

Chapter 5

Flashback

Alyssa looked in utter disgust at the red laced negligae' that ashed from underneath the red silk robe Rose was wearing. She knew Rose was being held here against her will by Alistair and being forced to wear this getup as a sign of Alistair's dominance over her. Rose tied the thigh high red silk robe tighter around her, trying to hide the lewd attire she wore underneath. This was disgusting even for Alistair.

"You're younger than I am," Alyssa couldn't help but hiss out in revulsion. "He's gone mental if he thinks-" and Alyssa stopped herself short. Unable to even put into words the disgusting things her father wanted to do to Rose.

"Alyssa...how's Xavier?" Rose asked fervently, obviously caring more for the state of her mate than her own dire predicament.

The silver manacles Rose wore to prevent her from turning clinked as she tried to hold her silk robe tighter around her body. They were burning into her wrists since they were pure silver, hindering her wolf's abilities. Guilt overwhelmed Alyssa. This was all her fault. She should have known...she should have done something to stop her father. Things shouldn't have ever gotten this far...

Sighing, Alyssa took out the key she'd found in her father's study and unlocked the manacles. Alyssa winced as the red sores and welts over Rose's wrists became entirely visible. The blonde sorely wished she had brought some soothing balm for Rose's burned wrists. Rose simply looked up at Alyssa expectantly, waiting for baited breath for an update on her mate.

"He's got a fractured skull, broken ribs and a broken leg," Alyssa whispered. "Lots of internal bleeding. Possible brain damage." Rose visibly blanched as she heard Alyssa speak. But Alyssa kept talking. "He's in the ER. We took him to the Rushing River Pack." Alyssa explained everything as best she could, adding that she'd gotten Dylan the antidote. The tension in Rose's body eased just a bit upon hearing that Dylan would be ne.

Rose really was a good person; she cared about everyone and herself last. She deserved to be the luna, Alyssa realized. Alyssa had always been selfish, thinking about herself first. And look where it had gotten her now. Alyssa breathed in deeply, doing her best to be good. She wanted her mother to look down at her and feel proud, not ashamed.

"Listen Rose," Alyssa began warily. "Xavier is in a coma from severe head trauma. He needs time to get better." Because Alyssa knew that Xavier would get better. She was doing everything in her power to insure that. "Just...just hold on OK? He's going to mark you. My...my dad," Alyssa spit out the word 'dad' like it was poison. She was absolutely horrified by her father's intentions.

Rose shuddered over Alyssa's words and Alyssa did her best to soothe her.

"Let's hope he stays busy awhile longer. Just...don't ght him," Alyssa struggled to say. Her father had a temper and she didn't want him to harm Rose in a fit of anger. "Tell him you're on your period or something if he tries anything." Alyssa supplied.

She knew Alistair wouldn't resort to rape. Rose just needed to stall. Rose visibly paled at the merest mention of Alistair trying to initiate intimacy with her.

"You really weren't in on any part of this?" Rose asked warily.

Alyssa took a step back, visibly takenaback by Rose's suspicion. Did everyone think so little of her? She'd made a few mistakes...but she didn't wish for anyone to die or be hurt. She was a pawn in all of this just like everyone else. Just like her mother who died and was easily replaced in Alistair's mind.

"You think I'd purposefully try and kill my boyfriend's father?" Alyssa asked reexively. Alyssa did her best to explain to Rose that the only reason she'd tried to separate Rose from Xavier was because she'd been convinced that this was all Xavier's biological wiring that was attracting him to Rose. Her father had been a huge negative influence in urging her to try and convince Xavier to stay with her. But her father had been doing nothing but thinking of himself. Because if Xavier was no longer with Rose, then Alistair could become Rose's mate. Rose would have been more amenable to him if Xavier wasn't in the picture.

What sick and twisted thinking her dad had. And all for a few scraps of attention she'd done the best she could to go along with her dad's suggestions of convincing Jake to challenge Xavier in a fight. Well that hadn't ended well at all. And when she'd seen the two wolves fight each other for Rose, Alyssa had realized that she'd severely misjudged things. Xavier loved Rose. He wouldn't just surrender and leave with Alyssa. The last thing she'd ever wanted was for Jake and Xavier to actually end up fighting each other. Xavier had almost killed his own cousin if Rose hadn't intervened in time.

