

Chapter 11 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alexi POV

“Alexi, do you have anything to add here? Maybe you’d like to share with us why you thought it was a good idea to reject Alaia in the first place?”

I looked over at my dad, then the Alpha and saw the disappointment in both of their eyes. I didn’t think it would come to this, but here we all are.

“Alpha, at the time, I thought I was doing what was best for Alaia. You all know my reputation; I’ve never been one to settle down with just one girl. It’s not that I didn’t think that I could settle down with Alaia, but it was the fact that I didn’t feel that she deserved to have to settle for me.”

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Alaia’s face drop, and I hoped my words had the intended effect.

“Alaia deserves the best, not some guy who’s slept with the majority of the girls in the pack! So yes, when I rejected her, I was doing it for her. But then she accepted my rejection; she didn’t even fight for me.”

I looked over at Alaia and stared her right in her golden honey eyes. I heard Xander growl at this, but I didn’t care. I had to make sure she understood what I had to say.

“When you accepted my rejection, I felt our bond break. You could have filled my veins with wolfsbane, and it wouldn’t have stung nearly as much as it did when you turned and walked away from me. Last night I stayed up all night thinking over my decisions, and I realized what an idiot I had been to reject you. I had hope that one day you could forgive me and finally be mine, I still have that hope...”

“She’s MINE!” Alpha Xander roared from his seat at the table.

“You had your chance, and you tossed it aside. Clearly, the Moon Goddess knew you would do just that since she then gave Alaia to me. Get it out of your head now that you’ll ever have any other chances with her!”

“Alexi, why didn’t you just think this through? Your mom and I taught you better than this. We always taught you to have respect for your mate, your absolute greatest gift. And you were

blessed with Alaia of all wolves. You couldn't have gotten anyone better for you, and you without thinking reject her? I just don't understand..."

Those words from my dad were like rubbing salt in my still open wounds.

"I'll challenge you for her," I finally said, looking Alpha Xander directly in the eye.

Xander snorted before replying.

"You can't be serious. Alaia's already mine."

"You haven't mated or marked her. Per wolf laws, an unmated and unmarked shewolf who has multiple suitors claiming to be her mate is still fair game."

I then stood to my feet.

"I Alexi Kostov, future Beta of the Opal Moon pack, challenge you Alpha Xander Black of the Blue Moon pack, for the right to mate Alaia Miller, daughter of Alpha Jonathan Miller, also of the Opal Moon pack."

You could hear a pin drop in the room. No one appeared to move or even breathe.

Soon, a smile crept up on Xander's face before he lifted Alaia off his lap and stood to face me.

"I, Alpha Xander Black of the Blue Moon pack, accept your challenge."

What the fuck had I just gotten myself into?

Alaia POV

"I Alexi Kostov, future Beta of the Opal Moon pack, challenge you Alpha Xander Black of the Blue Moon pack, for the right to mate Alaia Miller, daughter of Alpha Jonathan Miller, also of the Opal Moon pack."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I was still trying to figure all this out when Xander gently placed his hands on my hips and lifted me off his lap before he stood.

The next words out of his mouth stopped my world completely.

"I, Alpha Xander Black of the Blue Moon pack, accept your challenge."

"Wait! You guys can't do this! A challenge, really? I'm not some prize that you can just rip each other apart to claim. Dad, stop them please!" I begged.

“I can’t sweetie. You know I abide by all of our laws to the absolute best of my abilities, and that won’t change now.”

“Alpha Xander, as Alexi is the challenger, it is up to you to decide when this fight will take place. Since Alaia is still a member of the Opal Moon pack, we will see this through right here on our pack lands.”

I turned around to Xander, reached up, and pulled his face down, so we are looking eye to eye. Before I realized it, a lone tear fell from my eye as I pleaded with him.

“Please, Xander, don’t do this.”

He bent down and kissed the tear away before again standing straight.

“Don’t worry, Little One; everything will be fine. It will all be over soon.”

He then looked straight ahead at my dad and said: “Alpha Jonathan, I think tonight would be perfect.”

When I heard these words, my legs began to wobble, and darkness started to move in on me. Just before my world went completely black, I felt my body become weightless, and a smooth baritone voice called my name. It was all too much, so I just slept.

Aaron POV

I watched in horror as Alaia’s eyes rolled back and she collapsed in Alpha Xander’s arms. I ran to her, wanting to take her away to the pack doctor before I remember my place.

Alaia had a mate, two mates apparently, and it was for them to see to her wellbeing now. She was no longer my baby sister; she was a beautiful young woman.

“Alpha Xander, if you’d follow me, we can take her to the pack doctor and get her checked out. I’m sure it’s probably just the stress of the past couple of days getting to her, but it’s better safe than sorry,” I looked over and said to him.

Alexi let out a low growl and stated, “She was mine first. I should be the one...”

“SHUT THE FUCK UP LEX!” I roared.

“This, all of this,” I say while pointing around the room, “Is all. Your. Fault. If you’d thought with your brain instead of your dick all these years, we wouldn’t be in this situation now. So please, if you care for Alaia, shut that hole in your face and let her mate do what he needs to do.”

Alexi looked beyond furious once I finished speaking but didn't say anything. There was nothing he could say at this point, so he just nodded his head once and exited the room.

“Alpha Xander, come with me, please.”

“I'll meet you there, Son. I need to fill your mother in on all of this, and you know she won't want to hear it over mindlink.”

I nodded at my dad before I turned and started to rush through the halls to the pack hospital. Alpha Xander easily kept up, and when I glanced over, I saw how delicately he was holding Alaia. Like she the most precious thing in the world. Then I realized that to him, she was.

When we arrived at the hospital, I asked the first nurse I saw where I could find Dr. Collins. She pointed us towards the room, and we quickly made our way over and in.

“Ahh, Aaron, and Alpha Xander. Come, come, lay her down here. Your father linked me and filled me in on what was happening,” he said to us.

As soon as Xander placed Alaia on the bed, Dr. Collins got to work, checking her heart, temperature, and blood pressure. After a few minutes, he turned to Xander and offered a reassuring smile.

“Your mate is fine, Alpha; she just needs to rest. It seems that all of the recent excitement has drained her and her wolf. Being rejected, then immediately finding your second chance mate is almost unheard of. Her heart was shattered then put back together in such quick succession that she's now completely spent. I'll give her something to help her sleep more peacefully before I head out, but she should stay with us at least until morning.”

The news seemed to calm Alpha Xander, his body slowly started to relax, and the look of worry that had been on his face began to fade.

I pulled up a chair and placed it next to the one already at Alaia's bedside. Once I sat down, I looked over at Xander and said: “Well, it looks like we've got a bit of time to get to know each other.”

TWELVE | DO YOU KNOW WHAT A DOM IS?

Chapter 12 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alaia POV

It felt like I'd been asleep for years as I tried to open my eyes. My arms felt like lead, and I couldn't for the life of me, remember why.

I continued to work to open my eyes when I started to hear familiar voices. Was that Aaron, and Xander? What were they talking about? And laughing? What, were they best friends now or something?

I willed my eyes open and looked around. For a minute, I had no idea where I was until I heard the "beep...beep...beep..." of the machines.

"Why am I in the hospital?" I quietly asked.

Hearing me speak, both Xander and Aaron snapped their heads in my direction and leaned forward.

"How do you feel, Little One? Do you need a glass of water or anything? Are you in any pain?"

I chuckled and replied.

"No Xander, I don't need anything. You could help me sit up a bit, though."

He gently lifted my body before placing me back on the bed in a seated position. Aaron sat close by with a sly smile on his face.

I blushed at the attention before I looked up at Xander and thanked him.

"Anything for you, Little One," he replied.

"So, which one of you would like to tell me what's happening?"

The guys looked at each other before Xander ran his hands over his face and sighed.

"You're exhausted, sweetie. The doctor says that all the shit that has happened the last couple of days has mentally and physically drained you and your wolf. I guess hearing your father, Alexi, and I discussing the challenge was the last straw. You fainted in my arms before Aaron, and I brought you here. I'm so sorry, baby."

I reach out and grab his hand, willing him to look up and into my eyes. Once he did, I let him know.

"None of this was your fault. All you did was pick up the pieces when I was broken beyond repair. So again, thank you."

I then leaned back and looked over at Aaron.

"So how long have I been out?"

“Just a few hours, it’s a little after 4:30 right now,” he said, looking at his watch.

Cool, that still left me time to figure out how to stop this stupid challenge.

As that thought worked its way through my mind, Alexi appeared at the doorway of my room. Xander immediately tensed up, and Aaron jumped to his feet and turned to his friend.

“Dude now’s not a good time. She just woke up.”

“It’s alright,” I said, “I don’t mind if he comes in for a while.”

Alexi gave me a small smile before he stepped further into the room.

He nervously cleared his throat before he asked: “Guys, I know this is a lot to ask, but would you mind if I spoke to Alaia alone for a bit?”

I expected Xander to refuse the request, but then I remembered the rules of the challenge. Alexi couldn’t touch any part of my body whatsoever. Since he rejected me, I was no longer his. Another had found me, and now Xander had claim over me. If Alexi were to violate this rule, it would mean either death or banishment. It would be up to Xander to choose the punishment.

Xander and Aaron both looked over at me to see my reaction.

“It’s fine; you guys can wait right outside if you want.”

Xander stood straight up before bending back over and placing a petal-soft kiss on my forehead. The sparks that shot through my body charged and energize me. I wanted more of him, but I knew it was not the time.

“I’ll be right outside. Call me if you need anything at all.”

Xander turned then walked out the door, not even sparing Alexi a glance. Aaron also walked out and shut the door quietly behind him.

“You can come closer, you know. The rules say you can’t touch me, but you can at least sit by my bed.”

Alexi moved to the seat vacated by Aaron and sat down. We sat in comfortable silence for a few seconds before Alexi decided to break the ice.

“I didn’t mean for any of this to happen, Alaia. I had a feeling you were my mate when I hit eighteen last month, but I hoped it wasn’t right. I felt so unworthy of you. When I saw you last night, I didn’t know what to do. The last thing I wanted, was also the one thing I wanted most. I wanted you so, so bad, Alaia.

I just didn't know how I could face you once it was known that we were mates. The shewolves wouldn't have given you a moment's rest. Hell, they can't even handle us talking to one another without raging with jealousy, so just imagine what would happen when they saw you bearing my mark.

I realize now that I was just taking the easy way out. You're so much stronger than I ever gave you credit for. You showed me that when you accepted my rejection and walked out of my room with your head held high."

I seemed to have lost my voice as no sound made its way out of my mouth. Alexi had finally explained to me why all of this had happened, and I couldn't feel anything but sadness.

If only he had been stronger from the start. We could be happily mated now and preparing to start our lives together.

The Moon Goddess knew better, though. I don't know much about Xander; what I did know was that I wanted to be with him. I'd never before felt more at peace than I did when I was in his arms. I opened my mouth to express this to Alexi before he stopped me.

"It's okay, Alaia, you don't have to say it. It's obvious the way you feel about him already. I just wish I could take his place. And I will, tonight after the challenge."

Alexi abruptly stood up and left the room, leaving me alone with my thoughts.

Well shit...

About fifteen minutes later, my parents entered the room, followed by Aaron, Jordyn, Xander, and his beta Kade.

Mom rushed over and crushed me in a hug.

"My poor baby! A rejection, a second chance, and a challenge all in the span of twenty-four hours? It's no wonder you're exhausted. But don't you worry, we'll get you back to your old self sooner than you know it."

I laughed and smiled at her.

"Thanks, Mom, but I'm okay. I promise."

Before she could launch into more of her "mother hen" tendencies, Dad cut in.

