

## Bull's Eye Pt. 2

I didn't socially meet Alpha Connors as Lexi, but he was the same with her as he was when I was BA. I know someone like Alpha Connors wouldn't fear BA as some do, but I was afraid he could put on airs in front of a hood member. He didn't though. He truly loved her. We went to my room. "You look so happy with him." Haley smiled, "I am really happy Lex. I love him, and I love our little family." I smiled, "Your kids are stinking cute." She smiled, "Aren't they?" We chatted for several hours before she wandered into her room. I was restless for some reason. At two in the morning I gave up and went to grab myself some food. "Can't sleep?" I heard from a voice behind me. I whirled. "Marcus... you scared me." Marcus smiled, "What's wrong?" I smiled. I knew I was important to him because I was important to Haley. "Just nervous about the event I think." Marcus smiled, "It will be a success. You and Haley have gone over all the details numerous times." He left me alone in the kitchen after that. I checked the time. It was almost three in the morning. For some reason I was compelled to go outside. I could feel everything in me desperately wishing for me to walk east. After fifteen minutes. I ran. I could be back here in minutes. Every hood member could outrun any supernatural. We were that fast. I stopped when I reached the border of Haley and Eric's territory. I frowned. The hotel was about ten miles from where I was. There was nothing here. A wolf had obviously been here though. There were paw prints just across from where I was standing. I sighed. Maybe staying at Haley's was a mistake. Maybe I wasn't ready for people to sense my presence.

I shook that thought. No, I was ready for this. I ran back to Haley's house. I was tired enough that I managed to sleep as soon as my head hit the pillow. The next thing I knew I heard a pop. "Wake up Lex! Ted called in a f\*\*\*\*g panic. You have a meeting with Sally in ten minutes." I startled and grabbed my phone, "s\*\*t! I overslept." Haley laughed, "Which is why you are happy to have a fairy sister from another mother." I laughed. I'd told her that the first time I'd stayed with her a few weeks ago. She snapped me into a different outfit and grabbed my hand. She had popped me inside my oche. Ted sighed in relief. "You asked to meet with Sally, then you are late for work." I said, "Sorry. I overslept Ted. You know I'd never do that to you." Ted nodded, "Sally's always early too. Pick someone else to late with. Gosh Lex." He left laughing. Haley said, "Sally as in...?" I nodded, "That Sally. She's the caterer." Haley said, "I feel sorry for her." I said, "Why?" Haley said, "Her string is an asshat troll." I said, "He was great until the end." Haley said, "A man who lies to get in your f\*\*\*\*g pants is an asshat troll who should be shot in the f\*\*\*\*g d\*\*k. Would you just let me turn his d\*\*k green for a week? It would make me so happy." I laughed, "They are having problems having a baby." Haley raised an eyebrow, "I can sense her sorrow from in here Lex. I know you all think this Sally is a pure soul, but she's still a smart woman. Maybe she doesn't want to have a baby. If she does. Give me a call. I'll need her a sperm donor and everything. The world DOES NOT need a baby troll toad running around. If they are actually having problems, maybe your goddess realizes what an asshat he is. She's just f\*\*\*\*g waiting for me to make my move." I laughed, "Sally has to want Noah's child. She's his string." Haley snorted, "I f\*\*\*\*g doubt it. Would you want a troll's child? He's a manipulative asshole. Have a good meeting." Haley popped out. I shrugged.

Sally came in seconds later. Her smile actually reached her eyes today. "I have the menu set for the Princesses' fairy event." I motioned for her to sit. "I know. I read over everything about twenty times this week. I didn't ask you in for that." Sally frowned, "Oh, but Ted said." I interrupted her, "I told Ted to say that. A few months ago when I came home, you wanted to talk. I haven't had the time, but I recalled the other day you'd said that. I asked Ted to set up this meeting so we could talk." She glanced at the door worriedly. "Haley enchanted my oche. No one can hear us." Sally sighed in relief, "I need you to tell me the truth." I was confused, "About what?" Sally said, "The night before the string ceremony." I stiffened as she continued. "Please Lexi... I need to know what happened." I said, "Sally it was three years ago." Sally said, "I'm not stupid. You pulled away and went on missions. You did your duty, but you used to more. Noah wants a baby." I said, "I know. I can talk to Haley, she can..." Sally said, "I don't want her to do anything." I sat back, "But I heard it's been two years, and you guys want a baby." Sally said, "I said Noah wants a baby." I was cored, "You don't want a baby?" Sally said, "I went to a doctor outside our shroud for an IUD. So no, I don't want a baby." My jaw hit the ooch. "WHAT?" Sally said, "He's lying to me Lexi. He's been lying to me for three years. Just please. Tell me the truth about that night."

