

The Alpha Train - Oh Good 201[799 words]

Chapter 2

Enya

My world has fallen apart. My parents are dead. We were attacked. We won. Everything was fine. My father was injured but he's been injured before. He should have healed, but he didn't. Two days after the battle he went into the pack hospital with a fever. A fever. That never happens. The doctors said it was an infection. His wolf was too weak to heal him.

He never left the hospital. My mother stayed by his side. We were all there with him when he died. I'll never forget the horrible sound that my mother made when my father left this life. It was the most horrible, heart-wrenching sound I've ever heard. I felt like my heart was breaking, but the sound my mother made was like her heart was being ripped from her chest.

She ended up in her own hospital bed and two days later, she joined my father in the Moon Goddess' realm.

Now, there's only me and Shane. We're both underage, both woefully unprepared to take over this pack. My father has been working with Shane, but he's only sixteen and like me, he's devastated.

I'm the oldest. so I try to be strong for him. He can't show weakness, neither of us. The moment we do, the pack will turn on us. We know that. There are already rumblings in the pack that Shane is too young to take over. I thought our Beta would squash those rumblings but from what I can tell, he's encouraging them.

I'm struggling to hold on to my own sanity, my grief nearly

overwhelming me at all times of the day and night. I hold it together in

front of the pack, even though I feel like a zombie going through the motions. But at night... at night when I'm all alone, I grab my blanket, sit at my window in the dark and sob.

How could they have left us? We're too young to be on our own like

this.

No matter how little I sleep, I'm up every morning for warrior training, as is Shane. We haven't missed a day since we lit the pyres to send our parents to the Moon Goddess' realm. We can't. If we do, the pack will see it as a weakness.

Shane and I both fight hard during warrior training, both of us

instinctively knowing that we are fighting for Shane's position in the pack. But it no longer feels like a pack. It no longer feels like we're the beloved children of their Alpha.

It's not everyone, but there are enough warriors rumbling in the pack to let me know that we're going to have a problem very soon.

"Did you call the Council?" I ask Shane quietly as we walk in to breakfast.

"I did several days ago. I told him that I needed help. They said they'd send someone."

"Did they say who or when?" I ask.

"No, just that they would send someone as soon as they could."

I look around, feeling the tension in the air. "It's not going to be soon enough."

"I know. Will you stand beside me if we have to fight?" he asks.

"You never have to ask that, Shane. I'm your sister. We're the only

family the other has. I'm with you, always."

It starts the moment we sit down for breakfast. We don't even get to take a bite of food when Warrior Corey opens his mouth.

"What's the financial situation of this pack, Alpha Shane?"

I turn and look at him. "Do you have a specific concern, warrior?" I ask

him.

He shrugs. "I'm just making sure our pack isn't going to go bankrupt."

"If our pack was going to go bankrupt days after my father died, warrior, there would have been signs long before now," Shane says calmly. He's much better at remaining calm than I am.

"What's your problem, Corey?" Gamma Braden asks.

"I want to make sure I'm not living in a pack that is going to go belly up," he says.

"Then maybe you should eating so much food, Corey, so you can save the pack money," he says.

Where Beta Dorian stays silent, Gamma Braden stands up for us.

“We’re all in mourning, asshole. Shut up and let the children of our Alpha and Luna grieve without being harassed,” another warrior says.

“Children ou mean pups, right?” another warrior asks.

“Do you have a problem, Dexter? Or do you have a problem with authority?” Shane asks him.

“I don’t have a problem with authority... when there is one,” he says, smirking at Shane.

My chair goes flying across the room as I stand. I realize that Gamma

Braden’s did as well.

“Do you have a problem, Dexter?” I growl.

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Chapter 3

“I’d like to know the answer to that as well,” I male voice that resonates deep into my soul says from behind me.

I turn seeing the most gorgeous man I’ve ever seen in my life. He’s got the curly black hair with a wayward curl that is falling over his forehead. He has blue-grey eyes that stand out in his tanned skin. They are so intense that I can’t look away. And he’s wearing a white button- down shirt and black slacks with black loafers. If I had conjured up the sexiest man I could think of, I wouldn’t have come close to this man. He looks like something the Moon Goddess made with her own two hands then breathed him into life.

Now Beta Dorian stands. “Who the fuck are you?”

“My name is Christian Webb,” he says, looking completely

unperturbed that he walked into the middle of a pack argument that has nothing to do with him.

“Well, pup, do yourself a favor, turn around and get out of this pack before you regret it.”

“No,” he says, standing his ground. I’ve heard of men like him, of Alphas like him because that’s exactly what he is, an Alpha. He can’t be much older than I am, but the confidence, the energy emanating off him is unli anything I’ve ever seen or felt before.

