Welcome to Exton

My dad's Tesla turns smoothly off the motorway and our surroundings soon become more and more rural, as we drive past field after field. Trees and hedges become a pleasant green blur outside my window on the faster roads; they are so narrow in comparison to the roads I was used to.

Another turn reveals an expanse of rolling green hills and acres of trees under the sunny September sky. This was definitely the most green I'd seen in years and I was very excited by it.

Before I go any further, I should probably introduce myself.

My name is Eliana Reva, but I much prefer to be called Ella because that sounds less like a character from a Lord of the Rings book. As Ella I tend to fit in more and as a classic textbook definition of an introvert that's all I've ever really wanted when I've been at school.

For years I have attended boarding school in London where I currently reside with my parents. My parents work in the city but often have to travel all around the world to various cities, for an international law firm as human rights lawyers.

When I was much younger, we used to live in a small village in the county of Hampshire along the south coast of England, before my parents relocated us to London because of their jobs. London had been an incredible place to live and I was very fond of it. I was never bored in London as there was always an abundance of things to do, but as I got older, it felt more and more like something was missing. I felt a little off balance, like...I wasn't where I was supposed to be. During the last year I had grown very tired of the hustle and bustle of the city, the noise, the endless pavements and the daily chaos of the London underground.

I wanted to be somewhere more rural.

Scratch that, I needed to be somewhere more rural; I felt like I was being called back to where I was born.

I began to feel suffocated in the city and I made the decision to return to my home county in the countryside. I just kept dreaming of green fields, lush grass, huge willow trees and all sorts of wildlife and colourful exotic flowers. It was time to say goodbye to London, during term time, at least.

My parents were more than happy for me to do my sixth form years at another boarding school since they were out of the country so often. They just wanted me to be happy.

I had looked at numerous boarding schools, but a school called Exton College kept snagging my attention. I kept coming back to it's website; featuring an assortment of various beautiful people on it's front page just like the other schools did. But the people on the front page of theirs looked so alive, so happy and I wanted to be one of those happy people.

Their marketing sure got me good.

It had an excellent reputation for science among others and that was incredibly attractive to me as my goal was to apply to study medicine and become a doctor. I valued life and I wanted to make a difference to others with mine. I worked hard and had great grades, even though this was very counterproductive to my vague attempts at a social life. I had maybe one actual friend at my old school and we hadn't even kept in touch during the summer.

All in all, I was quite happy to start fresh somewhere else. A clean slate; not that clean was anything I needed. I had led a fairly boring life at my last school.

But...

This isn't a boring story, not by a long shot. If anything the next two weeks, the next six months even...well...there was no way I could've predicted anything that lay ahead for me as I innocently sat in the car on our way to my new school.

"Two minutes away sweetheart," Dad says quietly, checking the sat nav on the dashboard.

I take a deep breath in and sit up a little more in my seat, a nervous anticipation was definitely setting in as my dad turns the car through an imposing set of wrought iron gates that leads down a long road lined with lush poplar trees.

Even the driveway here looked posh. I vaguely remembered the photos of the school from their website and brochure but it looked more impressive in person. The school looked pretty well maintained, to say the least.

We pass a large navy coloured sign which reads 'Welcome to Exton College'; its ivy and wolf's head emblem shining in gold.

'Headmaster: Orion Landry' it says in a smaller font underneath. I remember the brief about the school that the headmaster had written for the school's website and I recall the photo of him. He had given me serious Dumbledore vibes, but I couldn't decide if it was the foot long white beard he had or his kind green eyes full of wisdom that leapt out from the photo. I had never before seen eyes that green. He definitely looked too old to be running a school, but I couldn't argue that he looked exactly like what I'd expect from the Headmaster of a very distinguished school.

Presently, dad pulls the car into an unmarked parking spot in a large gravelled car park.

"Well...this is it," he says, letting out a long whistle as he cranes his neck to look through the windscreen, up at the vast building in front of us.

"This looks very different to my last school, that's for sure," I comment quietly. My last school could only have been described as a grey, concrete box, the only source of life being a solitary yew tree in the main courtyard.

