

# Healing the Broken Alpha

## Chapter 1 – Healing the Broken Alpha

“Sit down, Lenora.”

My grandfather’s voice was unusually harsh as I hesitated near the door of his office. He was pacing back and forth in front of the dark window. Although he was eighty-one this year, he was still as strong and agile as a man half his age. Only the deep lines on his face and his tired eyes revealed his advanced years.

Across from me, my older brother Jenson lounged carelessly in his chair, one leg kicked over the arm, while he swirled a glass of alcohol in his hand.

I sat nervously, and gripped the bottom of the chair with my fingers. They never called me in the office, never involved me with pack business, so I couldn’t imagine why they had called for me when it was almost bedtime.

My grandfather stopped in front of his desk. “This is outrageous,” he ranted, continuing a conversation with my brother that I had not been privy to. “No self-respecting she-wolf would agree to mate that man.”

“Of course not,” Jenson took a gulp of his drink and then looked at me with a derisive sneer. “That’s why he’s asking for Lenni.”

My eyes bounced between the two men, and my brain tried to catch up. “Who is asking for me?”

“Alpha Blackstone.”

My fingers tightened around my chair. “But, he’s–” I couldn’t speak the words out loud. Everyone knew that something terrible had happened to River Blackstone, although details were always vague and speculative. It was said that the once powerful Alpha was now little more than a vegetable.

“That’s right,” my brother continued, with a malicious gleam in his eye. “His father called today. They want to negotiate a mating alliance.”

“It’s preposterous,” my grandfather muttered. “We have to refuse.”

Jenson brought the glass to his lips. He would have been a handsome man, if he wasn’t so slovenly. His messy hair, unshaven face, and stained shirt all detracted from his appearance. My brother drained the last of the alcohol in his glass and slammed it down on the armrest. “They are willing to forgive all of Father’s debts in exchange for you. Almost half a million dollars. Which is far more than what you’re worth, if you ask me.”

I let his insults wash over me without flinching. His low opinion of me was nothing new, and his barbed comments were not surprising. I still couldn’t quite understand though. A mating alliance? Forgiving debts? What did that have to do with me? I watched my grandfather’s face closely.

My brother could talk all he wanted, but he wasn’t the Alpha yet.

Grandfather sighed and came to stand in front of me, looking down at me with an expression of regret. He began to spell it out for me. “The Blackstone family has offered to clear all of our family’s debts in exchange for a mating alliance between our packs. In short, Lenni, they want you to marry Alpha Blackstone.”

I sat back in the chair as though someone had pushed me, and all the breath rushed out of my lungs. A hundred questions rolled through my head, but when I opened my mouth, the only words that squeaked out were, “But why?”

“Blackstone is in a precarious position,” my grandfather explained, “With their alpha disabled, the entire pack is weak and vulnerable. No doubt they are looking to strengthen their alliances with the surrounding packs to protect themselves from any rivals who would take this opportunity to challenge them. And having a Luna will give the people hope and confidence that River Blackstone will recover, or at least produce an heir.”

I squeezed my eyes shut. Produce an heir. I knew what that meant. “Please,” my voice came out brokenly, “Don’t make me do this.”

I saw compassion in Grandfather’s pale blue eyes. He started to open his mouth, but my brother spoke first.

“How can you be so selfish, Lenora? Sometimes in life we have to make sacrifices for the greater good. Think of everything Grandfather has done for you since Dad died. Now it’s your turn. For once, you can do something useful for this family!”

I swallowed thickly. It wasn’t selfish to want to live my own life, I knew that. And yet when I looked at my grandfather, I saw the way his strong shoulders were sagging under the burdens that my father had left him. When my father had died unexpectedly, he’d left our family and our pack in a terrible mess. I couldn’t even imagine how my father had managed to rack up a half a million dollar debt to the Blackstone Pack.

“I can’t force you,” my grandfather said, looking into my eyes. “It’s up to you to choose whether or not to accept this offer.”

Somehow, that was even worse. All of the responsibility now lay with me. And all of the blame.

I could refuse. I could leave my family saddled with a huge debt. Or, I could, like my brother pointed out, do something useful for a change.

“Look Lenni,” my brother went on, his tone soft and wheedling like he was trying to convince a toddler to eat his vegetables. “River Blackstone is sick and weak. His wolf is gone. I hear people say that he isn’t expected to live much longer. All you have to do is stick it out for a year, maybe two at best, and then he’ll kick the bucket, and you’ll be free!”

I cringed at his cold assessment. “But...I’m not fit to be a luna.”

Jenson snorted, “You’ve got that right! I’m sure they don’t expect anything from you. It’s all for show. Blackstone’s brother has been running everything since he collapsed, and he’ll take over once River is dead. All you have to do is sit there, look pretty, and pretend to be a doting mate.”

“But I—” Before I could refuse, something dark and terrible flashed in my brother’s eyes. Grandfather had his back turned, so he couldn’t see my brother’s face.

I knew then that if I didn’t accept this arrangement, he would make my life a living hell, even more than it already was.

My grandfather was giving me a choice. My brother was taking it away.

I looked down at the floor just to get away from the hatred and the promise of violence in Jensen’s eyes. “Maybe it won’t be so bad,” I said quietly, trying to reassure myself more than anything. I took a deep fortifying breath and looked up at my grandfather. “I’ll do it.”