“The fuck you say?” Beta Dorian growls.

“Do you have wax in your ears .” he lifts his nose in the air, sniffing, “Beta?”

Chapter 3

Beta Dorian rushes him, ready to attack. The Alpha, Alpha Christian doesn't move. He stands waiting for Beta Dorian to get close enough and when he does, he throat punches him with enough force that he wheezes and falls to the ground unable to breathe.

“Get behind me.” Shane says quietly.

“He's just one man, Shane.” I say, just as quietly, watching Gamma

Braden move closer to us.

“One Alpha that just took down our Beta,” he says, shoving me behind him.

I watch as Corey, Dexter, and three other warriors stand and attack the Alpha. He takes out all five of them quickly, easily, and without breaking a sweat. I'm pretty sure I heard noses break, shoulders dislocate, and knees pop out of joint.

He runs his fingers through that curly hair before turning to look at the rest of us.

“Anyone else?”

Christian

When I pulled up to the guard gate of Alpha Shane's pack, currently my pack, the guard stopped me as expected.

“I'm Alpha Christian Webb. I've been sent by the Council to run this pack until Alpha Shane reaches the age of maturity,” I tell him, handing h the paperwork I received from the Council indicating my authority to take over this pack.

“Oh, thank the goddess,” the man said, reading over my paperwork.

“Problem?” I ask. Another warrior steps up, reading over the first guy's

Chapters

shoulder.

“Yeah. You've got a group who aren't happy that they are being asked to follow a sixteen year old Alpha who isn't acting like an Alpha. Mind you, he's grieving the sudden loss of

both parents, and most of the rest of us are too. But you know how packs can be, and well..." he stops, looking at the second warrior.

"Just tell him," she says.

"It seems like our Beta is instigating a take over. I can't prove it, but those of us who are supportive of our young Alpha are out here running patrols until we're nearly dead on our feet and those who are supporting the Beta are sitting pretty, barely running patrols at all. Instead, they seem to be inside harassing our young Alphas, trying to intimidate them."

"Good to know," I said. "That ends today," I tell them as they pass back the paperwork."

"Alpha Christian, welcome to the pack," he says and I begin making my way to the packhouse.

I'm not surprised that the pack is in chaos. That's why I've been called in. But it is disappointing to hear that the Beta is instigating that type of behavior. So, when I walk into a shitshow, I'm not surprised.

After dropping the Beta and five warriors, I casually ask if anyone else wants to take me on.

"No one? Cod," I say as the Beta continues choking, trying to get his throat working while the other four roll around on the ground in pain. I think two are unconscious. I made sure not to kill any of them, not yet. But after I officially become Alpha, any insubordination will result in immediate death and I intend to tell them that.

Chapter 3

I unbutton the cuffs of my button-down shirt. I dressed up for today, ready to make a good impression and now I have blood splatter on my white dress shirt. At least the pants are black.

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Chapter 4

"Now, as I was saying, my name is Alpha Christian Webb. I have been assigned by the Council to run this pack until such time as young Alpha Shane can go to the Academy and take over this pack," I say, nodding at the teenager who is currently standing in front of his sister, protecting her. I like him already.

The sister is fucking gorgeous with striking red hair and sage green eyes that are locked onto mine. Both of them have the haunted look of pups suffering from unimaginable grief. I look away quickly before I get distracted.

“I am currently number one on the leaderboard at the Academy which is why I was chosen by the Council to take this position,” I say, rolling up my sleeves as I begin walking through the crowd of warriors. “Your fellow warriors here would have been wise to find out who they were fighting before taking me on. A battle tactic that will be remedied in our sparring classes going forward.”

I turn to the young Alphas. “I would like to speak with both of you privately.”

Alpha Shane nods but his sister continues to watch me. I turn back to the group. “For the rest of you, I will be holding an Alpha ceremony in one hour. You have two choices, accept me as your Alpha or leave this pack. You have one hour.”

I lift my nose and seek out the Gamma, finding him on the other side of Alpha Shane, ready to protect both his Alphas. Good. He might be able to step up and take the Beta position that Beta Dorian has just lost.

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Chapter 4

788 Vouchers

“Gamma, what is your name?”

“Braden, Alpha.”

“Gamma Braden, get these men to your cells,” I say, frowning and looking at Shane. “You do have cells, right?”

“Yes,” he says.

“Gamma Braden, please ensure that all six of these warriors get put in the cells. Then have your pack doctor come over to provide medical treatment. I’ll deal with them later.”

“Yes, Alpha.”

“Questions?” I ask the pack.

When there are none, I nod. “Dismissed. Remember, one hour. I do not tolerate tardiness,” I say, then turn to the young Alphas.

“Is there an office where we can meet?” I ask, making my tone more gentle.

