

Filth and Fists

-Nine years later-

Lily woke up from her nightmare when she was dragged out of bed by her ankles. The image of her mother's terrified green eyes as she screamed the word 'run', was still playing in her mind as she landed heavily on her bedroom floor. Her shoulder took the brunt of her weight and she could already feel the bruise forming, adding yet another purple mark onto her heavily bruised body. She let out a small whimper of pain but refused to give her father the satisfaction of hearing her scream. It only got worse though when he kicked her in the stomach, knocking the breath out of her.

"Get up!" he spat at her. "We're having a pack meeting in two hours and I need you to clean the house. The place is a f****g mess," he said in disgust as if he weren't the one responsible for the house's messy condition. He stormed out, slamming the door behind him, and the sound echoed throughout her room.

Lily pushed herself off the floor slowly, feeling every ache in her body as she stood up and walked to the bathroom. She took a quick shower, scrubbing furiously at her body which felt lthy from her father's hands. She thought it was ironic that she was the one who felt dirty when he was the one beating his own daughter. Yet, it was as if she could still feel his huge hands wrapped around her ankles, yanking her out of her sleep. Lily ignored the pain as she used her sponge to scrub at her stomach where he had kicked her.

Her new bruises twinged painfully as she got dressed, but it was worth it to at least feel clean. She wore a pair of light blue skinny jeans, a cute white top with small purple ovals on it, and a pair of comfortable converse. She had found all the items at a thrift store where she bought most of her clothes. She worked the evening shift at a coffee shop, so she had money for things like clothes and toiletries, which her father had long stopped buying for her. She also did some babysitting for a sweet family whenever they needed her. They were the only ones who didn't treat her like a social pariah, treating her like family instead, and Lily had fallen in love with their young daughter.

Her paycheck wasn't huge though, so she rarely treated herself to clothes that weren't second-hand. Not that Lily minded because she had always managed to find great stuff. She had also been saving a large chunk of her money, managing to accumulate quite a lot over the years. She had all her savings stashed in a hollowed-out book on her shelf, waiting for the day she graduated high school and could finally leave the house that had become her nightmare.

After piling her long brown hair into a bun, she made her way downstairs to clean up the house. Their house was the largest and nicest in their small town because of her father's role as the Alpha. It was also the house where pack meetings were held. Those meetings only served to make her feel even more of an outsider as nobody ever spoke or even acknowledged her at them—their Alpha had ordered them not to. Her role in pack meetings consisted solely of cleaning up the house before they started, and standing quietly in the corner while they took place.

Not for the first time, Lily wished she were brave enough to leave the house in its current state so that the pack could see how their mighty Alpha lived. She wasn't brave enough to face the wrath of her father if she did that though, so she reluctantly started cleaning. Her father had become a slob after his mate had died, so their untidy house was just another reminder of the mess their lives had become. Not that she needed reminding when her bruises and scrapes were a daily reminder of how much things had changed in their family. What used to be a beautiful home had become a war zone of food wrappers, lth, and stts.

There were dirty dishes on the kitchen table and food crumbs sticking to the material of the couches. Lily hated living in the disgusting mess, but she also refused to clean up her father's and brother's mess only to have them undo all her work an hour later. So she lived with her disgust until her father ordered her to clean like he had that morning. Sometimes she wondered if she was only causing herself more suffering by living in such lth, but ultimately she was petty enough to endure the grime if only to let her father and brother suffer with her too. It was one of the only ways she fought back.

It took her over an hour to vacuum, scrub and mop the downstairs area into spotless and almost unrecognizable rooms. By the time she was done, there were only five minutes left until the meeting started, so she ran up to her room to make herself more presentable. Her father may not like her anymore, but he always insisted that she look good at the meetings to show a strong front for the pack. It seemed illogical to her considering how he had ordered his wolves to ignore her presence, but her father had stopped being logical the day his other half had been murdered.