I sighed, "I don't want to hurt you." Sally said, "You can't hurt me. He's my string Lexi. It's him who hurts me." I sat up, "He hurt you? Physically?" Sally said, "He's never hit me, no." I relaxed, "This is what you need to move forward?" Sally said, "It's what I need." I sighed, "He told me I was his string. That he'd felt the pull since he was eighteen. We had s\*x; it wasn't good. He left." Sally said, "I'm sorry Lexi." I said, "No, I'm sorry. I would've never had s\*x right before a string ceremony. I wouldn't have done that to you. I just believed him." Sally said, "He's believable... isn't he? Everyone believes him about that day." I frowned, "What do you mean?" Sally said, "You never wanted to talk about it Lexi, and I respected that. You and I both know his story about thinking it was you pulling him as his string is bullshit." I gaped. I'd never heard Sally cuss. "I was four people away from you. You, me, Susanna, Isaiah, Zeke, and Terry know its bullshit. We all saw him Lexi. He did that to hurt you." Tears filled my eyes and I looked away, "I never wanted you to know that Sally." Sally said, "I knew. Just as I know, and you know... along with everyone else if they didn't want to live with their head in the sand about Noah; he knew I was string all along. He'd have felt the pull when he turned eighteen. Not to you, to me. He dated you anyway. Which is ne. It's not like we are like werewolves with their mates about our strings." I said, "That's not fair. They can't feel the mate bond fully until both are eighteen. They just feel like they like each other if one is underage." Sally said, "True. I hate what he did to you Lexi. Some days... I hate him."

I sat back, "Sally... You deserved better than what happened. I can't say I know him well anymore, but I know he has a way to make you feel special." Sally laughed, "Oh he does. You know he calls me Lexi sometimes during sex." I paled, "He what? Sally... no... I swear to you... it wasn't even good!" Sally laughed, "He's angry Lexi. He thinks I don't know, but he's angry about you and Raphael. You need to be careful." I said, "Sally, we can get you away from him. If he makes you unhappy, reject him. I'll help you." Sally said, "We all make sacrifices Lexi. This is mine." I said, "What are you talking about?" Sally said, "He'll come after you if I reject him. Call me jaded, but I don't want him to get what he wants. You deserve to be happy. Maybe after you meet your string. I can reject him, but for now this is where the war goddess wants me. I may not be a ghter like you, but I love our people too. I will make the sacrifices I am meant to." Tears dropped down my cheeks, "Sally... I can handle Noah. If you want out, I will help you." Sally smiled, "I know you would. You actually have. This catering business is a god send. It's the most excited I've been about something in three years. I love it. Noah is pissed." I sighed, "I'm not trying to cause problems between you two. I thought..." Sally laughed, "Oh no Lexi. You misunderstand. He's pissed about you, not me. He's over the moon I have this. He thinks it will help my mood improve, and then we can have a child. He's mad because YOU have something of your own. I know you loved him Lexi, so I never said anything back then. He controlled you. We all saw it. Everyone but you and Heath. When you came back home after your mission and got mad at Heath about withholding information about Haley was bad. Whatever they said behind closed doors has Noah scared. He's desperate to get you back under his control. That's what Noah craves. Control and not in a fun sexy way either."

I sat and thought about it. Haley had said something similar on multiple occasions. I thought she was projecting her own feelings and past onto Noah. Did he control me? He only showed interest when someone else did. Then he made sure I could only think of him. Even before he asked Heath to date me. I did things to please him. He would make a face if I told Heath I had a date. I'd stopped accepting. Was that Noah's fault though? I said, "I made choices. They were the wrong ones." Sally said, "He took advantage of your grief and became your rock. That's not your fault Lexi." I said, "Truly Sally. Reject him. I know you'll get a second chance string. You're such a good person." Sally laughed, "I used to be." I shook my head, "No you still are. Why did you ask about the night before the string ceremony?" Sally looked away, "Susanna was scared about the ceremony. She'd seen you walk into your cottage. It was the closest one to hers. She walked over and heard Noah tell you he'd felt the pull. She heard him ask you if you wanted him. She left after that." I said, "That's why you wanted to talk to me before you left with Noah that day? That's why you looked so horrified?" Sally said, "Yes. Susanna told us before you got there that Noah had confessed you were his string. I asked him that night if anything happened like that with you guys. He told me he respected your decision to wait for your string. He said he hadn't seen you all month. He was the lieutenant after all. He had to follow protocol. If I didn't know he was lying, I'd have believed him. He's that good."

