

The Alpha and the Mistake

Jilguera

Mistake - 10

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Mike

I looked at the sunlight filtering through the tree limbs. The numbness brought on by the Jack Daniels was gone. Now I was stiff with a damp ass. Damn, why didn't I notice the wet ground when I sat down? Standing, I stretched all the kinks out. I wondered if Missy ever got out of the woods. I meant to tell her the way she needed to go, but the look of pure horrified shock on her face was hilarious. Did she think Dad would let her just walk away?

When I reached the school parking lot, it was empty. Good, I was over school. It's nothing but a waste of time, if you ask me. As I pulled out of the lot and drove home, I actually obeyed the speed limits. Unfortunately, even driving so slow it only took me ten minutes to get home. As I pulled into the driveway, I saw Tammy, my sister's friend. She was just walking up to the front door. Maybe my day was looking up.

"Hey girl, what's up?" Some playtime sounded nice about now.

"Oh hi, Mike. Uhm, is Dean home? He said he'd tutor me in math." Her cheeks flushed as she bit her lower lip.

Oh, I knew what kind of tutoring she was in the mood for. Angerily I gripped my car keys. With a grin on my face, I said, "I bet he did, but he's not here. Don't worry, I can help you with anything you need." 1

She curled her lip in disgust. "You are such a pig, Mike."

What the hell? A pig? What did I even say? "A pig, huh? That's not what you said last time."

Tammy rolled her eyes at me. "Whatever, Mike. Dean is a gentleman, so why would I waste my time on you?"

My hand tightened around my keys more. Tammy was begging to get slapped. I brought up my fist, but remembered Dad didn't want me hitting her. Her dad was in good with him, so I had to play nice.

"Well, as I said, you deaf bitch, he's not here, so get your slutty ass out of here." I grinned at the flash of hurt on her face. Good. When she came crawling back to me, I was so going to make her beg. Damn Dean! Was there a single thing that asshole didn't ruin? I couldn't wait until Dad finished pretending to be friends with my uncle's pack. I was going to have so much fun smashing Dean's face into the ground, and I would make sure Tammy was there to see it.

Mom was in the hall when I went inside. "Thank you for getting rid of that girl. I can't stand her. She is like a parasite." Mom wiped her hands on a dishtowel and kissed me on the top of my head, making the anger vanish.

Mom was the only one besides Missy who calmed me down when I was angry. "No problem, Mom. She is a parasite, came here looking for Dean hoping he'd let her blow him." I grunted as she smacked me on the back of the head. It didn't hurt, just surprised me.

"Language, Mister. I don't care if what you say about her is true, it's not the way to speak. You may talk like that with your friends, but when you're around me, I want none of it."

Rubbing the back of my head, I begrudgingly gave her an apology. I slung my arm around her waist and hugged her. She flinched, and the anger trickled back through me. Dad hit her again. "How bad?"

Mom smiled at me. "I'm fine, sweetheart. It's not too bad." How could she smile like that and pretend like nothing was wrong? It was something Missy did too, and I never understood it. 1

"Your father just couldn't help himself. He's under so much stress lately, and I shouldn't have bothered him," Mom explained. 1

I scowled, hating when she defended him. It was never her fault, but arguing with her would get me nowhere. "Fine. I'm going to my room."

"Okay, make sure you clean up for dinner," she told me with a kiss on my forehead before returning to the kitchen to do whatever it is moms do there.

I closed the door and sat on the bed, leaning against the wall. My anger returned as I thought of Tammy, Dean, and my dad. I hated them all and wanted them dead. With a smile, I closed my eyes, imagining what it would be like to have their blood on my hands. I wanted to do it. I wanted to see the life drain out of their eyes. In a slightly better mood, I opened my eyes. I glanced out of my window and let a small smile cross my face as I saw Missy.