“This way,” Alpha Shane says, as Gamma Braden begins ordering warriors to drag the men to the cells. I make note of which men he asks to assist him and which are standing around looking like they want to

argue.

“Problem?” I ask. I’d rather bite any issues in the bud now, instead of dealing with anarchy later.

“No, Alpha,” the group I’m staring at says before turning and walking out. I watch them go before turning and following Alpha Shane and Alpha Enya to an office that smells enough like them that I know it must have been their father’s.

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Chapter 4

288 Vouchers

I close the door and gesture for the two of them to sit. When they do, I pull up a chair and sit in front of the two of them.

“First, my condolences on the loss of your parents. I know this must be a very difficult time for both of you, made harder because the pack is testing you. I want you to know that I have no intention of taking over this pack permanently. I am here as a substitute, if you will, to stand in as your mentor, protector, and to keep the peace in this pack until you pass the Academy and take your place as Alpha,” I say to Alpha Shane.

“I’m the one who asked the Council for help,” he says.

“Based on what I just saw, I think that was a very wise decision,” I say.

“As I mentioned, I am Alpha Christian. You can call me Christian. You are Alpha Shane and Alpha Enya, is that correct?” I ask.

“Yes,” Shane says.

I pull the paperwork out of my pocket and hand it to him.

“This is the paperwork from the Council giving me temporary control of this pack. You will see that it clearly defines that my time as Alpha ends after you pass the Academy and take your place as Alpha of this pack,” I say to him.

He opens the paperwork and Enya leans over, reading over his shoulder.

“This says you’re my custodian as well,” Enya says. They’re the first words that she’s spoken since I arrived. Her voice is melodic, but hauntingly sad.

“That is correct. I can in no way take the place of your parents, nor would I try. But I will make sure that no one forces you into a mate bond. I am responsible for you until you become an adult and I will

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Chapter 4

284 Vouchers

work with you to help you find your mate once you turn eighteen,” I

say.

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“You barely look older than I am,” she scoffs.

“You’re right, I’m less than a year older than you are. But in that year, I’m considered an adult where you are not. Therefore, I am considered your Guardian. May I ask why you aren’t at the Academy?”

“I had no interest in it. My parents expected me to become a Luna, so that’s what I was trained to be,” she says.

I nod again. In my family, the Academy was not only an option, it was also encouraged. You could always say no, but at least then the options for education and knowledge were yours.

“We can talk more about that later. Have your parents been laid to rest?” I ask.

“Yes, three days ago. The day I contacted the Council,” Shane says.

“Good. Is there anything related to their deaths that is still pending?”

Shane looks at Enya who shrugs. “Not that I know of,” he says.

“Okay, then what I’d like to do next is have the two of you accept me as your Alpha here, privately. Then, when I take my place as Alpha of this pack, I’d like the two of you to stand by my side.”

“Why?” Enya asks.

“Because it gives a unified front, but it also shows that I’m not

usurping your brother’s position in this pack. The more unified that we

the easier it will be for you to take your place when the time

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Chapter 5

385 Mouchers

comes,” I tell him.

“Thank you, Christian. You don’t know how much this means to me,” Shane says.

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“I hope that all three of us can become close over the next two years. I want you to feel comfortable coming to me with any questions, any problems, any worries that you may have. I am here for you, both of you,” I say.

When they nod, I extend a claw and hold it over my palm.

“Ready to accept me as your Alpha?”

Enya

The moment we walked into the office, it was like Alpha Christian became a different person. Gone was the tough, Alpha exterior and in its place was a compassionate, understanding man.

I’m a bit offended that the Council thought I needed a custodian. However, even though Alpha Christian, or just Christian as he says we should call him, is less than a year older than me, he seems like he’s

years

older than me. Is this what the Academy does for someone? Or is he just a special kind of Alpha?

I don’t get any inkling from him that he intends to take over this pack for good. He’s already being very open with us about the expectations of the Council and what his plans are. Of course, those things can change. I’ve seen that with Beta Dorian. But so far, he seems very genuine.

When he asks us if we’re ready to accept him as our Alpha, I look at Shane. This impacts him more than it impacts me. However, my brother seems eager to have the assistance, especially from someone as confident and powerful as Christian.

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Chapter S

“Yes.” Shane says, looking at me. Even if I didn’t agree, it wouldn’t matter. I’m not leaving my brother on his own.

“Yes,” I say.

“Thank you for trusting me,” Christian says, looking first to Shane, then to me, making sure that we see the sincerity in his eyes.

“Do you have a cup? It doesn’t have to be the ceremonial one. If not, I can go wash my hands. I have blood splatter on me from before,” he

says.