"Both Xander and Alexi agree that the challenge is to move forward as planned. Knowing you, I'm sure you were trying to find a way to stop it before it started, but that doesn't seem to be the

case here. I've asked them both to take the next few hours to prepare themselves, and since the outcome directly affects you, I'll ask the same of you.

Get ready, sweetheart, because no matter what happens, someone has to lose. It could turn out to be a fight to the death if they refuse to concede the victory. Someone may lose their life tonight, so please, prepare yourself as much as you can, okay?"

I wiped the stray tears I didn't even realize had fallen from my cheeks and nodded.

"Okay, Dad."

He gave me a quick hug before he took my mom's hand and turned to leave. Xander and Kade stood at the door, having a private conversation amongst themselves through their mindlink.

Jordyn sent me a smile and mouthed, "I love you, girl."

"Aaron, baby. Let's give her some time alone. I'm sure she's in good hands."

They both walked out, leaving me with Xander and Kade.

I gave them both a shy wave encouraging them to come closer.

"How are you, Luna?" Kade asked me.

"I guess I'm about as good as I can be. I know that the outcome I want isn't guaranteed and that honestly worries me."

"Well, you don't have to worry about your Alpha. He's waited years for you, and he damn sure won't give you up now that he's found you. Besides, I'm sure the whole pack back home is waiting to see the lovely lady who turned Big Bad Xander here into a lovesick puppy."

Xander growled at Kade, making him and I laugh.

Kade put his hands up in surrender before he conceded.

"I'm going to head out now and give you two some much needed alone time. 9 o'clock," he said to Xander before he walked out.

I looked up at Xander and patted the spot beside me on the bed. He smiles before he walks over, takes off his shoes, and lays down beside me.

Like magnets, our hands found their way to each other, and our fingers intertwined.

“How about we play a game, twenty-one questions?” I asked him, “That way, we can get to know one another.”

“Sure, I’ll start,” he told me.

“What is your favorite food?” he asked.

I giggled when I told him “That’s impossible to answer, I love all food. Have you seen these thighs?”

Xander’s eyes darkened and he licked his lips.

“Yes, I’ve seen them. And I’ve dreamed about having them wrapped around my waist and around my face. I want to commit every golden-brown inch of those thighs to memory.”

Dear sweet baby Jesus. This man just had to look at me, and my panties were soaked. The thought of his head, either one, buried between my thighs makes them instinctively clench.

I cleared my throat and said, “P-pancakes. Our head omega Mrs. Wilson makes strawberries and cream pancakes that I will fight over. They are my favorite...”

“Sounds delicious, I’ll have to try them sometime,” he said with a sexy smile.

“What’s yours?” I ask.

“I’m not 100% sure yet, but I think it might be you. Your ankles and hands tied to my bed while I devour that juicy pussy of yours until you cry tears of joy.”

He leaned over and placed his lips right next to my ear before he whispered, “I can smell you, baby.”

I gasp and cover my face with my hands.

Xander roars with laughter before pulling me in for a tight hug.

“It’s alright, Little One. You have no idea how happy it makes me to see how your body responds to my touch. This delicious little body was made to be mine and mine only. Mine to touch, mine to kiss, and mine to fuck until you can no longer walk straight. Once this is all over and I bring you back to our pack, you’ll experience pleasure you’ve never known.”

“W-what do you mean?”

“Do you know what a Dom is Little One?”

“No,” I whispered.

He lowered his voice to the sexiest huskiest tone I'd ever heard before and explained.

"I am a Dom, or dominant. You will be my submissive. That means that I like to be in absolute control. When you're in our bed, you're to be 100% submissive to me. If you disobey, you will be punished. Punishment can be anything from bending you over my lap while I spank that pretty round ass of yours until you cream down your legs, to withholding your orgasm. It's all up to me.

When I tell you to cum, you will. As hard and as many times as I want. When you feel like you've reached your limit, I'll push you over it. As your Dom, I'll make you reach the highest peaks of pleasure and pain before I bring you back down and soothe it all away. Your body will be my toy, and I'll play with it as rough and hard or as soft and gentle as I want. Would you like that, Little One?"

Would I like that? Would I like this tasty mountain of a man to use my body however he saw fit? Abso-fucking-lutely, I would love it.

I'd never experienced anything like this, I'd never even kissed a guy, let alone had sex, but now the idea of allowing Xander to take total control set my body ablaze.

Amethyst, who'd been mostly quiet the last few hours, woke and began to purr and howl loudly. She's wanted to be taken by Xander just as badly as I did.

"Your eyes have gone dark, Little One. Couple that with the thick smell of your juices, I'll assume that your answer is yes?" he said with a raised eyebrow.

It seemed that all my body's hydration had gone south, my mouth was like a desert and far too dry to even form the simplest of words.

I took my bottom lip between my teeth and gave Xander a nod, causing him to growl lowly.

"I'm going to destroy that mouth of yours, baby," he said while reaching up and pulling my lip free.

He then ran the pad of his thumb across the outline of my mouth before saying, "Open."

I immediately obliged and was rewarded with his thumb slowly entering and gently beginning to finger fuck my mouth. My body moaned in pleasure.

"Suck it, Little One, such a good girl you are," Xander said and I felt my nipples become hard as ice, straining against my thin T-shirt. My body gushed, leaving pools of my pleasure between my thighs.

"Now there's just one more thing I have to do."

I just nodded furiously, Xander could do whatever he wanted, however he wanted.

He brought his face closer to mine, so close I could feel his warm minty breath fan over my cheeks and down my neck. Goosebumps erupted all over my body, and I began to suck his thumb like it was the tastiest treat known to man.

“I have to go beat your ex in this challenge.”

He then pulled his thumb from my mouth, making me almost whine from its absence.

“Don’t worry, Little One, I’ll come right back, and when I do, You. Will. Cum. And hard.”

Again, I just nodded my head.

“Let me hear that beautiful voice, baby.”

“Y-yes,” I managed to get out.

“Yes, what?”

In unison, Amethyst and I said, “Yes, Daddy.”

Oh, Moon Goddess, what had I gotten myself into?

THIRTEEN | IT'S TIME

Chapter 13 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alaia POV

After Xander left, I was left alone with my thoughts. So much had happened in one day, and now was a perfect time to sort out my feelings.

I knew that at any moment, the challenge would be starting, and I didn’t want to be anywhere near it.

I did not doubt that I wanted Xander. My mind, definitely my body, and my soul craved him. He had become like fresh air to me, and I couldn’t imagine how bland my life would be without him in it.

The things I had felt for Alexi were child’s play in comparison.

Xander would come back to me. He would claim and mark me. He would bury himself deep within my walls and fill me with his seed. I wanted all of that and more with him.

My one concern was Alexi. Would he concede? Xander was a dominant alpha, fighting for his mate. There was little chance of Alexi beating him.

Alexi was full of pride. It was one of the things that used to attract me to him. I just hoped that pride would not turn to cockiness at the most inopportune moment.

I did the only thing I could think to do, and I mindlinked Aaron.

Aaron, where are you?

I'm heading to the training ground for the challenge. Are you alright, do you need anything?

I'm alright, I promise. But I do have a favor to ask.

Alaia, you know I can't interfere in the challenge. They have to settle this on their own. There's nothing-

No, I don't want you to interfere. I know the rules. I also know that the chances for Alexi to win this are slim to none.

So what do you need for me to do?

I don't even know really. Alexi's so proud, Aaron. Don't let his pride get him killed tonight. If it's clear that it's over, maybe you can convince him to concede? Please?

I don't know, Alaia. I don't want to lose my best friend tonight either. I'll see what I can do, but I make no promises. Okay?

Okay, thank you, Aaron.

Anytime little sis. Sit tight; I've got a surprise on the way to you. See you later!

Once Aaron cut the mindlink, I walked Jordyn. Goddess, it felt like ages since I had spent time with her, even if it had only been a couple of days.

As soon as I saw her, my face lit up. Aaron had marked her.

"Ohh, you dirty girl," I squeaked with giddiness. "Tell me everything NOW!"

She walked towards my bed before lying down beside me.

"Wait! Tell me almost everything," I corrected.

She chuckled then let out a long sigh.

“Everything has been such a mess,” she started.

I grabbed her hand to show her I understood before she continued.

“After everything happened with you and Alexi at the party, it was apparent that Aaron and I wouldn’t mate last night. Our favorite person in the world was shattered; there was just no way.

Then this morning, I can’t even begin to explain the relief I felt when I saw you in the kitchen inhaling those pancakes. I’ve always known you were strong, but I couldn’t figure that you’d get over Alexi’s rejection so quickly.

Then when Aaron told me what happened at the Alpha meeting, it all clicked. I couldn’t believe the Moon Goddess would give you your second chance so quickly, but I’m beyond ecstatic that she did. You deserve nothing but happiness, and the glow that Xander has given you today has kept Alexi from dying at my hands for sure.

Then the asshole challenges Xander? The one person who was able to make you whole again? Needless to say, Alexi was on my shit-list again. At the tippy top.

It made me understand that the Moon Goddess gives us mates, but it’s up to us to love and cherish them. And that’s what I was determined to do.

Your brother is so perfect, Alaia. I wanted nothing more than to bear his mark and let the world know that I belong to him.”

“I’ll spare you the details,” she said with a laugh, “but it was the most amazing experience of my life. When we became one, I swear the air became sweeter, the sun is now brighter, and life is just...better. He’s my entire universe...”

I sniffled and wiped away a few tears. Never in my life did I imagine that my best friend would be my brother’s mate, but I couldn’t be happier. She saw him for who he was, not his place in the pack.

Not once had she spoken about the fact that she would soon be the Luna of the pack, she didn’t care about titles like that. She just cared about Aaron, and it made me love her so much more because of it.

“No more tears, lady. You’ve got some sharing to do as well. I can tell, so spill.”

We spent the next hour or so filling each other in on the joys of having a mate. It was so funny to watch her jaw drop, and her eyes almost pop out when I told her about Xander being a “dominant.”

“Holy shit, that’s hot,” she said, dramatically fanning herself.

Before I could respond, a breathless and disheveled Aaron burst into my room.

“It’s all over. It’s done.”

Xander POV

As soon as I left Alaia’s room, I mindlinked Kade to meet me at the training grounds.

By the time I arrived, he was already there, stretching his muscles.

I pulled off my shirt and walked towards him.

I needed to spar, and Kade knew this. I never knowingly went into a fight unprepared. Alexi may have just been a beta, but I would never underestimate a wolf fighting for their mate, even if that mate was now mine.

“You ready?” I asked.

“Let’s do this, Alpha,” he responded.

Kade charged at me, fast and hard. I was dodging blows to my head, chest, and legs. He didn’t relent because he knew that I didn’t want him to.

I took in his stance and anticipated his next move. As he brought his foot up for a roundhouse, I grabbed his calf and ankle then spun around, throwing him into a nearby tree.

Kade was a well-trained fighter so he quickly stood and brushed himself off.

“It only took you ten years to finally start reading that move. I guess now is as good a time as any.”

When he finally made his way back to me, I went on the offensive, throwing combinations and hooks so quickly they began to blur together. Kade was able to block many of them, but I felt the impact of the ones I did manage to land.

One hour later, we’d finished, and I knew that I was ready. My muscles were loose and pliant. I wiped a bit of blood from my mouth before I decided to let Alastair out and go for a run.

“What do you say to a quick run?”

“As I said before, let’s do this, Alpha.”

I laughed before I took a deep breath and allowed Alastair to take control. My vision began to sharpen, as did my hearing and sense of smell. Then I started to feel the sting of my bones dislocating and elongating, taking on my wolf form.

I felt my consciousness takes the back seat to allow the other part of me to come forward.

Alastair let out an ear-piercing howl once the transformation was complete.

We stood in the middle of the training grounds and looked around.