I get out of the car, more than keen to stretch my legs after the long journey. I hold my hand up to shield my eyes as I take in the imposing sight before me.

A grand, red and beige bricked building stands before us. It has four main turrets around the front section and the tall windows make it look very distinguished. There are a large set of thick oak doors which sit proudly in the middle of the main building, flanked by pure white marble pillars. Ivy has snaked its way up the walls all around the building and around the large arched windows in particular which added to the grand mystique of the place. Back in London my schools were in a variety of different buildings, but nothing living snaked its way up the walls...or anywhere nearby for that matter.

Dad opens the trunk of the car and pulls out my suitcases while I fumble around in my satchel for the bundle of paperwork I had been sent a few weeks ago.

An SUV and another Tesla arrive in the car park to drop other students off just as we ascend the steps and enter the school through the large oak doors, finding ourselves in a grand atrium.

I gasp.

It is huge and the decor is rather decadent. It reminds me of the typical entrances they have in the posh hotels back in London.

I immediately can't help but notice the grand staircase at the back. A beautiful and thick, rich, navy coloured carpet snakes all the way up the stairs to the first floor. The flooring of the atrium is a highly polished light hard wood that leads to baroque style walls. The biggest feature was a huge, gilded painting of a bizarrely pure golden wolf which adorned the wall at the back of the staircase. The painting was at least ten by twelve feet wide. The wolf had familiar piercing green eyes and was stood proudly on a hill top overlooking a forest and a vast meadow. It was beautiful, and I wondered where wolves fit into the history of the school considering they were also part of the school's logo. Above the bottom of the staircase was a beautiful and rather sizable chandelier with hundreds of glittering lights. The ceiling itself was ornate too.

I immediately feel rather overwhelmed by the beauty and grandeur of this place and I inhale sharply as I take it all in.

This looked nothing like how I imagined a school to look, it was very impressive...but I wasn't. Was I going to fit in here?

My reverie was broken by a woman calling out from the side of the atrium.

"Hello there! Good afternoon! You must be new to the college?" a woman calls to us from behind a large reception desk to our left. I turned to face the woman, who has dark hair framing her plump and homely face. I step forward apprehensively toward the desk.

"Hi. Yes...I...I'm new," I smile nervously. She smiles back at me warmly which relaxes me a little, and she gestures for me to come over.

"Well, head on over here honey and lets go through the paperwork. Then we will get your room key and welcome pack sorted," she says, putting her glasses on from around her neck.

"I'll do it," Dad offers happily, taking the paperwork from me and heading over to the receptionist himself while I walk further into the atrium. To the right of the stair case was a large set of comfortable looking navy blue sofas arranged around a circular oak coffee table.

Along the wall behind the sofa arrangement is a wide notice board split into 'secondary' and 'sixth form' sections, along with a few vending machines located a little further away near one of several corridors off the atrium.

This was definitely not a small school.

Exton College was a sixth form, therefore students could attend the secondary school as normal from the age of eleven up until they reached sixteen. They could then continue their college level studies up until the age of eighteen. Or, there could be people like me, joining for the final two years of sixth form after leaving a normal secondary school.

I walk over and take a closer look at what was on the sixth form notice board. There was a basic list of events listed for the coming academic year.

-Winter Formal - November 19th

-Sixth form ski trip to Chamonix - February 18th

-Spring Formal - April 4th

I make a mental note to sign up for the ski trip. It was one of the most exhilarating things to do and I simply loved it. I'd gone almost every winter with my parents for as long as I could remember...but we unfortunately weren't going this year as my parents were going to be in California for several months.

"Come on then Els, let's go find your new room," Dad says eagerly from behind me, having now finished exchanging forms and receiving various items from the lady on reception. I grab the handle of one of my suitcases and head to the lift to the side of reception rather than take the staircase.

After following some signs for the 'ladies residential wing' we find room 2.06; my room for the next two years.