She made it out, after all. That's my girl. I knew she'd do it. I scooted off my bed to watch her swing on a swing set like she was six or something. It made me smile even more. Dad hated her. He called her weak, human trash. A mistake that should've never been born, but I knew the truth. Missy was strong. No one weak could deal with the shit I gave her every day, yet Missy did and came back for more. Dad was a big fucking idiot. 2

I couldn't let him get rid of her. She was the only good thing I had going right now. No matter how angry I was, she was always there to take it. I wasn't ashamed to admit it. I needed Missy and her ability to take my

anger. She was like the yin to my yang or whatever. Without me, Missy was no one, but some stupid unimportant human, and without her, I might end up hurting Mom as Dad did. I would rather die than sink that low. 1

Yeah, Missy and I, we were like meant for each other. Not like mates and that stupid shit, but something more. 3

My eyes narrowed as I saw Dean freaking Williams walk up to Missy. What was he doing there? Anger turned in the pit of my stomach as he started talking to her. What did Dean have to talk about with Missy? Didn't I make it clear? No one goes near Missy but me! The more I watched, the angrier I got. He kept getting closer and closer to her as he held the chain of her swing. Go away Dean, I swore silently at him.

A growl resonated through my throat when he held her face. I was going to break that hand. To make matters worse, I watched furiously as he kissed her. He actually kissed her! My lips curled into a snarl. I felt the nails of my hands grow into claws. She blushed, smiling at him. "No," I growled. Dean could have Tammy or any girl he wanted. Anyone but Missy. She was mine! I gripped the windowsill, not caring I had splintered the wood.

"Enjoy it Deano, because it's going to be the last time you touch her. You are a fucking dead man. I am going to kill you. I don't give a fuck what Dad's plans are. You are dead!"

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I sat on my bed, legs bent and arms resting on my knees. Mom lectured me for nearly an hour before she let me go to my room. There was a moment I thought of telling her everything. Part of me wanted to, but I couldn't. Despite all that had happened so far, it didn't change the fact that Mom needed Harry. If she knew the truth, it would force her to choose between us.

Harry knocked on the door, then opened it. He shook his head when he saw me. "You're in it deep," he said and took a seat at the foot of the bed. "So what actually happened?"

"What always happens — Mike," I replied. Did everyone forget about him all of the sudden? With a sigh, I explained, "He was drunk, I think. He stank of booze. Before I could go into school, he pulled me off into the woods, and when I tried to stop him, he gave me this—" I pointed to my busted lip. "He was ranting about his dad and Ry-Dean."

Harry's lip quirked. "I know he's Ryder."

My jaw dropped for a second, then I narrowed my eyes at him. "Uh-huh. You do, do you? I'm guessing that's why you didn't kick him out last time?"

"Something like that. So what else happened?"

"He told me his dad wants to start a war using Ryder."

Harry's expression fell. "I was afraid something like that would happen when I heard about this little exchange between our packs." His face went blank next as he asked, "Why did he tell you this?"

I shrugged. "No clue, but he said one more thing..."

"What?"

"He mentioned his dad really, really doesn't like me." I saw the truth of what Mike told me in Harry's face. I swallowed, feeling a pit in my stomach open up. So his alpha considered offing me because I didn't have any pack connections. "So with the alpha going all evil plotting over here; on a scale of one to ten, in how much danger am I in?"

He didn't answer at first, which wasn't exactly comforting. "As we stand right now, I think you're a two. I've heard nothing that might suggest my alpha is planning on using you in his evil plotting, as you called it. However, I am going to ask a few I trust that are higher in the pack. If I catch anything that worries me, you'll be the first I talk to, okay?"

I nodded, though I was far from reassured. Especially since he looked more and more worried as we talked.

"Just," he started, setting a hand on my forearm. "Stay off his radar the best you can. I mean really stay off it. Do nothing that might remind him you exist."

When did my life become Harry Potter-esque? "Don't worry. I'll be in my bedroom, making no noise and pretending I don't exist." I expected a laugh or something, but he just gave me an odd look. Of course, Harry wouldn't have read the book or, at the very least, seen the movie. I resisted the urge to roll my eyes. "Never mind. I promise I'll be good." 1

Harry patted my arm. "I know. Good night, Brook."

"Night."

The next morning, I groggily walked down the stairs towards the wonderful smells coming out of the kitchen. My legs and feet were still sore from my trip through the woods, but the cuts the branches gave me had stopped stinging. I heard Mom rummaging around the kitchen, and I hesitated, but my stomach rumbled with the complaint that I wasn't eating yet. I took a breath and walked into the room.

