

The Alpha and the Mistake

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Mistake - 8

Mistake - 8

Did Mike seriously ask me if I was interested in Dean? Well, he didn't exactly use the word interested. I swear his vocabulary only consisted of insults and vulgarities. I would have to answer him in the right way or I'd be in a lot more pain than I already was. Thankfully, I could usually figure out what Mike expected of me. "No! Of course not," I told him. "I know my place, Mike."

Still holding my face in a bruising grip, Mike stared at me for a while, as if he was trying to rip the truth from my very soul. "Good girl," he said and let my face go.

I rubbed my cheeks, hoping he didn't leave bruises there too.

"I'm so sick of that jerk." Mike hit the ground with his fist.

Funny; him calling someone a jerk. 1

"All anyone ever says is Dean is so amazing! He's so hot and such a nice guy and, oh, those abs!" Mike's lip curled in disgust. "I've got better, see!" To my horror, he lifted his shirt to show me. I turned my head, looking anywhere but at his stomach. God, awkward much? I would sell my soul to be anywhere else right now. Didn't matter where as long as it wasn't here. "And you know what's the worst, Missy? I canceled my plans to show him around like Dad told me, and that asshole blew me off the first chance he got. Barely seen the guy since he got here."

I gave him a little shrug, my stomach knotting with nerves.

Mike tossed the bottle against a tree, shattering it, and called Dean several more nasty names. "You're so damn lucky!" Realizing he was

referring to me, I looked over at him. Lucky? Had he lost his freaking mind? "Your life may be shitty at school, but you at least go home to the perfect little family."

Mike's expression soured, and he almost looked jealous as he continued. "I bet Harry doesn't get pissed that you're so weak. No. I bet that pussy coos over you like some precious little thing and gives you shit to feel better. All that and you're not even his! Guess what happened to me, Missy, when I didn't keep track of good ole Deano, Dad gave me this?" Mike turned his face so I could see the black eye. "Failure is not an option for the Howe family."

I wasn't sure what to say. This was Mike; the guy who's been my nightmare for three years. Sympathy was the last thing I had for him. "I'm sorry," I said anyway.

Mike leaned his head back and laughed. "Man, Missy's sorry for me. God, you're so pathetic." He leaned over and kissed me on the cheek. I gasped and gawked at him. He didn't just do that! Please, tell me he didn't just do that? Where is the disinfectant, anyone? 2

With a sigh, Mike shook his head. "Stupid, stupid Missy. You'd never survive in our world. We should eliminate weakness, not to be sorry for it."

Emboldened, I said, "Some would argue that it's the duty of those that are stronger to protect those who can't defend themselves."

Again, Mike laughed. "Stupid, pathetic Missy. This is why you won't survive the coming war."

"War? What war?"



The humor on Mike's face vanished. "The one Dad's going to start after he can figure out how to frame Dean."

My stomach jumped. "Frame Dean? Why?"

"Isn't it obvious? Blue Crescent pack is weak and trying to make all of us weaker with their pacifistic ideals," he replied, as if being a pacifist was the worst thing on the planet. With another sniff, Mike turned to me. "Better stay out of sight, Missy. Dad likes humans even less than he likes my uncle's pack. He might decide to rid two birds with one stone."

Uncle? Dean and Mike were related? Wow, but wait... "Me? But I haven't done anything to anyone?"

"Haven't you? You're a human who knows about us. A human that has no blood or mate ties to a werewolf. Dad would've taken care of you long ago if it wasn't for Harry. It's why Harry can't stop me from kicking your ass when I want."

I stared at him, horrified. "That's sick."

Mike gave me a bitter grin. "Its survival and only the strong survive." He began laughing coldly, looking cruel and worse, murderous. 1

This time, when I tried to free myself, Mike let me go. I stood and in one last little burst of courage, I stared down at him. "You're all monsters," I yelled and ran away from him as fast as I could.

I didn't stop running until my lungs felt like they would implode. I dropped to my knees, panting and waiting for the black spots to disappear. My mind wouldn't stop replaying the conversation with Mike over and over. Did Harry know what the alpha had planned? I stared up

into the cloudless sky through the trees. No, I didn't think he did. Harry was a good person, despite being a werewolf. He'd never allow Dean to be framed to start some stupid war.

Bitter rage filled me. I wanted to do something, to stop the alpha, but what? I was just a stupid human. Mike spent the last three years making sure I knew I never had a chance against them.

