

## Surrendering To The Alpha

### Once Upon A Time

Kelsey

Once upon a time long ago... yeah, I'll stop right there. I was eighteen years old when I learned the hard way that fairy tales don't exist. There's no glass slipper that will suddenly shine armor coming to slay a dragon for you, no glass slipper that will suddenly change your life and no amount of kissing a frog is ever going to turn him into Prince Charming (although he might give you warts).

On my eighteenth birthday, I was totally blindsided when my boyfriend and the future Alpha of Crimston Pack, Blake, rejected me as his destined mate. We had just celebrated our one year anniversary and I was utterly and completely in love with him; convinced that I was the main character in my own real life fairy-tale.

We had spent countless magical nights sneaking out to lay under the moonlight on the pier, talking about what our lives would look like together and how we couldn't wait to find out if we were mates. Of course there was a chance that we weren't destined mates, but Blake was adamant that our love was "too special" not to be and being the naive teenager I was, I desperately hung off of every word he said.

I had spent years secretly crushing on Blake. Let me correct myself: every girl in Crimston Pack spent years crushing on Blake. Girls threw themselves at his disposal, it took one flash of those crystal blue eyes to make any girl instantly wet. He was two years older than I was with the body of a Greek God and a smile that lit up the world. So, you can imagine my excitement when I confirmed on my eighteenth birthday that Blake, my boyfriend and heir to the Alpha, was my destined mate.

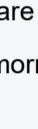
Well on that same night, Blake fucked me so hard that I swear I still remember the stars that blurred my vision, then brought me out to the same familiar pier that I loved so much and broke up with me in true douchebag fashion. He claimed that he was no longer in love with me and I had been nothing more than a past time until he found someone worthy enough to stand by his side as he became the Alpha of Crimston Pack. So much for that "special love", right?

I'll never forget the sound of my heart shattering into a million tiny pieces and the piercing pain that was now seared into my chest permanently. It felt like Blake stabbed me repeatedly in the gut with a razor sharp knife, causing me to become completely disoriented. My brain became a foggy mess, all tangled up in his words and struggling to process what had just happened. I desperately wanted to scream at him for rejecting our mate bond, which was the most sacred bond to werewolves, but I couldn't form a single sentence to spit out. So, I turned on my heels and ran like hell the entire way home; never seeing Blake again.

When I had finally arrived home, I bolted up the stairs and locked myself in my bedroom for three whole days. For three days, I refused the food and water that my parents had placed in front of my bedroom door. I was sure that the entire neighborhood heard my desperate cries and choked sobs slip through the window. During those three days, I didn't shift into my wolf one. She was edging towards the surface and fighting for control but I knew if I had let her out, she would have run straight back to our destined mate. It took three days to become entirely numb and empty inside, I even wondered if I had just run out of tears to cry just like an empty well of water.

I had been scheduled to start college in less than two weeks at a school nearby. Even though I had received acceptance letters from all of the schools I had applied to back in the fall, most of them with full scholarships, I decided to accept an offer from the college that was less than an hour away from Crimston Pack. Having lived in a pack my whole life, pack life was important to me and so was my family. I'm sure you can guess what the one thing that I absolutely couldn't bare to leave behind was though.

That same thing that I couldn't imagine my life without was the same thing that drove me halfway across the country in a split second. I pulled out my laptop and sent an email to an advisor that I had stayed in contact with during the application process, desperate to get as far away from this place as I could. My eyes nearly bulged out of their sockets when the email shot back immediately and they accepted my transfer with such short notice. I was grateful when my family had been so supportive of my decision, although I could see the reluctance in their eyes. I packed up my life within 24 hours and boarded a plane to start a new life as far away from Blake as I could get.



### Summoned By The Alpha

Kelsey

I had taken fate into my own hands and started my new life in Arizona with no regrets. Four years later, I graduated from the best years of my life at Arizona State and was now living out my childhood dream as a teacher at a local high school in the area. My boyfriend, Eric, had moved in with me a few months ago and I was truly the happiest I had been in a long time.

Eric was a CEO of a big wealth management company which sometimes resulted in him travelling and working long hours, but he still made sure that I knew I was his whole world. My family had met Eric a few times when they came out to Arizona to visit me and they both seemed to like Eric a lot, apart from my older brother who couldn't seem to understand what I was doing dating a human. My best friend, Asher, who had come out to Arizona to celebrate his 21st birthday with a few other pack members also seemed to approve of Eric. Well, besides the fact that Eric was a die hard Dallas Cowboys fan.

