves.

Mom blessed me with a fantastic hourglass gure.

I would say that I would have been considered attractive by many, but I was about to graduate high school, having never dated or even having a boyfriend. I liked to keep to myself and avoid the drama that seemed to follow hormonal teenaged werewolves, so even with my physical appearance and my rank within the pack, not too many people took the time to approach and get to know me.

I pulled myself out of my haze of thoughts and tossed my hair into a giant messy bun before rushing into my closet and throwing on my favorite yellow maxi dress and brown gladiator sandals. Because of my short stature, standing at an intimidating 5'2, I had to tie a knot in the front of the dress to keep from tripping and falling on my face, but I still loved it. I stopped at my vanity, applied a bit of mascara and lip gloss, then grabbed my things, and headed downstairs. On the way down, I took a look at my phone and saw that I had enough time for a quick breakfast before I had to leave. I did an air st bump before I rounded the corner into the kitchen.

I loved food and was not ashamed to say it.

I said my good mornings as I passed a few members of the pack already having their breakfast at the large island and looked over to see more in the dining room. I gave them a wave before I opened the fridge, stuck my head in, and started unconsciously doing my happy food dance.

"Oh, what deliciousness do you hold dear fridge?" I asked while scanning the shelves.

My brother Aaron was sitting on the counter, eating a massive bowl of Fruity Pebbles, and laughed at my display. "You're such a weirdo, sis, I've never seen someone get so happy over breakfast."

"Then you're not eating the good stuff. Once you've tasted a blueberry mun fresh out of the oven and slathered in butter, you've ocially tasted heaven, trust me," I replied.

"How are you not the size of a house right now?" he asked, staring quizzically at me.

"Good genetics, I guess; maybe I'm special and was blessed by the Moon Goddess herself," I jokingly replied.

"Blessed? I highly doubt that. If that were the case, she would have given you those missing three inches, half-pint," he replied as he hopped from the counter and petted the top of my head like I was a puppy.

I slapped his hand away. "So what? You're freakishly tall, big deal. And stop petting me unless you want to feel this half-pint's sts."

Being twins, Aaron and I could ght like cats and dogs one minute, then be the best of friends the next. I loved my brother more than anything, and I knew he felt the same.

"That's alright. I saw you sparring with Jordyn yesterday and actually keeping up. I see that you've been paying attention in combat training, nally."

I used to hate combat training. It always seemed more like a punishment than anything else, and besides, I saw myself as more of a lover than a ghter.

As the daughter of the Alpha of the Opal Moon pack, it was ingrained in me early on that Aaron needed to be the ghter. He was the one who would take over the position from our dad one day, and once I found my mate, I would bear his pups and be a "good wife," whatever that means. My mom, Opal Moon's Luna, found this notion to be insane and insisted that I start training immediately.

What if my mate was an alpha from another pack? No one wanted a Luna who only knew proper place settings and oral arrangements. Dad was hesitant at rst, but because it's almost impossible to deny your mate, even if you are the alpha, he gave in, and I'd been in training for the last six months.

Since I had alpha blood, I was ercer than other wolves, and I'd caught on in training rather quickly. I could keep up with pack warriors who'd been training since they were pups. My strength had brought me great pride, and it was incredible knowing I could defend myself and my pack if the time ever came.

I looked up at Aaron and smiled.

Even though we were twins, we couldn't have looked more different. He had dad's fairer skin, green eyes, and wavy brown hair. He also had a fantastic, friendly personality and a smile that could make anyone's day. At 6'2, he towered over most kids at our school, and the girls couldn't seem to get enough of him. With his good looks and soon-to-be alpha status, one would think he would be a manwhore sleeping through the entire female population, but that couldn't have been further from the truth. Aaron believed in the importance of mates and wanted to wait for his. She would share everything from his rst kiss to his rst time having s*x. To Aaron, there was nothing more special than sharing all your rst with the one the Moon Goddess herself made especially for you.

I also believed in mates, but I didn't think I was as excited about nding mine as Aaron was. He knew his place in the pack and the world, but my future was still up in the air. I think that scared me a bit.

While off in my own world, my mom walked into the kitchen with a big smile on her face.

The way she was almost bouncing on her toes told me she was up to something, and she couldn't have been more excited about it. "Are you ready, my babies?"

Aaron and I looked at each other, then back to mom.

"Huh?" we both said at the same time.

She rolled her eyes, but quickly regained her excitement. "This Saturday? It's all set. I've got the whole pack preparing, and your dad has invited four Saturdays and a few chosen guests from neighboring packs. It's going to be so much fun!"

Aaron and I were still completely lost, and our faces must have clearly shown it because mom thren up her hands and yelled. "Your birthday? Don't tell me you forgot that you turn eighteen this Saturday and can nally nd your mates! Oh, I can't wait to be a grandma. I'll have the cutest grandbabies ever."

With that, realization struck, and my eyes went wide as saucers. My eighteenth birthday? How could I have forgotten my birthday and my eighteenth at that? "Holy s**t!" I squeaked before I could catch myself.

Mom shot daggers at me and said, "Excuse me?" so dangerously low; it gave me chills.

"Sorry, Mom," I whispered, which seemed to do the trick because almost immediately, she was back to chattering about the party, mates, and everything else. I tuned her out and quickly opened my mindlink to Aaron.

Most werewolves couldn't mindlink until they'd come of age, and their wolf had fully awakened, or their eighteenth birthday, but because we were twins, we could link each other and no one else.

Did you know about this party? And how did I forget our birthday?

I had no idea. Dad's invited four other packs? Do you know how much that increases our chances of nding our mates, Alaia? As much as we hate parties and being the center of attention, this is a good thing.

Good for who? What if my mate is from another pack or an abusive asshole with a foot fetish, or worse, what if he doesn't like cheese?

Really Alaia, disliking cheese is worse than being an abusive ass? Get your s**t together, sis.

Whatever.

I cut the mindlink just as I heard Mom speak again.

"Okay, babies, off you go. You don't want to be late. It is your last week, after all."

It was then I realized that I didn't even get a chance to grab breakfast.

She started pushing us toward the door, and my stomach rumbled in protest. With her heightened senses, she heard the sound and smirked. "That will teach you to hit the snooze button so many times."

"Please, at least let me grab a banana or something! I had time, I did, but Aaron distracted me, and you wanted to talk about the party. I'm starving," I begged.

It was useless; we were pushed into the garage, and Mom quickly closed the door behind us.

"You can grab something from a vending machine if we hurry; come on." Aaron looked over and said.

My stomach protested and rumbled the entire way to school; that day was already complete crap.