I may be a mere human, but Harry wasn't, nor was Dean. I could warn them of the alpha's plans. With determination, I stood, but when I looked around and saw only trees. Yeah. I had no idea which way I'd come from.

I took out my phone and sighed - no signal. Great. I looked at the sky, trying to judge where I was according to the sun. It always rose in the west and set in the east, right... or was it the other way around? Man, I couldn't remember. I was so screwed! The moss! I thought with a flare of hope. I heard moss only grows on the northeast side of the tree. At the nearest tree, I leaned over to examine it. No moss to be found. Of course not. That would've been too easy, right? 2

After a quick but unsuccessful search for a mossy tree, any mossy tree would do, and coming up empty, I gave up. I spun a slow circle, hoping for some kind of sign of where the town was. Why couldn't nature come with proper signalization? How do people find their way around here? I mean, come on, would it hurt to have a sign with 'town is this way?' I don't think so. With a huff of indignation, I paraphrased a line from one of my favorite movies. "Deep dark forest. Can't be that hard. Well, come on feet." I picked a direction, hoping it led anywhere but deeper into the woods. What choice did I have, anyway? It wasn't like anyone would come looking for me here. 1

The sun had nearly set by the time I made it out of the woods. I would

have jumped for joy if my legs didn't hurt so much. They were doing all they could to keep me standing. Jumping was completely out of the question. Why would people walk for fun? I took out my phone again to tell Mom and Harry I was okay. Only, my phone was dead. I sighed and wondered if this day could get any worse. Fearing I was tempting fate, I glanced upwards. "I didn't mean it. Seriously, no need to prove me wrong."

I shuffled to a small park and sat on one of the swings. Man, it felt so good to sit down. My feet throbbed from walking so much. Once again, I went back over the conversation I had with Mike. Would Harry even believe me if I told him? Mike's dad was his alpha and his kind. I was just his stepdaughter and human. How serious was Mike about his dad hating me? Should I maybe leave sooner than planned?

I pushed and swung. As soon as I got some height, I stopped and let the back-and-forth motion ease some of the tension inside me. When I had almost slowed to a stop, someone called my name, my actual name. It was Dean.

"Hey," I said when he reached me and I put my feet down, stopping myself.

Dean's expression grew more worried as he looked me over. "Hey, where've you been and what happened to your lip?"

"Isn't it obvious? Mike happened."

"What happened and where have you been? Your parents are more than a little worried. No one's seen you all day."

Anger flared up inside me. "I told you Mike happened."

Mistake - 8

"What's wrong? You're acting kind of strange." Dean's words came out slowly, in a deep rumble. "Did he hurt you?"

This time I laughed. "When does he not hurt me?" I shrugged. I know it wasn't his fault, and he didn't deserve my attitude. "Sorry, Dean, I don't mean to be rude or anything, it's just been a long day."

"Brook, talk to me," Dean said, giving me that puppy face of his. "Tell me what happened, let me help you."

Remembering what Mike said about his dad's opinion of Dean's family and me, I said, "You can't help me and it's probably best for us both if you stay as far away from me as possible."

"Stay away... did Mike threaten you?"

"More like warned," I replied. "Mike's dad wants to start a war with your pack using you. He wants to frame you for something, anything."

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Mistake - 9

Dean didn't seem at all surprised when I told him the alpha wanted to frame him. "I figured my uncle would try something," he said, then his expression turned dark. Dean was so tense he looked like he might snap in two if he tried to move. "But why did Mike tell you that?"

My shoulders lifted in a shrug. "I don't know. He had been drinking. Maybe he's a talkative drunk."

Somehow Dean looked even tenser. "So why should I stay away from you. Did Mike... did he...?"

My eyes widened at the anger I saw on his face. "We just talked. It's a bad idea for us to be seen together because neither of us is popular in this pack and who knows what Mike's dad will do." Just how far would the alpha go? I didn't want to find out.

Most of the anger on Dean's face left. He offered me a smile that I guess was an attempt to be reassuring. "Don't worry about Mike or his dad. I can keep you safe."

He can keep me safe? Seems like Mike wasn't the only one hitting the bottle today. "That's sweet and all. I'm sure your alpha is very proud of you, but this is Mike and his dad we're talking about. They're alphas and I know enough to know that means they're a step above the rest. Plus, I don't want to tempt Fate. She hasn't exactly been on my side."