I look around, but don’t see the ceremonial cup. I open the mind link to Gamma Braden. ‘Do you know where the ceremonial cup is?’

‘Shane just asked me the same thing,’ he says.

I look at Shane and smile. He smiles too, so I know Braden told him that I asked the same question.

“Did I miss something?” Christian asks.

“We both asked our Gamma where the ceremonial cup is. He said he’ll get it for the ceremony,” Shane tells him.

“That works, is there a bathroom nearby?” he asks.

“Through that door,” I say, pointing to where there is a private bathroom in my father’s office.

When Christian walks into the bathroom, I look at Shane. “Are you sure about this?”

“I asked for help because we need it Enya: Things were only going to get worse and right now I know I should be strong enough to deal with the pack, but I just...

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Chapter S

288 Vouchers

I reach out and grip his hand, squeezing tightly. “I know.”

“I can’t let Dad down. I have to be able to maintain control of the pack, or at least, have someone that I can trust help me do that. If the Council trusts him, then I think we can too.”

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I nod as I hear Christian turn the water off in the bathroom. I agree that we can trust the person the Council sent, but did they have to send someone who is so ridiculously attractive? I mean seriously, does the man have a flaw? On top of being confident, powerful, and an obviously excellent fighter, he has to be stunningly gorgeous as well?

When Christian sits back down, still wiping his hands dry, he looks at Shane. “I won’t let you fail and I won’t let you disappoint your father. That’s why I’m here. You were right to call the Council. I’m sure you’re a very strong Alpha, but you’re suffering in a mountain of grief and that’s a lot for anyone to take on, let alone a sixteen-year-old who thought he still had a couple of years before he had to take on the pressures of being an Alpha.”

“You heard me?” I ask him, shocked.

“I ranked top in the Sensory class at the Academy, but I also inherited my mother’s heightened sense of hearing and I’ve honed my father’s heightened sense of smell. I can also see better than most, but that’s my greatest sensory weakness,” he says, making me frown.

“You mean your weakest sensory strength, don’t you? Since you ranked top in the Sensory class,” I say, making him smile.

“I guess it depends on how you look at it,” he says.

“Well, you’re number one on the leaderboard. I’m pretty sure there’s only one way to look at it,” I say to him.

He holds my gaze long enough that I have to fight not to squirm. “Are you ready?”

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Chapter 6

288 Vouchers

“For?” I ask him.

“To accept me as your Alpha.”

“Sure thing, Numero Uno.”

What the hell is wrong with me? Why did I just say that. Even Shane is giving me a side-eye wondering what’s going on with me.

He raises his eyebrow. “I’m getting the feeling that me being number one on the leaderboard is a problem for you.”

“Nope, no problem,” I say. It wouldn’t be a problem if he wasn’t making me feel so flustered.

“Good,” he says, turning to Shane.

“Do you, Alpha Shane Ward, accept me as your Alpha?” he says, holding out his hand again.

“I do,” Shane says. Christian slices his hand without flinching and Shane licks his blood. I watch Shane jerk, but he doesn’t say anything.

“Next,” he says, turning to me and switching hands. I notice that the slice on this hand is already healed.

“Do you, Alpha Enya Ward, accept me as your Alpha?” he asks, watching me with those intense blue-grey eyes.

“I do,” I say. He slices his palm and I take his hand in mine, feeling the heat of his hand soaking into my mine. I’ve never considered a man’s hands to be muscular and sexy, but somehow, his are.

I lean over, smelling his clean, foresty, masculine scent that makes my stomach do flip-flops. I lick the blood off his palm and I instantly understand why Shane jerked. I knew Alpha Christian was powerful.

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Chapter 6

288 Vouchern

But knowing it and feeling that power as his mind connects to mine, are something very different.

‘Easy, Enya,’ he says in my mind. My eyes snap to his. ‘You don’t need to fear my power. I am here to protect you, not hurt you.’

I nod and look away from those intense eyes.

“Can I have my hand back?” he asks. I can hear the teasing tone in his voice. I yank my hands away from his.

“Sorry.”

“Not a problem. Now, I’d like you to preside over the ceremony, Shane. I think it will be good for the pack to realize that we are partners from the get-go. Have you ever done that before?”

“No, but I’ve seen it done,” he says.

“It’s a good time for you to address the pack. I would suggest that you think about what you want to say to them. I would acknowledge that with the loss of your parents, your pack is in a time of transition. During that transition, you will all be accepting a substitute or temporary Alpha. That is my suggestion, but you should speak from your heart. Let the pack know that you’re in agreement with what is happening.”

“Okay.”

“I will also be informing everyone that I will not accept any insurrection against me or either of you. Anyone caught trying to cause an uprising in this pack from now on will be killed at once.”

“Killed?” I ask, looking at Shane.