Alastair was a massive wolf, undeniably an Alpha.

He possessed a massive frame that reaches 6' at his haunches and at least 8' at the top of his head. He shared my same coloring with thick black fur and crystal blue eyes.

Through the mindlink, I told Kade where we were heading before we took off.

It had been a few days since I'd let Alastair out, and it showed.

He ran through the forest, dodging trees, leaping over fallen logs, and chasing after any poor little animal he could find.

When we looked over, it was clear that Kade's wolf, Elias, was just as happy to be out.

We made our way to a clearing with a small brook before we took a quick breather.

So, tell me, Alpha, are you ready for the challenge?

Yes, I'm ready. And what's with all the "Alpha" shit?

Just making sure you know who and what you are. You're an alpha taking on a beta. You are superior in every way, so remember that.

I know what I am, Kade. But alpha or not, I'm still a man fighting for his mate. In some twisted way, so is Alexi.

I do not doubt that you'll come out on top in all this. I've fought beside you for years, and I absolutely wouldn't want to trade places with Alexi tonight.

I'm worried...

Worried? About what?

Why would he challenge me, Kade? We all know what his chances of beating a trained alpha are. Minimal at best. That means he's proud, and pride can make you stupid.

Okay?

Ugh, just listen. When Alexi challenged me, I could see the fear in his eyes once I accepted. And I saw that same fear in Alaia's eyes when she begged me not to do this. Make no mistake about it, she is mine and mine alone, but she still cares for her friend. If it comes down to it and he refuses to concede, I'll have to kill him. How will Alaia live with that?

Alastair looked over at our second in command before we heard him reply.

If the time comes, I don't doubt that you'll do the right thing. You're an alpha not just in title but in your heart. You are true and just.

Who knew you were so poetic? I can't wait to tell all your lady friends!

Alastair then took off back towards the training grounds with Elias hot on our tail.

We're ready, I thought to myself.

That we are, replied Alastair.

Aaron POV

My conversation with Alaia had left me more than a little on edge. I knew Alexi, and he wouldn't concede. I had no idea how this night would end.

As I reached the training grounds, I saw that my dad and Beta Lucas were already there. Alexi arrived a few seconds after I did.

"Hey, man," he said when he walked up to me.

"Hey, Lex. You ready for this?"

"Can I ever be ready for something like this? Before it's gets started, though, I wanted to apologize to you."

"Save your apologies for Alaia bro; she's the one who needs them. Not me."

"You're wrong. Not about Alaia, if I make it out of this, I'll never stop apologizing to her, but you deserve one too. I hurt your sister, and in turn, I hurt you. You've been my best friend for as long as I can remember, and I know you're pissed and disappointed in me. If I get the chance, I'll make all this right. I promise."

"Give yourself the chance Alexi. Don't cause any of us any more pain, got it?" I asked, looking him right in his eyes.

Alexi seemed to get what I'm saying. He sighed and nodded before replying, "I got you, bro."

Just then, we saw two massive wolves break through the tree line and jog towards us. I'd never seen them before, so I immediately looked around, trying to figure out how they got past our border patrols.

The wolves begin to shift, and we saw that it was just Alpha Xander and his Beta Kade. They both grabbed a pair of basketball shorts lying at the edge of the sparring circle and put them on before stepping into the center.

"It looks like it's time, Lex. Let's go."

FOURTEEN | THE PACK IS WAITING

Chapter 14 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alexi POV

It was time. Nine hours ago, I let my ego take over, and now I was about to fight an Alpha for his mate.

I wouldn't admit it to anyone but myself, but Alaia was, in fact, his. The moment she walked out of my room, she became his.

My pride was hurt when she didn't fight for me, fight for us, for what we could have been. Didn't she want me as much as I wanted her?

Now it was that pride that I was fighting for. I may never get to claim and mark her, but no one would ever say that Alexi Kostov ran away. I was a beta and a warrior. I'd fight to regain my pride or die trying.

I walked to the center of the sparring circle and faced Alpha Xander and his Beta to his left.

Aaron stood to my right, with my dad and Alpha Jonathan standing side by side between Aaron and Kade.

It was three Alphas with their three Betas.

The air was thick with anticipation when Alpha Jonathan began to speak.

“Alexi Kostov, per your request, you are here to challenge Alpha Xander Black for the right to mate my daughter Alaia Miller. Is this correct? Do you still wish to follow through with this challenge?”

“Yes, Alpha.”

“So be it. The rules are as follows:

1. The circle has been blessed. No one outside of it can mindlink anyone on the inside. There will be no unfair advantages.
2. There will be no shifting in this fight.
3. There will be no use of weapons of any sort.
4. The battle lasts as long as it lasts; no outside party can stop it once it starts.
5. You must always remain within the sparring circle.
6. If at any point, you feel that you are unable to continue, you either concede to your opponent or face death.
7. Lastly, once the fight is over, the loser is to renounce any and all claim to Alaia Miller immediately.

That’s it, gentlemen. Please step back to the edge of the circle, and we will begin.”

All six of us stepped back with Xander and me staying within the circle, and the other four stepping just to the outer edge.

“Alexi, Alpha Xander...fight!”

Kade POV

As soon as Alpha Jonathan announced the beginning of the fight, Alexi and Xander began to circle one another.

There was a clear height advantage of at least 4” for Xander. Although shorter, Alexi still had plenty of muscle and would put on a worthy fight, of this I was sure.

Still circling one another, they were trained on their opponents’ movements. Waiting for the other to strike first.

It was Alexi who finally stepped forward and threw the first punch.

This tactic was something that Xander and I had learned early on. When you didn't know the strengths or weaknesses of your opponent, you let them strike first. It allowed you to gauge the potential power of their punch.

I saw Xander shake off the blow and could see the recognition in his eyes. Alexi was a strong fighter, just like we were.

Now it was Xander's turn to return the favor. He stepped forward with lightning speed and hit Alexi with one of his favorite combinations. Two right hooks to the rib cage followed immediately by a left.

I watched as Alexi's eyes widened once his body registered the impact. Xander was strong, insanely strong.

Now that they both knew what to expect from the other, the fight would really begin.

They stepped forward at the same time. Alexi threw a jab with his right, which Xander smoothly dodged.

Xander answered with a right jab of his own, and using a trick taught to him by yours truly, he anticipated Alexi dodging to the left and shot out another jab with his left hand that connected with Alexi's nose.

We all heard the telltale crunch of his nose breaking.

Blood began to pour from Alexi's nose, but he just shook it off.

Xander had drawn first blood, but before this was all over, much more would be spilled.

Alexi leaped into the air and wrapped his left arm around the back of Xander's neck. When he landed, he pulled Xander forward into a backward headlock before hitting him with three sturdy right hooks to the kidneys.

"He's gonna feel that tomorrow," I said aloud to no one in particular.

Xander broke free and began to bounce on his toes, shaking off the pain radiating up his side.

Alexi charged forward again, and he and Xander went back and forth trading blow after blow. For another ten minutes, this went on.

There were bruised ribs, black and swollen eyes, and a myriad of other cuts and scrapes.

It looked like Alexi was beginning to slow when I noticed the change in his posture. I knew what he was going to do before even he did.

Alexi jumped and began to spin, feeling that a powerful roundhouse would be just what he needed to gain the upper hand.

Big mistake.

Xander saw the move coming, and as he had done to me earlier, he grabbed Alexi's ankle and calf before using his momentum against him and slamming him to the ground with so much force they could feel the aftershock throughout the forest.

Xander then straddled a near unconscious Alexi and began to rain blows to his face and torso.

Alexi tried to block them, but his energy was all but gone.

I could see the others outside the circle, starting to grow agitated. We all knew the fight was coming to an end; we just didn't know how it will end.

As he continues to beat Alexi voraciously, Xander growled, "Do you give up yet? CONCEDE!"

"For fuck's sake Lex. Don't do this, man, please!" Aaron yelled from the sidelines.

I saw the light begin to fade from Alexi's eyes.

Xander was still relentless with his blows when finally Alexi raised one weak hand in surrender. He conceded and almost instantly blacked out.

Xander rolled off Alexi's weak and broken body and lay on the ground, panting and gasping for air.

I'd never seen him like this before.

But then again, this is the first time he'd ever fought for his mate; and won.

As Beta Lucas rushed into the circle to check on Alexi, Aaron took off towards the house.

I heard Beta Lucas heave a sigh of relief, then he said, "Thank the Goddess, he's still alive."

He lifted his son, and before he walked away, he turned to Xander.

"Alpha Xander, thank you. I know you were holding back at times when you didn't have to. You could have easily taken my son's life at the end, but you didn't. I am forever grateful to you for that."

He then turned before he set off to take Alexi to the pack hospital.

I walked up and stood over Xander, who was still lying on the ground.

“Congratulations, Alpha.”

“Thanks, Kade.”

“So how many broken bones did you rack up?”

“Who knows, man; that fucking kid can punch.”

I laughed before I reached out to help him to his feet.

Once Xander was upright, Alpha Jonathan walked up to us.

“Alpha Xander, that was impressive. As a father, a fighter, and an Alpha, I have nothing but respect for what you did here in this circle tonight. I know that I don’t have much say in the matter, but I give my full blessing to you and my daughter.”

The two alphas then shook hands before Alpha Jonathan also headed towards the house.

“Well, it looks like its time for you to bring our Luna home. The pack is waiting...”

FIFTEEN | INNOCENCE

Chapter 15 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alaia POV

“It’s all over. It’s done.”

My heart felt like it stopped and started beating double time at the same time.

I instantly became clammy and light-headed.

Jordyn started to rub slow circles on my back, trying to help me calm down.

“Just breath, sweetie, breath.”

Inhale, exhale. Inhale, exhale.

“What happened?” I looked up and asked Aaron.

“He conceded. Alexi conceded. Not before Xander beat the shit out of him, though. I left as soon as it was all over to come to tell you.”

I let out a massive whoosh of air. Thank the Goddess. I was terrified that Xander would have to take Alexi’s life tonight, and I was so grateful that he didn’t.

“Is Xander alright?” I asked, sitting up on my elbows.

“Is my Little One worried about me?” I heard Xander say as he walks in.

Oh. My. Damn.

My mate stood before me in just a pair of basketball shorts that hung dangerously low on his hips. Underneath all the bruises, dirt, and sweat, his body was magnificent. There was a large tribal tattoo on his right arm that spilled over onto his chest. I wanted to feel every inch of that chest, commit that tattoo to memory.

His 8-pack was so well defined it looked like it was airbrushed, and that v-line? I just want to run my tongue...

My thoughts were interrupted by Aaron clearing his throat.

“Jordyn? I think it’s time for us to give them some privacy.”

I blushed to realize those dirty thoughts were running through my head while my brother and his mate were in the room.

“See you later, sweetie,” Jordyn said as she began to walk away.

“I wanna know everything!” she mouthed as she closed the door.

I looked back at Xander, but before I was able to start drooling over him again, he took a deep breath.

“Oh, Little One. It smells like you missed me.”

“Y-Yes, I did.”

“Yes, what?”

“Yes, Daddy. I missed you.”

At this point, my core was throbbing. I had never before felt this hot, and I knew that only Xander could put the fire out.

He stalked over before standing in front of me. From my position on the bed, his crotch was almost eye level.

My eyes were glued to the bulge. It was huge; about the size of my forearm.

As small as I was, I was afraid he'd rip me in two when the time came.

“Don't worry, Little One. I'll make sure you're warm, wet, and ready. And when you are, you'll take every last inch, won't you?”

“Yes, Daddy.”

“That's my good girl.”

Xander leaned over my small frame, and my body tingled with anticipation. His head traveled lower and lower until it was hovering just above my weeping core.

I watched as his eyes went impossibly black, and he breathed in my essence.

