

Afternoon Off

Lindsey POV

I can sense the stares and hear the snide comments as I spend the day at school, putting up Tiffany's damn promotional posters. Why can't she put them up herself? She has two hands and it's not like it's going to ruin her damn nails, I fumed, eying the posters with a twisted purse of my lips. Tiffany was wearing her prom dress in the poster, a gorgeous blue and white concoction that perfectly suited her hair which was in an elaborate updo. She wore a diamond tiara in her hair and a diamond necklace around her neck. The words PROM QUEEN were written in large letters across her chest. You could hardly fail to see them, I thought bemused, sweat beading off my forehead, as I place up the last poster out of the box, almost wanting to yell out hallelujah in celebration. There must have been hundreds of posters in that box, or at least that's how it felt. Why did she need so many? The school wasn't that large for heaven's sake.

Tiffany is watching me from behind, with an amused smile on her bitchy face. She c***s her head as I glance over my shoulder at her, seeing a small crowd of her friends gathering. "It's not straight" she declares and my heart sinks as I move the poster a few inches to the right.

"Is that better?" I pant.

Silence. I glare at the poster, wishing I was anywhere but at school right now. As it is the last bell is due to ring any moment and this was how I was spending my free period, hanging damn posters I hadn't wanted to hang in the rst place.

"Much" Tiffany nally drawls as her friends laugh. I nish tacking up the poster and wipe the sweat off my forehead with the back of my hand. I kick the box to the side and sigh, placing a hand on my back which has fully healed but is aching from all the stretching I've had to do.

I hardly expected Tiffany to say thank you so I wasn't too disappointed to nd she merely disappeared with her friends as the last bell rang. In fact, I was grateful to nd that she had left me alone without shoving me into the locker. Perhaps that was her way of saying thank you I thought, a bit bemused. I dodged past the crowd and grabbed the backpack, grabbing hold of the empty box and depositing it in the trash on the way out of the school.

Today was a good day. Why do you ask? Because it was the one day I had the afternoon off helping out at the pack house and at home. I had no intention of wasting it going home where Beth might have some chores for me to do, I was still feeling dirty towards her over volunteering me to do the posters and for threatening to have father punish me if I didn't do it. Instead, I fairly skipped out the school gate and made my way into the forest. There was no sign of Max, I noted disappointedly, as I kept a close eye out for the grey and white husky I had grown fond of, and began to make my way to my small sanctuary, a place where nobody else knew about, either that or nobody gave a damn about it. It was quite deep into the forest and a bit of a hike, but I reached the spot eventually, where a small lake resided, surrounded by beautiful greenery, a cave nearby, and the water so clean and pure you could swim in it and drink from it if you were so inclined. It was stunning and so peaceful. The grass was soft and lush beneath my feet and I hastily took my shoes off, letting my feet sink into the grass, inhaling the crisp clean air and letting out a deep breath in satisfaction.

This was perfect, I thought hazily. It was so quiet. I was the only one there, and I didn't waste any time, spreading myself out and grabbing my homework to take care of. I know that seems like a nerdy thing to do on an afternoon off but I still had my grades to keep up and I was still planning on getting myself to college. I had already applied to the nearby Rosemary College for girls, planning to get a full-time job to pay for the tuition. I couldn't stay as an omega forever. There was no way I could survive it. I wanted to be a journalist and I knew I'd make a damn good one. I was an excellent writer and I loved seeking out the truth. I wanted to do something I loved for a living and journalism would be a dream come true. Rosemary College had an excellent journalism course and they offered scholarships. If my grades were good enough, there was every chance that I could be offered a scholarship and wouldn't have to get a job to pay for tuition.

There was a rustling sound and I sat upright quickly, my eyes scanning the trees, my nose sning the air. I couldn't sense any shifters nearby and I denitely didn't smell any rogues. Not that I stood a chance against any rogues, I thought a bit sadly. I stood up, cautiously walking to a nearby tree and grabbing hold of a large branch, and gripping it tightly in both hands.

"Who's there?" I called out nervously as I heard twigs breaking and the crunching of leaves below footsteps thudding nearby, but there was no answer. There was a ash of something grey out of the corner of my eye and I turned around just in time to be attacked by something large and furry, tackling me to the ground and licking me on the face. My eyes had closed in horror but as the furry monster began to lick me they opened in confusion and I blinked as I took in the grey and white face, the long snout, and the big blue eyes. It was Max. I laughed and began to pat the enthusiastic dog.

"Max" I squealed, hugging him tight "where have you been boy?"

My heartbeat returned to normal as I embraced him.