“And here...we...go...” mutters Dad, slotting my new keycard into the security slot by the door. We open the door and step across the threshold. I am quite surprised at how large the room is. I am also surprised to see only two beds, having been in a dormitory with five other girls for the last few years.

Two double beds flank either side of the room along the back wall, with an ensuite to the right and a sizable study area to the left. At the foot of both beds are large oak trunks and along the wall are oak wardrobes. Each wardrobe features a full length mirror in one of the doors. The decor of this room was in stark contrast to the grandeur of the atrium. Plain white walls, oak furniture and a dark grey carpet; more modern and simple compared to the grandiose appearance of the atrium.

The main source of colour in the room comes from a dark pink floral duvet topped with a fluffy cream bedspread that is already on one of the beds. I definitely had a roommate, but she wasn't here right now. I notice a few photos stuck around the mirror on the associated wardrobe, mainly featuring a rather stunning girl with long, wavy, dark brown hair and another pair of startlingly green eyes. She was surrounded by the same people in every photo and I feel a little overwhelmed again, wondering what my roommate was going to be like. She clearly had an established life here at this school. Would she even like me? The girls in my dormitory didn't care much about me and I'd lived with them for five years.

I notice the lack of any other personal effects and this tells me she probably hasn't returned just yet. Maybe she could show me around, at least?

Dad checks his watch and sighs a little.

"I'm so sorry honey, but I really can't stay too much longer, your mum and I have that flight to catch. Now....are you definitely sure that this is what you want? No travelling tutor? You could still come along with us?" he says, holding both my upper arms and looking at me quite seriously in the face.

I'm not sure. But I just need to be here.

I smile at him, for I am used to this verbal exchange as we had done it every September for the past ten years. But something about this place is giving me a great feeling of trepidation among other things that I had certainly not felt at any of my other schools. For once it just felt like I had come to the right place and this was exactly where I needed to be.

I nod sincerely.

"Honestly Dad, I am really excited. This was a good decision for me. Besides, I'll see you both at Christmas, then again at Easter, and we will all be so busy anyway that time is going to go so quickly," I reassure him. He smiles warmly in response and pulls me into a big hug before giving me a kiss on my forehead. Then, with his hands on my shoulders once more, he studies my face.

"Well...don't forget we are always just a phone call away...or maybe an email when you factor in the time difference. Only call it you really have to," he jokes. I laugh and nod.

"Have a safe journey home, dad. Also a safe flight, of course. Honestly, please don't worry about me, I am going to be just fine."

He hugs me tightly once again before exiting the room. The door clicks shut and that's it; I am on my own.

I sit on the edge of my new bed for a moment and breathe through the nerves I'd hidden from my dad. It was hard starting somewhere new, but I knew I just had to embrace it and power through it, because that was what I did.

I go over to the large window at the back of the room in between the two beds and I look out across the grounds. They are vast, green and lush, just like I had wanted. I can see several other buildings separate from this one; this campus really was quite large.

The closest I had to this back home was Regents Park. I carefully open the window and take a deep breath in, enjoying the invigorating feeling of the warm, late summer air entering my lungs. Looking out at the beaming sunshine I soon feel wide awake, my nerves disappearing as excitement starts to set in again.

It was only half past four so there was still some time before dinner. I look at the site map I'd been given which had the meal times and other items of information anyone new to the school would need to know. The school was actually huge. I wonder how long it will take me to find my way around.

I go back over to my side of the room and begin unpacking my things, wondering when my roommate was going to arrive. Mostly, I wondered exactly what she was going to be like…

My Roommate

4652 Words

Freya

My brother performs yet another sharp turn as he drives his car through the gates of the school grounds, speeding hastily down the poplar lined driveway toward the car park.

"This has definitely beat Stephen dropping us off, surely?" my brother Austin says as he deftly swings the car perfectly into a parking spot in the student car park. I exhale with relief as the car stops with a sudden jolt.

We had made it.

"Yeah. I just love feeling car sick while you see local speed limits as a general guideline," I say with a hefty amount of sarcasm. I am just thankful we have made it back to school alive. Austin laughs heartily at my reaction. Typical.