Seeing this made me even wetter than before, causing me to furiously chew on my bottom lip to stifle my moans.

We locked eyes with one another for a brief moment before Xander shut his and slowly shook his head.

When he again looked at me, I could see that he had cleared some of the lust, but not all of it.

“Alaia, baby. Be careful. I'm hanging on to my control by a thread. If you keep this up, I will take you hard, fast, and rough. Right here, right now.”

“But I want-”

“No! You're my Luna and my queen, your first time will not be bent over a bed in the hospital. It will be in our bed, the one we'll share forever.”

He reached out to cup my face as I nodded my head. As much as I want him, I knew he's right.

“Thank you for thinking of me, Xander.”

“Always, Little One. I'm going to go grab a quick shower, and I'll be right back,” he said while turning to leave.

Before he stepped out the door, he looked over his shoulder and said, “Don't think Daddy forgot Little One. Even though I won't take you here tonight, you will still cum. Very, very soon. Get ready.”

He winked at me then walked out the door.

Xander POV

As soon as I left Alaia's room, I headed for my own for a quick shower. I had plans for my little one I couldn't wait to show her.

Once I finished washing all of the grime from the challenge away, I took a glance in the mirror. All in all, I didn't fare too badly.

I had a large bruise on my left side that would probably take a day or two to heal. My split lip, swollen eye, and miscellaneous other cuts were already almost healed, thanks to my wolf.

I quickly dressed in a pair of grey sweatpants and a simple white T-shirt. After I was dressed, I reached in my bag for one more thing before I headed out.

On the way back to Alaia, I mindlinked Kade.

I'll be out of touch for the rest of the night. Only reach out for an extreme emergency.

Is that so? I take it the Luna will be out of touch as well?

Don't fuck with me, Kade. Just do what I'm telling you to do.

Got it, boss. Be gentle with her, will you? We can't have you breaking her in half before your parents get the chance to meet-

I cut Kade off mid-sentence. As one of my closest friends, he was one of the chosen few I allowed to speak to me like that. He was a pain in my ass for sure, but he kept me grounded.

As I rounded the corner to Alaia's room, I took a deep breath. She was new to my world, and I didn't want to scare her off. She would be the perfect submissive, but I had to ease her into it.

I refused to let myself go into full dominant mode until I was 100% sure she was ready.

Well, let's start with something small and see how she does.

I opened her door and stepped inside, locking out the outside world.

I just watch Alaia, she was sitting up in bed playing a game on her phone. When she looked up at me and smiled, my breath caught on my throat. She was stunning in every way.

“How are you feeling, Little One?”

“So much better. I feel energized and refreshed like I just woke up from a twelve-hour nap.”

As she was talking, she reached her small arms above her head to stretch. The movement caused her shirt to rise, exposing her perfectly flat stomach.

I raked my eyes up a little further and noticed her full breasts, standing at attention, and begging for me to taste them.

“Stand up,” I told her.

Being the good submissive she was, she immediately complied.

“We’re going to try something, okay, Little One?”

“Okay,” she whispered.

I raise an eyebrow at her, causing her to realize her mistake.

“Okay, Daddy.”

“Good girl. When we are behind closed doors, and in our Dom/Sub roles, you are to address me as Daddy or Sir only. Understand?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Your body is mine to do what I please with it. You will not hide your body from me. If you do, you will be punished. You will not hold in your moans of pleasure. They belong to me. If you do, you will be punished. Understand?”

“Yes, Daddy.”

“I want you to think of a safe word. If at any point you feel like things become too much for you to handle, just say your word, and I will immediately stop. Have you got a word in mind?”

Alaia scrunched her nose and tilted her head slightly to the side, deep in thought. She was so fucking adorable.

Before long, she nodded and said, “Yes, Daddy. I have my word.”

“Tell me what is.”

She looked up through her lashes before she softly said, “Innocence.”

This woman would be the death of me.

“That’s perfect, baby. If at any point you want to stop, just say innocence, and we will.”

Alaia nodded her head and said, “Yes, sir.” She was learning quickly.

“Now...strip. I don’t want one scrap of fabric on that curvy little body of yours.”

“Yes, Sir.”

Alaia never broke eye contact as she slowly unbuttoned her tiny jean shorts and wiggled them past her hips. When they reached the floor, she stepped out of them and slid them to the side.

She then moved to pull her shirt over her head before also tossing it aside.

She was now standing before me in just a matching lace bra and panty set. The bright red fabric brought out the beautiful golden tones of her skin. She was radiant; she was mine.

As she reached behind her back to unclasp her bra, I had a thought.

“Stop.”

She looked up at me as if she was worried she’d done something wrong. Before she got the chance to ask, I say, “take your hair down first.”

“Yes, Daddy.”

She reached up and began to loosen the large bun at the top of her head. Once undone, masses of thick curly chocolate brown hair cascaded over her shoulders and down her back, resting right above her waist.

I then nodded for her to continue.

She did as instructed and reached behind her back, releasing the clasps of her bra. As soon as the cold air touched her bare breasts, her nipples pebbled and hardened.

Her heavy breathing was made more evident by the steady rise and fall of her mounds.

After a few seconds, she reached down and wiggled her lace panties over her hips and down to the floor. She was now standing in front of me in all her natural glory.

No words could describe the vision in front of me. Alaia had curves that any woman would be envious of. Her flawless skin seemed to almost glow with anticipation.

With the absence of all her clothes, the smell of her arousal teased my nostrils relentlessly. I’d never in my lifetime smelled anything that made my cock so hard. Painfully hard. I needed release.

I walked closer to her and said, “Turn around, Little One. Face the wall.”

When she did, I grabbed an unused IV pole and adjusted it to its tallest setting. I then reached in my back pocket and pulled out two black silk scarves.

“This isn’t the ideal environment, but we’ll make do. I’m going to tie your hands above your head, okay, baby?”

“Yes, Sir.”

I took her delicate wrists and gently wrapped the scarf around and tied it tight. Once done, I attached the scarf to the top of the IV pole and stepped back to admire the view.

The muscles in her back began to twitch slightly, getting used to the restricting position. Her round plump ass was standing at full attention, and I just couldn’t wait to bury my teeth into it.

“Now, I’m going to blindfold you. Sensory deprivation is a big and rewarding part of this. With your vision cut off, you’ll feel every touch so much more. Are you ready?”

“Yes.”

Hearing her stray from the rules, I instinctively gave her a quick smack on her ass. She hissed at the impact before correcting to, “Yes, Daddy.”

“Good girl, don’t forget the rules, or you will be severely punished, understood?”

At this point, Alaia had shut her eyes, and she was chewing on her bottom lip. She nodded furiously and said, “Yes, Daddy. I understand.”

I tied the second scarf across Alaia’s eyes, leaving her totally in the dark.

“Perfect. Now let’s begin.”

SIXTEEN | SIX DAYS

Chapter 16 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alaia POV

“Perfect. Now let’s begin.”

My breathing was ragged and rough. I could hear my blood rushing through my ears and smell my juices that were freely running down my thighs.

Xander was right; being blindfolded had caused all my other senses to compensate for the loss of sight.

I felt Xander move to stand directly behind me. I wanted him to touch me so badly.

“Spread your legs; just a little bit wider.”

I did as I was told, and my legs were shoulder-width apart.

“Perfect. You’re such a good girl. Do you want daddy to touch you, baby?”

“Yes, please, Daddy.”

I felt Xander’s fingers lightly brush along my right hip. The contact caused the usual sparks to shoot through my core, but because of the skin to skin contact, they were so much more intense.

Xander reached out and swept my hair forward over my right shoulder, leaving my back and part of my neck exposed.

He then leaned down and placed an open mouth kiss, right where my neck met my shoulder.

I shuddered at his touch, making Xander growl in pleasure.

He then began to nibble and gently suck on the same spot, the spot that will one day bear his mark.

As his mouth continued its assault on my neck, his large hands began to roam across my curves.

He started at my hips before he moved forward and began to massage my stomach.

At this point, I was a whimpering mess, but I knew he was just getting started.

“Moan for me, Little One.”

“Xander...please. Oh my god...”

My head fell back and rested on his hard chest. All my strength was being used to remain upright.

Once the delicious exploration of my stomach was over, Xander’s hand parted ways, one heading south to wrap around my inner thigh and the other north delicately cupping one of my large full breasts.

I sucked in a sharp breath and almost collapsed in his strong arms.

Xander's mouth then moved to my ear, and I felt as his tongue flicked out to tease my earlobe. I would have never thought of my earlobe as one of my erogenous zones, but it seemed that Xander knew my own body better than I did.

"You're doing so good, baby. I'm so, so proud of you."

I breathlessly said, "Thank you, Daddy."

"Let's see how wet you are, Little One; shall we?"

"Yes, Sir."

As soon as the words left my lips, I felt Xander press two fingers deep inside my core. I cried out from the sudden intrusion and felt tears escape and roll down my face.

Xander leaned down and slowly traced his tongue along the path the tears traveled.

"You're delicious, baby, and I haven't even tasted your best parts yet."

He slowly started to move his fingers in and out of my pussy, which began to flex and clench, trying desperately to hold him in place.

The sounds of Xander plunging within the walls of my juicy depths were only drowned out by my incoherent moans and heavy breathing.

He began to increase his speed, and I felt like I was being wound tighter and tighter.

"You will NOT cum yet, understand Little One?"

Hearing him say this made me almost fall over the edge. I could barely form a coherent thought, let alone words.

Suddenly, I felt a hard smack on my ass.

I gasped at the impact; it hurt so damn good.

"Answer me," Xander growled in my ear

"YES, DADDY! I UNDERSTAND!"

I felt myself starting to fall apart. My legs were shaking uncontrollably, and the tears were running continuously down my cheeks.

"Hold on, baby, just a little bit longer."

I nodded my head vigorously.

“Daddy, please!” I begged. I didn’t know if I was asking him to stop or to keep going until my last breath.

Then suddenly, his fingers were gone. Almost immediately, my body wept from their absence.

“Open.”

I did as instructed and opened my mouth. Xander inserted the same two fingers he was just ravishing me with, allowing my tangy sweetness to coat my tongue.

I drunk down my juices hungrily; I felt as if I was going insane.

I tried to steady my breath as Xander pinched and rolled one of my nipples between his thumb and forefinger.

Xander again brought his mouth to my ear and said, “Cum. NOW!”

With that, he clamped down on my clit so hard, behind the blindfold, I saw stars. My body began to tremble and convulse, and my knees gave out.

Xander released my nipple and wrapped his arm around my waist to hold me firmly against his chest while he continued to pinch and pull my overstimulated bud. I threw my head back and screamed out his name.

“XANDER!!”

It seemed like hours before the waves of pleasure finally broke. I felt Xander slowly release my clit before rubbing his hands up and down my sides.

He placed soft kisses over my back and shoulders while he reached up to untie my wrists.

My bones may as well have been jelly. I collapsed as soon as my wrists are free, but luckily, Xander was there to catch me.

He gently lifted me, and I felt him turn and start walking towards the bed.

“You did so well, Little One. How do you feel?”

“Mmhmm,” was all I can say.

Xander chuckled then placed me down and removed the blindfold from my face. I didn’t know when, but at some point, he had dimmed the lights making my transition back to sight so much smoother.

He walked into the adjoining bathroom, and I heard him turn the faucet on. A few minutes later, he returned with a warm soapy towel and began to clean my body gently.

“Usually, I’d end the night with a warm bubble bath, but I guess that will have to do for now.”

I nodded my head and felt myself begin to lull. My orgasm drained every last drop of my energy. I had never experienced such pleasure in my life.

“Sleep baby, I’ll be here when you wake up.”

