

# **Alpha Nox - Chapter 0001**

## **by Jane Doe**

### **Chapter 0001**

For as long as I lived, I would never forget that day.

It was the day the people I considered my friends—my family, failed me irreparably. The day that the life that I knew and loved was ripped out from under my feet, splintered like the deck of a mighty ship, leaving me to drown in the ferocious waves below.

This was the day I learned the sheer power of betrayal and how it can motivate a person to endure *anything*.

The shackles around my wrists were heavy. Cold against the burnt flesh that spanned my wrists. Just as my skin would start to heal, scabbing over in rough patches caked with dried blood, the silver would brush up against them and split them wide open. With every step I took, the chains connected to those shackles rattled, singing a terrible song of agony, death, and unrequited love.

The townspeople parted to let me through, keeping their distance only because the guards standing on either side of me forced them to. I was more than positive if they were allowed, they'd hurl stones and throw fists, shouting words just as painful as their blows.

If only they knew that had I wanted to, I could've broken free.

These were the people that had watched me grow up, that had stood on their front porches waving as their children and I walked to school each day. How quickly they turned on those they considered friend and family, tossing away their narrow-minded ideas of community when it suited their sadistic needs.

*I'd never forgive them for this.*

I held my head high because that's what Einar (AY-NAR) women did. Turning my nose up at the crowd like I was better than them because I knew the truth.

It's what my mother did when the rogues murdered her, uncaring that she was holding my newborn sister against her chest. Using her abilities would've saved them both but would also have painted a target on all our backs. One that could never be removed. It was their sacrifice that granted me life—a life I threw away for something as fickle as love.

The one solace I had to this entire situation was a double-edged blade. One poised at my throat, pressing hard enough to draw blood that only I could see. Once this was all over, I'd be with my mother and sister. I'd walk into the Moon Goddesses arms, my head held high, and tears buried beneath silent rage.

...but my father.

Titus Einar, the one man that believed me, that loved me despite the crime I committed. He'd spend the rest of his life mourning me, just like he mourned my mother and sister.

The mere thought of my father made my eyes sting with tears. They would never know the pleasure of falling, of drying against pale skin, leaving salty kisses behind.

I scanned the crowd, my neutral expression carefully composed and perfectly in place. Disappointment battered me upside the head when I failed to see his broad shoulders and long blonde hair, but I couldn't blame him.

What person on this Goddess-forsaken earth would want to attend their only daughter's execution?

I was led through the clamoring crowd, shoved past their hateful words that ricocheted off my skin like spitballs, and into the city court room.

Even though I'd spent my entire life in this pack, I'd never been in this building before. There was never a need to come here.

The guards flanking me bypassed the security check-in, escorting me around the metal detectors and to a series of large double doors. Seeing as I'd been locked in a cell for the past three days, there was no need to check me for weapons. Hell, the scraps of cloth they called clothing didn't even have pockets.

I knew which room we were going to by the sound of chattering coming from within.

Part of me wanted to snort when I was escorted into the largest, grandest court room I'd ever seen. Of course, Alpha Oliver would take every opportunity to make a spectacle out of this.

Even my bastard of an Alpha, who was among the many that had watched me grow up, hadn't believed me when I tried to explain myself.

No one had. Not even *him*.

The moment I entered the court room, I could feel his eyes on my face. They had a weight to them that no one else seemed to have, inciting a pressure that rippled over the skin and caused one to shudder.

Despite everything—despite every way he failed me, I could not stop myself from meeting his eyes.

Nox Griffin, my best-friend, the boy I harbored a secret love for, and the son of our illustrious Alpha.

He stared at me from the podium where he stood proudly beside his father, his eyes a bright whirlpool that sucked me in only to spit me back out. Just the sight of him cracked the mask I'd spent three days crafting.

*How could you, Nox? I wanted to cry out.*

*Everything I did—everything—it was all for you.*

He looked so much like his father, rigid and immovable with hair darker than the prison cell I'd been thrust into, an expression of malice on his face where there had once been fondness. I clung to the scraps of my mask because without them I knew I'd cry.