“You have pack members who have already started to turn against you.

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I don’t know all of them, but there are six in your cells right now. Do you disagree that your Beta was turning your pack members against you?” he asks me.

The Alpha Train - Oh Good 206[847 words]

Chapter 7

I look at Shane. He and I had been wondering that very thing.

“No, I don’t.”

“I intend to remove his title. I’d like your thoughts on promoting your Gamma to Beta. He was standing beside the two of you when

everything started. That says to me that he was ready to protect you both. Do you agree?”

“Yes,” Shane says. “He has been very vocal about supporting us.

“Good. That is the type of Beta that you need. Someone you can trust. Beta Dorian is not that person.”

“I agree,” Shane says.

I'm not sure what it is, but something about having Christian here is already making Shane seem more confident. He's even sitting straighter than he was when we walked into the room.

I look at Christian again as he and Shane talk through the plan for the ceremony. How can one man have so much of an impact after such a short amount of time?

And an even more important question for me, why is he having such an impact on me and my emotions?

Christian

The moment Enya touched my hand, I felt it, a zing of awareness. Then when she licked the blood off my hand, that awareness went straight to my dick.

I felt her shock at my strength, the same as Shane's. For **him though**, my strength made him feel secure that I could manage the pack. For Enya, there was a hint of fear behind the surprise. I don't want her to fear me, so I pushed the unexpected desire flowing through me down and reassured her that she has nothing to fear from me.

Then, she hadn't let go of my hand. The pulses of desire just kept coming the longer she touched me. I had to force myself not to snatch my hand out of hers. However, when I asked for my hand back, she jerked back like I'd burned her.

Where Shane seems to be calming because of my presence, it seems to be having the opposite effect on Enya. I get the feeling that she doesn't trust me, which is understandable with everything going on in the pack. There's also a very strong protectiveness inside of her toward her brother. I felt the same inside him towards her as well. It's good to know that they are close. I'm hoping I can use that to make her feel more comfortable in my presence and to help them heal from their grief.

After Shane and I finish preparing for me to take over as Alpha, I grab my bag and quickly change my shirt. I'd rather not start my tenure here with blood on my clothes.

When I refocus on the other two, Enya is looking away, but I see the blush on her cheeks. I'm guessing that means that she's not the type of female who sleeps around. That makes something deep inside me happy. I don't have time to focus on that right now, so instead, I look at Shane.

"Ready?"

"Yes."

The three of us walk outside together. The pack has congregated around a hastily placed stage that has a table and the ceremonial blade

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and cup sitting on them. Gamma Braden, soon to be Beta Braden, did well

‘Let me know if you see anyone who is missing. Did either of you feel any tethers to your pack members break?’ I ask them in the mind link.

‘I didn’t,’ Enya says instantly,

‘Neither did I,’ Shane says, as I lead them up to the stage.

Gamma Braden was on the stage, but he steps aside, ready to step down.

“You can stay,” I tell him.

“Thank you, Alpha,” he says and goes to stand on the other side of Enya.

I see both Enya and Shane looking around the pack.

“Is anyone missing, Gamma?” Enya asks him quietly.

“Other than the patrols who are currently on shift, not that I can tell,” he murmurs back.

“Let’s begin,” I say, nodding to Shane.

He turns to face the pack.

“My pack members, a lot has happened to this pack in a very short amount of time. We were attacked, we lost our Alpha, we lost our Luna, and we were slowly unravelling as a pack while we all dealt with our grief. I recognized that I needed assistance to properly manage this pack while Enya and I are still dealing with our own grief at the loss of our parents and the leaders of this pack. I knew that it couldn’t wait. I was unwilling to allow this pack to fall apart just because I’m

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struggling with my own grief. So, I called the Council and asked for their assistance,” he says, gesturing to me. “Alpha Christian is here in response to my request. He is here to act as Alpha until I can take my place as your Alpha. He will not only lead this pack, he will train me to do so as well, preparing me for the Academy over the next year and a half.”

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Chapter 8

He stops, looking around. He’s a natural leader. He’ll do well as an Alpha. I need to see if his father made it to the leaderboard. Shane has the potential, and I want to tap into that while I’m here.

I glance at Enya. I wonder how I can convince her to go to the Academy. It would be good for her. I can feel the strength in her, but her confidence is lacking. She has accepted that she will become a Luna, and there is nothing wrong with that. It’s a difficult job. But I would like to expand her horizons, help her to see that in her future, there’s more potential than just being a mate to an Alpha.

As if she can feel my eyes on her, she glances over, blushes, and quickly looks away.

“With that, Alpha Christian, will you join me,” Shane says.

I quickly refocus on him and step forward.