He'd passed his test six months ago but he still hadn't quite moved out of the standard teenage 'rally driver' phase. He drove fast and I was very thankful he had near perfect reflexes or else we'd have ended up in a hedge somewhere well before we'd gotten anywhere near Exton.

I look over at him with an exaggerated scowl as he turns towards me and I tut loudly. He had the same thick, dark wavy hair just like me and we had the same piercing green eyes everyone in our family have always had. We also have the same generous dark eyebrows, except mine were kept very well groomed whereas his were perhaps a little on the wild side. He had grown a few inches over the summer and was now a gangly six foot two inches, while I was a rather respectable five foot nine, which was considered tall for a woman, particularly someone my age. I had only turned sixteen in June; I was annoyingly one of the babies of the year and I really hated that. We looked the same age, but there was only seventeen months between us and this was probably why we got on so well.

The adrenaline rush from his hazardous driving aside, I adored my brother and generally so did everyone else who met him. He was easily the most liked person in school, a fact he had always seemed entirely oblivious to which only made people like him more.

"Ouch, Freya," he says with mock sadness, "I will remember this when Stephen starts teaching you in the summer and you start to enjoy the freedom that driving brings," he says, flashing me his classic cheeky smile. I smile back at him and he chuckles! he's got away with it once again.

We both get out of the car and he starts taking my various belongings out of the car boot. He just has a single backpack. I wasn't sure how he was going to survive the school year on one backpack of clothes when he'd grown half a foot over the summer. Austin was useless when it came to having clothes that fitted. He also had a penchant for destroying clothes almost every time he shifted, so that backpack of clothes wasn't going to last long at all. Perhaps a fortnight.

If you're new around here, you may be wondering what I mean when I say 'shifted'. Austin and I weren't typical teenagers, or at least, we were not like the majority of the human teenagers in the country. There was still definitely plenty of us. Well over two hundred thousand across the country alone...but the human population was entirely oblivious to us and for thousands of years it had been kept that way.

We looked human, but we weren't. Not technically...and definitely not at night under a full moon.

We were Lycan.

We'd been called many things over the years, particularly 'werewolves', which was a mythological creature in pop culture. Definitely moreso thanks to the Underworld film franchise, Teen Wolf, Twilight and The Vampire Diaries. We weren't exactly like how they portrayed us. We hadn't been cursed or bitten, it was in our blood and written into our genetic makeup. We lived in packs across the entire world, much like normal wolves did. Lycans were however, much bigger than normal wolves and the key difference of course was that we were both human and wolf in one person. From the first full moon at the full onset of puberty we could shift into our wolf's form, taking on the appearance of the wolf spirit we became blended with, gifted to us by our Moon Goddess. We were blended with them for life. A best friend, an advisor, a partner in crime who would walk with us until our dying day, and then maybe...maybe we'd become a spirit ourselves one day and basically live on within someone else.

Here we are, back at our home away from home, I said inwardly to my wolf spirit Mira.

Hopefully your grandfather has sorted out the roommate issue from last year. Although a room to ourselves might not be so bad...I mean really, it's time for you to start mingling with the boys, Mira muses.

I shuddered at the thought of my roommate from last year.

Can't be any worse than an insane witch, right? I joke.

Maybe we will be blessed with a nice simple human or something...if we have to have one at all, Mira suggests.

I stare up at the grand building I knew and loved so much. I had been coming here as a student since I was eleven, but I had come here many times ever since I was very young; because this school was our family's legacy.

It wasn't a normal school like hundreds of others across the country. It was a school mainly for the supernatural, governed for hundreds of years by our family. Our family also led our pack, which was the oldest and amongst the largest packs in the United Kingdom. Our father Leo Landry was the alpha in charge of our pack.

I pick my things up, effortlessly. Wolf strength came in handy for moments like this, but most especially when it came to a heavy day of clothes shopping, something I'd not done in so long; which by my standards was roughly only two weeks...