A gavel rang out, clashing against wood and echoing in the courtroom until every witness in attendance grew silent.

I stared at Nox unblinkingly, showing him with my eyes the horrible mistake he'd made.

*I take back the love I gave you, Nox Griffin.*

*I take back the future I pictured for us.*

*I take back the mate-bond I prayed to the Goddess for.*

*I take it all back.*

This one last time, I let myself drink him in. I traced the lines of his plump rose petal lips, ones I never had the pleasure of kissing but had often dreamt about. His shoulders, which had filled out more over the summer, along with the mop of unruly hair on his head, so thick and soft that I'd often tug at it every chance I got.

When his father began speaking, I was forced to look away.

"I, Alpha Oliver Griffin, have gathered you all here today to sentence Ms. Lilac Einar for her heinous crimes against this pack." He addressed the crowd, sweeping his pale eyes over every one of their faces.

Murmuring rang out, rippling along the crowd that sat in rows at the back of the room and on the shoulders perched on small balconies overlooking the courtroom.

"Lilac Einar, do you confess to the murder of Beta Silas Whitlock?" Alpha Oliver asked in a steady voice that made me want to roll my eyes.

*Your mate would watch Nox and I after school when my dad was busy at work. She'd make us little sandwiches and give us juice boxes, watching with starry eyes as we played. Yet now you stand here with wariness in your eyes, because now—now you finally see me for what I am.*

*A threat you cannot contain.*

*A threat no one can contain.*

So many memories, so many chances for them all to just listen to me, but they never did. They saw a fraction of what I could do and let the fear of it swallow them whole, stealing away their memories and reason.

“Yes.” I replied, chin raised and voice just as eerily calm.

I hid my disgust for that wretched name beneath a carefully crafted façade of heartlessness.

There was nothing more for me to say. This wasn’t a place to express yourself, or to make notions of innocence. No, this courtroom was created for one thing—dishing out sentences. And there wasn’t a person in this pack who didn’t know the punishment for murder.

Alpha Oliver nodded to the gasping crowd as if to say, ‘See? See what this girl has done?’

I didn’t react, didn’t dare turn around to where Beta Silas’s family sat. I could feel the daggers his son, daughter, and mate were thrusting into my back. At the end of the day, it didn’t matter. Their father’s name was carved where no one could see, deeper than flesh and bone, right down to the soul.

“As Alpha of the Midnight Falls Pack, your punishment for murdering a beloved member of this community is—”

“Wait! Please, wait.” A voice interrupted.

I knew that voice and knew it well. It was the one that would sing me lullabies as a child, gruff and husky but full of so much warmth that I’d never gone a moment in my life without feeling it’s gentle touch.

“Father.”

My mouth opened, forming the word, but no sound came out.

In all of his six-foot glory, my father rushed into the courtroom through the side door. His long hair was unbound, showing me he’d been in a hurry to get here. The dress shirt he wore was crumpled, as was his slacks. He wasn’t the type to wear suits. Mom was the one who would knot the tie around his neck, which is exactly why he wasn’t wearing one right now. This wasn’t unusual for him, but the sight managed to bring a smile to my face.

That’s what my father was. Light, undying warmth, and the only joy I had left in this bleak, miserable world.

“Titus, I understand this is difficult for you, but you must obey the rules of this court.” Alpha Oliver stared down at my father, but the indifference on his face wavered when looking into the eyes of the man he considered his closest friend.

“Oli—Alpha Oliver...” My father corrected himself, clearing his throat. “You make the rules here. Please, I beg you. All I’m asking is for you to hear me out.”

Slowly, without looking at the muttering crowd, Alpha Oliver nodded.

Rage bubbled beneath my skin, charring my insides until I was sure my next exhale would be tinged with smoke. If only that had worked for me. If only they had stopped and listened to me instead of tossing me into a cell, locking me away in the dark.

My father, the man who swallowed his grief and showered the only daughter he had left with unconditional love, looked our Alpha in the eye and said the unspeakable.

“I ask to take my daughter’s place.”

Gasps rang out, exploding across the courtroom in echoes of pure shock and panic. I barely heard them above the sound of blood rushing to my ears.