I thro my body on the plush black couch in my apartment and gripped onto the side of my torso, that stabbing pain that gutted at my insides was back with a vengeance this time. Goddamn mate bond, I muttered to myself. For the past four and a half years, I would feel this aching pain come and go. Sometimes it was so bad that I had to excuse myself from my classroom so that I could go lay down in my office until it subsided. I was lucky that I taught high school students who didn't seem to mind when I fantastically told them I had to answer a call in my office. Everyone else though? They all thought I had IBS. Yep, irritable bowel syndrome.

The mate bond is sacred amongst shifters, the missing piece of the puzzle to your soul. Two hearts binding together for eternity to become one. Your mate is handpicked for you by the Moon Goddess even before birth. A shifter can only find their mate after they turn eighteen years old; some find each other shortly after they reach of age while others search an entire lifetime. Legend has it that a wolf can never be fully complete until they find their destined mate.

Yada, yada. Fact is, I didn't have my mate but I was doing just fine.

Although there are rare situations where destined mates reject each other, it doesn't happen often. Rejecting a mate causes subtle lifelong torture until you eventually wither away, it is believed to be the punishment for crossing the Moon Goddess's decisions which was probably what was happening to me.

Finding your mate is what many shifters eagerly wait their entire lives. The chance to find your one soulmate. Most of the time, couples rejoice when they find each other. Not in my case though, I was forced to take fate into my own hands and now I'm constantly reminded of that. My Prince Charming is still a toad and as far as I'm concerned, Cinderella can still kiss my ass.

As the throbbing pain began to subside, my body relaxed into the couch and took refuge against the soft cushions. Feeling my phone vibrate for the third time in a row, I finally pulled it out and smiled when I saw Asher's name on the screen.

"What's up Casanova?", I say playfully.

"Arizona! I've been trying to get a hold of you all damn day, almost sent out a search warrant to the sheriff", he replies, I can vividly picture the smirk on his face by his tone.

"Ha...ha... I forgot you were such a comedian. I just got home actually, I'm pretty sure grading these finals will be the death of me", I exclaim.

"Hmm", Asher says and then pauses, "or are you trying to fake your own death as an excuse not to come back to Blackclaw Mountain?"

"Not the worst idea you've ever had, I'll give you that", I tell him and heave out a sigh, "I just don't understand the rush, my five year check-in with the Alpha isn't for another six months".

"If I were you, I'd rather get it over and done with then stretch it out longer. Since Blake took over as Alpha, his father has been trying to ease the transition for him. You're not the only one who's been summoned back for a check-in", he explained, "plus it's gotten boring around here without you".

"Yeah, me plus old man Logan right?", I respond with a giggle.

Logan was the old man down the road from my parents' house, he had left Blackclaw to attend law school and never came back except for his five year check-ins with the Alpha. Most of the pack piles him, they say that he missed finding his destined mate because he was too busy playing human.

When shifters leave the pack to go to school or work in the human world, they typically come back afterwards. Since we are werewolves, the importance of pack life is heavily embedded into our brains. Everyone has a responsibility to serve and protect the Alpha. Abandoning a pack is equivalent to abandoning your family.

I could hear Asher snort at my comment and then sincerity flowed from his voice, "Kels, just promise me you'll try to make the most of it. Your family, your friends, your pack mates - we exist too, Blackclaw isn't just comprised of Blake. This week is going to fly by and then it'll be another five years until you're back."

"Good riddance for that", I teased, "don't worry, I promise I will. Blake is a thing of the past, I've moved on if you haven't noticed".

"Oh ya, how is Mr. Dallas Cowboys?", Asher said sarcastically, I could hear the doorknob rattling as the key entered the lock.

"He actually just got home, gotta run", I reply.

"Tell him I said hi. Oh and Kelsey? I'm sorry that I can't pick you up from the airport", Asher muttered.

"What? You're the Beta now! I could never hold that against you. I'll see you tomorrow", I replied and ended the call.

Eric walked into the apartment with his navy blue tie loosened at the collar and his hair a tousled mess. I could tell that he had another strenuous day at the office and was exhausted but that didn't hold back the excitement that twinkled in his honey brown eyes every time he saw me. Eric was undoubtably handsome. He was the textbook definition of tall, dark and handsome and he was mine. My wolf however, made it clear that she felt differently by constantly reminding me that sex with a human wasn't all it was chalked up to be. Horny little slut she was. It wasn't Eric's fault though, shifters just had an increased appetite for sexual intimacy that was often in overdrive.