I walk through the big oak doors and flash a warm smile to Lynda, who manned Exton's reception desk.

"Welcome back you two," she says, before turning a little to rummage in a tray of paperwork.

"My my, haven't you both grown over the summer," she then says toward the both of us, "you are becoming so handsome, Austin! You must be beating all the girls away with a tree trunk!"

She slides our timetables and room key cards across the reception desk toward us as I roll my eyes a little.

Austin had grown considerably over the summer and his baby fat days were definitely now far behind him. As such, there had been a lot more comments about his good looks, particularly from the other girls in the pack over the summer. I didn't mind it too much from Lynda, though, as she was something like a surrogate aunt to us while we were here at the school, and her comments were more maternal than anything else.

"Very kind of you to point that out Lynda. I hope you had a great summer," I say a little sarcastically, grabbing both items.

"I am loving the new hair cut on you Lynda, it really suits you," Austin says with a broad smile before following me towards the stairs. Oh for heaven's sake...

Turning the charm on as always. Get used to it, though, it's just going to get worse when he hits eighteen in a few months, Mira growls in amusement.

She knew how annoying I had found the fawning comments about him over the summer. Admittedly it was probably because no one ever made about me, but that was the life living in the shadow of our next pack alpha.

We both throw our usual respectful nod toward the golden wolf on the giant painting on the back wall. The painting was many hundreds of years old and supposedly featured our pack's founder.

The Landry bloodline was indeed very old, and very well respected. Our pack, the Golden Lycans, was the third largest in the country, and our name uniquely comes from a legend, rather than the area from which we originate. We descended from one of the original Lycans within this country and legend said he had fur of pure gold...soft to touch, and yet entirely impenetrable like armour. Supposedly, he had been impervious to fire and had been impossible to kill; but it was just a fancy story to explain our strange name, in my mind. Lycans only came in greyscale and browns.

We were regarded as a 'blue-blooded' family in the Lycan world. Not that it matters in the present day, of course. Nobody cared much about lineage anymore, just whether your pack happened to be the strongest. Every generation, our fur had gotten darker and darker and with it our strength and position had diminished a little. The gangly teen climbing the stairs with me was our father's heir, the next alpha to lead to our pack and, while I was also of alpha rank like he was, I had no zero interest in challenging my brother for the job. He was definitely the best person to do it by miles. Our father had been diligently preparing him for his future role for many years now, and that training was going to kick up several notches after he finished his final year.

This next year was a very important year for him. The year he would turn eighteen, finish school, and he was hoping to soon discover that his girlfriend, Ava, was his destined mate. They felt absolutely sure that they were, and over the last two years they had become the quintessential 'it' couple of the school. They were so sweet together it was rather nauseating at times.

Ava had turned eighteen just two days ago, and she came from a local pack not far from Exton. She was the beta daughter of two strong and fairly prominent betas, and she was expected to end up mate bonded to an alpha or beta, so the idea seemed to fit.

I was skeptical, but sometimes situations like theirs did work out...sometimes.

Well...rarely, actually.

I had an inkling he was heading for heartbreak. It wasn't unheard of at all to feel the mystical, destined mate bond before turning eighteen, but they'd know for definite once Austin came of age in January. I had nothing against Ava at all. Indeed, she was an exceptional and lovely person. I hadn't seen much of her this summer, though. She had been out of the country for a while on holiday in France.

"I hope to see you later at dinner, depending on whether I have a new roommate and manage to make it down to dinner alive or not," I joke. Austin laughs at this, and he waves behind him as we part ways at the intersection of the residential wing; one corridor for the lads, one for the ladies. I wander down the corridor a little way and arrive at the familiar door to the room I have had since I was eleven. I stop outside the door and have a quick sniff.

There is someone already inside and to my absolute relief she smells human.

Hallelujah, Mira sighs.

Thank the moon goddess! I agree.

I happily stick my keycard into the slot and open the door.

...

Ella

I was standing in front of my wardrobe mirror staring at myself. I had changed my clothes a few times since I had arrived, wondering what might give the best first impression. I had studied the photos around my roommate's mirror and she looked so put together.