Nox’s eyes were on my face, the waves in his gaze churning viciously as they fought to pull me in, but I couldn’t look away from my father.

“Father, no—” I cried out, my heart shriveling in my chest.

He whipped around, eyes blazing with both fury and love, and I knew then that it wasn’t only my heart that was breaking. His was too.

“Silence, Lilac.” He bellowed harshly.

No one else would know that this man had never, ever raised his voice to me in my entire fourteen years on this earth.

Alpha Oliver’s eyes flickered between open and closed, blinking away the shock that mirrored in the faces of everyone in this room. Everyone who couldn’t quite comprehend how far my father was willing to go for me.

“Titus, you can’t possibly—”

It was then that my father, one of the world’s most prolific warriors with an ability so brutal he had long ago locked it away, fell to his knees.

“Oliver, I beg you. As your friend. As—As the man that saved your son’s life. Please, please do not take my daughter from this world. She is all I have left. I cannot live in a world where she is gone. Let me stand in her place. Take my life but spare hers.”

One tear, one singular tear crested my lower lid and trickled down my cheek as I watched my father beg for my life.

The man whose past was so terrible that my mother and I became the beacon's that kept his darkness at bay, the one that still to this day would wake in the middle of the night screaming at invisible enemies hiding in the shadows, was offering his life in exchange for my own.

With nothing left to lose, my eyes snapped up and met Nox's, who had been watching me this entire time.

*If you let him do this, there will be no prison on this earth that will keep me from you. Even love won't be strong enough to stop me. I will kill you, Nox.*

I prayed to the Moon Goddess above that my plea—my threat made it through. That somehow the boy I'd loved with every fiber of my being heard my words and cared enough to listen.

"Titus, old friend. What you're asking me for...I—I cannot accept."

The only time I'd ever seen Alpha Oliver torn was the night his mate, Nox's mother, was killed. His face held the same haunted expression, staring down at his closest friend, as it did when he carried his wife's lifeless body to the pack hospital.

"Oliver—" My father began, but our Alpha raised his hand and cut his words short.

"Let me finish, Titus." Alpha Oliver said not unkindly.

His eyes swiveled to where I stood and that speck of emotion vanished, evaporating like water on scalding pavement.

"Lilac Einar, this one time I will act against the best interests of my people, for the only friend I have ever had the honor of calling brother. You are hereby exiled from this pack and ordered to live out your days as a servant for the Lycan's, our kinds most brutal clan of warriors. You will be ushered from this room directly onto the next flight to their training camp where you will remain until your final breath." Alpha Oliver commanded. "Tonight, when you look up at the sky and feel the moonlight seep into your skin, I want you to remember one thing. It is not the Goddess you should thank, but your father."

I didn't have time to process my sentencing or what it meant for me. The court erupted in outrage, exploding in screaming matches directed to the podium at which I stood. Words were hurled, slicing through the air and cutting into my skin.

The guards standing at my sides grabbed hold of my arms, the chains swaying as they lifted me a foot off the ground. I barely registered that I was fighting against them until I locked eyes with my father.

I needed to say goodbye, to thank him for giving so much, for loving me more than he loved himself.

I'd like to think that the Moon Goddess heard my prayer, and that she was responsible for my father's voice floating into my head, the phantom touch of his love brushing against my thoughts.

*'The Lycan's camp is a brutal, terrible place that many do not survive. Remember what I have taught you. Hide in the shadows, learn what you need to make it another day. You are mighty, my beautiful Lilac. You have my strength and your mother's cunning. You must use them to survive this.'*

*'It is of the utmost importance that you never use your abilities. This alone is crucial. Death would be a kinder fate than what they would do to you if they found out the full extent of your power.'*

*'We will meet again, daughter. We will meet at the place where the moonlight and water touch, and when that time comes, our family will be whole again.'*

## **Chapter 0002**

Four Years Later

"Worm! Get your ass over here!" The one voice I hated more than anyone else's screeched.