"Morning. Breakfast is on the table," Mom said. Her terse voice told me she was indeed still mad.

With a cringe, I ducked my head, hating it when she was mad at me. "I'm sorry, Mom. I really am. Never meant to make you worry, I swear."

She turned to face me, her lips pressed so tightly together, they were a shade paler. "I know you didn't, Brook, but that's not the problem here. The problem is something is going on, and you're not talking to me."

Alarm shot through me. "What? I have no idea what you're talking about."

Mom sighed, her shoulders slumped, and she shook her head at me. "Baby girl, I have been your mother too long not to notice something has been bothering you and has been for a long time. I can't help you if you don't let me in."

Guilt swelled inside me and I did my best to swallow it down. "I'm fine, and there are no problems. I swear."

She shook her head again, and I had a sneaking suspicion she didn't believe me. "Alright," she said finally, setting a plate of waffles in front of me. "But remember I'm here. No matter what." I force a tight smile and nodded before eating.

I left as soon as I was finished with breakfast. Surprise flashed through me when I saw Ryder waiting for me at the corner of the intersection. “Hey,” he said, smiling at me.

“Hey back.” My stomach did that weird twisty thing, making me a bit nauseous. That he was here, talking to me, and... all that was so unreal. I had expected to wake up this morning and find it had all been a dream, or at least the parts with Ryder in it. “Should you be walking with me? Mike won’t—”

“Don’t worry. I’ll handle Mike. I’ll tell him I’m getting you to trust me so I can shove you in a locker or something.”

I made a snort of a laugh. “Have you seen our lockers? I’m not a big person, but I don’t think you could fit me in there.”

Ryder shrugged. “That’s all semantics, besides I talked with my dad, told him what Mike’s doing to you. He’s going to bring it to the other alphas.”

Say what? Something that felt too much like embarrassment trickled through me. “Why? I’m just a human. Why would any of your kind care about me or Mike bullying me?”

Ryder stopped, giving me the puppy face again. “Not all of us are like this pack, Brook. Humans aren’t beneath us, just different. Mike and his dad are barbaric and cruel; two things an alpha should never be. The Black Mountain pack isn’t much better either since they’re allowing it.”

“Ah,” I said, but I didn’t believe it if I was honest. We headed into school and stopped at my locker.

Ryder leaned on the locker next to mine. “There is also something else I

need to tell you," he started, but the bell cut him off. His face turned into an expression of pure annoyance. "I guess I'll have to tell you later." With a light laugh, Ryder leaned over and kissed my cheek.

My stomach fluttered as I watched him leave, then realized I needed to get to class myself. I opened my locker, shoving everything I didn't need inside. I slammed it shut and raced down the hall.

Just as the bell rang, I slid into my seat. Mr. White gave me a scathing look as he shook his head. Slightly embarrassed, I shrugged and got out my book and stuff. As I was laying everything out on my desk, I noticed Anna three desks away, trying to get my attention. She was doing her best to be discreet and failing miserably. She pointed at me while mouthing some word. 1

Not sure what she was trying to say, I glanced over at Mr. White as he wrote something on the board while going on about something, I'm sure was math related. I wasn't listening. With a glance around, I got out my phone and saw she sent me a text.

OMG, you were talking to the new guy? Details! Now!

Ice filled my veins and my stomach sank down to the floor. She'd seen me talking with Ryder. If she saw me, then who knows who all else did too? Crap, crap and a double serving of crap. Despite Ryder's confidence that he could handle Mike, dread filled me. I had to find out who else might have noticed us. No way did my luck change enough for it only to have been Anna.

I started to type in a reply when Mr. White cleared his throat. "Ms. Ford," he said sharply, calling me by the wrong last name... again. He knew what my last name was. I told him a hundred times it wasn't Ford but Dawson. It was his way of joining in on Mike's little twisted game of Missy

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Mistake. I knew I couldn't correct him either, or he would give me an extra page or four of homework.

I tried to keep my phone out of sight. He would love nothing more than to confiscate it. "Uh, yes, Sir?"

