

Faith’s Pov

My heart sank. I stood there, letting Alice's words cut into me. It was what I deserved, I thought, for even dreaming of a different life with Astor. This pain was familiar, a dull ache I'd lived with forever, so there was no use pretending it didn't exist.

If he truly wanted her back, why didn't he tell me? Why didn't he reject me? I would have been hurt, yes, but I would never have stopped him. He has never cared what I thought anyway. It was my own fault for being so foolish. I should have known she would come back, and that he would be waiting for her with open arms. He always did.

"I'm happy you decided to come back," I managed to say, my voice steady despite the tremor in my knees. "But whoever picked you up from the airport should be the one to prepare things for you. Tell him I can't."

I turned, forcing myself to walk away. I knew she was laughing behind me, her taunts echoing in my mind. My legs felt like jelly, ready to give out, but I couldn't fall. Not now. Not in front of her.

I don't know how I made it to my room without collapsing. The moment I was inside, I locked the door and stumbled into the bathroom. I turned on the shower, letting the cold water hit me. I wanted to scream, to lash out, but I couldn't.

I was physically, mentally, and emotionally tired of the course of my life. I couldn't cry about it anymore because nothing ever changes.

This took me back. A daily occurrence after starting at the Eclipse Pack.

I was the forgotten and unwanted one despite being Alpha Connor's biological daughter.

They always preferred Alice, and they didn't even try to get to know me. My father took pleasure in teaching her how to run the pack. How to drive. How to hunt and a lot more, and not once did he take me along. My mother made sure to cook her whatever she wanted, took her shopping, gave her the love and attention I craved, and she was literally her best friend, but she never noticed me.

Because I don't have a wolf.

My mother once told me she regretted bringing me back to the Eclipse Pack. They saw me as a disgrace.

Their favoritism towards Alice was like a dagger to me and always made my heart bleed.

After a long, much-needed shower, I went to bed. I thought it would be hard to fall asleep, with my mind racing and my heart aching. But my body was just too tired, and so was my mind. I fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

My phone ringing woke me up, which was rare. My phone almost never rang; no one was interested in talking to me unless it was an emergency. I didn't even check the caller ID. Then I heard his voice.

"Where are you?" Astor said, his tone sharp.

I sat up, rubbing my eyes. I was usually on top of things. If there was something important we needed to do today, I wouldn't have slept so deeply. I didn't understand what he was talking about.

"Why aren't you here yet?" He repeated, probably because I hadn't answered. I was still trying to rack my brain, just in case I had forgotten something vital.

"Where?" I finally asked.

"Alice says she told you about the welcome celebration." He said. My soul sank. He was snapping at me because he expected me to be there, to watch him with her.

"I can't come," I whispered. I wanted to hang up, to just disappear, but I knew I couldn't. He had given an order, and I always had to follow his orders.

"You're my mate. You have to come. I'll see you here." He hung up before I could say anything else. Of course. The servant always does as the master says. And that's exactly what I would do.

I tried to dress up a little, putting on some makeup. My soon-to-be mother-in-law always told me that a Luna must always be presentable, that she must lead by example. I didn't really like makeup, but it was good at hiding my tired face.

I was late. I had come, though, because I was forced to. I could hear the loud laughter of their group even from outside the pack bar. It was a huge place, but all I could hear was their celebration. Alice cheered the loudest.

I pushed open the heavy door and stepped inside. Everyone went quiet, and their eyes landed on me, as did their hate and displeasure.

They didn't need to say it because the silence was loud enough.

They didn't want me here, but I still held my head up high and made my way to their table. Only to notice that there was no space for me, and sitting next to my mate, like she belonged there, was Alice.

I didn't break. I didn't let them see how much it affected me. I found a small corner for myself, away from the laughter and the light. I held it all in, but my heart felt every single piece of it.

I didn't fit into their moment because I wasn't one of them. They grew up together and have been friends since childhood. They loved Alice and considered her the sweetest sister. So they hated me for coming between them and breaking Alice's heart.

I have been humiliated before, many times, but not like this. It was humiliating, each one more special than the last, all for her. And I hadn't even gotten a kind word since Alice arrived. I knew I wasn't what they wanted, but I didn't deserve this cruelty.

I didn't want them to stop loving her. I just wanted them to give me a small piece of that attention, that warmth. I tried and I tried and I tried, but I could never get it right with them.

They called me names, and have never accepted me, and they probably never will.

"All of this feels so special! Thank you for your gifts! I'm excited to see you all again!" Alice cooed, nuzzling into Astor's side. "But you did get me something, didn't you? Will it be handpicked by you?"

We all knew it was impossible for Astor not to have gotten her something. And he did. I thought maybe it would be flowers, something simple, but instead he pulled out a beautiful necklace.

"Yes, I saw it on my way back to the pack. It suits you." He chuckled.

I looked at my mate in shock. Astor is always busy with work, so the gifts he sends me are selected and given to me by his beta. He never gave me a real gift. Not even once.

On my first birthday with him, I got flowers. Just a simple card. The next year, it was a platter of snacks. I knew he didn't pick them. It was a job, something he had to do. He wanted us to look loving in front of his father, so I did what he wanted.

Everything was a show for Alpha Xander. Astor just wanted it to look like we loved each other. It was just easy for him.

I didn't think it could get worse until everyone suggested that she give him a kiss in appreciation.

Right in front of me.

"Alice," murmured her most devoted companion, "you alone received a gift personally chosen by Astor. Surely such an honor warrants some... demonstration of gratitude?"

"Kiss him!"