Lily quickly braided her hair and put on some lip gloss. She couldn't afford any other makeup so the lip gloss would have to do. Luckily, her green eyes were lined by naturally dark and thick eyelashes and, as a werewolf, her pale skin was flawless except for the few freckles on her nose. She would have loved to have some concealer to cover the dark circles under her eyes, but she suspected there wasn't a concealer good enough to completely cover the bruise-like rings from her nightmare-fled sleep.

She had just reached the bottom of the stairs when the doorbell rang, announcing the arrival of pack members. Lily ran to open the door only to find Kyle and his parents on the other side. Even after all this time, she was still attracted to her brother's friend. Kyle was her first crush and it seemed like none of the cruel things he said or did killed her feelings for him. Lily hated how pathetic it made her feel. She would give anything to make her crush go away.

Her heart twisted painfully when he sneered at her in disgust before walking into the house. His parents didn't even bother to glance at her as they followed him in. The rest of the packs arrived in much the same way until the living room and kitchen were filled with chatting werewolves.

The only one who greeted her was Eli Stevenson, the father of the girl she babysat for, but even then he could only give her a small smile and a nod so he didn't risk the Alpha's anger if he managed to find out they were close. The small gesture meant more to Lily than she would ever admit. Amanda, his wife, must have been at home with their daughter, Bella, who at six, was much too young to attend meetings. Only one member from each family was required to attend pack meetings, so it wasn't uncommon.

Eli, Amanda, and Bella were like family. They were the reason she could get out of bed in the morning even when all she wanted to do was crawl under the covers and never get up. Amanda had found Lily crying outside the school when she was nine and had been taking care of her ever since. She took Lily to buy her first bra, had helped her when she had her first period, and had been like a mother to her when she desperately needed one. She would never replace Lily's real mom, but she had been there for her when everyone else had abandoned her.

Eli, a kind man in his early thirties, had welcomed her into their family as well, and Lily could happily say that he had become a replacement for her father. She sometimes missed her old dad, the one who wasn't so consumed by loss, but she couldn't say that she felt guilty for considering Eli as her dad now. He had done more for Lily in the past month than her real father had done for her in the past nine years. Unfortunately, they couldn't show their affection for each other in front of the pack, because if the Alpha found out, he was sure to do everything he could to end her relationship with the Stevensons. So Eli left her at the door and went to talk to a group of male werewolves.

Once everyone had arrived, the Alpha greeted them with their presence with Sam by his side. He led them into the enormous space that acted as a kind of boardroom. There were about a hundred werewolves, which made up about half the pack, in the room. The ones with higher ranks sat in chairs at the long table in the middle of the space, with her father at the head of the table. The rest of them stood against the walls and Lily took her place as far from her father as possible.

Her father was only forty, but he looked at least ten years older than that. Werewolves didn't age as quickly as humans, but his hair was showing grey already and his forehead had wrinkles. If anybody thought he was weak because of how he looked though, they would be sorely mistaken. After his wife's death, he had become more dangerous and angry. It was something he hid well from the pack, releasing most of his anger out on Lily instead. So it came as no surprise to her when he sat at the head of the table looking calm and only slightly intimidating.

"We have a few important things to discuss," the Alpha said, signaling the start of the meeting. "But before we do that, I would like to announce that my son has found his mate," her father said with sincere pride.

A werewolf could only find their mate after their first shift, which happened when they turned eighteen. Sam was nineteen, but Jessica had only turned eighteen a few days ago, so they had only realized they were mates then. On cue, Sam turned to the girl sitting next to him and kissed her forehead affectionately, his love for her clear on his face. His mate, Jessica, was one of Lily's least favorite people, so the sight made her want to gag.

Their obvious happiness grated at her because Sam's love for Jessica only emphasized that he was capable of caring but just refused to give his sister any affection. Lily missed him, but she may as well not even exist for how little he seemed to miss her.

"Their bonding ceremony will take place in two weeks and the whole pack is invited to attend," Lily's father announced happily. His love for Sam was clear in his voice, which was nothing new, but it still hurt Lily to hear it when his disdain for her was so apparent.