I was stunned, "Sally, I am so sorry. You shouldn't... Please don't stay with him for me." Sally smiled sadly, "The sad part is I love him. He's my string. I'd always dreamed of him and our life together. I can't bring a child into our relationship though. He doesn't love me. He needs me, but he doesn't love me. He wants me because I am his, but he wants you too. Just be carefully Lexi. You know him. He can be dangerous if he wishes to be." I said, "There are things about me Noah doesn't know. Things change in three years. I can handle him if I have to. I'm worried about you." Sally said, "I'm trying to gure it out too Lexi. I love him, but it hurts to love someone who's supposed to be your other half when they don't love you back." I said, "I'm his last defender, but I've seen how he looks at you. He does love you." Sally shrugged, "He doesn't love me enough to let you go. As I said, I've stayed for you and myself. I want to exhaust every option before I give up on him. I don't ever want to wonder 'what if this or that.' The only thing I won't do is have a child with this unresolved. It wouldn't x what was wrong with us." Sally started to cry, "I want to be a mom so badly. Why can't he just love me?" I walked around my desk and held her. Ted cracked open the door. I put my hands up waving him back. His eyes went wide, and he closed the door silently. I said, "One day Sally, whether it's with Noah or someone else you will be an excellent mother. It's not even like you're wasting your good years on him. We will live for a long time." Sally laughed, "At least there's that. I know I'm just as bad lying to him about being on birth control."

I immediately disagreed, "I don't think so. You fear his reaction. Did you guys decide to have a baby? Then you changed your mind?" Sally said, "No, he told me it was time. He'd gone to our healer and told him not to ll my birth control. I found out when I went to get my next pack." I was shaking, "THAT ASSHOLE! He does NOT get to decide when you are ready to have a baby! That's a conversation you are supposed to have together." Sally laughed, "I agree with you. Susanna has wanted me to talk to you for years. I wanted you to heal rst. Now, with Raphael, I couldn't not tell you. I'm scared for you Lexi. He can't hurt me. It's his string. You though... he's possessive of." I said, "I've had s\*x with other people. Why does Raphael bother him?" Sally said, "Because he's not a mission. You connected with Raphael. Heath told him that. You like him." I frowned, "I do like Raphael. We aren't dating though; he's going home in... not even that long now." Sally said, "But you connect with him. That makes Noah feel like he's not in control. Having s\*x with a mark on a mission isn't the same to him, and you know it." I said, "I wouldn't do it if I had my string." Sally said, "Don't tell him when you nd your string." I snorted, "I don't tell him anything about myself. I haven't spoken to him more than a few sentences in three years." Sally looked me in the eyes, "Don't let Heath tell him." I said, "I can't stop Heath." Sally laughed, "Oh yes you can. Noah doesn't need to know for lieutenant duties you've found your string. Just protect that when you nd it Lexi." I studied her, "You really are afraid for me." Sally said, "I really am Lexi. Part of me is scared for myself. I know I'm safe as long as he's my string. If I reject him, I'm no longer safe. His pride would be hurt, and he's not a man who does well when his pride is wounded." The real fear in her eyes pissed me off. f\*\*k Noah. I said, "We are enrolling you in a self-defense class. I'll nd the class. Ted will put you as a standing appointment on my calendar. If anyone looks, your car will be here. You can run to the class and run back from her. I'll make sure it's close by."

Sally had tears in her eyes, "Thank you Lexi." I said, "I wish you'd told me sooner. I'll protect you Sally." Sally snorted, "Isn't that ironic. The girl my string emotionally abused is the one helping me.... protecting me from the one person I shouldn't need protection from. The biggest part of me hopes I'm wrong, Lex. That I'm making a mountain out of molehill." I smiled, "We will be ready either way. If you want to reject him though, I'll get you to safety. A new identity. Haley will help me. He'd never nd you." Sally smiled, "There's a fourth of me that wants to jump on that. It's so hard, Lex. I love him. I do." She broke down in my arms. I rubbed her back, "No one knows better than me Sally; Noah can make you feel like the only important thing in the world." Sally cried, "He really can. Sometimes everything is so perfect." I said, "You never know. Maybe this thing with Raphael will make him realize I don't matter." Sally quickly wiped her eyes, "I've given up hope on him giving you up." My heart wrenched, "Sally." She shrugged, "It's not your fault. You did everything short of leaving the hood, and none of us wanted that. I was afraid you would. Noah was petted when he'd found out the Princess came at your request to take you to her realm. He let Heat beat the s\*\*t out of him. That's when he said he'd thought you were pulling him not me. Susanna has really been there for me, Zeke and Isaiah too."