Xander snuggled in beside me then placed a light kiss on my forehead. I breathed in his scent before I let myself fall into a deep slumber.

Aaron POV

The morning after the challenge, it felt like a weight had been lifted from my shoulders.

Finally, all the drama with Alaia was over, and she could be happy.

I looked down into the beautiful face of my sleeping mate and realized that I too could finally just be happy.

Then I thought about Alexi. He was my best friend, but now I didn’t even know what he was to me.

When he rejected Alaia, it was almost like he rejected our friendship, and now I didn’t know where to go from here.

I heard the “buzz-buzz-buzz” of a message come through, and as carefully as I could, I reached over to my bedside table and grabbed my phone.

I saw that it’s a message from my dad, asking me to meet him in his office.

Sure thing, Dad. Give me about 30 minutes to get cleaned up, and I’ll be right there.

I sent the reply, then sat the phone down and turned back to look at Jordyn’s sleeping face.

I had always thought she was beautiful, but now she was all I could see. I couldn’t think of anyone better to be my mate.

I lightly caressed her face and whispered, “Jordyn, babe. Wake up...”

She moaned in protest, which makes me chuckle. She and my sister were so much alike. Not morning people at all.

I tried again, this time adding, “Just wake up for a few minutes, then you can have the entire bed to yourself.”

She wrapped her arms around my chest in a tight hug before she opened one beautiful blue eye.

“The sun is barely up, so why are you?” she grumbled.

“My dad asked me to come to his office. I’ve got to hop in the shower and get ready to head down. You stay in bed a bit longer, and after the meeting is over, I’ll come up and get you for breakfast.”

Her face broke out in the most beautiful smile, which I couldn’t help but return.

“Aaron, you know I adore you, but you could have just told me that in a note, even a text would have been more acceptable.”

She then rolled her eyes at me before she turned over and pulled the blankets back over her head.

Her antics really made me laugh as I moved out of bed and headed off to my shower.

“I think you love sleep more than me,” I said over my shoulder.

“Mmm!” She replied as she snuggled into my recently vacated pillow and stretched out to take up as much space in my king-sized bed as possible.

After I finished getting dressed, I headed down to my dad’s office. The door was slightly open, so I took it as an invitation to come on in.

As soon as I stepped in the door, my dad looked up from his computer and sent me a smile.

“Come on in Aaron, and shut the door, will ya?”

I did as he asks before I took a seat in one of the plush leather chairs before him.

“So, how is everything going with your mate? I suspect since you’ve known Jordyn for as long as you have, things should be off to a great start.”

“Things are perfect. I can already tell that she’s my perfect complement, she’ll balance me out for sure.”

“Good. Good. Well, let me get to the point so that you can get back to her. Your mother and I are ready to step down as Alpha and Luna and hand the title over to you and Jordyn. You’ve shown yourself to be a more than capable leader, exhibiting maturity and wisdom beyond your years. I know with your mate by your side, you’ll lead this pack to the best of your abilities.”

I was left speechless. Sure, I'd always known that one day my dad would step down, but to see that day come was a little overwhelming.

"W-when.." I trailed off and cleared my throat before starting again.

"When would the changeover take place?"

"Well I don't want to rush you, but I also know you're ready. So, I'd say the next full moon? That's six days from now. Plus, it gives your mom enough time to do her favorite party planning."

Six days? In six days, I would be the Alpha and Jordyn the Luna of the Opal Moon pack. Wow.

I looked at my dad in the eye before I nodded in agreement.

"Six days, it is then."

"Great. Also, something to keep in mind, you'll need to complete your first shift before you can be named Alpha. The night I became Alpha, I shifted at the beginning of the ceremony, went on a pack run to solidify the bond, then returned to accept the title officially. You can shift anytime before then if you'd like, but I've always thought the other option was the best way to deepen that pack bond. Your choice."

"Give me about a day to think about it? I'll let you know what I decide soon."

"That works. Now, for the last item on our agenda, who will you be choosing to replace Alexi as your Beta?"

SEVENTEEN | I WILL GET HER BACK

Chapter 17 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alaia POV

As I gently began to wake, I felt the soft rays of sunlight falling across my face. I slowly opened my eyes, only to be met with the crystal blue ones of Xander.

Goddess, he was gorgeous. I couldn't believe he was mine.

"Good Morning, Little One," he said in his sexy husky morning voice.

I was so mesmerized by him that I didn't even register what he'd said.

My eyes trailed down from his eyes to his lush pink lips. They looked so soft, so warm. They could work some dangerous magic when put to work on my body; I could tell.

My eyes snapped back up when I heard a low rumble from deep within Xander's chest.

"I can smell you, baby. What's going on in that dirty little mind of yours, hmm?"

Usually, I would blush and hide my face, but after last night I felt emboldened.

Finally, I opened my mouth and said, "I'm thinking about you, but more specifically, your lips. I just wonder what kind of delicious tricks they could play across my curves."

I finished my statement by licking my lips seductively.

"Oh, Little One. You'll pay for teasing me like this. Would you like me to show you what these lips can do?"

I nodded my head before I whispered, "Show me, Daddy."

Xander's eyes flashed black before he captured my mouth in a blazing kiss.

My hands were pressed against his chiseled chest to steady myself as he wrapped one arm around my waist and brought the other up to cup the back of my head.

He pulled me impossibly close before he bit down on my bottom lip, causing me to gasp into his mouth.

Before I knew it, his tongue had found its way into my mouth, and I tasted him for the first time.

He tasted like the sweetest strawberries, and instantly I was addicted.

I broke the kiss and gasped for air while Xander took those magic lips on a journey over my jaw and down my neck.

Just as he did the night before, he lightly bit, sucked, and licked my marking spot. The feeling elicited powerful tremors to radiate down to my most delicate of places.

Xander's mouth was driving me insane, and I loved every second of it.

Before we could go any further, there was a sharp knock on the door.

We pulled away from one another and tried to steady our breathing.

"Ms. Alaia, it's Dr. Collins. May I come in?"

Xander stood and passed me a robe hanging nearby. It was then that I realized that I was still completely naked.

I mouthed a quick “thank you” while I covered myself up.

“Yes, come in, Dr. Collins,” I finally said.

A few seconds later, Dr. Collins poked his head in before he moved further into the room.

“Good Morning, Alpha Xander, Ms. Alaia,” he greeted the two of us.

“Good Morning Dr. Collins. Are you here to sign my release papers?” I jokingly asked.

He chuckled at my silliness before saying, “First things first, how are you feeling this morning? You could stay another day if you feel that you need more rest, you know.”

“I feel great doctor, truly I do. I’m pretty sure I got the best sleep of my life last night, and I’m more than ready to go back to my normal life. Please?”

I gave him my most innocent face before he erupted into laughter.

“You’ve got your hands full with this one, Alpha Xander. I wish you luck.”

“Yes, doctor, I see that as well,” Xander said with a laugh.

“Alright, Ms. Alaia, you’re free to go. Please let me know if you feel anything out of the norm for the next couple of days, okay?”

“It’s a deal Doc,” I said with a smile.

“Have a good day Ms. Alaia, Alpha Xander.”

Dr. Collins then turned and left the room.

“Finally! I feel like I’ve been here forever!” I said once the door closed.

“Well, you’re out now. Any plans for the day?”

I took a look at the time and saw that it was only 7:27 AM.

“If you’re not busy, we can go back to the packhouse for pancakes? I’m sure Mrs. Wilson wouldn’t mind whipping us up a stack or two.”

“Sounds like a plan, Little One.”

“Perfect, I just need to grab a quick shower back at my room, and I’ll meet you in the dining hall around 8:00 AM.”

“Actually, I’ve got a much better idea. I’ll join you in that shower.”

Shit...did it just get really REALLY hot in here?

Xander POV

“Actually, I’ve got a much better idea. I’ll join you in that shower.”

I watched Alaia’s face to gauge her reaction, and I was surprised by what I found.

“That sounds good; let’s go.”

She took my hand in her tiny one before she started to lead me out of the room.

This was the first time that we’d ever walked side by side, and I could truly notice the size difference.

I offered a small chuckle when I looked down at her and said, “You are tiny, Little One. It feels like I’m being lead through the halls by a pup.”

The look of shock and offense she sent me made me laugh even louder.

I reached down and scooped her up into a hug, leaving her small feet dangling off the ground.

“You’re perfect the way you are, baby. Besides, I can think of more than a few things I’d like to try with such a small mate.”

I ran my nose along the side of her neck before gently placing her back down.

She again looked up at me before she said, “Don’t let the small package fool you, babe, I can still kick some serious ass in a fight.”

“Of that, I have no doubt, my love. Now, about that shower...” I said while pulling her up the stairs and towards her room.

When we arrived at her door, I remembered the night of her birthday party. The night my universe was finally complete.

I stepped inside and was met by the memory of her small frame curled up on her bed, heart shattered and torn apart before I stepped in to put the pieces back together.

“You okay, Xander?”

I looked over and saw my precious mate with her head leaned slightly to the side, a look of concern marring her beautiful features.

I walked over and wrapped her in a quick hug.

“I’m better than okay, Little One. I just remember the moment I found you and the feeling of completion I felt when I first laid eyes on you. At that moment, my heart became whole, and it became yours.”

I placed a finger under her chin and gently lifted her face until she was looking deep into my eyes.

“My heart belongs to you and only you, Alaia, from now until forever.”

I leaned down and captured her lips in a passionate kiss, hoping that she could feel every emotion that I felt for her at that moment.

I then pulled away and looked into her dazed golden honey eyes.

“Now, strip Little One. We’ve got business to attend to.”

Alexi POV

I felt like I had a ten-ton truck parked on my chest. I kept trying to move, but my body refused to cooperate.

Eventually, I was able to open my eyes to a blinding white light.

I must have been dead. I knew I didn’t stand much of a chance against Xander, and I refused to give up the fight, so this could only be my entrance to the afterlife.

After my eyes adjusted to the light, I heard a low “beep-beep-beep” beside my head. I looked over and saw at least three different machines running tubes to and from my body.

Was I in the pack hospital? If I was here, that meant that I wasn't dead.

Did I win the fight? I promised myself that I wouldn’t concede, but maybe Xander did? I knew that piece of shit couldn’t love her nearly as much as I did.

I tried to sit up, but my IV got caught on the bed and was almost ripped out of my hand.

“Shit!” I yelled before I reached down to adjust the tube.

My outburst woke my Dad, who I didn't know was sleeping in the corner of the room.

"Alexi? Thank the Goddess; you're awake. Stay still, son; I'll go grab the doctor to look you over."

"I'm fine, Dad. What happened? How long have I been out? Where's Alaia, why isn't she here?"

"What do you mean, Alexi? Alaia is with her mate, Alpha Xander. Don't you remember?"

"What?! What do you mean? I'm her mate; she should be here with me!"

The machine monitoring my heart rate started going crazy as the beeps got faster and faster.

Alaia not being by my side had to be a mistake. I was still alive, so there was no way that she wasn't mine.

I reached over to pulled the IVs out of my arm. I needed to see her and figure out what the fuck was happening.

"Alexi, stop!" My dad yelled.

"Look at me son, Alaia is no longer yours. You rejected her."

"Don't you think I fucking know that?! But that doesn't explain why she's not here now. Or why you're telling me that Xander is her mate. What happened at the challenge?"

"You conceded, Alexi. You put up an admirable fight for as long as you could, but in the end, Xander overpowered you. You began to lose consciousness; I saw the light going out of your eyes. But before it was gone, you lifted a hand in surrender. Xander immediately stopped the fight, and I brought you here."

"You can't be serious right now, Dad. I didn't concede. I don't know what you guys thought you saw, but it wasn't me giving up. I would rather have died than give up Alaia!"