Flawless, actually.

I wanted to make a good impression on my new roommate but I wasn't really sure how.

I was a little taller than average for my age at around five foot nine. My P.E teacher at my last school said my long legs and generally slender frame was definitely built for running, which was the only hobby I really had back home. Well, it was a little more than a hobby; I was a national champion for girls in my age group.

I was perhaps a little on the skinny side, but I felt I was mostly average looking. Apart from my hair and my eyes, which were easily my best features as they were the thing people tended to comment on. My hair was naturally a very light blonde, was dead straight, and it came down just past my waist. It grew and grew and at times it was like the more I cut it, the longer it seemed to get. As such, I have had waist length hair for as long as I can remember. As I grew up, I had expected my hair to get darker like my parents, but if anything, it had gotten brighter and brighter as I got older. My skin was nicely tanned from a summer of sun worshiping, which really brought out the freckles I had across my nose and cheeks. My eyes were a very light blue with an interesting inner halo of aqua green, which again, didn't match my parents at all.

I swiftly pull my hair into a messy bun and secure it with a hair band. I was planning on heading down to dinner shortly, but I was feeling nervous about meeting the other students. I had always been quite introverted and preferred to try and blend into the background as much as possible. Starting a new school was daunting, but I was hoping to perhaps be a little less invisible at this school. I was turning seventeen in two months and I felt like now was the time to try growing up a little and pushing myself out of my comfort zone a little more.

My eyes fall on the necklace my mum had gifted me when I was much younger, which she told me had once belonged to my grandmother, and her mother before that. It was a pretty, silver sun charm on a delicate platinum chain, with an unusual yellow stone in the middle of the sun. I had never taken it off. I used to joke that it was our family crest, as we all just loved the sunshine. We holidayed in Dubai every year for the past eight and we had family out in Australia who we'd see every other Christmas during their summer. It was nice to feel like I had a bit of home with me, now, being on my own in an entirely new place.

I suddenly hear the sound of the door closing and I turn around sharply to see the girl from the photos standing by the door with a suitcase and a few bags at her feet. Somehow even prettier in person, I cant help but feel immediately intimidated by her, just as I had been by some of the more confident girls at my last school.

She really was flawless.

She stands there in a dark blue satin jumpsuit and gold sandals. Her long dark hair is in an immaculate french braid and her smokey eye makeup makes her bright green eyes pop. With her amazing bone structure she looks like a teen model and definitely older than just sixteen years old. I shrink back a little before I realise my expression is probably quite nervous. Thankfully, a warm smile spreads unexpectedly across her face and she excitedly comes toward me to give me a friendly hug. I freeze for a second before returning it tentatively. I was not used to being hugged by anyone except my parents.

"Hi! Welcome to Exton, I'm Freya, and I am really happy to meet you!" she says stepping back and looking me up and down with an intrigued look on her face. I look at her again too. She is ridiculously pretty and in comparison I now feel so plain, standing there in my jeans and a plain white t-shirt.

"Hi...I'm Ella. Well it's actually Eliana, but I prefer Ella. It s-sounds less like a character from a fantasy novel," I shrug, cursing myself for stammering a little, but I always do when I am nervous. She nods and continues to smile at me warmly.

"Cute. I quite like Eliana, but sure thing, Ella," she replies with a subtle wink. She starts arranging some throw pillows on her bed that she has taken out of her wardrobe and begins putting items from her suitcase into her bedside table.

I watch with interest as she unzips a large suit bag and removes a number of gorgeous looking clothes on hangers before stuffing them into her already packed wardrobe. She looks satisfied at the contents and somehow manages to push the door closed with some effort.

"The sure fire sign you have too many clothes is when you struggle to shut the doors properly," she jokes. She did seem nice and friendly and I feel a bit less nervous. I bite my lip and decide to take the plunge.

"Umm...I was about to head down to get some dinner if you wanted to join me?" I say timidly with my hands stuffed awkwardly into my back pockets. At least I haven't stammered this time, thankfully. She turns to look at me as if I had just said the magic words.