"Since you seem so captivated by today's assignment. How about you show us everything you've learned and do the first exercise of the morning," he replied, holding out the chalk for me to take. I hid my phone under my text book as I stood. Anna would just have to wait until break for those details and all I could do was pray no one told Mike about Ryder talking to me this morning.

Several of the kids snickered as I walked over to Mr. White and took the chalk from him. Doing my best not to scowl, I attempted to do the problem on the board. I got even more snickering behind me as I failed... miserably.

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Mistake - 12

After math, which was particularly horrible by the way, I hurried to my next class. As soon as I sat down, I took out my phone and texted Anna back.

Don't get too excited. It was nothing. I think he and Mike are planning something nasty.

Only a few seconds passed before I heard my phone ding with a reply, but before I could look at it, the bell rang. I stuffed my phone into my backpack before Mrs. Claire saw it. She wasn't a jerk like Mr. White, but she was very strict when it came to phones. Mrs. Claire had no problems confiscating them and if she was feeling generous, you might get it back at the end of the day. Mrs. Claire wasn't known for her generosity.

It wasn't until lunch did I get a chance to read Anna's text. Back in a stall in the girl's bathroom, I sat on the toilet and checked my phone.

Really? Well, that's disappointing, but would explain why he'd talk to you.

Ouch. I hope she was talking about Mike's rules and not that he was like out of my league or something. Though, it didn't matter. What was important that everyone else thought it was some twisted game of Mike and 'Dean's.'

Totally. I think whatever it is, it's going to be terrible since he was talking to me in public.

I started to add something about spreading the word, but that sounded suspicious. Anna was my friend, but I could trust her only so far with

some things. She loved gossip way too much for my safety. As much as I hated to admit it, if I made her suspicious, she would pry, or worse, talk to other people about it. And if other people passed it around, it would get to Mike, and I didn't want to imagine how Mike would react after he told me how much he hated him the other day.

The end of lunch bell rang, and I left the girl's bathroom. I had only taken a few steps when I felt Mike grab my neck from behind. His fingers dug into my skin. I couldn't help the hiss of pain as he pulled me closer to him. "Missy, Missy, Missy," he said in a sneer, his face close to my cheek. "You've sure earned your name this time," he said, his voice low and dangerous. "I'm only going to warn you this once and once only. After that, whatever happens is your fault, got it?"

My throat tightened and I could hardly breathe. He knew. Someone must have seen Ryder and me and told Mike. With a small nod, I waited for his 'warning.'

"Stay the fuck away from Dean." Mike spoke in a slow whisper, his voice full of menace. "What the fuck he has to say to you, anyway? It doesn't really fucking matter. Guess what does matter? He's a dead man. People who hang around dead men end up dead. Do you want to die, Missy?"

I moved my head slowly from side to side.

"Then stay the fuck away from him," he growled into my ear before he shoved me away from him and into a locker. Pain flared through my shoulder as I hit the metal.

Without another word, Mike walked away from me and down the hall. I didn't dare move until he disappeared down the hallway. Blowing out a breath, I adjusted my backpack and rubbed my shoulder. I don't know what Ryder thought he was going to do, but I couldn't be his pet project

anymore. It was too dangerous. Not to mention, Ryder should do the smart thing and go back home.

I avoided them all, Ryder, Anna, and Mike, for the rest of the day. Which I have to say is some real girl boss moves, considering Ryder shares Science with me. I waited the usual twenty minutes for the school to empty before I left. Halfway through the parking lot, Ryder caught up with me. "Hey," he said, startling me. I nearly jumped right out of my skin when he spoke. I didn't see him walking over to me, and I certainly didn't hear him.

"Good god, dude! Are you trying to give me a heart attack?" I told him, my hand over my heart. "I'm going to have to put a bell on you."

"Sorry," he apologized, but judging by the smile, I didn't think he was all that sorry.

"Sure you are," I said, giving him my best stink eye. When I remembered Anna and Mike, I glanced around, looking for anyone that might be watching us. He shouldn't be here, talking to me. I took a breath to tell him as much when Ryder took my hand in his.