"Listen to me Rose-" Alyssa began warily. "-Xavier will come for you. And when he does, be ready. He just needs time to regain his energy."

Alyssa's sharp eyes suddenly caught Rose's reexive movement as her hands went protectively over her stomach. Alyssa wasn't a fool, she had the brains to ace her LSAT and she sure as hell had the brains to realize that Rose was not just worried about her mate. She was now also worried about her unborn pup.

Pretending she hadn't noticed anything, Alyssa retreated from Rose's room, still trying to digest the information that Rose was pregnant. She was going to have Xavier's baby. Xavier, the one person who'd been her thick and thin. So what if they didn't work out and he now had a mate? To go against him would be totally disrespecting the good times they'd had together. And if she was honest, he was the one man who'd truly ever valued her for her. He didn't think less of her for being a female like her father had. She wouldn't let anything happen to his pup. She'd do her best to help them. Because if anyone deserved a happy ending, it was Xavier.

"So?" Alistair asked quietly, startling Alyssa who'd been walking as if in a trance.

She jumped, nearly colliding with a painting of owners her mother had bought and put in the hallway.

Alistair stared back at her from the doorway of his study with crossed arms.

"I-I spoke with her," Alyssa said in a shaky voice. "I told her to let you mark her."

"And?" Alistair raised an eyebrow expectantly.

"And she's just scared," Alyssa said in a rush, grasping for straws. "She...I'm pretty sure she's still a virgin. She needs time."

Alistair's eyes narrowed.

"How is that possible? She's marked and I'm pretty sure Xavier would have mated with his luna," Alistair drawled.

"They wanted their first time to be special," Alyssa blurt out. "It's a sentimental human thing. So they were...waiting. You can't just expect a blushing virgin to fall into your arms. You're going to need to wait and give her time. Give her time to adjust to the idea of having you for a mate..." Alyssa trailed off, revulsion evident in her voice.

"I can see you aren't too fond of this idea," Alistair pointed out.

"I'm not but it's not like you care what I think" Alyssa countered weakly.

"I don't care," Alistair retorted indifferently. He heaved a sigh. "But I can at least respect the fact that you don't want to be in the middle of this. Go back to law school and nish up your semester. I won't force you to visit. But-" Alistair held up a finger. "-I will expect you to be here for the birth of your baby brother, hopefully a year from now."

"You're sick!" Alyssa burst out angrily as Alistair laughed.

He'd done that to purposefully get a reaction out of her.

"I don't think I ever want to come back!" Alyssa yelled angrily, trying to throw him off the trail.

She was going to come back all right. The minute Xavier got better, she'd sneak him in to challenge Alistair. Hopefully, he'd catch the old alpha off guard and Alistair would simply surrender. There was no way Alistair could beat Xavier at full strength.

Alistair simply chuckled.

"Then don't. I'll have my son eventually. I'll also have oil drilling rights to Xavier's old pack lands and Evercore will be giving me a hefty amount of cash for that. Which-" Alistair's upper lip curled. "-will help you pay for your fancy ivy league college."

"I'm on a scholarship," Alyssa gritted out, fists clenched.

She knew her father was in support of Evercore drilling pack lands for oil. It would put a hefty amount of cash in Alistair's pockets while degrading pack lands.

"Oh and I suppose that fancy apartment you live in is also paid for by your University?" sneered Alistair. "No dear. That and the fancy new convertible you're driving have all been paid for by me. Money doesn't grow on trees." Alistair shrugged. "Do as you wish. You don't ever have to come back. I have no need of you unless you plan to help me form an alliance with a strong alpha and his pack," Alistair said with naivity.

Alyssa's lower lip trembled as she realized that's all she ever had been for Alistair. Someone who was of no use unless she served to strengthen his pack. She stomped out of the house, slamming the door behind her.

