Ella's Discovery

Austin

I try to stretch out for a fork, but I just can't get close enough. A dark haired she-wolf from my politics class is getting a little too much in my personal space.

"All I'm saying Aus, is that if you're ever up for some no strings fun, just come knock on room two twenty-eight," pouts Camilla Warnford, blocking my route as I stand there with my breakfast tray. Freya definitely had a point the other day, although I'd never admit it to her. This sort of thing was happening every day since Ava had been scooped up by Chase. Actually, it was multiple times a day. In fact, the more I think about it, it is happening a lot.

I had never given it much credence when I'd heard people mention it in the past, but perhaps I really was giving off some strange 'alpha vibe' that I couldn't control.

Regardless, it was getting quite annoying and I wasn't the sort of guy who enjoyed much attention. I sigh a little too loudly before I remind myself that I should at least try to be kind, regardless of how irritated I am right now.

"Uh, see the thing is, I'm just not into casual hookups. I'm really sorry. You are very pretty and I'm sure you're a great person, but I'm just not...looking for...anything," I respond awkwardly, trying my best to reach for a fork. Camilla leans back even further against the table, blocking my access, ignoring what I have just said, entirely. She tosses her long dark hair over her shoulder and looks up at me through her thick, eyelash extensions. I definitely preferred someone who looked more natural, those things looked ridiculous.

"Hmm, but you never know what you're looking for till you try, right? It's a full moon tonight Aus, just let your wolf take over for a night. Enjoy what I have to offer," she says boldly, pouting once more. This was getting so tiring.

I just wanted a fork.

I'll take over and let her know how pissed I am that she is preventing us from eating breakfast, Atlas growls to me, clearly annoyed now too.

I could always count on him to lighten my mood. I smile slightly.

"My wolf is only interested in sausage and black pudding, right now. I'm very sorry," I tell her, leaning dangerously close to her face in order to grab the cutlery from behind her. I raise my eyebrows at her and give her my best apologetic expression before going over to our table to start eating my breakfast.

I slowly chew a piece of sausage as I watch Chase and Ava sitting together a few tables over. They are smiling, laughing, giving loving touches here and there. I feel a little bit like a creepy ex while watching them, but I felt it was only natural given what had happened just ten days ago.

It took the edge off to see that they hadn't marked eachother-yet. Something told me that would probably change after tonight's full moon. I knew not many alphas could avoid the allure of a new mate once the next full moon arrived. Chase could be an ass sometimes but he was generally a good guy, but I was sure that if it was down to him they'd have solidified their bond by now. I realise as I put a piece of bacon into my mouth, that I really don't have any sort of lasting resentment toward him at all, or toward Ava for that matter. They didn't ask for it to happen the way it did.

"Oh come on Aus, you really need to move on," Ollie says to me quietly in annoyance as he takes the seat next to me. I sigh myself at Ollie's lack of empathy.

"Ols, it's quite literally been ten days. We were together for two years. But in any case, I'm actually fine. I just...I mean they could try to be a little more discreet, but I think I am over it," I mutter, taking a gulp of my coffee.

"I do have compassion. I'm just saying...there are at least a hundred fine women in this hall right now who would love to be on your arm...or uh..more accurately, another appendage of yours," Ollie jokes, sweeping his arm out in front of him across the hall grandly, as if gesturing to the masses. I can't help but laugh at him and his dirty humour.

"Uh huh, seriously dude, I get girls asking about you all the time now, man," says Dominic Long, one of our pack's younger gammas, "I'm like...hey girl, I'm available too. I too am a tall, dark and incredibly handsome guy who would love to show you a good time. But no. They only want to know about alpha Aus."

I chuckle a little awkwardly and clear my throat.

"I'm sorry guys, you know me, it just can't be anyone. I just want the one," I say quietly. The guys laugh heartily at me like they usually do and I sigh again. I didn't like talking to them about this sort of stuff for this very reason.

"You're still sticking with that, huh? This is your chance to have some no strings fun before you come of age, and you're seriously not going to take advantage of that? Do you want to have awkward moments with your mate in the future or be a seasoned alpha lover?" Ollie jokes, tucking into some bacon himself.

"Honestly, Aus, you do sound like a teenage girl," Dominic snorts. Ollie bursts out laughing and I roll my eyes. I knew it was actually pretty normal for most alphas to 'play the field' a bit but that just wasn't me. It was largely due to having a very old and very wise wolf spirit. Atlas was unusually level headed for an alpha wolf of his heritage, and I was pretty collected and focussed myself. Together we simply had excellent self control, which couldn't be said for a lot of other alphas my age. I had been with Ava for two years but I hadn't been with Ava, which deeply shocked my friends. As far as they were concerned, if I could, I should. I look back at her and watch her and Chase again for a few minutes.