“Alpha Christian, do you pledge to lead these pack members, protect them with your life, if need be, and to serve this pack to the best of your abilities?”

“I do.”

He slices my palm, and I hold it over the cup, looking out over the pack.

“Do you swear to always put the needs of the pack over your own, forsaking yourself for the pack if need be?”

“I do,” I say as he slices my already healed palm again.

“Do you promise to lead this pack with a firm hand when necessary and a gentle kindness when possible?”

“I do.”

“As the Alpha heir of this pack, I claim you to be my Alpha,” he says, lifting his neck and submitting to me. It wasn’t necessary, I didn’t ask him to do it, but I know it will go a long way toward assuring the pack that I am in charge.

“Thank you, Shane,” I say in the mind link.

“The pack needed to see it,” he says, stepping back.

It starts with Gamma Braden and then one by one, the pack comes up, swearing their loyalty to me, Shane, and the pack.

Each member connects to my mind and when it’s done, I have created a new pack link for the pack. I also realize quickly that my presence in their mind is stronger than Alpha Colin’s ever was. It makes me think that he didn’t make it to the leaderboard. I’m sure he was a good Alpha, but I’m not getting the impression that he was a great one. I’ll have to look into that.

“I know there are patrols who haven’t yet sworn their loyalty to me. That will be remedied this evening. My first order of business is to look at the protections that are in place in the pack. Since we were recently attacked, ensuring that our borders are safe is my first goal. Alpha Shane, Gamma Braden, will you join me in reviewing the patrol schedules? I understand there are some discrepancies in the frequency of pack members being assigned patrols. That ends today,” I say, loud enough that the warriors who are standing around us can hear me.

Gamma Braden ducks his head to hide his smile, obviously pleased that this is my first order of business.

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“Over the next few days, I will be getting familiar with how things are run and managed in this pack. That not only includes the patrol schedules, but it also includes the kitchens, food preparation and ordering, warrior training, the pack hospital, anything and everything that this pack does will be reviewed by myself and Alpha Shane. Do not think that it means you are doing anything wrong. I just need to understand how the pack runs and if Alpha Shane and I see any areas that can be improved upon, we will take those actions together,” I say, nodding at Shane who nods in agreement.

“How many times a day do you run warrior training?” I ask him.

“Once a day, in the morning,” he says.

“Starting tomorrow, warrior training will be held twice a day. All warriors who are not actively on patrol duty will report to both warrior trainings,” I say. “I want you all to feel comfortable approaching me if you have any questions, concerns, or if you just need to talk. I am here for you. Obviously, as Alpha Shane mentioned, he’s still grieving the loss of his parents. Understandably so. In the interim, please come to me. Once your Alpha heir has had some time to process the events of the last couple of weeks, then he will make himself available to you as well. Questions?”

I answer a few standard questions, then dismiss the pack.

As we walk back inside, Gamma Braden turns to me. “Shall I bring the patrol schedules to Alpha’s office?”

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“No, let’s sit in the dining hall. I’d like the pack to see us working together and to give them time to adjust to having me around before I start getting into their business,” I say turning to Enya. “Do you want to join us, Enya?”

She frowns. “Why?”

I shrug. “So you can learn about managing a pack.”

“I already know how to manage the omegas,” she says.

“But do you know how to schedule patrols?” I ask her.

“No.”

“Then sit with us. You can just watch,” I tell her.

She frowns, but nods in agreement.

Good. If I can get her to agree to going to the Academy, it will make her classes there easier.

Enya

As I sit with Christian, Shane, and Gamma Braden, I watch the pack. Christian was right again. The pack is watching him, assessing him, and having him here in the middle of an area that is always busy, is giving them a chance to see that he’s here to work and that he’s working WITH Shane, rather than taking over.

“Do you have any thoughts, Enya?” he asks, pulling my attention back to him and the others. I struggle to come up with something

meaningful to say, simply because I don’t want Christian to think I’m a mindless idiot.

“It looks like you’ve evenly distributed the groups and separated the ones who might have been starting to turn against us with those who were solidly supporting us.”

“That’s exactly what I was going for,” he says, flashing me a brilliant smile that makes my heart flutter. I’d say it was a response to his praise, but that would be a lie. That smile ... when I’ve heard women talking about a man having a ‘panty-dropping smile’ I always thought they were being ridiculous. Now I realize I just hadn’t seen one myself. Now that I have, my thighs press together in a subconscious effort to keep my now-damp panties firmly in place.

“Any other thoughts before we implement this schedule?” Christian asks Shane and Braden, turning away as if he didn’t just cause my entire body to respond with just a smile.

“You may get some push back,” Braden tells him. “Some of these guys have been skating by for a couple of weeks now.

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“They can shape up or ship out, I won’t tolerate any problems in this pack,” he says confidently.