Eric held up a brown paper bag one hand and snaked his other arm around my waist, gently pulling me into his paper bag and placing an affectionate kiss on the top of my head.

"Chinese? I figured you could use one last binge before you leave for Blackclaw", he chuckled.

I stared up at the total stud in front of me in complete awe, it was the little things that Eric did that always showed me just how much he cared. I was the luckiest girl in the world.

He was right though, there was no chance that I would be getting any Chinese food over next week. The population in Blackclaw was a grand total of 28,972. Huge right? Maybe not for a human town but Blackclaw was actually the second biggest pack in the US. The closest city was an hour away. I'll admit there was a piece of mind in Blackclaw though. It was a shifter town which meant that there was little to no threat of being exposed to humans which left shifters free to roam however they pleased.

Eric had asked to come home with me when I told him I was going to go visit my parents for a week. I was lucky enough to dodge him though, promising that I would formally take him to see where I grew up for Christmas. I knew he wasn't happy about it but he accepted it, which thankfully now buys me more time. In order to ever bring Eric to Blackclaw, I would have to ask permission from the Alpha and the odds on that one were staked against me.



### Welcome To Blackclaw

Kelsey

I had this nagging feeling that I was forgetting something since I got off the plane but couldn't quite put my finger on it, so I continued my struggle and lugged the bulky suitcase out of the terminal. I was only going to Blackclaw for a week - why did I have to pack so much?

To be honest, I'd been an anxious wreck since Eric woke up me this morning with a steaming hot cup of coffee. God bless that man's soul. My wolf had stirred all night causing me to toss and turn, resulting in me getting no sleep. It would be my first time back on pack territory since I had left to flip the page on my life in Arizona. It would also be the first time since I've seen him. As usual, I laid there and fought to get the thoughts of Blake out of my mind, but they still lingered. That mesmerizing smile that never failed to encompass me, the laugh that always gave me heart palpitations and those thick fingers that easily could send me into complete oblivion sent a shiver down my spine.

Blake had tried to contact me only once when I left Blackclaw behind, that was apparently all I was worth to him. I guess the mate bond didn't affect his wolf as badly as it did mine. I could tell that he had gone out and was drunk by the slur in his voice when I answered the call. It didn't help that I heard an irritatingly high pitched female voice in the background. Later when I broke down to Asher, he confirmed that Blake had gotten laid that night by his new flame which was a girl named Ashley.

After a few days of hoping he'd call again, I gave up, gathered my remaining dignity and finally changed my number.

A nearly deafening shriek caught my attention and before I knew what was happening, my mother had her arms wrapped tightly around me. I could see the excitement swirling in my father's eyes to as he stuffed my suitcase in the trunk of the car. They were thrilled that I was finally home even if it was for a short time. We quickly settled into the car and began the three hour drive to Blackclaw. I stared blankly outside the back seat window while we drove through the winding road of the forest, the familiarity of it all seeping in my mind.

Mom was going on about how excited the pack was for me to be home and how someone had dropped off some biscuits and pecan pie. True country small town lovin'. I knew I should've listened but I was too busy with my own thoughts that were already a sporadic mess. I was trying to play it cool, I didn't want my parents noticing how uncomfortable I really was. Truthfully, my nerves were shot with all the adrenaline that was coursing through me.

"Shit", I whisper to myself, finally registering eyes fixed on me and my forehead which I had landed in. Alasbera, I can see my dad's staring wide eyed at me as he stared wrinkled with concern in the rear view mirror, "what's wrong honey?"

"Oh nothing, I just forgot to text Eric and tell him I landed", I say as my fingers frantically tap against my screen of my phone. I was doing something I forgot, it must be because I'm so goddamn sleep deprived. "Mhm", my mother says as if there was something she wanted to say but didn't.

"Where's Mark?", I finally blurt out. My brother and I had always been super close growing up, he was three years older than I was. Not seeing him at the airport kind've bummed me out. He wasn't exactly thrilled about me moving out to Arizona originally, he may have even resented me for a bit but I swear he was excited that I was coming home.

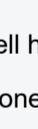
"Oh carebear, he wanted to come but he had training with the pack. Alpha Blake wouldn't excuse him", my father explained. Ugh, figures. Of course Alpha Blake didn't excuse him. Why was he purposely out to get me? First, I'm summoned home early and now he couldn't even agree to let my brother miss one practice. Goddamn Alphas and their power struggles.