The pack's support of the match was obvious, especially from Jessica's father, Beta Davidson, who sat next to the Alpha. They gazed on the couple with approval, knowing that Jessica, being the Beta's daughter, was from a strong bloodline. Their next Alpha couldn't have asked for a better mate.

Aside from Lily, the only one who didn't look impressed was Eli. He gave her a sympathetic look and a small encouraging smile. They both knew how cruel Jessica could be. She had been bullying Lily for the past nine years and had been one of her main tormentors at school. She may hide her ugliness behind her blonde hair and good looks, but Jessica was one of the most hideous people Lily knew.

Lily smiled softly at Eli, letting him know she was okay, before turning her attention back to her father. Her breath stopped when she saw his eyes were narrowed and icking between her and Eli. She knew that they would both probably be paying for the display of affection later, but for now, her father managed to control his temper, slipping his mask back on as if nothing had happened.

"Onto other matters, we are expecting the arrival of new members in the coming days. A family asking my permission to move to this territory, and seeing as we need more wolves, I accepted," the Alpha continued.

A wave of surprise went through the room. It was rare for werewolves to move to other territories unless they were moving to be with their mates, which didn't seem to be the case here. Although, sometimes a family would be forced to leave their pack when there was conflict between the Alpha and another wolf. It was possible that was why this family was moving to Hood River, their small town in Oregon.

Lily barely focused on the meeting after that point as the rest of it consisted of trivial issues that were much less interesting than daydreaming about the new pack members. She wondered what they would be like or if they would reject her, just like the rest of the pack had when they found out what happened to her mother, and about Lily's role in her death. It seemed likely that they would. If the people who had known her for her whole life could turn their back on her, why not people she had never met before?

Still, Lily found herself hoping that maybe they would be different. Maybe they wouldn't hate her or ignore her as the others did. Maybe they would be kind like Eli and Amanda. But Lily knew it was silly to hope because hope always seemed to lead her to disappointment. She pushed thoughts of the mysterious new pack members aside and focused on her father as he concluded the meeting.

"Thank you all for coming," he said graciously, hiding his true nature behind a mask of civility. "If any of you have any issues you wish to discuss with me, you may do so now."

With his words, everyone led out of the room except for two males who must have wanted to speak to their Alpha. Lily left the room and went upstairs to her room. She felt tired after all the cleaning she did and after standing through the whole meeting, so she lay on her bed and closed her eyes.

Her nap only lasted half an hour, before she was woken up by the sound of her father's heavy footsteps on the stairs. She held her breath, wishing for the loud steps to pass her bedroom, but her hope died when her door was swung open and he walked in. She jumped out of her bed, putting herself in a less vulnerable position—not that it would help much, because at six foot four, he towered over her small frame.

"Did you think I wouldn't notice?" he asked menacingly.

Lily swallowed nervously, not knowing what she could say to make him calm down.

"I saw the way you and Eli looked at each other. Are you really so desperate for love that you have to resort to sleeping with a mated man? It's embarrassing!" he sneered at her.

Lily recoiled in disgust. "Wait. What? Is that seriously what you think? What the f**k is wrong with you!" she shouted in exasperation, not realizing her mistake until it was too late to take it back.

The shock from his assumption had made her lose control and she had talked back to him for the first time in years. Standing up to him sent a jolt of satisfaction through her, but it was quickly crushed when his fist hit her face. It was the first time he had hit her there, as he usually preferred to keep his abuse to areas people wouldn't see. He had apparently lost control as well. Her vision went black as she fell to the floor, but it slowly cleared until she could see her father standing over her prone body, staring down at her with hate.

"Don't ever f****g talk to me like that again!" he yelled at her, stomping on her hand so hard she nearly passed out from the pain.

Lily couldn't contain her scream. Her eye was swelling shut from the punch and now her hand felt like it had been crushed by a brick. The agony only worsened when she grabbed the broken hand as she struggled with him, and bent her index finger back so far that she heard the bone crack. That time she did actually pass out from the pain. Her last thought before she fainted was, at least he didn't break my right hand this time.