“Speaking of problems, what do you intend to do with the men in the cells, specifically Beta Dorian?” Shane asks him.

“They can sit overnight and fester in their aggravation. Then, they will get the same choice the others did. Get with the program or get out. Beta Dorian will be demoted ...”

“What?” Braden asks, surprised.

“Shane, Enya, and I talked about this and agreed that he’s been trying to turn the pack against them. Do you disagree?” Christian asks him. I’

m surprised he included me as part of the group who agreed that Beta Dorian was causing problems. I’m not the future Alpha.

Braden sighs. “No. He was, or at least, he wasn’t doing anything to stop it.”

“We need a Beta we can trust,” Christian says, then turns to Shane. He opens the mind link to both of us, surprising me once again.

‘If you’re comfortable, you should offer him the position of Beta. But you have to be comfortable with him. You have to trust him. I’d prefer it if you both agreed on this before you offer him the position,’ Christian says to Shane, but he looks at me as well.

I blink then look at Shane.

‘Well? What do you think?’ Shane asks me in the mind link.

‘I’m okay with it.’

‘I am too,’ Shane says, turning to Braden who is watching the three of us have our silent conversation.

“How would you feel about a promotion?”

“Me?” he asks, looking from Shane to Christian.

“Shane and Enya both agree that they can trust you. Alphas have to trust their Betas implicitly. Dorian is not that man, but it seems as if you are,” Christian says to him.

He stares at us a moment, at a loss for words. “Yeah. Yeah, I’d love the job! Thank you!”

“Don’t thank us. You’ll work your ass off for me and I’ll teach Shane to do the same, Beta,” Christian says, smiling at Braden. For some

reason, the smile he gives Braden doesn’t have the same ‘panty- dropping’ feel as the one he gave me. Maybe because this one wasn’t directed to me.

I jolt a bit when Christian turns his intense gaze on me again. “You said you’re familiar with managing the omegas, correct?”

“Yes,” I agree.

“Tomorrow, how would you like to give Shane and I a guided tour of the kitchens, the food storage, the ordering system, all of it?”

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“Do I need to know all of that?” Shane asks.

Christian turns that gaze to Shane who blinks, obviously as unused to such an intense gaze as I am.

“A good Alpha can run a pack. A great Alpha needs to know how to run every part of that pack so they know if and when there’s a problem before it becomes a bigger problem. You don’t know how long it will be before you meet your mate. You can’t assume that someone else will tell you what you need to know. It’s your job as the Alpha to always have your thumb on the pulse of this pack. All aspects of the pack. I realize this may be different than what your father taught you or how he ran the pack, but this is how I believe a great pack should run. And when I turn this pack back over to you in two years, I intend to hand you a great pack.”

Shane nods. “Okay.”

“I’d like to be involved as well, if that’s okay,” Braden says.

“Even better,” Christian says turning back to me. “So, can we get a tour of kitchens tomorrow after breakfast.”

“Sure thing,” I say.

Christian grins at me.

“What?” I ask, wondering if I have something on my face.

“Should I call you Numero Uno of the kitchen?” he teases.

I open my mouth, but no words come out as my cheeks heat with

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embarrassment.

Shane chuckles. It’s not his old laugh, but it’s more than I’ve heard from him in weeks.

“He’s not going to let you live that one down, sis,” he says, a soft smile on his face.

When I look back at Christian, he winks at me. I’m pretty sure my cheeks could light a match they feel so hot.

The rest of the afternoon goes by quickly and at dinner, Christian stands with Shane and announces the new patrol schedule.

“Are you kidding, Alpha? This schedule starts tonight!” one of the warriors grumbles.

“Yes, it does. What’s your name?”

“Gabriel, Alpha, but everyone calls me Gabe.”

“Warrior Gabriel,” he says, pulling up a sheet of paper that has the previous schedule of patrols listed on it. “It appears that you haven’t run a patrol in nearly three days. You had the easy morning shift three days ago. Since that time, multiple members of this pack have run up to five patrols. So yes, Gabe, you will be running patrols tonight. Anyone else want to question their assignment?” he asks, shutting down any further argument.

There is some grumbling, but no one questions their assignment. When we finish dinner, Christian asks Shane to show him our father’s

office.

“I’d like to start looking through the pack’s finances with you tomorrow to make sure everything is in order. I know it may be difficult, but it would be easier if I was able to take over your father’s office until you’

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Chapter 10

re ready to take over the pack,” he says to Shane.

I feel the twinge in my heart, knowing that I’ll never see my father in his office again. I feel Christian’s presence strengthen in my mind as his warm hand covers mine.

“I can never replace him. If it’s easier, I can create a new office,” Christian says gently.