I was proud of my brother, Mark was announced as Alpha Blake's enforcer shortly after his father stepped down and announced Blake as Alpha. Working so closely with the Alpha, I knew that Mark had responsibilities to the pack. He had trained tirelessly his entire life to become strong enough to join the upper rankings of the pack one day, he was almost as strong as Asher. Being head of security was also fitting for Mark because it allowed him to use his computer skills that he had gone to school for. Trust me, that kid was a computer whiz. I was pleasantly surprised when I heard the news, I was worried that my past relationship to Alpha Blake would make Mark suffer.

One week, I kept telling myself. One week and I'll be back in Arizona. Back to the life that I had built for myself or my liking, not the one that I was being forced to live. No shifters, no obsessive parents and definitely no Blake.

The rest of the drive was relatively quiet until I realized that we were on the long gravel driveway that I so vividly remember leaving behind, headed straight for the black iron gates.

Welcome to Blackclaw y'all.



### Rage and Regret

Blake

The one thing that I'm certain about is that I have to stay away from her at all costs. Here's the plan, I'll keep my head down, keep my distance and avoid her like the plague. Everything will work out, right?

Ever since my father told me that he had arranged for Kelsey and Logan to return to pack grounds for their five year check-in, my life has been nothing short of a blur. When I stood up to stretch from being cooped up in my office all morning like a tiger in a cage, I noticed her parents' black sedan passing through the black iron gates and driving into Blackclaw from my window. My wolf knew she was here too, he could feel her near and he wouldn't stop pestering me. He missed her, I missed her too, but I shouldn't.

They say the best way to get over someone is to get under someone else. I can confirm that's bullshit. None of the countless one night stands I've had over the years have come close to healing the wounds that have now become lathered scars in my heart. As I'm thrusting into a girl, I imagine that it's Kelsey underneath me. Just when I'm about to release my load into a girl, I imagine it's Kelsey I'm releasing into. She's become my obsession. An obsession that I haven't been able to break free from.

I've spent the past four and a half years torturing myself for letting go of the best thing that's ever happened to me and I was positive that this week would be any different. She's what I wake up thinking about and what I fall asleep dreaming of. If that isn't enough, I physically get to feel the sting of rejecting the mate bond nearly every damn day. The only thing that I found to slightly numb the pain was keeping myself distracted with booze, women or work.

I know I hurt her, I know I broke her heart. A cruel reality that I now have to live with. The truth is I broke my own too but she doesn't even know it. She sees me as an asshole and I don't blame her for it.

I would have claimed her right there on the dock that night as my mate if I could have. I knew she was my mate, as lame as it sounds I could feel it. There was something different about Kelsey, something electric that made me feel alive whenever I stared into those big emerald green eyes.

I'm an Alpha by birthright though and like they say with power, comes responsibility. My parents had approached me that morning of her eighteenth birthday at breakfast and explained that while they adored Kelsey, it was better to break things off with her instead of stinging her along. You see, my Beta fate had been sealed when I was only five years old to take Everly from Silver Shadow Pack, the first born daughter of Alpha Jakob as my Luna.

That's right, Crimston Pack's biggest rival. The rivalry had gone on for centuries, every decade or so, there would be another unnecessary war. The union between Everly and I would be the official stitch to finally mend the packs together, the years of bloodshed soon to be nothing but brutal history never to be repeated.

Everly was prim and polished, molded into the perfect picture of what a Luna should be. However, she was a tad too cocky for my liking. Coming from me, I know that says a lot. Being the Alpha's daughter and having lived in the spotlight her entire life, I also didn't hold it against her. Us Alpha kids just had it different than the rest of the pack.

Just as I was about to sit down at my desk and continue working on the details for the pack run next Friday, my Beta Alpha mind links me. "Alpha, the endurance training we had scheduled is done for the day. Do you want to come down and continue with defensive drills or should I let them off early today?"

My Beta Asher had been one of my best friends since we were pups. When my father's Beta had stepped down to spend more time with his grandchildren and shortly after I became Alpha, there was no question in who I believed should take his place as Beta. Asher was quick witted, level headed and strong. His wolf was the second biggest in the pack, I had even come across Alphas who were weary to mess with Asher. My father's Beta trained Asher and had no doubts that Asher would be a valuable asset to Crimston Pack.

Only one issue: he was also close friends with Kelsey, my mate, and it was clear as day that he adored her. I could always tell when she was calling him because Asher was horrible at hiding it. Whenever he glanced at his vibrating cellphone and saw her name, he never failed to immediately tense up. It was like clockwork. Asher knew about my predicament and I knew he disagreed with my decision but I was grateful that he refrained from mentioning anything Kelsey related.