"Alexi, it's over. Xander has claimed Alaia as his. You're to renounce all claim to mate her as soon as possible. It should have been done after the challenge ended, but you weren't in a coherent state."

I ripped all the IVs out of my arm and stood to my feet before my dad could stop me.

"Alexi! Where are you going?"

"I'm going to find my fucking mate!" I roared.

"She's MINE, and I will get her back. I don't care how I have to do it!"

I stormed out of the room and ran towards the front doors. As soon as my feet hit the soft dirt, I felt my body begin to shift, and my wolf Max took over.

I wasn't expecting to shift, but I had already turned eighteen, and Max had been fully awake for weeks. I guess I had been avoiding the actual first shift because of the horror stories about how painful it was.

But calling this painful didn't do the feelings justice.

I felt all of my bones snap and pop out of their joints; my skull stretched and elongated, making way for my snout.

I felt as claws replaced my fingernails, and reddish-brown fur sprouted from my skin.

When it was finally over, Max let out a loud howl before he turned and thundered into the woods.

Don't worry, Alexi, we'll get our mate back, even if it's the last thing we do!

EIGHTEEN | CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Chapter 18 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Aaron POV

“That works. Now, for the last item on our agenda, who will you be choosing to replace Alexi as your Beta?”

I sat a bit stunned for a moment. Replace Alexi? I knew we're in a bad spot then, but that didn't mean I wanted to replace him. He was my best friend.

“What do you mean, Dad? I'm not replacing Alexi; he'll be my Beta.”

My dad took a deep breath before running his hand through his hair. I looked at his face, and for the first time, I noticed all the stress that was clearly eating at him.

“Dad? What's going on? Is Alexi alright?”

“Before you arrived, Lucas linked me. Alexi woke up a little more than an hour ago, Son.”

“That’s great! I’ll go see him after we’re done here and tell him the news-”

“Wait, Aaron. Alexi woke up, but the good news ends there. When he woke up, he was confused. He says that he never conceded the challenge to Alpha Xander. He had decided that he would rather die than give up Alaia.”

“But we all saw him concede Dad! This is crazy!”

“We can’t say for sure what it was we saw. Alexi lifted his hand; he could have been trying to block another blow from Xander. We all just took it as a concession because that’s what we wanted. Alexi says that’s the last thing he would have wanted or done. He refused to renounce his claim to Alaia. Afterward, he shifted then disappeared into the woods. We have patrols out looking for him, but he could be anywhere by now.”

I sat back in my chair, stunned. I couldn’t believe this was true.

“What does this mean for Alaia and Xander? Do they know yet?”

“Only you, Lucas, and I know at the moment. An unfinished challenge is unprecedented, so I’d like to keep it contained until we figure out where to go from here.”

“Alaia’s going to be devastated, Dad. She was finally getting her chance to be happy.”

“And she’ll still get it. As far as we’re all concerned, Xander is her mate. And she’s accepted him as such. In my opinion, the safest thing for her would be to go to the Blue Moon pack, have Xander mark her, and complete the Luna ceremony. Once that is done, Alexi can no longer challenge for the right to mate her.”

“But we don’t know where Alexi is or when he’ll be back. What if he comes back tonight and immediately requests a re-do? We don’t know how much time we even have.”

“Then we need to get Alpha Xander in here immediately to get his take on things. The sooner we figure this out, the better it will be for all of us.”

Alaia POV

“Now, strip Little One. We’ve got business to attend to.”

Hearing those words from Xander’s mouth made my core clench. Would it always be like this? Would he forever have this effect on me and my body?

I slowly started to remove my clothes until I was again standing naked in front of my mate.

A week ago, I never would have imagined I'd be comfortable with something like this, but Xander made me feel beautiful and loved.

He looked at me like I was the last woman on Earth, which brought out a totally different side to me.

I turned my back to him and walked to the bathroom. Before I reached the door, I looked over my shoulder and asked, "You coming or what?"

I then stepped in the bathroom and turned on the shower.

Before I got the chance to pull my hair up, I was pushed against the shower wall.

"What did I tell you about teasing me, baby? Now you will be punished."

My lotus flower began to drip its sweet nectar, and the scent mixed with the steam from the shower, filling the air like a potent potpourri.

Xander growled loudly before spinning me around and getting down onto his knees. I wasn't sure when, but he'd stripped out of all his clothes, so he was now kneeling at my feet completely bare.

Xander grabbed both my thighs and lifted me onto his shoulders, resting my back against the shower wall.

The warm water from the showerhead was cascading down, covering us from head to toe.

"Mmm, baby, you smell so fucking good. Now you're going to hold on like a good girl while I eat this pretty little pussy of yours. And you'll cum, again, and again, and again until I've satisfied my thirst, and I feel like you've been sufficiently punished. If you let go, I'll punish you again, understand?"

I nodded my head and said, "Yes, sir."

Xander reached between my legs and pinched my bud, making me arch my back off the wall.

"Say 'Yes, Daddy,'" he said.

"Y-yes, Daddy!"

"Good girl, now hold on."

Before I got the chance to get a firm grip on his head, he plunged his tongue into my depths.

I inhaled a breath so sharp I swore my lungs would explode.

I grabbed onto his silky curls and held on for dear life while he tongue fucked me like there was no tomorrow.

I felt his tongue curl and roll in and out of me, making my eyes roll back and my toes curl.

This man's mouth was nothing short of amazing.

I felt myself squirt again and again. Each time I did, Xander lapped the juices up and moaned in pleasure.

Before long, I could feel the telltale tightness of an orgasm about to hit.

I grabbed his hair so hard that I was afraid I might pull it out, making Xander growl into my pussy.

The vibrations pushed me closer to the edge, and my body began to shake uncontrollably.

“Oh, fuck, baby. I'm so close. Please, please don't stop,” I panted.

Xander sped up the pace and began to hum on my clit. That's all it took before I took the plunge.

“FUUCCCKKK XANDER!! I'M CUMMING!” I screamed out.

I was being hit with wave after wave of pleasure; it felt like I was having a seizure.

Just as I began to come down, Xander removed his tongue from my soaked and spasming slit and bit down on my clit. Hard.

“AHH!! XANDER!!!!”

Before I could recover from the first orgasm, he forced another from me.

By that time, I was a shaky mess. My hands were becoming weak, and I didn't know how much longer I could last.

“DO. NOT. LET. GO!” Xander demanded.

“Mmm, Daddy, PLEASE!”

Xander then inserted one finger inside of me and began to massage my G-spot. I was now seeing stars, unicorns, and every other mythical creature there is.

I couldn't think straight, I couldn't hear, and my lungs were close to collapsing.

“Cum, NOW!”

With one more flick of his finger, another orgasm tore through my body.

Tears of pure pleasure were streaming down my face, being washed away by the shower overhead.

It was an out of body experience, and I swear I watched myself fall apart from multiple vantage points.

I was done. I had never cum that many times back to back. The hallucinations began to give way to darkness, and I felt myself start to slowly pass out.

Before I went completely under, I thought to myself, "That was the best punishment I'd ever had..."

Xander POV

After I forced the third orgasm from Alaia, she went limp in my arms.

I was so proud of my little mate, she was still so new to my world, but already she had allowed me to push her limits.

I stood, gently lifting her and turned off the shower before I stepped out.

I grabbed a large fluffy towel hanging on the back of the door, and after sitting on the edge of the huge soaker tub, I placed Alaia in my lap and began drying her off.

Once done, I carried her still limp body to her bed and laid her down.

Small snores escaped her slightly parted lips, and she looked so at peace. She was absolutely perfect.

I began to pull my clothes back on when I heard a message arrive on my phone.

I wondered if it was from my pack. I needed to go back home soon. I hated leaving the pack without both their Alpha and Beta for too long, but I was bringing their Luna back with me, so I was sure they'd understand.

I glanced at the phone and saw that the message was actually from Alpha Jonathan.

Good Morning Alpha Xander. I've received some troubling news this morning that directly concerns you and Alaia. Would you be able to stop by my office to discuss?

What troubling news? What the fuck could be going on now?

Sure thing, Alpha Jonathan. I'll be down in five minutes.

I placed my phone in my back pocket, then walked back to the bathroom to wash my face and rinse my mouth.

As much as I would have loved to wear her scent for the rest of my days, it didn't seem appropriate being that I'd be meeting with her father, whom I respected immensely, shortly.

Once done, I walked over to Alaia and ran my hand through her hair, causing her to begin to stir.

"Welcome back to the land of the living, Little One. Did you have a nice nap?"

Her face turned beet red, before she said, "Did you make me cum until I passed out? I didn't even know that was possible!"

"Yes, I did exactly that. And I haven't even begun to show you all the possibilities this delicious little body of yours holds. But that will have to wait; I have to run to a quick sit down with your dad. Apparently, he got some news this morning that he finds concerning, and he wants to discuss it with me."

"Is everything alright?" she asked while sitting up, ready to come along with me.

"I'm not sure love, but as soon as I know anything, you'll know. Go down and have your pancakes, and I'll catch up with you later, okay?"

"You promise you'll tell me?"

"Yes, baby, I swear."

She smiled when she heard this, and I knew right then and there that I'd do anything to see that smile. So if she wanted me to tell her what was going on, I would tell her.

I captured her lips in a quick but passionate kiss before I was out the door.

I figured that Kade should be involved in the meeting, so I quickly mindlinked him.

Kade, I'm heading to the Alpha's office. Meet me there in five minutes.

I'm on my way, boss, be there in three.

Kade and I arrived at the same time, with him greeting me with a quick salute.

"So, what do you think this is all about?" he asked.

“Let’s go in and find out,” I replied before giving the door a quick knock.

“Come on in,” Alpha Jonathan replied.

When Kade and I stepped in, I saw that Aaron and Lucas were there as well.

“Morning, Gentlemen,” I greeted the room.

“Alpha Xander, Kade, please come take a seat. I’ll make this as quick as possible.”

Kade and I sat in a large love seat before Alpha Jonathan began.

“So...Alexi woke up this morning under the assumption that he won the challenge and therefore won the right to mate Alaia. He said that at no point did he ever have any intention of conceding the fight to you, as he would have rather died than lose his mate.”

I growled loudly when I heard this. Alaia was mine, and I was tired of having this conversation.

“She. Is. Mine. I don’t care what he ‘thinks,’ Alaia became mine the moment he rejected her.”

“Yes, we all agree on this. The problem is, once Alexi was informed of the current state of things, he became enraged and refused to renounce his claim. He vowed to get Alaia back by any means necessary. He then shifted and ran off into the forest. We have no idea where he is or what his plan is at the moment.”

Through my rage, I looked over at Lucas and saw how torn he was. As a Beta, he was loyal to his Alpha and his pack, but he was also Alexi’s father.

It’s was because of that that I took a deep breath and calmed myself before I spoke again.

“Alpha Jonathan, you’ve called us all here, so I’m assuming that you have a plan?”

“I do. Mate and mark Alaia immediately. Make her your Luna. The rules are clear; once she is officially claimed as yours, Alexi can no longer challenge you for her.”

“I’d love to do just that, but this decision is not mine alone. It’s up to Alaia to decide if she’s ready to be marked, and I won’t force her into anything. Ever.”

“Discuss it with her; see what she wants to do. But please do so soon. We don’t know what Alexi’s plan is, and Alaia’s safety and wellbeing are of the utmost importance.”

“With all due respect Alpha Jonathon, I’m well aware of the importance of her safety. She’s my entire universe and my only reason for breathing. With that being said, I’ll be taking her back home with me. Tonight. My pack will protect its Luna with their lives, so I know she’ll be safe until we get to the bottom of all this.”

“Wait. Tonight? But we’ll be holding the alpha ceremony in six days; I will be taking over from my father. Alaia has been with me for every milestone in my life; her best friend is being named Luna. We need her to be there,” Aaron stated.