It was much raspier than I'd ever heard from another she-wolf, if one could even call Harriet a she-wolf. I liked to think of her as a toad. A fat, wart-riddled toad that couldn't stop itself from croaking every single chance it got. Unfortunately, she was a poisonous toad, and I had no choice but to bow to her every whim or risk becoming her next victim.

I'd made that mistake four months in and learned the hard way when she punched me so hard I took an involuntary three-day nap. Wolves with the ability of enhanced strength had a knack at hitting you where it hurt most.

It wasn't the worst I've endured, but it certainly made an impression.

I entered the Trainer's compound where all of the higher-up's gathered for circuit week. Harriet stood with her back to me, hunched over the table as she reviewed this year's circuit map. Her muddy brown hair looked exactly the same as when I'd first met her four years ago, pulled into a bun so tight that I just knew she had chronic headaches.

"Yes, Ma'am." I announced myself, standing erect and holding my breath until my lungs burned with need.

"Have you filled the snake pit yet?" She called over her shoulder, her voice crackling like she'd just smoked a pack of cigarettes.

I gritted my teeth. “No, Ma’am. I was ensuring the spikes along the climbing walls were operating correctly.”

Her fear was ripe and salty as it stained the air.

Snakes—that’s what she feared most. The irony of it was sweet on my tongue, like the chocolate chip pancakes my father would make every single morning. Someday, when revenge was no longer a concept but a reality, I’d use her fear against her.

The phantom pain of silver thorns digging into my flesh speared my mind. Their little circular scars were added to my collection. As though I could still feel the heavy shackles on my wrists, my eyes trailed down to stare at the slightly darkened skin.

“Get on with it then!” Harriet snapped, smacking her meaty hand down on the table. The mess of maps, battle arrangements, and little figurines shuddered upon impact. If she had used her full strength, the table would’ve likely shattered. “We can’t have the second and third Division’s arrive until everything is prepared. Do you understand how poorly that would make us look?”

I rolled my eyes at the back of her head, silently wishing she’d come up with a vicious migraine.

The Circuit is the biggest event, apart from Graduation, that the Lycan’s held. It’s occurred once a year, its location switching between the three divisions. When I first arrived at camp, the event had just come to an end. The next year it was held at the second Division, all the way in Northern Russia, and last year it was held at the third Division in Africa.

Both times I was left behind, forced to stay here in Juneau Alaska while most of the camp left for the other Divisions. As incredible as it would be to visit both the Taiga Forest and Congo’s Rainforest, this was the one time of the year where I was left the hell alone. There were no beatings, no public humiliation, no looking over my shoulder any time I dared to eat, sleep, or shower.

It was the worlds greatest injustice that this year the Circuit would be hosted here, at the first Division.

*Lucky me.*

Harriet spun around; her spine stiff from the stick she kept lodged up her ass. Her thin, puckered lips were flattened, vanishing since she didn’t have that much to begin with.

“The last thing we need is Phineas Striker on our asses, worm. So help me, if you don’t get this shit done, I’ll tell him exactly who’s at fault. You hear me?” She sneered, barring her yellowed teeth, sending a wave of garlic and curdled milk scented breath my way.

Harriet really needed to lay off the onion and cream cheese bagels.



I waited for my body to react to that name, for a jolt of fear to encase my heart or for my adrenaline to spike, but nothing happened.

“Yes, Ma’am.” I replied with a scathingly fake amount of sincerity.

Her eyes flashed with anger before narrowing into tiny slits.

It was hilarious, really. There probably wasn’t a Werewolf in this world who wasn’t afraid of Phineas Striker. Well, except for me, but I didn’t feel much of anything these days. How could I when this place had beaten, burned, sliced, and diced every emotion from beneath my skin? Each one slipped through my fingers, watering the earth along with my blood until almost nothing was left.

Phineas Striker, a man who spent as much time on his appearance as he did torturing people, was the first Division’s Executive Director, a.k.a. the big man in charge. My first year I’d made the grievous mistake of insulting him. It didn’t matter that I was fourteen years old or that all I’d done was snicker at his perfectly pressed suit and teal handkerchief. He still punished me like I’d committed a war crime.

