

Succumbing

Riley POV

Something is going on. Even as hidden as I am, I've managed to gather that Alpha Rowan's pack has been merging with ours. It lls me with fear. What we are doing is going against Alpha Jaxon's directives and I know instinctively that we will pay the price. There is no way that my father's plan is going to work. All it will do is infuriate the Alpha that much more. He will bring his wrath upon us and all of us will suffer for my father's arrogance. I will no doubt suffer the most, for being his daughter and having his bloodline. It won't matter that I had nothing to do with it. I sit on my threadbare mattress and contemplate running away, but suspect that with the added patrol and new pack members, I wouldn't make it far.

Damien comes down, holding a paper bag in his hand. My stomach rumbles. Food. My mouth salivate even as I try to keep the hopeful gleam in my eyes. Damien is never nice for free. There is always a price to be had or strings attached. He laughs out loud at me, seeing the crumpledness of my clothes and the dishevelledness of my hair.

"What's up useless" he mocks, inging the bag so hard that it hits me right in the face.

As usual, I do not answer but he knows better than to expect one. I can't talk after all.

"I'm only bringing this because Father wants you to eat. Not sure why he's showing a sudden concern for you" he said with a glower "and I don't appreciate being treated like a damn servant in order to bring it to you. It should be an omega's job but Father wants you kept out of damn sight."

I slowly begin to open the bag. I expect moldy food, soggy food, or something completely inedible despite my father's orders. Instead, I'm greeted with something reminiscent of a feast. Two cheese and pickle sandwiches, which were my favorite sandwiches when I was a small child. A packet of crisps. An apple and a juice box. It's more food than I've had in months. My stomach growls in anticipation and my mouth waters. But I'm suspicious and I look at my brother who shrugs.

"Father's orders," he said with grimness "who knows" he added gleefully "maybe it's a last meal or something."

He joked but it could be the truth. I glance back at the bag, not sure if I'm hungry anymore. But if it's a last meal then it would be foolish to waste it. Wouldn't it? I was so hungry that tears were coming to my eyes. My stomach was like a gaping hole. I took a tentative bite of the sandwich and tasted nothing sinister. There was no strange aftertaste. Nothing that tasted as though it shouldn't be there. I took another bite, my stomach urging me to continue. I was hungry, no I was ravenous. I was starving. Before I could so much as blink, I had polished off the rst sandwich while Damien sat down and watched with an impatient look on his face. I ignored him.

My hands shook as I picked up the second sandwich and began to devour it. I tore off huge chunks, unable to prevent myself from doing it. It was like I was transxed by the food. When was the last time I had a proper meal like this? The last time I had eaten so well? I couldn't remember. The second sandwich was polished off. I began to eat the apple next, almost moaning as the sweetness of its juice hit my tastebuds. The apple was fresh and juicy. The skin was ripe and a delectable red. I chewed, trying to slow down a little and savor it.

"God, could you be any more of a pig" Damien muttered in disgust.

I xed my eyes on him. If I was a pig, it was because I wasn't fed enough, I wanted to shout. Besides, if anyone was a pig, it was him. He ate much worse at the dining table. I nished the last bite of the apple, reluctantly putting the core back in the bag. I couldn't eat it. My mouth was parched. I began to sip at the juice box and then opened the bag of crisps, carefully placing the rst one in my mouth and listening to the loud crunching sounds as I bit into it.

Heaven. Salty goodness. I ate much slower now, my stomach beginning to feel satiated and if I were honest, bloated due to not eating this much in a long time. I felt like a chipmunk trying to squirrel food away for winter. Damien just shook his head at me in disgust.

"Honestly, I can't believe we're related sometimes."

Neither could I. Damien looked more like my father while I looked like my mother, or at least that's the assumption I made. I preferred it that way. Why would I want to look like the people who made my life a living hell, day by day? Why would I want to be associated with them? I would rather be related to somebody who was kind and compassionate. But this pack was lled with cruel and inhumane pack members. Honestly, I thought with a sudden spurt of viciousness, it wouldn't be the worst thing in the world if Alpha Jaxon forcibly took over this pack. It might be a horrible thing for me to think that way, but there was no kindness to be found here. This pack was vicious and cold-blooded. Just like my father.

I methodically chewed on the crisps. My brother shifted on his bottom scowling.

"Would you hurry up already?" he barked.

I looked at him, raising a brow. I suppose I should be grateful he wasn't brandishing the remote control for the dog collar at me. Either he had forgotten it or he just wasn't in the mood to use it. Either way, I was glad. I tried to eat a little faster to show my appreciation as he grunted and glanced away. But eating the salty food just made my throat dry and my thirst increase.

I began to drink the last of the juice. I was nished. I glanced regretfully at the paper bag, wishing I had kept some food for later, but I suspected Damien would not allow me to. "You're such a pig" Damien snapped, reaching out and taking the offending garbage off me.

I waited for him to leave. It wasn't customary for him to stay and keep me company, but he seemed hesitant to go. Strange. I glanced at him. There was a shifty expression on his face. What was going on? Why was he acting so peculiar? I made a gesture at him.

"Shut up" he snarled "I'll go when I'm good and ready to."

I felt like an animal on display as he sat there. It felt like he was waiting for something. But what? I blinked. My body was starting to feel a little off. Like it was oating. My eyes widened and I reached out a hand to try and steady myself. I fell to the oor, on my back, my eyes staring up at the ceiling.

"About time it started to take effect. I must not have put in a high enough dose for it to work quickly enough" my brother's voice was positively callous as he stood up and then moved, kicking me in the legs and causing a sharp stab of pain to shoot through me.

What was happening to me? I tried to move my arms and legs, but they refused to cooperate or obey me. They felt like leaden weights. Damien had done this, I realized with dawning horror. The juice box had been dosed with some sort of drug or poison. No wonder he had sat there and waited. He was making sure it took effect. I felt like an i***t. I should never have eaten that food, but if I hadn't, he no doubt would have made me. Damien moved so that he was standing above me, his face towering high above me as I looked up at it. There was a vicious grin on my face.

"I thought the last meal thing would have been some sort of clue, but it went right over your pretty little head didn't it Riley?" he mocked, his eyes gleaming "you really are pathetic" he chortled.

Last meal? Had it been poison I had consumed? Was this nally the end of me? Was my father nally ridding himself of my presence? Why now? I wanted to form the words but they would not come. Instead, my vision became blurred as Damien c****d his head at me. "At least you'll prove useful before you nally die" he murmured, "so you're good for something at least."

My vision began to dim. I felt him kick me hard in the midsection, my body reexively curling in on itself. Darkness began to surround me. Damien knelt by my ear, his voice chilling. "I can't wait until you wake up and realize exactly what use we have for you. Alpha Rowan is about to be dealt with and he's just as foolish and stupid as you are. Father and I are going to have the strongest pack in the country and it's going to be all thanks to you and that poor, pathetic, Alpha Rowan. How ironic is that?" he said chuckling darkly, straightening up as I stared at him in horror.

I succumbed to the darkness and heard no more.