“Alpha ceremony, huh? Just curious, but who’s your beta?”

NINETEEN | WHEN DO WE LEAVE?

Chapter 19 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alaia POV

After Xander left, I returned to my bathroom to take a real shower this time.

Once I was sure I was clean, I headed into my closet in search of clothes. I needed to find Jordan ASAP for some serious girl talk.

I pulled on a sky blue maxi dress and flip flops, pulled my hair back into a long ponytail, and headed downstairs.

If I knew Jordyn, she’d likely be in the dining hall having breakfast before heading out to training.

As soon as I walked in, I spotted her sitting alone close to the wall and quickly ran over.

I plopped down beside her and gave a sly smile.

As my best friend, she immediately knew what was up.

“OMG Alaia, spill!!”

I noticed her searching my neck for my mark, so I figured I’d let her down easy.

“You’re not going to find anything, J; Xander hasn’t marked me yet.”

A look of confusion crossed her face when she said, “But you smell different. You smell like Xander.”

“Do I really? I just took a seriously hot and long shower!”

“You know damn well you can’t wash off your mates’ scent. Why would you even want to?”

“It’s just that everything is still a little crazy around here. I still haven’t seen Alexi yet, and I don’t want things to be weirder than they have to be the next time we talk.”

“I guess that’s understandable. So...if Xander hasn’t marked you, what has he done to leave his scent so strongly on your body?”

She lifted her eyebrows suggestively, making me laugh out loud.

“Well...” I began before I dished about all the dirty things my mate and I had done the last twenty-four hours.

I wished I had thought to record Jordyn’s reaction; it was priceless.

“Holy fucking shit, Alaia. So, he’s made you cream multiple times, but you’re still somehow a virgin? How, I mean, who- what is happening?”

I again laughed. Watching Jordyn at this moment was like watching a computer glitch. I’d overloaded her with too much information for her to process.

“It’s been amazing, J; he’s been amazing. I haven’t had the time to dwell on all that’s happened, when I’m with him I’m just so happy that I’m his.”

“Aww, my little Alaia is all grown up!” she teased.

“Oh, shit! I’ve got to go, babe. Training starts in ten, and I’m helping Jason warm up the pack today.”

“I’ll come with you. Dr. Collins says I have to take it easy for the next couple of days, but I could use the fresh air. “

We stood and headed towards the back doors when Mrs. Wilson intercepted me.

“Hold on a minute, sweet girl. I was told you were in the pack hospital, is that true? Are you alright, sweetie?” she asked me.

I smiled and gave her a tight hug.

“I’m better than alright, Mrs. Wilson, I’m amazing. I promise.”

She held me at arm’s length and looked me over for a moment before she nodded her head.

“Okay, but you take it easy out there, got it? And take this with you. I know you haven’t had a decent meal since yesterday morning.”

She handed me a huge blueberry muffin that was still hot from the oven and a sausage egg and cheese croissant. I knew she made the croissant from scratch; she always did.

When the smells hit me, my stomach loudly rumbled.

“Thank you so much! Trust me; these will be gone in ten minutes, tops!”

“You’re welcome sweet girl, have a good day.”

As she turned to walk away, I spun around and beamed at Jordyn.

She rolled her eyes at me and mumbled, “so fucking spoiled” before walking out the back door with me close behind.

As soon as we reached the training grounds, Jordyn walked over to Jason and began to help him with the warm-up. They had the warriors start with one-hundred pushups and sit-ups each, before running five miles around the perimeter.

I took a seat under a large tree and tore into my breakfast. When the warm muffin touched my tongue, I shamelessly moaned out loud while saying, “Oh goddess, this is incredible!”

I’m immediately scared out my mind when I heard a deep voice respond, “Damn, I wish I could make you moan like that.”

It felt like the temperature had dropped twenty degrees as I looked around, but all I saw were the warriors training, there was no one else there.

“Don’t worry, Kitten; I won’t hurt you. I just wanted to talk to you without that mate of yours around.”

He spat the word “mate” like it was laced with venom, and it was then that I recognized the voice; it was deeper, but I still knew it.

“Alexi? What is going on? Where are you?”

“I’m just checking in on you, Kitten, that’s all. And you’ll know what’s going on soon enough.”

It felt like a hand was grazed across my cheek, which sent icy chills down my spine.

This wasn’t right; this isn’t Alexi at all.

“Alexi, whatever this is, just come out so we can fix it, okay?”

My heart was starting to pound loudly in my chest, and I just wished that Xander was there with me.

“Anxious, are we? You’ll feel my touch, my real touch, very soon, all over that gorgeous body of yours. Then I’ll make you mine; you will bear my mark, you will bear my pups. Everything will be right again, I promise. Soon...”

With that, the cold chill vanished and I was left alone.

“What the fuck just happened?”

Xander POV

We were all still sitting in Alpha Jonathan’s office when there was a sudden knock on the door.

Before anyone could respond, it flew open to reveal a terrified looking Alaia.

I rushed to her immediately and wrapped my arms protectively around her small and trembling body.

I could see that the rest of the men in the office were on their feet as well. Alaia had our full attention.

My blood began to boil with rage, whoever did this to her, scared her to this extent, would pay with their lives.

“Alaia, baby? What’s wrong? Tell me what happened.”

“It-it was Alexi...but it wasn’t. I j-just, it was so cold and then he, no, it was gone. And-”

“Calm down, Little One; we can’t understand you. Take a deep breath and start over, okay?”

I watched her take a deep breath and steady herself. She was so strong, even if no one else recognized it, I did.

“Alexi. I don’t know what’s going on, but he somehow showed up at the training grounds and spoke to be. But it wasn’t him. I couldn’t see him physically, but I heard his voice. And I felt when he touched my face. It gave me chills.”

Alastair was battling with me for control. I was so pissed off that I almost shifted right then and there. But I didn’t want to do anything that would harm Alaia.

I calmed Alastair as much as I could before I cupped Alaia’s face and tilted her head up to meet my eyes.

“Tell me exactly what he said. Please.”

I knew my anger was radiating off me in waves, and I didn't want Alaia to feel that any of it was directed at her. I had to tread lightly here.

“He said he wanted to talk to me without my mate being around. That soon, I would feel his touch, wear his mark, and bear his pups. He sounded angry, almost evil. I'd never heard him sound that way, it scared me.”

Tears began to build up and spill over when she finally asked, “Xander, please. What is going on?”

I took a seat and pulled her into my lap. Then we proceed to tell her everything that was happening.

I watched as she listened and absorbed the information seamlessly.

When everything was on the table, this beautiful soul looked over at Aaron and said, “Congratulations on the Alpha ceremony. I'm so proud of you, and I know you and Jordyn will do great things for the pack.”

We were in awe of her. It seemed that her ex-mate was determined to have his way with her and had the use of dark magic at his disposal, but still, she thought of others before herself. She was a true Luna.

“Thanks, lil sis. That means a lot to me. But just know that if you can't make it to the ceremony, we'll all understand. I'm so sorry all this is happening.”

“It's a lot to take in, that's for sure,” she said with a shrug.

She then turned to face me and said, “Alright, mate, when do we leave?”

Aaron POV

Knowing that Alaia would be leaving for her new pack that night was a hard pill to swallow.

I knew that once she became mated with an Alpha, she would have to leave to become his Luna, but this felt wrong.

It felt as if she was being driven out, and that wasn't fair.

Opal Moon was her home, and she deserved to feel safe and comfortable here.

Alexi had taken that feeling of safety away from her, and I could never forgive him. What we had was over. He was no longer my friend, no longer my brother.

I had decided that my first act as Alpha would be to banish Alexi, thus classifying him as a rogue.

It was a hard decision to make, but it was the right one. He had broken our laws by continuing to pursue Alaia, and no one was above our laws.

I stood in the doorway of Alaia's bedroom and watched as she, Jordyn, and our mom cried and hugged while attempting to pack her things.

The attempt at packing had gone on for almost an hour; if the situation were different, it would have almost been funny.

I heard footsteps coming down the hall and leaned back to see Xander and Kade waking in my direction.

"We're all set, how are the ladies?" Xander asked

I replied with a small chuckle.

"The same. My mom and the girls haven't stopped crying since they started. I don't know how they do it."

Kade poked his head around the corner before he stepped back and put his hands up.

"I am NOT going on there. I can't even handle one woman crying, let alone three. You two have got this. Just pass me her bags, and I'll get them to the car."

Xander and I laughed at Kade's nervous expression before we both walked into the room.

Alaia turned to me with red-rimmed eyes and ran into my arms.

"You're acting as if we'll never see each other again, Alaia. Your new pack is only a few hours away; we'll see each other all the time. I promise."

I leaned down and kissed the top of her small head.

"B-but I won't be here to see your first shift, or to watch to become Alpha. You know we always planned to be together when that happened. We were supposed to shift together; we did everything together!"

"I'll ask someone to record the ceremony. And from what I've been told, shifting is painful-and gross. You won't be missing anything."

She finally laughed and wiped her eyes before blowing out a deep breath.

“It better be a professional quality recording, none of that shaky shit, or you’ll have to do it all over. Understand?”

“Got it.”

Xander then walked over and took Alaia by the hand.

“Everything is all set, are you ready Little One?”

Alaia nodded her head, and we all walked out of the bedroom, down the stairs, and out the front door.

When we got to the front steps, we saw Xander’s large black SUV being guarded by six huge wolves.

“I asked six of my best warriors to come and help escort their Luna home. They did so without question,” Xander said.

One by one, the wolves walked toward Alaia and bowed their heads in reverence and respect for their new Luna.

When the last wolf was back at its place beside the SUV, Kade stepped forward and opened the back passenger door.

“Luna, we’re ready when you are.”

Alaia took one last look around at us before squaring her shoulders and climbing into the truck.

Xander stepped forward to address my dad and me as we were standing side by side.

“Alpha’s, we’ll guard her with our lives. Don’t worry; she’ll be safe.”

We all gave a single nod before he too climbed into the back of the SUV and shut the door.

Kade got into the driver’s seat, started the engine, and slowly began to pull off with their six warrior wolves flanking the vehicle at all sides.

Xander POV

Once I shut the door to the SUV, I pulled Alaia over and into my lap. I just wanted to be near her and smell her.

I was happy that she would finally be meeting the pack but hurt for the way it had to happen.

As Kade got into the driver's seat and started the car, I felt Alaia tilt her head up to look at me.

“Xander?”

“Yes, baby?”

“Let's go home.”

I smiled then looked at Kade through the rearview mirror. “You heard your Luna, let's go home.”

TWENTY | WELCOME HOME

Chapter 20 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alaia POV

At some point during the drive I drifted off to sleep. I just couldn't handle anything else happening, so I forced myself to shut down.

Lying in Xander's arms was heaven. Breathing in his scent brought me a sense of peace and tranquility my life had severely been lacking the past few days.

I was sure he had plenty of pack work to catch up on. He'd been with us at Opal Moon for much longer than he had anticipated. My old pack was the largest in the area, but not by much, and the Blue Moon pack was a close second.

Xander had his hands full running multiple businesses, seeing to his pack members, and protecting his lands from rogues, all without a mate by his side.

I was sure he was just as tired as I was, but he didn't show it.

He allowed me to rest, cradled in his arms for the entire trip. Valuable time that could have been used doing anything else.

I felt a gentle shaking of my arm then heard Xander say, “Wake up, baby, we're home.”

I sat up to look out the window and was greeted with the most beautiful forest I'd ever seen.

The trees were all so tall and majestic; they looked like they'd been plucked from a painting.

I could see little animals scurrying around the forest floor and imagined letting Amethyst out to chase them around.