"Come on," he said with a light tug and pulled me over to a small, but expensive looking car. "Get in."

"Ry — Dean, I don't think this is a good idea."

His expression crinkled into what looked like irritation when I said his brother's name. "Don't worry. Just hurry up and get in." I hesitated. This felt like a bad idea. "If you keep standing there, you're going to draw attention."

It was a really bad idea. I would even go so far as to say a terrible idea.

Horrible! If Mike found out about this, no one would ever find my body... yet, I still got into the car. I don't know what is wrong with me.

Ryder grinned as he backed out of the parking space and left the school. He took a left, taking us past the street to my house. "Uh, Ryder, where are we going?" I asked, totally not nervous. Nope. Not at all.

Ryder smiled at me again. He reached over and took my hand. "You skipped lunch again, so while you were in here, waiting out the crowd, I got us something to eat. And since we shouldn't let anyone see us talking, I was going to go to this little spot I found just outside of town."

At least he wasn't completely ignoring everything I had said. "That's a good idea," I said, and his smile brightened. It was almost as pretty as his eyes. My stomach filled with butterflies and my heart fluttered. Reality wouldn't let me get lost in the moment of being there with him. "But you know what would be safer? If you avoided talking to me. No risk of getting caught."

"Yes, but then I would miss out on your company," he replied.

The sound I made was a mix of a snort and a scoff, and it was embarrassing, to say the least, but Ryder just laughed. It wasn't like Mike's. There wasn't malicious, but warm and, well, nice. 1

When Ryder stopped the car, we were in an empty parking lot by a boating dock. I knew there was a river near town, but I'd never went looking for it. In fact, I didn't see much of the town since I only was safe going from home to school, and directly back again. Exploring could get me in trouble and hurt.

We got out of the car and Ryder got a couple of bags of fast food out of the back. "Come on," he said, walking towards the water.



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I followed Ryder down near the shore. We sat down at a small picnic table some hundred feet from the shore. "Here," he said, pushing a bag towards me, then looked hesitant. "You're not a vegetarian, are you? Sorry, I should've asked before I left."

"Nah, you're good," I told him, taking out the burger and fries he'd gotten for me. My stomach rumbled, making me well aware that I hadn't eaten lunch. 1

Ryder relaxed. "Great," he said, and the amount of relief in his voice made me laugh.

"You're weird. You know that," I told him.

"So my brother's told me."

This situation was so weird, too. It had been so long since I'd sat down with someone and had an actual, relaxed conversation that wasn't Mom or Harry. It was nice and only now did I realize how much I missed it. I was also very curious. "You said your pack isn't like this one? So what is it like?"

The question seemed to take him by surprise, but in a good way instead of 'the nerve of this girl,' kind of way. "Well, for starters, my dad doesn't run his pack like a cult leader, as Uncle Ryan does. We're a community that works together to make sure everyone is safe and happy. That's all a pack is, Brook, a community with the alpha as leader. Well, more than leader he's a caretaker. It's his job to ensure everyone is okay." 1

I opened my mouth to ask him about people like me. Did all that '

community' feelings extend to someone who was a mistake like me, but I was too afraid of the answer so instead I said, "Sounds nice."

"It is. One day, I'll take you there."

"Cool," I said, looking down at my food. The knowledge that I would most likely never get the chance to visit Ryder's pack dimmed my mood. I shoved the feeling aside. No, if all things went right, I would be all the way to California, away from all werewolves. The possibility of good werewolves and good packs didn't change that.

"Hey, you okay?"

I looked up and nodded. "Yeah, it's just... I don't think we should do this anymore."

"What do you mean? Why?"

"Mike knows."

Ryder still looked confused. "What do you mean he knows?" His expression turned worried. "Knows what?"

"Not that you're Ryder instead of Dean, but that you've been talking to me."

Ryder had the audacity to visibly relax. "Oh." He continued eating as if what I told him was no big deal.

I glared at him. "No, don't say oh. This is not an 'oh' situation, Ryder. This is serious. He called you a dead man and pretty much said I'd be dead too if he saw me talking to you again."

"I can —"

I narrowed my eyes as I continued to glare at him. "Do not say you can handle Mike. Please, for the love of Gouda, do not say that!"