I fight the tears that want to come. Even with Christian here, I can’t show weakness in front of the pack. I look down as I fight for control. I realize that Christian’s hand is so large that it completely engulfs mine. While he’s putting pressure on my hand to let me know he’s there, it’s not painful at all. It actually feels warm and comforting.

“It’s really up to Shane,” I say, not looking up.

“It’s up to both of us, Enya,” Shane says. “I don’t like it any more than you do, but I think Christian is right. Eventually that office will be mine. It doesn’t make sense to move everything out of it just to move it back in two years when I take over.

“I know,” I say, forcing a smile and looking at Christian. “I’m not going to act like a foolish little girl.”

“You’re not,” he says kindly. “You’re a daughter who loved her parents and is grieving their loss. It’s understandable.”

My throat tightens and I nod, once again fighting tears at his gentleness. I feel the pressure of his hand over mine again, reassuring me until I regain control of my emotions. Then he pats my hand and goes back to talking to Shane. Even though he removes his hand, he keeps a presence in my mind, as if making sure that I'm okay.

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Chapter 11

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After dinner, I head upstairs. As the packhouse winds down for the night, I shower and put on my pajamas. Then I turn off my lights and go sit beside the window, thinking that once again, my life has changed in the blink of an eye. Christian has been in our pack less than twenty-four hours and already the feeling in the pack is different, better.

I look up into the night sky and finally let the tears fall. As grief once again overtakes me, I cover my mouth with my hands, trying to quiet the sobs that I can't hold back any longer.

Suddenly, warm arms are lifting me from my chair. I jolt, looking into Christian's intense blue-grey eyes.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to disturb you," I say, trying to force the sobs back down.

"You didn't, Enya. I'm here for you. You shouldn't be alone right now. Let it out. I'm here. You're safe," he says softly, sitting down in my chair and holding me in his arms like I'm a precious child.

I curl up against his chest, fisting his shirt in my hands as my grief overtakes me.

Christian

After dinner, Shane and I went to his father's office. When we stepped in, he stopped. Through the Alpha link, I could feel him struggling with his emotions.

I put my hand on his shoulder and squeeze. “We can do this another time if it’s easier to wait,” I say.

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‘No. Let’s do this,” he says, taking a deep breath. “Can we leave the set up like it is for now though?”

“Of course, I don’t want to cause any unnecessary burden to you or Enya. I’m here to help, not make things harder,” I say, keeping my tone gentle.

He nods, looking around the room before looking back at me. “Having you here is already making things easier. I’m not sure how you did that so quickly, but I can feel the difference in the pack already. They’re settling. It’s helping me to feel more settled too.”

“Good. Then I’m doing something right,” I say, smiling at him. “So, what do you know about how your father organized things in this office?”

“Not much. He was just starting to involve me in things,” he says.

“Do you know things like what bank he used, passwords, anything like that?” I ask.

“No.”

“It’s possible that Dorian knows them, so we’ll want to change them. Why don’t you link Beta Braden and ask him if he knows any of that information and I’ll start looking through the desk.

A few minutes later, Beta Braden comes in, showing us where the bank book is and where the safe is that supposedly has the passwords to all the accounts.

“Any idea what the passcode would be?” I ask, looking at the safe.

Both men shake their heads.

“Okay, Shane, why don’t you try to get the safe open. Start with

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birthdays, anniversaries, a mix of all of those and see if you can figure out how to get that safe open. Keep track of which one you're using so when it finally opens, you know which one it was," I tell him.

Two hours and a lot of paperwork later, Shane shouts his excitement as the safe opens.

"What was the code?" I ask him, standing from the desk and walking over to see what's in the safe.

"Enya's birthday month, my birthday day, and mom's birth year, Seven- twenty-eighty-seven."

"Well done! How about we call it a night? Now that we know the code, we can go through the safe tomorrow after we go through the kitchen process with Enya."

"Sounds good. It's later than I realized," he says. I reach out my hand and help him off the floor where he's been sitting.

"Are you too tired to sit and talk for a bit?" I ask him.

"No. I mean, I'm tired, but sleep doesn't come easy for me anyway," he says.

I grab the bottle of whiskey that I brought with me, my father's favorite, and lift it up to show Shane. "Do you drink whiskey?"

"Dad never did, or if he did, I never had any," he says.

I pour a glass, sniff it, then pass it to him. "See if you like it. It's strong, but it's my father's favorite. I've been drinking it for a couple of years. It's a nice way to unwind at the end of the day. If you don't like it, I'll drink it."

"It smells strong," he says, sniffing the glass. Then he takes a sip and

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chokes a little. "Yep, that's strong," he says, his voice choked.

I chuckle. “Are you keeping it or not? My mom prefers hers on ice. It takes the edge off a bit.”