There was a picturesque little stream that ran along the road we were on that held water so clear I could easily see to the bottom.

As the forest gave way to a clearing, I finally saw the Blue Moon village.

The houses were adorable little cottages painted in blues, grays, and whites.

All around pack members in both their human and wolf forms ran towards the car, anxious to welcome their Alpha home.

There were so many excited faces that I didn't even notice that Kade had stopped the car.

"Xander, I don't think they'll let us pass until they get a chance to see Alaia. They've been waiting far too long to meet their Luna."

Xander looked down at me and said, "It's up to you, Little One. If this is too much for you right now, I can command them to move aside."

"Don't you dare! I'd love to meet your pack."

"Our pack, baby. They are just as much yours as they are mine. Let's go."

Xander cracked to window a few inches, and in his Alpha tone, he addressed the crowd in front of us.

"Blue Moon pack, I have brought your Luna home to you, and I'm sure you're excited to meet her. Since we don't want to overwhelm her at this time, I ask that calm yourselves and take a few steps back."

They immediately did as instructed, allowing space for Kade to come around and open the door for us.

Xander stepped out first to a chorus of "Welcome home, Alpha!"

He then turned and offered me his hand, helping me out of the tall truck.

I was being shielded from the crowd by his large body when he looked down at me.

"I'm ready," I told him.

He then took my hand and turned to the pack.

“Blue Moon pack, I give you your Luna, Ms. Alaia Miller.”

I stepped beside Xander, and all was quiet for a moment. I feared something must have been wrong before the pack erupted into cheers and celebrations.

“Congratulations, Alpha!”

“Thank the Goddess!”

“She’s beautiful, Alpha!”

Tears threatened to fall when I felt all the love and acceptance these people had for me so soon.

I knew in my heart that this was where I was meant to be.

Xander leaned down to my ear and whispered, "Welcome home, baby.”

Yes, welcome home, indeed.

Xander POV

There was no doubt in my mind that the pack would instantly accept my Alaia. Even if they hadn’t been waiting years for her, she was a pure and gentle soul that they would notice immediately.

As the celebration continued, my Gamma, or third in command, Matthew came running up to the car.

I could tell that he had recently shifted as all he had on was a pair of basketball shorts.

As he reached Alaia and me, his face broke out into a huge smile.

“Welcome home, Alpha, Luna.”

I could feel Alaia’s body tense up a bit when he approached, but I understood why.

Matthew was a warrior as well, and a well-trained one at that. He kept very fit, and with his perfect smile, dirty blond hair, and baby blue eyes, he was a lady killer without even trying.

He just had an effect on women, even if it was harmless and unintentional.

“Thank you, Matt, it’s good to be home. Now would you please put on a shirt so my mate can take a breath?” I said with a laugh.

He blushed before he slightly bowed his head and said, "Sorry about that. Excuse me for a minute."

He opened the back of the truck and pulled out a T-shirt from the stash we kept there.

As he got dressed, I leaned down to Alaia and said, "Don't worry, this happens with all the shewolves when they're near him. It's nothing he does on purpose, and once I've marked you, he'll be just another pretty face in the crowd."

She nodded her head in acknowledgment.

When Matt walked back, he said: "My deepest apologies Luna; I meant no disrespect."

"It's fine, really. And please call me Alaia. It must be nice having all the ladies fall at your feet like that," she said with a smile.

"Not at all, Lun- I mean, Alaia. Luckily, most of the guys in the pack know that I mean no harm. As soon as I find my mate, all the madness will finally be over."

He shot Alaia one of his dazzling smiles that made her draw a sharp breath.

"Alright, pretty boy, back to the packhouse. You're going to give my girl a heart attack," I said.

"Yes, Alpha," he said before turning and running back down the road.

Alaia looked up at me with an embarrassed look on her face.

"I'm so sorry Xander, I don't know what was happening."

I laughed and pulled her in for a side hug.

"I promise, baby, it's not your fault. It's a long a crazy story that I'm sure he will share with you one day, but it's a curse that's was put on his family years ago by a love-struck witch. All the men in the Stone family have had to deal with this for as long as they can remember. He hates it, but he's a good guy, and he would never use it to take advantage. He knows you're mine and his Luna, there is nothing to worry about."

"Okay," she quickly said.

"Come on; it's time for me to show you the packhouse."

Before we got back in the truck, I addressed the members of the pack who were still milling around.

"Get ready Blue Moon, tonight we will celebrate and welcome our Luna home around the bonfire. We'll see you all there."

Alaia POV

When we finally arrived at the packhouse, I was again blown away. It was stunning. The house was at least four stories and had what looked to be a million windows.

The exterior was covered in white marble that sparkled and shined in the sunlight. There were impeccably maintained gardens around the perimeter that I couldn't wait to explore while walking hand in hand with Xander.

“Do you like it, Little One? My great-grandfather had it built back when he was Alpha. We've updated and modernized inside obviously but never saw a need to change the exterior,” Xander told me.

“It's amazing, Xander. I love it.”

“Great, let me show you the inside-”

Xander was cut off mid-sentence by a high-pitched squeal of delight.

A fast-moving blur of dark hair and familiar blue eyes rushed us before slamming me into a crushing hug.

“Oh, for fuck's sake Kimmy, you couldn't at least wait for her to get inside before you pounced on her?” Xander yelled, part angry, and part amused.

The vibrating ball of excitement I assumed was Kimmy quickly replied, “Fuck off, Xan; I finally have a sister! I'm so excited!!”

Xander walked over to the two of us and comically placed one of his large hands on Kimmy's forehead before gently pushing back, forcing her to take a step away from me.

“Alaia, this is my little sister Kimberly, or Kimmy for short.”

“It's nice to meet you-”

“AAAHHHHHH! SHE'S SO FUCKING BEAUTIFUL!!!” she screamed, almost bursting my eardrum.

Before I could even think of anything to say, I heard a smooth but authoritative voice yell, “Kimberly Elizabeth Black! What have I told you about that mouth of yours?”

“Ugh! Sorry mom, but have you even seen her-”

Kimmy was cut off by her mom, raising one perfectly manicured hand.

Kimmy's mom-that meant that this woman was Xander's mom!

I gulped and took a step back. Instinctively I ran my hands over my hair, hoping that I looked presentable and that she would like me.

As she walked closer, I saw the striking resemblance between mother and son. Xander has her same ink-black curls and crystal blue eyes. I could also see that he inherited her cheekbones, nose, and mouth. Xander was just a larger, manlier version of his mother.

She was closer to my height, around 5'5, I'd guess, but still small compared to all the men around. Even with her small size, she commanded respect and oozed grace and style. I was immensely intimidated by her.

Before she could come to a stop in front of me, I gathered my courage and said, "Hello, Mrs. Black. It's an honor to meet you. I'm Alaia, Alaia Miller."

When she smiled at me, all my fears disappeared.

"My, what an exquisite and polite mate the Moon Goddess has blessed my son with. And this gorgeous caramel skin of yours is flawless; you'll have to share your skincare routine with me someday," she said while gently running her hand over my cheek.

"And please Dear, call me Katherine, and the honor is all mine. You have no idea how excited we all are that you've finally come home."

She then wrapped me in a warm motherly hug that made my heart melt.

"Thank you so much," I simply replied.

After she released me, she gave me one more smile before turning to welcome Xander home as well.

"Thanks, Mom. So, where's the old man at?"

"The 'old man' can still kick your ass, Son. Don't forget; I taught you everything you know."

Then, an extremely handsome gentleman made his way onto the front porch. He was almost as tall as Xander, coming in right around 6'5. He had light brown hair and kind gray eyes.

Xander stepped to me to make our introductions.

"Alaia, this is my father, Xavier Black. Dad, this is my mate, Alaia Miller."

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Alpha Xavier," I said, stretching out my hand.

He waved it away and said, “Pfft, Xander’s the Alpha now, I gave that headache up a long time ago. And besides, you are our Luna, so please just call me Xavier.”

“Then, Xavier, it is.”

Once the introductions were done, Xander and I moved into the house for a quick tour. As expected, it was impeccably maintained and modern inside.

The common room had a massive 85” TV mounted above the fireplace with every gaming console known to man organized neatly nearby.

There were at least six humongous leather sofas placed throughout the space making it almost resemble a theater room.

When we moved into the kitchen, I was again amazed. It was tastefully decorated with Corinthian marble countertops and built-in professional-grade stainless steel appliances.

The range held eight burners, and I could only imagine the delicious foods that would be cooked on it.

There was an entire wall that held nothing but refrigerators. Two built-in refrigerators, two built-in freezers, and one built-in wine cooler to be specific.

Werewolves had extremely high metabolisms, so packhouses were usually filled to the brim with food.

Before I was taken through the rest of the house, I was shown the back yard which had an Olympic sized swimming pool with a water slide and waterfall, three built-in barbecues, and a beautiful covered gazebo with its own private koi pond.

I could see the pack having so much fun in this space.

I was told that the first floor was common grounds, meaning that anyone in the pack was free to roam there.

The second floor held eight guest rooms, all with private baths and two additional offices. The third was shared between Kade and Matthew and, eventually, their families.

The fourth and final floor was for the Alpha and Luna.

It had six ridiculously sized bedrooms and bathrooms, Xander’s office, an office for myself, my dressing room, a music room, a library, and a small kitchenette for those pesky midnight snacks runs.

By the time the tour was over, my feet were throbbing from all the walking.

“I’m so tired. This place is huge, Xander!” I said to him.

He laughed, then scooped me up bridal style and began to walk towards his room, our room.

“Just one more thing to see, then you can rest before dinner.”

“You had me at dinner, babe!”

Xander opened the door to the room, and I gasped. It was perfect.

This space had to be five times the size of my room at home. There was a large four-poster California king bed rested against the wall between two open balcony doors.

The room was decorated with soft blues, grays, and whites, which seemed to be a theme here.

There were a large fireplace and seating area to our right and three sets of double doors to our left.

“This is my closet here, yours will be right next to it, and those doors at the end are to the bathroom,” he said, pointing them all out to me.

He placed me on my feet, and I went over and opened his closet doors.

As soon as the doors opened, an overhead light came on, causing me to look over my shoulder at him and say, “Ohh, so fancy.”

His clothes were neatly organized and color-coded. He had everything from simple blue jeans to tailor-made tuxedos.

“Wow, who knew one man needed so many clothes!”

“Oh, really? Check out your closet.”

I turned to him and raised an eyebrow before walking into my closet.

Again, the lights overhead came on as soon as I opened the door, and I was blown away.

Every color of the rainbow, fabric, style, and designer was in this closet.

There were at least thirty ball gowns, cocktail dresses, sundresses, jeans, shorts, skirts, everything!

I had derby hats, baseball caps, floral head wraps, even a frickin’ tiara.

“Really Xander, a tiara? You can’t be serious.”

“Yes, really. You, Little One, are my queen and will be treated as such. If there is anything that you don’t have here and want, I’ll be sure to get it for you.”

“This is more than enough. I’ll never have an opportunity to wear even half of this stuff.”

“We’ll see about that. There’s one last room for you to check out.”

He grabbed my hand and pulled me out of the closet and into the master bathroom.

It was gigantic. The double vanity boasted the same Corinthian marble countertops as the kitchen with shiny gold fixtures.

The clawfoot tub was deep and wide, and the shower was big enough to hold an entire football team. It had multiple shower heads coming from above and streams of jets running down the back and sides.

“Ohh, yeah!” I said while eyeing the shower.

“Should I be worried, or maybe even... jealous?” Xander joked.

“Yes, you should be very, very jealous,” I replied while stripping my clothes off.

“I think it’s time for this shower and me to get to know one another better.”

“I’ll save the jealousy for another time. Right now, I’m going to shower with my beautiful mate.”