I heave a sigh and massage my temples in aggravation, "ya. It's fine, I'll be there in five minutes" and flick my laptop screen down. Any other day and I would have let the group finish early, we had been training vigorously since the last training session a month ago with the allied packs. The last time the packs got together to train, I had two injured shifters by the end of it and I was determined not to let history repeat itself. I'm pretty sure Alpha Tate isn't going to let me live that one down anytime soon considering it had been shifters from his pack that inflicted the injuries.

Alpha Tate, Alpha Jaxon, Alpha Liam and I renewed the allegiance amongst our packs once I became Alpha of Crimston Pack. A brotherhood of sorts. We were all similar in age, essentially grew up together and have the same goal of transitioning our packs into the modern world. Maybe even the entire werewolf race. As the human world advances, the shifter world cannot stay stuck in place; a testament that our fathers weren't exactly fond of.

But, as always, change might be uncomfortable but it's necessary.

Three out of four packs already had ties to each other from when our fathers were Alphas, with the exception of Alpha Tate's pack. However, their allegiances consisted of having each other's backs in case they required assistance for whatever reason. Our pact inherits their beliefs but adds a little bit more from our warriors actually being familiar with each other. Alpha Tate was from the North, I was from the South, Alpha Liam was from the West and Alpha Jaxon was from East. Even though there are seven werewolf packs, four packs working hand in hand with each other gave us a majority when it came to most Alpha meetings.

They were scheduled to arrive with their warrior packs tomorrow night except for Alpha Tate who had already arrived and was already up my ass to go for an drink. Crimston Pack will be hosting the training session this time around. Having no allegiance with each other, we gathered our warrior packs once a month to train together, master skill sets and more importantly learn to fight together as a team. If a war was ever to take place, it was vital that the warriors all saw each other as one force moving in unison instead of four separate identities.

I had made my way into the field and towards the bright eyed warriors. After last month's circus, I could see their determination to showcase their strength at the other packs. Shifters are obnoxiously competitive by nature, particularly against other packs.

I quickly demonstrated a few defensive moves which they all seemed to grasp with ease when they paired off to practice. Two hours of defensive training later and I realized I had completely lost track of time. "Pack up Crimston. Good work today, training is at 3pm tomorrow. One last session before our guests arrive tomorrow night. Do not be late!", I yelled out to the group.

Beta Asher comes and places a hand on my shoulder, "they look good out there, Alpha Tate is going to shit his pants when he sees them this time", he says with a smirk. Beta Asher was beaming from the improvement of the group and I can admit his work has been impressive.

I coil out a laugh and reply, "yeah, I'm stoked to see his face too. That guy may not come back next month when he sees Crimston now". I pull off my black v-neck tee that was drenched of sweat from the beaming hot summer sun.

I notice Beta Asher's eyes bolt to the other side of the field where a small crowd was now gathering, it was like he wasn't even paying attention with his gaze so intently fixed on the horde. The look on his face made me wonder if he was looking for something... or rather someone. "...I'll catch ya later Alpha", he said and jogged over to the crowd.

My cellphone vibrates against my leg and I pull it out my pocket. I groan seeing that it's a text from my father asking where I had left the pack rotation schedule. Unbelievable. I know he wanted to help with the shift of power of Alpha but sometimes it felt like he wasn't ready to let it go.

I stuff the cellphone back in my pocket, I was on my way back to my office anyhow. A high pitched shriek catches my attention from across the field and I glare over to the crowd that Asher had just raced towards. Before I even have time to react or process what was going on, I see my Beta Asher picking up and spinning a blonde in his arms. The already short canary yellow dress exposed her long tanned legs that were wrapped tightly around his waist while his arms held her up right under perky her ass.

I feel my mouth run dry at the sight and a growl escape my chest. "Mine!", I howl. I couldn't fight the urge and rip my gaze off of her, she looks breathtaking. A total fucking Goddess.

I can feel my gym shorts tighten when thoughts flood my mind of how badly I'm craving to have her underneath me. Her petite body trembling under mine while I thrust into that taut little pussy like no time had passed.

I watch her until our gazes lock, her emerald green eyes shining brightly in the reflection of the sun and narrowing directly at me. Fuck, I need to get out of here. This wasn't the plan. The plan was to avoid her at all costs. I'm not sure how much self-control I'll have around her.

I stalk my way into the forest, feeling my wolf whimper and scold me that we're going the wrong way. I tare my gym shorts off and shift, taking off towards the pack borders.