She genuinely looks happy and he is clearly very caring toward her; more caring than I'd ever seen him be toward any of the other dozen girls I'd seen him with in the past.

Ollie is right, you really need to close this chapter. Get closure and move on, Atlas now interjected.

Great, I was getting accosted from all angles. I was annoyed at them all, but I knew they were right, annoyingly. I did need to move on from this situation entirely.

I know, you're right. Its time to clear the air and get some total closure, I reply.

Indeed. Talk to her. Don't make that moment be your last interaction. They will be our future allies after all, Atlas reminds me wisely.

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I catch up to Ava and Chase at the end of breakfast just as they are leaving the hall.

"Ava, hey, could I please have a quick word?" I ask, feeling a little nervous and very much sounding as such. She shoots a quick glance at Chase before nodding at me with a smile, following me over to the navy sofas in the atrium. A few people whisper to each other as they spot us sitting down. I'm sure everyone knew what had happened, but I just tried to ignore the multiple whisperings over the last week or so. I was sure the human population probably found the situation a lot more dramatic, without any knowledge of what actually happened.

Sitting across from Ava now, my mouth goes dry and a pang of hurt hits me again as I open my mouth to talk. Before I can get any words out, Ava speaks.

"Aus, before you say anything...I am so deeply sorry that everything happened the way that it did. I've been so conflicted all week," she begins, fiddling with her fingers awkwardly on her lap, "I felt so cruel and so ashamed by how it happened. It must have been so awful for you. I really wish it hadn't happened in front of so many people."

She definitely seemed pretty apologetic about it. But she was a good person, so I hadn't expected anything less.

"Yeah, the timing was pretty...well let's be honest, it was pretty dreadful," I laugh. She laughs too for a moment. Her expression then softens as she speaks.

"I, like you, believed we were going to be mates, but I guess the moon goddess just had other plans for us," she says with a small shrug.

I nod slowly while staring at the floor, but then look up at her lovely face once more.

"Are you happy?" I ask. Her face thankfully lights up at my question.

"Oh, absolutely! Oh Aus, I hope you find your mate soon. It really is just incredible. I had no idea just how strong the bond could be. How much we affect each other, how much stronger we make each other. Everything just feels so intense," she says, her face and eyes full of excitement. Her expression then changes a little as if she felt she'd said the wrong thing.

"I don't say that to make you feel sad about what happened with us," she continues, "but I genuinely cannot wait for you to experience it. I just want total and complete happiness for you. You are one of the best people I will ever know, and you deserve someone truly amazing. You are going to make an incredible alpha someday, and your Luna is going to be an incredible woman, I just know it."

She puts her hand on mine and gives it a squeeze. I smile at her warmly and I realise that even though it had only been ten days, I really wasn't as upset about it as I thought I was. I was really glad I had spoken to her.

"You were always going to make an excellent Luna, Ava," I tell her truthfully, "Sapphire Lake has gained a very valuable and all-round good person."

She looks touched by my words.

"Thanks Aus, that means a lot. I know this isn't what either of us expected, but I hope we can still be friends. Sapphire Lake is a great pack and Chase and I would love for us to strengthen our existing relationship with the Golden Lycans, once you take over," Ava replies, tossing her glossy black hair over her shoulder.

"You'll have to wait a few years for that, my dad isn't quite ready to move on to being headmaster of the school," I laugh.

"Yes, I can't quite picture Leo sitting up there in the round office, he's definitely more of a practical, 'on his feet' sort of man," she agrees with a smile.

"I've got to head to class, but I'm really glad we've talked, Ava," I tell her, standing up. I am about to go when she pulls me into a final hug. It feels nice and familiar, but I notice it doesn't feel quite right now either; like two jigsaw pieces that didn't quite fit together.

For the first time in ten days, I felt like things really had worked out for the best.

The bell rings just as I pull away from Ava, and I give her a polite nod. Then, I was off to class, more specifically, Lycan politics, a must for any budding young alpha and other higher ranking wolves. It was probably one of my most boring classes but equally one that was the most important. When I did take over the pack I would need this knowledge behind me. Our pack was the third largest in the United Kingdom, and being their leader would be a big responsibility. It was a class Ollie was able to come to, so at least I had someone to talk to at times when I felt like ramming my head into the wall.

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As the day wore on I felt the familiar itch setting in more and more that we felt every full moon. The itch to shift. We could shift at will after the first full moon since the onset of puberty, but every full moon it was just something we had to do. We had to shift for our wolf spirit's wellbeing, and part of that was to howl at the moon in reverence to our moon goddess. Shifting allowed them to take over and quite literally stretch their legs. I used to dread it, as it was painful the first few times. But now, it wasn't a problem and I genuinely enjoyed being in my Lycan form. I could take a backseat and Atlas was able to run, hunt, and do his own thing for several hours.