"I'm not afraid of Mike, my uncle, or Fate." 1

Must be nice, I thought a little bitterly. "Dean, nothing good can come of whatever this is that you're trying to do. I am not a charity case, okay."

"I never said you were."

Geez, this guy was harder to get rid of than a cold. "Will you just leave me alone? You're doing no one any favors if you get hurt or worse, and believe me, I think the alpha may not object to murder."

The anger returned to Dean's face and his eyes turned an icy blue. "I can handle myself. There are things you don't know about me."

"Yeah, you're right, I don't and I never will. Forget about me, I'm just a sad little, insignificant human, Dean."

"I'm not Dean!"

I blinked and stared at him. "What?"

"I am not Dean. Dean is my brother," he said and stood. "My name is Ryder Williams, future alpha of the Blue Crescent pack."

My jaw dropped. A future alpha? I've been arguing with a future alpha? Oh God, this was bad. Man, I should've never wondered if this day could get worse. I tempted Fate, and she answered. Perhaps I deserve to be called Missy Mistake after all. "Oh," was my brilliant response after a moment of mental scrambling. I tried to remember everything Harry told me about alphas. My gaze lowered and I pulled my shoulders in close to me to seem smaller and less threatening. "I'm sorry... I didn't mean..." 1

Dean, or I should say Ryder, suddenly knelt in front of me. I flinched as he took my face in his hands and forced me to look at him, face to face. My skin warmed where he touched me. "Brook, don't. I told you I'm not Mike. I don't want nor do I need anyone to bow to me, especially not you."

Especially me? Why me? My breath caught as he leaned in closer. He wasn't going to... was he? His lips brushed against mine gently, as if waiting for some kind of sign before he pressed them firmly in a definite kiss. My eyes closed by their own will and I had no idea what to do. Yes, I'll admit it. I am seventeen, and the closest thing I've come to kissing is when I was nine. Gerald, a stick of a boy, gave me a slobbery peck on my lips behind the dumpster at school.

I kissed him back, praying I was doing it right. My heart turned up to hummingbird speed when he pulled my swing towards him, so he was kneeling between my legs. Okay, this blew Gerald's kiss out of the water.

When it ended, and Ryder leaned back, a hot flush bloomed in my face and I blurted, "Why did you do that?"

"Because I've wanted too since I met you." 1

He wanted to kiss me since he met me? Heat flooded through me. I went tomato red. That's right, just call me Brook 'Beefsteak' Dawson. My stomach clenched on itself and sent a jolt of shock from the top of my head all the way to my toes. I swallowed and was unsure of what to say. I am proud to say I didn't stupidly ask him why he'd want to kiss me. The only thing I could think of to say was a change in the subject. "So, uh, why are you pretending to be your brother?"

Ryder grinned as he sat on the swing next to mine. He pulled the seat of my swing to the side, so we were still facing each other. Was this real? I am starting to wonder if I didn't pass out in the woods and this was all some dream. "My uncle suggested our packs do an exchange as a show of faith in that sad excuse for a peace agreement he and Dad made. My brother would live with them and my cousin Beth would live with us. Something didn't seem right, so I told my dad I'd go in his place and

figure out what he's up to. My uncle never saw my brother or me before, so he wouldn't recognize either of us. And Fate was on my side. I found you."

Confusion and butterflies in my stomach made me feel lightheaded and strange. "Found me? What are you going on about?"

Ryder grinned again, pulling my swing closer to him. "Brook, there is something else I need to tell you. You're..." His phone loudly came to life. He glanced at his pocket, looking conflicted. The phone kept ringing and Ryder sighed, taking it out. "It's your dad - I mean Harry." He put the phone to his ear. "Yeah, I found her... no, she's okay." As he spoke, Ryder hooked his leg around mine, keeping our swings close as he set his hand on mine. "Alright. We'll be right there," he finished and hung up. "I have strict orders. You are to come straight home with no dilly dallying. Harry's words, not mine. Your mom is going to want an explanation."

My throat tightened, and I had to bite my lip hard, the pain stopping me from doing something stupid like crying. "I can't... she can't know, De - I mean, Ryder."

"Brook," he started, and I shook my head.

"She can't. You didn't see her; see how she was. I'll think of something to tell her."

"Fine, but it better be good. If your mom is anything like mine, she'll want a blow by blow of where you were today."

"Yeah, mine is the same," I replied, but I had lots of practice coming up with explanations.