He continued to lick my face as I sat upright and patted him. He began to sniff me all over and I grinned. "I bet you're hungry" I teased and moved to my bag. I grabbed the bologna sandwich I had packed and held it out to him, watching as he began to devour it hungrily. "Good boy" I praised him, rubbing his belly as he opped over on his back "good boy Maxie" I laughed.

I led him over to the lake and he started to drink thirstily as I began to strip down to my underwear and bra. The water was so cool and refreshing as I paddled out to the middle. I didn't however, expect Max to join me but the blasted dog paddled out to me and I gaped at him as he splashed at me. What kind of dog likes water? Apparently, this one did, because he continued to paddle and I began to swim around with him, letting the water soothe my sore and tired muscles.

Max got tired rst and paddled to the edge of the lake, drying himself off and lying down in a patch of sunlight, watching me with his head on his paws. I swam on my back, oating, looking up at the clear blue sky and enjoying the warmth of the sun as it shone down on me. If only every day could be like this, I thought lazily, how different my life would feel. Max suddenly let out a warning bark and I slipped, falling underneath the water and rising to the surface spluttering, before swimming to the edge and getting out of the water. I don't know why, but I trusted the dog and I knew instinctively that his bark had been a warning. I hastily put my clothes back on just in time as Derek came waltzing out, a wide grin on his face, his hands in his pockets. I shivered, chilled to the bone, stepping into the sunshine, Max coming to my side, a snarl on his face. He was so protective of me, I marveled at it but I was also secretly thrilled by it.

"Thanks for the show," Derek said with a grin. "I enjoyed watching you."

I felt sick to my stomach. How long had he been watching me? It can't have been long, not if Max had barked when he sensed Derek's presence.

"What are you doing here Derek?" I spat out "Why aren't you with Tiffany?"

He looked a bit defensive. "I was just going for a walk. It's not my fault you were swimming in the lake half-naked" he growled exasperatedly. "Some of us like to go to the lake to think."

I didn't believe that for a second. I had been going to the lake for months, every chance I got, and not once had I ever run into him. I knew instinctively he was lying but why? What did he have to gain?

Max growled at Derek.

"That's some guard dog you have there," Derek said looking down at the dog.

"He's very protective," I said with a shrug. "If you want to stay that's ne, I was just leaving," I said quickly but he held up a hand, his eyes ashing black and then back to normal. What the hell was that about?

"You smell nice" he spluttered.

"Thank you," I said confused. I had no idea what was going on with Derek. Where was the annoying, brash, arrogant asshole I was used to?

His eyes darted down my body, my wet hair soaking my shirt and droplets of water trickling down to the ground. He licked his lips. Max gave a small whine. I patted him absent-mindedly and then made the mistake of going to fetch my backpack. I should never have walked away from Max.

Because the next thing I knew, he was there, standing in front of me. His eyes were black and there was a distant look on his face. "I'm so damn tired of ghting it" he murmured, "so tired of ghting him."

He reached out and grasped my chin with one strong hand, tilting it up so that my eyes were forced to meet him. I sucked in a breath. I couldn't speak. Couldn't move. "I bet you taste as sweet as I, think you are" he murmured and then before I could make a sound, his lips were on mine, gripping the back of my head, forcing it to stay in place, caressing me roughly, his hand gripping the back of my head, forcing it to stay in place. My heart was racing. I forced myself to stay still. He gave a low growl, his hand trailing down my arm and gripping the back of my waist, pulling me hard against his body. It felt like an eternity before he pulled back and I blinked, tears trailing down my cheeks. How could he have done this to me? I wasn't naive. This was just another attempt to humiliate or degrade me in some way. It wasn't because he liked me or loved me. He had stolen my rst kiss from me and I felt so humiliated that I couldn't even bear to look at him. Now he had another reason to tease me. Why hadn't I just pushed him away or slapped him? He had some sort of power over me that I couldn't explain.

Max growled and bounded back over. Derek blinked and his eyes returned back to normal. I tensed, waiting for the bullying to start but he looked just as stunned as I did. He licked his lips and ran a hand through his disheveled hair.

"That was unexpected" he nally muttered as I inched.

Way to make a girl feel special.

Unexpected was an understatement, I thought to myself sourly. Then he seemed to snap back to normal. "If you tell Tiffany I'll make your life even more of a living hell" he snarled and I nodded, my throat constricted. He growled down at me and his eyes shifted to the ground. Then he glared at me and turned around stomping away. I waited until he was fully gone, before I broke down completely in tears, hugging Max to me tightly, and sobbing into his fur.