The memory of being tied against a wooden stake at the center of camp was still fresh in my mind. On bad nights, I could still hear the crack of the whip slicing through the air, and the slap it made as it hit my back.

Ten lashes, and he made me count out loud for each and every one.

It was the last time I allowed them the pleasure of hearing me scream. Now, they see nothing but the monster they turned me into, a vast pit of emptiness so feral and hungry that they know if I were to *ever* be released, I’d swallow them fucking whole.

In those precarious moments where I hovered between life and death, there was one thing I managed to hold onto, and it alone was what kept me sane.

Vengeance.

Harriet snapped her fingers, then pointed at the ground right in front of her gargantuan feet. Seriously, her combat boot was bigger than my head—something I also learned the hard way.

“Here.” She said curtly. “Now.”

I already knew what was coming, which is why I couldn’t bite back the eager smirk that tugged at my lips. I did as she said and stopped just a foot away from her, my feet planted firmly where she had pointed just three seconds ago. Garlic and rancid cheese surrounded her in an aura of filth.

Harriet cocked her meaty fist back and decked me square in the face.

One wet crunch and a flash of electrifying pain later, and I knew my nose was broken.

Twinkling stars danced behind my eyes even though the warmth of sunlight soaking into my skin told me it was still daytime out. Hot rivulets of blood spilled from my nostrils, tickling my upper lip as it dribbled down my chin and into the grassy floor.

*I'd endured worse, so much worse.*

Pain was a fickle thing, and at the thought of the more gruesome things I'd endured, it quickly faded into the background.

Harriet's upper lip quivered spitefully, and not a second later she spat at my feet. Her foaming wad of saliva mixed with the droplets of blood that splattered on top of my busted up athletic shoes.

"If I didn't need you to finish setting up for the Circuit, I'd backhand you into next Tuesday. Get the hell back to work, worm."

My smirk deepened, blood filling my mouth.

"Yes, Ma'am."

After setting my broken nose and washing the blood from my face at one of the water fountains, I made my way to the outskirts of the Camp, past the Mess Hall, Barracks, and the Kitchens, towards the small brick building and rows of wooden sheds that served as our storage facility.

The sun was shining bright overhead and would be for the next sixteen hours since June had just rolled around. I still wasn't used to Alaska's strange daylight hours, but I found myself preferring the winter. Despite the fact that I loathed the cold, it was much easier to evade punishment in the dark.

My father taught me from an early age how to use my surroundings to my advantage. I'd never been large or tall in stature, which meant I had to be quick and silent. My true strength, however, is the one thing that would ensure my death.

My abilities.

I peeled the neckline of my ratty sweatshirt away from my chest, scowling down at the splotch of dried blood. Before long, I'd be stealing from the other recruits just to keep myself clothed. As a servant, you did not want to be caught naked around here.

That was just asking for trouble.

Doing laundry was chore since the recruits liked to destroy what little clothing I had. There was a nearby stream I used whenever the chance presented itself, but with the Circuit coming up, I barely had the time to eat and shower.

Nestled directly in between six wooden sheds was a building comprised of auburn brick. It stood out in the winter and blended in during the summer. The Armory, as many called it, was where every blade, sword, and gun was stashed when not in use.

During my first year, I'd snuck in with the hopes of stealing a weapon to protect myself with, but that was before I realized how thoroughly this camp kept track of things. Anytime someone wanted to check out a case of throwing knives, or perhaps a machete or two, they had to be signed in and out.

Stealing weapons around here was an impossibility, which is how I became skilled in the dubious art of shiv whittling.

I patted the waistband of my ratty sweats, making sure it was still there. Approaching the second wooden shed in the row, I plucked the key off its nail and jimmied the door open. The scent of lumber and gasoline permeated the air. It would've been pleasant if not for the undertone of hissing coming from the eight large oil barrels inside.

The key remained clenched in the palm of my hand as I entered. A lot had happened my first year here. I'd been knocked out, whipped, beaten, had my hands broken and smashed, among many other things, but one event in particular that stood out the most was when I was ambushed in the storage shed.