I was quiet, "Sally if you have no hope for you two..." She said, "That's the pathetic part, you know? I do have hope that his feelings for you can go into a quiet space in his heart. Talking to you makes me realize how angry I am at him. How angry I am myself, because I'm not ready to throw in the towel and give it up. I tell myself it's for you, but it's for me too." I said, "As long as it's for you too. He doesn't deserve you, Sally." She smiled, "He doesn't deserve you either." I smiled wickedly, "It's a small thing, but stay with me at Haley's tonight. The event is tomorrow. Tell Noah you need to be there first thing. It's your first big event." Sally smiled, "I could use a night away." I said, "Show him what he's missing. We'll have Haley doll you all up before you go home." Sally smiled, "That would be nice. It's been a while since I've done that." I said, "We will show Noah what's right in front of his eyes and what's truly in his heart." Sally smiled, "My heart hopes you're right. My head is telling me to give up." I smiled, "If and when you're ready to give up. You let me know." I'll be here." Sally smiled and hugged me, "Thank you. You... you won't tell anyone, right?" I said, "I'll tell Ted we discussed you wanting a child. If he tells anyone, no one would be surprised that was the conversation." Sally said, "You really are great Lexi. Your string is going to be amazing." I shrugged, "We will see if I ever nd him. I'm not exactly whole anymore." Sally said, "Who is? We all have our issues. I'm going to run into my little catering company, and make sure everything is running smoothly." I nodded, "Be back here around quitting time. I'll drive you to Haley's."

Sally got to the door then turned, "What if Noah shows up to bring me home?" I laughed, "He wouldn't dare. Everyone knows Haley hates him. He's not allowed on missions involving the Hackura anymore for that reason. One or two of her brothers are always there with her according to Haley herself. Her guard is here too. He'd get his ass kicked if he showed up, and no one wants an angry Alpha Eric Connors." Sally shivered, "No... no you really don't." I smiled, "He's adorable with her, and their kids. He can't hide his love for her, and he doesn't even try. I'd pity anyone who upsets her." Sally laughed, "She made mincemeat of Claudia Harden." I laughed, "Haley told me she calls her Claudzilla." Sally said, "How apt." I said, "Haley is good at things like that. She'll like you Sally." Sally said, "Are you sure? She hates Noah, and I'm his string." I shrugged, "Haley doesn't hold things like that against people. She'll be telling you to leave Noah ve minutes into tonight." Sally laughed, "I already like her." I smiled, "Few don't. She's hard not to like. She just doesn't see that though." I gave Sally a hug and she left quickly.

I sat down on the couch in my oche and laid down absorbing everything. Sally was truly afraid for me. I didn't understand why Noah would care. He must just be possessive because I told him I was his that night. Surely, he knows that doesn't mean anything now. He'd given no indication he even wanted me in the last three years. Not that I'd given him the choice. He'd tried to explain everything to me, but I slammed the door in his face. When he'd refused to leave, I had Haley pop me out again. Heath told him to stay away from me. For the most part Noah had. We never talked about that night ever again. I didn't want to. I didn't want to hear his lies. I think he knew he couldn't lie to me, so he gave up. He knew Heath would rip his position away from him if I ever told the truth. Only on a few occasions had I had to have Heath remind Noah of that indirectly. Like the circumstances with Haley. Noah knew I held the trump card here. Sally's words were making me think about our entire relationship though. Did Noah control me? Did he take advantage of my grief and my naivety? I sighed, that sounded like a Raphael question. Haley would agree with anything bad about Noah. Plus, she'd said many of these things before. I sighed.

Ted came in, "What the hell was that about?" I said, "Girl stuff." Ted said, "Come on girl. Talk to me. I know everything." I sighed, He didn't. I didn't even know Isaiah, Zeke, Susanna, and Sally knew that Noah had been so cruel to me. I was embarrassed about everything that had happened, and I knew people wouldn't believe me. I knew Ted would've been on my side. Ted was the hood gossip telephone though. His moniker was TeleTed. "You know what it was about Ted?" Ted winced, "She's in such a state about having a baby, or she wouldn't talk to you." I silently wondered if Sally was wrong about herself. She could go on missions. She had everyone convinced her sorrow was about having a baby. Not her heart being slowly ripped apart by her string. I was worried. I hadn't been paying close enough attention to my people. I should've noticed her struggles. I said, "Grief does weird things to a person." Ted studied me, "I know. I'm proud of you though Lex. For everything. Everyone knows of the Black Arrow. You have so many aliases at this point. What was your last one? With Henrick?" I laughed, "I was Collette." Ted Said, "A fun name. This though Lex, your company. Even Heath is thrilled." I laughed, "Not hiding his proud big brother status is, is he?" Ted laughed, "He's worse than me on this one. He tells everyone how great it is, and your event with the Princess is going to be a smashing success according to him."