"Yes. Definitely. I am starving and it's SUNDAY. Trust me, you haven't had a Sunday roast until you've had one here," Freya says with excitement. My stomach growls; I do enjoy a roast dinner. I slip my running trainers on which were one of just two pairs of shoes that I own aside from my school shoes.

We exit the room and start to walk down the corridor together.

"So...what brings you here to Exton?" Freya asks me as we walk toward the atrium.

"Well...I've lived In London for a while and just felt like I needed a change. I just really needed to get away from the city," I sigh.

"But specifically...why Exton?" Freya presses on. I find this to be a bit of a strange question. It was just a school.

"Umm...I don't know really. I could've gone to a few other places in the area but it just seemed like a good fit. The front page of the website made everyone look so happy here. The Ofsted report on science was also really good-"

I am suddenly interrupted by another dark haired girl who is rapidly running up to us in the corridor.

"Freya! Oh my goddess you won't believe it," she begins excitedly, "Ava! Just now...she...ugh. Freya. It's...Chase," she says, barely able to contain herself.

Obviously I have no idea who Ava or Chase are, or what was going on in the slightest, and I stand there in silence while they have their exchange. Freya's immaculate eyebrows hit her hairline at this news....whatever it was.

"Wait, are you serious, AB? Chase?" Freya exclaims, looking incredulous and immediately pulling her phone out of one of the pockets of her jumpsuit.

"Yep, Chase. Man, Ava is just the luckiest girl, it seems," the girl says with a tut before sighing loudly, her face showing supreme disappointment.

I find the whole exchange utterly confusing and I wonder at what point they'll realise I am still standing here. I start to consider if I should leave or say something as Freya's fingers drum away rapidly on her phone for a minute before she looks up at me quite apologetically.

"Oh, gosh; I am so sorry, Ella...I am being so rude. This, is Annabelle. Well, I tend to call her AB for short. Annabelle, this is Ella, my normal roommate," she says, nodding toward the other girl before continuing down the corridor, still engrossed in her phone.

Did she just call me a normal roommate?

At least she thinks I am normal...

Annabelle is a little shorter in height and has a really cute, straight, shoulder length dark brown bob that suits her amazing bone structure beautifully. She has an almond shaped face and a deep tan, clearly having recently escaped the unpredictable British climate for somewhere far more glorious. Like Freya, she is dressed stylishly and once again I feel a little out of my depth. I notice a sapphire ladies Rolex on her wrist, that her top was definitely pure silk, and her cardigan was clearly made of high quality cashmere. Annabelle was evidently loaded. She smiles at me and offers me her arm.

"Great to meet you Ella, shall we go get some food?" I take a deep breath and nod anxiously, taking her offer of an arm as we follow Freya down the corridor. I am feeling very surprised at how welcoming they have already been. I'd been here less than three hours and already I had two girls treating me like I was their friend.

...and I was pretty happy about that.

Something seemed special about these two girls, they just oozed a level of confidence I could only dream of; I was dying to know what their secret was.

I am floored when we enter the main hall which is located down a corridor off the main atrium. It reminds me more of the main body of a cathedral merged with a conservatory rather than a school hall. It has the same baroque features and ornate elements as the atrium, but instead of a normal ceiling it has a huge glass dome that shows the evening September sky above. It is seriously cool. While I am wondering how on earth they keep the glass so clean, Freya links my arm with hers and marches me over to the food service area on the far wall to get food. Before us is the most delicious looking food. Several types of meat, crispy roast potatoes, fluffy Yorkshire puddings, roasted vegetables, stuffing...my mouth is watering. This did look really good.

"Every. Sunday," Freya says slowly and deliberately, nodding her head with excited eyes as if she can read my mind.

We sit down at 'their table' with our dinner trays and I notice Freya craning her neck to look around the room as if she is looking for someone. I decide to take a look around myself and I soon feel like I have wandered onto the set of a classic American teen movie.

Actually....it is weird.