I'd been ordered to grab some sparring pads and made the mistake of hanging the key back on its hook after unlocking the door. The moment I stepped inside, my stomach contracted with dread. I'd heard the snickers then, but it had been too late. The door was slammed shut, and the lock bolted in place.

It had taken three whole days for someone to find me, and even then I'd been punished for never returning.

Grabbing the metal dolly off the wall, I swatted away the spider webs and got to work wedging the platform beneath the bottom of the first barrel.

"Yeah, yeah. I'm not happy about this either." I said in response to the snakes voracious hissing.

The snake pit was a measly three-minute walk from the sheds. I stuck to the outskirts of the camp, avoiding the recruits as they went to and from their training courses, conserving my energy for what was to come.

Why they couldn't pick a simple garden snake was beyond me, but what did I know? I was just the help.

Lugging eight giant oil barrels full of venomous snakes was no easy feat, but I relished the burn in my arms and calves. The pain reminded me that I was alive, and that the possibility of revenge was still feasible.

The pit I spent the last month digging was just outside of camp, only a few feet inside the forest. This part of the circuit had four rows of monkey bars stretched over top a long, rectangular pit of what would soon be filled with vicious snakes. The recruits would race through the various traps the circuit had to offer before making it here.

Taking my time, I situated each barrel at the edge of the pit. Using the strap I'd taken from the shed; I wrapped it around the neck of the barrel and looped it so that it couldn't slip off. I then popped the top off the barrel and hastily shoved the entire thing into the pit, holding onto the straps for dear life.

I'd end myself right here if I had to wade through poisonous snakes to fish out these stupid oil barrels.

It took a few minutes, shimmying the barrel left and right to make sure all of the snakes had gotten out, but I managed to pull it out with zero injuries.

Rubbing my hands together, I stared pointedly at the others.

"One down, seven to go."

Repeating what I'd done with the first barrel, I worked down the line until each one was empty. The floor of the pit was no longer brown and coarse from compacted dirt but was now a writhing mass of slithery bodies and angry-looking eyes.

"Don't worry, soon enough you'll have some juicy recruits to sink your fangs into." I told them.

A branch snapped in the distance, and I spun around, facing where the sound had come from. The air was heavy with silence that made my finely tuned intuition scream out in danger, flashing its neon signs and effectively turning my insides to mush. There was no fear. Fear was for those who weren't steeped in rage and brewed in mania.

"How's about they start with you first?" A voice with a heavy Southern twang called out.

I groaned inwardly, cursing myself for having even the smallest shred of joy that I'd finished this idiotic task without a single injury.

Of all people to come and fuck with me, it had to be Weston Phillips.

He came from the front, all swagger in his muscle tee and cut off jeans. His shit eating grin made the she-wolves swoon, but not me. The man had the sex appeal of a wet sock.

I contemplated making a run for it when two more faces appeared from the brush. After four years in this hellscape I made it a point to remember every face and name of those who hurt me. These two pig-nosed bitches were towards the top of my long list of people to maim, torture, and kill.

Kaylee Smith, who was creeping at me from the left, had thin lips that looked like chewed bubblegum and the laugh of a toothless hyena. To the right was Ivy Davenport, a resident mean girl who I'd made the mistake of laughing at when she claimed her blonde hair was natural.

Nothing about those roots were natural.

Both Weston and Ivy were a bit of a big deal around camp. When a Werewolf had a coveted ability, it gave them more than just bragging rights. Weston here was a shifter, a wolf that could take the form of other animals, while Ivy could cloak the scents of over a dozen wolves. It not only meant they were hot shit to the Lycan's, but that their pedigree was strong.

"Hah. Funny, West. She's not even a recruit." Kaylee sneered, rattling out her high-pitched hyena squeal. "She's a lowlife servant. An orphan."

Most of the servants were magicless orphans. They weren't just at the bottom of the totem pole; they were the dirt it sat upon. That's what the recruits assumed I was as well, and I never cared to correct them. The only ones who knew the real reason for me being here was Phineas Striker, Harriet, and the Crawford twins.

I shouldn't strike back, but I really couldn't help myself. Keeping quiet, being obedient—it just wasn't possible for me.