After another mentally intensive politics class in the afternoon, I was finally done for the day. I spot Ella at one of the vending machines across the atrium, her long blonde hair standing out quite obviously in a high ponytail. I stop and I watch her, inwardly amused at the thought that there was a spell in place every full moon to prevent the humans from realising what was going on outside. Usually, they were compelled to watch a movie, and I wonder as I watch her, what Ella and the other humans would be doing in blissful ignorance this evening, while the rest of us shifted outside in the grounds.

I continue to watch her, and that is when I start to notice that her body language suggests that she is stressed and acutely agitated. She angrily hits one of the vending machines pretty hard with a loud bang, before ducking down to grab her purchase.

Any time I'd seen her she had been so calm and collected, so this didn't seem like normal behaviour for her at all. Something had to be wrong. Regardless of Freya's nonsensical order, I am about to head over to see if she is okay, when one of the science teachers approaches her, handing her a note before walking away.

She opens it and whatever she reads on the note makes her sink to the floor and put her face into her hands. I hesitate for a moment, knowing Freya wouldn't be happy at all if I were to go over to her, but she was clearly having some sort of crisis.

I decide to go over to her, to see if there is anything I can do to help.

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Ella

I need chocolate, or anything delicious and sugary, really.

After what I had just read in the library, I was shaking and I needed something sugary and comforting...and fast. The world as I thought I knew it, was totally different now, and I needed to process what I had just discovered. My chocolate bar irritatingly gets stuck on it's way out, so I promptly hit the machine in anger.

This was so not the time for a classic vending machine f**k up.

Thankfully, my angry gesture dislodges it and it falls to the bottom. I stand up after securing my chocolate bar, to find one of my science teachers wordlessly handing me a note before swiftly walking away. I hesitate for a moment before I slowly open the note, breathing in sharply when I read the words.

Headmasters Office, 3pm

I gulp and I feel my blood run cold.

Did the headmaster somehow know that I knew?

...but how could he know?

My mouth goes dry as I sink to the floor by the vending machine. I put my face in my hands. I suddenly feel so isolated, heavily confused and now more than a little afraid as I reflect on what had just happened...

I had been in the library for the past hour or so, doing research for an essay for biology class. The library was vast and definitely better stocked than my previous school. It also had that classic 'really old books live here' type of smell. A library smell.

Weirdly, down a number of the aisles, I had seen several students engaged in some serious lip locking activities in addition to some heavy groping. I wasn't sure what the appeal of the library was for that activity, but thankfully, the aisle that I needed was entirely empty.

I had walked slowly down the aisle scanning the shelves alphabetically for a book about the lymphatic system when I stopped abruptly in my tracks, as my eyes had fallen on a book titled 'Lycan History: 19th Century'.

I hesitated at first, but then I plucked it off the shelf and I opened it, scanning the index before flicking through a few pages here and there.

Suddenly I had frozen, as my eyes fell on one page in particular.

There, on the page, was a very old photograph of a group of men, one of whom I recognised immediately. I'd seen those kind eyes and beard before, although they were clearly much younger in this photograph and their beard wasn't white here. I read the description,

'The General Council members of 1905: L to R: Orion Landry, South of England Ambassador...'

I had looked up from the book and done some quick mental math. He looked around twenty in the photograph, but that was impossible. For if he was around twenty in that photo, that would make him nearly one hundred and fifty years old now in twenty twenty-two. The book fell from my hands as they began to tremble. I breathed deeply a few times to level myself before picking the book back up and shoving it back on the shelf along with a few other titles:

Lycans on Screen: Fact & Fiction

Lycanthrope Law: Pack Law

Sociology of Lycans

Ethics & Procedures of Lycan Leadership

I had looked and there were at least three shelves of books all around the topic of Lycans. I could have ignored one book, but not an entire section.

I then glanced around, seeing one of the librarians smiling at me as she continued to catalogue returned books. I stood there for a few minutes against the wall opposite the shelves, my heart hammering in my chest, considering what I had just found out.

My school's headmaster was quite possibly decades older than the oldest person on the planet. He was featured in a book about lycanthropy, which was a fancy word for a supposedly mythical creature.

It could just be some sort of ridiculous joke.

But then...suddenly...several things had made sense; how intensely wolves featured around the school, the horrid black wolves on my run during my first week, the chestnut coloured wolf who seemed to be protecting me...why the male population of the school looked as if steroids were being slipped into their morning coffee...everyone here was so beautiful...no normal school cohort looked the way they did here, something had definitely felt off since I had arrived here.

I had then faltered at the next thought that popped into my head.

Freya.

Did this mean she was Lycan if the headmaster was?

Was Annabelle?

Was everyone here?

I suddenly felt light headed and I needed air. I also just really needed something comforting to calm me down and ground me. Chocolate was my go-to.

I fled the library and went straight to the vending machines, my mind reeling over what I had just discovered.