The girls here all have perfect hair, perfect figures, basically perfect everything. Suddenly, Freya isn't the only modelesque looking person here, not by a long shot.

Was I actually on a movie set right now?

Don't even get me started on the guys.

I am not sure why they weren't all on the front page as the main focus of the website. Holy cow, I'd never seen this many good looking, buff guys all in one place before. The contents of the hall looks like a crowd of models auditioning for a high-end catalogue.

The table next to us features some stereotypical 'giggly girls' who are chatting endlessly about some guy called Austin. In my American teen movie scenario I assume he would be the school heartthrob, who probably plays for school's sports team. The equivalent at my last school wasn't a nice person in the slightest, wasn't particularly intelligent and yet still had girls fawning over him all the time - just because he was good looking. I never got the appeal of arrogance, but each to their own. The more I look around at everyone, the more I am convinced that I have indeed somehow stumbled onto a movie set. I am starting to feel like the plainest person in the entire room as I shrink down into my chair.

"Is it mandatory to work out here or something?" I mutter, as a male student walks past, his pecs and washboard abs being hugged by a tight white t-shirt.

Holy moly.

I feel my cheeks flush unexpectedly. I hadn't bothered to consider boys at all at my last school, but within the past few minutes I have started to think that might need to change.

"Ha...no, but I guess a healthy body means a healthy soul, right?" Freya winks at me, stuffing a whole yorkshire pudding into her mouth.

"If you're up for it, self defence and combat classes are on every morning at six!" Annabelle says happily, pretending to flex a bicep. I choke on my drink.

"Every day?" I ask incredulously, "are you expecting to be attacked or something?" I joke. Freya coughs and clears her throat, just as her phone buzzes loudly on the table.

...

Freya

My skepticism had been right on point, as usual.

Austin's girlfriend Ava had just turned eighteen, but instead of Austin, it turned out her destined mate was Chase instead.

Chase was the recently appointed alpha of his pack, Sapphire Lake, after his dad had been killed during an attack on their pack. Their pack was two counties away and they'd had some issues with a neighbouring pack in recent times.

While I eat my dinner I wonder how Austin is doing.

I knew him well enough to know he was probably pretty damn heartbroken. He wasn't a cold hearted jerk like almost every other Alpha and Beta that went here.

All throughout dinner I look for him, but he doesn't come in for dinner.

Maybe he'd already been?

Would he come later?

Should I just bring him some food to his room if he doesn't want to come down?

Nah...his best friend and roommate, Ollie, would only eat it himself.

I was a little concerned. I was his younger sister but I was quite protective of him, especially now.

I notice Ella watching a group of annoying girls on the table next to us, and I hear them mention my brother's name excitedly several times.

I sigh loudly.

Alpha Lycans did tend to be quite physically attractive, so there had never been a shortage of female admirers for Austin. Now that he was apparently single, it would probably only get worse.

He wasn't going to be interested in any of them.

He had only ever really wanted to find his destined mate. There had been no casual dating or random hookups like every other high-ranking Lycan in our year and above, particularly like his friend Ollie.

Guess Austin is going to be even more of a hot topic now... Mira goads me. She knows I find the worship of him annoying.

Oh good. Well, they're free to waste their time, I guess! I reply sharply.

My phone buzzes on the table; it's a text message from our dad.

Dad: it's disappointing news for Aus, but young love doesn't always equal mates for life. We will have an eighteenth birthday event for him at the school and invite envoys from all the packs.

I snort out loud to myself. Austin would hate a huge party, but actually, that sort of thing was quite commonplace in the bigger packs, and I think it sounds quite fun.

We finish dinner and I head back to my room with Ella after we say goodnight to Annabelle.

Just before I go inside my phone buzzes again. I feel relieved when I see who it's from.

Austin: Usual place?

FINALLY.

"Hey Ella, I'll be back later, I'm just going to meet my brother for a bit. His girlfriend just...well, she...broke up with him. I need to go tend to his emotional wounds the way only a younger sister can," I tell Ella with an apologetic smile before I head back down the corridor.