Ryder smiled, and it started to piss me off. "I can."

Yep, I was now pissed off. How could he not get it? "Fine. You can handle him, but I can't." I turned on to the side and lifted my hair, showing the new bruises Mike left on my neck. I heard Ryder suck in a breath and I dropped my hair back down.

"When did he do that?" Ryder demanded, his voice going all growly.

"Between classes today. I will admit, you have a certain charm to you and yeah, you're cute, but this," I said, waving my hand between him and me.

"Has to stop. You need to stay away from me, for both our sakes. I never saw Mike this pissed off and I don't know what he'll do if he sees us together again."

"I won't let him hurt you again," Ryder said, the growl in his voice become more pronounced. His eyes even started to glow.

"Thanks, I appreciate the heroism, but you can't stop him." I shrugged and finished my food.

"I can and will," he insisted, his eyes still glowing.

"You can't protect me and stop your uncle. Remember, you said you had to stay on his good side. You should take me home." I was still technically grounded. This little outing would probably earn me a few more days. I stood, gathering all the fast food containers.

"Brook," Ryder called after me as I took them to the trash. "Brook," he called again, doing the same, but I didn't stop. I walked over to the car,

leaning on the passenger side door with my arms crossed. I didn't want this to end nor did I want to go back home, but I if I ignored the reality of the situation, I was going to get hurt, like seriously hurt.

Ryder unlocked the car, and I got inside. Before I finished putting on my seatbelt, Ryder cupped my cheek in his hand. "I know you're worried about Mike, and yeah, I admit, I haven't been doing a very good job keeping you safe, but I swear Brook, I won't let him hurt you again."

He was delusional. He had to be if he wasn't seeing the absurdity of his words. I was going to tell him how crazy he was when Ryder pressed his lips against mine. All thoughts of Mike and everything that wasn't Ryder shattered into a million pieces, and I forgot about them all. Unable to help myself, I laid my hands on his chest and kissed him back. I must have been doing something right, as Ryder pulled me over, closer to him.

Our kiss deepened and my heart beat so hard it almost hurt. My hands slid up to his shoulders and around his neck. He shivered as my hands touched the bare skin of his neck and I could feel his smile against my lips. Perhaps I was just as delusional as he was, but I couldn't stop or pull away from him.

Lord help me, but I didn't want to stop kissing him and I didn't want this to be our last. Maybe Ryder really could keep me safe. He was an alpha too, right? Perhaps it was time to stop living in the shadows, afraid all the time.



Mistake - 14

When Ryder stopped in front of my house, I couldn't help but give in to another kiss. Were all Ryder's kisses going to be like this; so addicting? I wanted more and more of them. I can tell you Gerald's kisses weren't like this at all!

Someone knocked on the window, causing me to jump so hard the seatbelt dug into my chest. Mom stood at on the curb, giving both Ryder and me a death stare. "Out now, young lady," she demanded. 1

I cursed under my breath.

"Oh, right, you're grounded," Ryder said with a groan. "Sorry. I'll talk to her, I might—"

"No," I told him. "You'll make it worse. Trust me." I got out of the car and offered my best charming smile. "Hey, Mom. You look great today. You know that?"

The ice queen didn't melt. Not even a little. "Inside."

"Okay." I turned to Ryder. "See you never," I told him with a wave and walked inside. I found Harry spying from the window. "On a scale of 1 to dead, how more grounded am I?" 1

"When you get ungrounded, I suggest you look at retirement homes."

I groaned. "But it wasn't my fault. Ryder kidnapped me!" 1

Harry chuckled. "And that's why you were kissing him just now."

Embarrassment burned in my cheeks. "You saw that?"

"Yep. Ryder is lucky you'll be grounded until your golden years," Harry said, his expression serious. "Cause if he hurts you, I will kill him, alpha or not; I have ways."

Despite the fact Harry was threatening to murder Ryder, I smiled. "As you said, I'm grounded until the end of time, so no chance there. Thanks Harry." Adjusting my backpack on my shoulder, I headed up to my room. If I wasn't in sight when Mom came back inside, I might avoid a lecture.