"We'll see how long it takes you to come crawling back and asking me for more money!" Alistair yelled after her.

Alyssa kept walking.

"You won't survive a day without my financial support!" Alistair exclaimed, opening the door so she could hear him better.

Alyssa shook her head, getting into her red convertible. No wonder she'd been messed up in the head for awhile. With a father like that, who needed enemies?

End of Flashback

Alyssa put down the papers in disbelief.

"Evercore is back?" Alyssa asked weakly.

Rose nodded.

"We had had to make our land off-limits so it couldn't be drilled. Our petition requested the government to make it off-limits due to the endemic species residing near the creek but..."

"But they only made part of it off-limits," Alyssa ended having read through the contents of the letter.

"The rest of the land is open game, and Evercore is applying for drilling rights again and since 30% of the surrounding land is government property and the government is letting them drill there-"

"It automatically gives them pooling rights," Alyssa cut in.

Rose nodded uncertainly.

"Whatever that means...the legal lingo is a little bit complicated for me to understand," Rose admitted. "Which is why I thought I'd ask you for help."

"Basically, if an oiling company gets rights to drill 25% of the surrounding land, then it automatically gives them rights to drill your land too," Alyssa explained. "That's why it's called a forced-pooling law," Alyssa explained briskly. "So the drillers will notify anyone within the drilling area and you participate in a hearing before the oil and gas board. If Evercore's petition is approved, you'll have three choices," Alyssa counted them off on her fingers. "A) pay for the well and share in the profits from the sale of gas, B) don't pay for the well and share the gas profits after a 'risk aversion' penalty or C) get a state mandated minimum royalty percentage. You won't have any other options, least of all, the option to avoid drilling."

"This won't be good for our land," Rose explained.

"Because wolves need land, they don't need money," Alyssa stated.

She crossed her arms and leaned back.

"We want to hire you as our lawyer. You've taken up a few environmental law cases before," Rose urged.

"But those were different," Alyssa responded. "Those were regarding environmental pollution caused by big corporations. And I was assisting lawyer...this..." Alyssa spread out her hands helplessly. "...this is way more complicated than that."

"We want to try and stop Evercore drilling from being approved. Our packs will suffer if they win!" Rose said urgently, hoping Alyssa would agree.

"Our packs?" Alyssa asked in confusion.

"The Crimson Phoenix pack and the Silver Creek pack," Rose elaborated.

Alyssa laughed bitterly.

"I was kicked out of the silver creek pack by Dylan and Xavier. It's not my pack anymore," Alyssa couldn't keep the bitterness from her voice.

Rose folded her hands together and said her next words carefully. She knew what had happened. Initially, Xavier had been the ruling alpha of the Silver Creek Pack and asked Dylan to rule in his stead. Xavier and Dylan had exiled Alyssa along with Alistair as a precautionary measure. However, now that Dylan was older, and more mature, Xavier had all but given the pack to him. The Silver Creek Pack's true alpha was now wholly and solely Dylan. Dylan didn't like Alyssa. And Rose knew it was because he blamed her for the entireiasco with her father. However, Rose needed Alyssa to realize that the pack was still a part of her.

"But it's still your pack. It's where you grew up," Rose supplied.

Alyssa just kept her eyes wearily, rubbing a spot in the middle of her forehead. Somehow, she'd just known coming back home would end up getting her involved in a new mess.

"I'll do it. I'll be your lawyer. Not because of any other reason but that I want to do the right thing. Any other lawyer would tell you it's not worth fighting," Alyssa warned. "And if I'm honest, it's not. There's a huge chance we will lose. But I know how important land is for wolves and drilling would not only risk exposing our kind to humans but also degrade the pack lands." Alyssa shrugged. "What kind of lawyer am I if I can't even help my own kind?"

Rose smiled, glad to see that Alyssa had agreed. Honestly, she'd thought it would take more effort on her part. But it hadn't. As Rose waved Alyssa off, she couldn't help but muse on how far Alyssa had come. She'd changed. That much was certain now.

Sometimes, life was the biggest lesson of all.