

Chapter 1

Lorna POV

Thump! Thump! Thump!

I started awake, gripped in fear. The same way I wake up every morning.

Thump! Thump! Thump! Again and again

I have been hiding in the storage space under the back staircase every night for the last six years and yet every morning I still jump in fear.

I never could work out why my tormentors were never able to find me here. Though I wasn't going to complain. I often heard the pack elite searching the halls of the pack house, yet they never came down here. Night after night, when my chores were finished and every one is already asleep, I sneak through the damaged grate outside and crawl through decades of forgotten furniture and decorations, before curling up in an old trunk with moth ravaged table cloths.

Even then, sleep does not come easy, and I spend most of time tossing, turning and running from old nightmares and lives once lived.

Though lately, my dreams have been different. No longer of the attack that took my parents from me, or the pack elders blaming my father for the m*****e that followed, not even of the day our home was set alight as punishment, with me inside.

Lately, my dreams have me laying on lush meadows in the spring and chasing with a magnificent onyx wolf with the most enchanting purple eyes staring back at me. I find myself feel at peace and safe. Which is a feeling that I had almost forgotten.

Ever since the loss of my parents that night, my life changed forever. From the Beta's beloved daughter, in a family home filled with laughter, and a pack house of friends. Their deaths made my life a curse. Alpha Gregory cannot look at me without thinking of betrayal and anger. Luna Margot, turned bitter and spiteful, when she had once been a smiling aunt. Their son, the future Alpha and my once best friend, Domino, grants favour to those who torture and humiliate me in the most imaginative ways possible. The first time I was beaten, he found me hiding in gardens. I thought he was my friend, at one time I believed he may have even been my mate. That day destroyed all that. He dragged me by my hair, screaming and clawing, begging to be released. I was thrown in to the Great Hall during lunch, landing hard on a table, with food and dishes ying haphazardly. Crying out, praying for anyone to help me. No-one did. Domino announced my change of status, to only be referred to as mutt or slave. To be offered no kindness or help, to only be spoken to when being disciplined. To be hated, to lose my home and my belongings. To be a target for rage and hatred, to be an outlet for the families and friends whose loved ones died in the rouge attack. To be beaten, and scarred, and used no matter my pleas.

I shake myself, detaching the memories from my mind. What a silly dream. I'm wasting time that I should be doing my chores upstairs, uninterrupted, while the rest of the pack gorges themselves on breakfast. Oh, it Friday today, no wonder I can smell Chelsea buns. Oh how long it's been since I have been allowed one. I do hope Mrs Clarke hides one for me. She sometimes tries but is inevitably caught.

I crawl back out of the grate, making sure I'm not being observed and dash for the servants stairs. I have a small window of time to change twelve beds, clean the en-suites and gather all the laundry before breakfast is finished.

"MUTT!!!!" I hear bellowed behind me as I move between bedrooms, dropping the last pile of laundry on the floor. Oh no! Luna Margot always finds reason to punish me. What did I do wrong today.

I turn quickly, bowing my head and answer her.

"Yes Luna!" Ensuring to not show a moment of disrespect for that is all she would need to land me in the infirmary again.

"You stupid mutt, can you do nothing right?! Why have you not prepared the guest floor yet?? The Alphas from the most powerful twelve packs on Earth are on their way here!! Why do you insist on embarrassing your pack!! Moon Goddess! why were we cursed with you!" Luna Margot bellowed in my face, resulting in more pack members coming to the hall.

"But Lu.." SMACK!!

I didn't get chance to finish the word before being struck across my cheek. I fell to the ground, feeling dazed and confused.

"How dare you talk back to me, you ungrateful mutt! I saved you from being cast out and becoming a rogue. I SAVED YOU!!! Why.. ..."

I knew the shouting continued but I felt like I was under water, everything was muffled. Then suddenly snapped back into focus.

".. ... will be heard tomorrow! Tomorrow!! Prepare the rooms to a higher standard than your normal sub par effort or I will correct a mistake I made years ago and banish you to the rogues myself!!!"

Luna Margot strutted off, followed by all the spectators, looking rather smug.

I shuddered to standing, holding my face, pressing down on the swelling and hearing the bones crumble. Another broken cheek bone, at least it wasn't my jaw this time.

With a large sigh and a Herculean effort to hold back the tears, I gathered my supplies, and took the stairs to the floor below. These were the guest quarters, all forty of them.. ... I was never going to get this finished in time.

Room after room, lunch came and went.

Room after room, the setting sun told me it was dinner time but I could not stop until my chores were finished.

Room after room, the bright moon comes to guide me to my slumber but I cannot go. Not yet, though my eyes are so heavy and it is so late it's early. The bed looks so comfortable, perhaps I can just rest my head for a moment before I finish. Blackness calls to me, pulling me under.