Which was foolish thinking on my part. Mom came looking for me. I got another near hour-long lecture that came along with an icy stink eye the next morning. "Straight home, Brook. No stops, no visits, no Dean along the way. You got me?" she demanded as I left for school.

"Yeah, loud and clear," I told her and closed the front door. I hurried to school, close to being late. I shoved what I didn't need for the first half into my locker. Slamming it shut, I raced down the hall. As I turned the corner, someone grabbed me and shoved me into what I think was the janitor's closet. I turned to face the person and sucked in a breath. Mike!

He followed me inside and closed the door behind him. "Mike..." I breathed. Fear slammed into me when I saw the murderous glint in his eyes. Oh God, he must've seen the kiss Ryder gave me in the car or someone told him. I told Ryder this was too dangerous. I looked around. There was only one way out and it was past Mike. I was dead, so very, very dead.

"Missy, Missy, Missy," he said, moving his head side to side slowly with a disapproving tone. "I thought you were smarter than this. I told you to stay away from Dean Williams and what did you do? You fucking ignored me!"

A shudder of fear tore through me and I took a step back. "We were just... he didn't mean..." My mind ran blank, and I couldn't finish a sentence. As he came closer, I stepped back until I ran into the metal shelving. Trapped! I was trapped with a pissed off Mike. There was no escape and no witnesses. My heart pounded in my chest as he closed the distance between us. 1

His fist hit me so hard and fast, I doubled over before I'd even realized what happened. The air escaped my lungs, and as hard as I tried, the air wouldn't go back in. Just when I thought I might pass out, I took a deep breath.

Mike grabbed my shoulder and pulled me back up straight, shoving me against the shelving. "This is my last warning. Stay away from him, Missy. Stay away, or I will forget about our little rules and really punish you, got it?" Fear made my mouth dry and I couldn't bring myself to say anything. He pressed me against the shelving harder. "I said got it?"

"Y-yes, I got it," I managed to say. "I w-won't go n-near R-Dean again. I swear it."

Appeased, Mike pet my head like I was a faithful dog or a child. "That's my girl." Mike grabbed my face. "Don't let him kiss you again. Got it? If he kisses you, I'm going to rip out his spine and beat you bloody with it. Then I'll visit your mom and do the same to her."

I gasped. He'd never threatened Mom before. "I-I won't. I never..." I couldn't lie about Ryder or his kisses. "Never again. Promise."

Mike grinned before he leaned forward until our foreheads touched. "I knew you wouldn't let him interfere," he said, sounding relieved. His hand brushed along my still throbbing stomach. I stiffened and the hairs

on the back of my neck stood on end. Something was wrong here, like really, really wrong. Mike never got this close to me before, and he never touched me like this.

"If you behave and do what I tell you, Missy, I'll protect you from my dad," he said, almost in a whisper. "I promise if you follow the rules, the only one who will hurt you will be me."

If I thought I was scared before, it had nothing on how terrified I was right now. The need to escape slammed into me. "I'll behave," I said, my voice shaking. I'd do anything to get out of there right now. "If my mom is safe. I promise I'll stay away from Dean, and away from everyone until I leave for college."

Mike's eyes snapped up to mine, glowing a golden amber now. "Leave? You can't leave! You're mine. I need you!" He twisted one of my wrists as if to prove his point.

I cried out as the sharp pain raced up my arm. "B-but don't you have like a mate or something. Why do you need some dumb human?" I felt awful for even suggesting someone else should take my place, but it was too much. The terror was so raw, so real. I had to get out of there!

Mike snorted, repulsion on his face. "I don't need a mate!" A sneer formed on his lips as he looked at me. "But if that's what you'd like, then we could work it out." He brushed his nose against my cheek. "Might be fun... maybe I'll even turn you so I wouldn't have to be so careful."

Intense panic slammed into me. Oh God, anything but that. I couldn't let him do that to me, nor would I stay here to be his punching bag for the rest of my life! "No," I shouted. The most basic, primitive part of me screamed to escape. My knee jerked up, hitting him hard in the groin. He yelled out in surprise and pain, letting me go as he fell to his knees. I