

Prologue

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"Daddy!" Alyssa exclaimed, her blonde hair wet from the water as she swam in the lake behind Alistair Evans mansion.

Alistair, alpha of the Silver Creek Pack, sat on a lawn chair reading over some ocial documents. Her mother sat next to him.

"You're doing wonderful! What a nice cannonball!" Alyssa's mother praised. Alistair's mate and Luna looked towards him, expecting him to praise his 6-year-old daughter.

Instead, Alistair Evans remained xated on whatever he was reading.

"Daddy look!" Alyssa yelled again.

Alistair didn't look up.

"You could atleast pretend to be interested," hissed the Luna.

Alyssa looked up briedy, barely glancing at Alyssa before mumbling, "That's nice dear."

Alyssa's face fell as she realized that Alistair could care less what she was doing. Quietly, the little girl went back to swimming and didn't ask him to look her way again.

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"She got straight As again!" Alyssa's teacher said proudly during the parent-teacher conference.

Alyssa looked over, happy her father had, for once, decided to attend a PTM. But Alistair wasn't even paying attention to the teacher. Instead, he'd walked over to where another fellow Alpha was standing with his own son and started to talk to him conversationally. Her face became devoid of emotion while her mother began talking to the teacher.

It wasn't until they were on their way home that the argument ensued.

" You only came today to get a chance to talk the Alpha of the Crimson Phoenix Pack!" Mrs. Evans exclaimed accusingly.

"So what if I did?" Alistair snarled, swerving ercely as he turned the car onto pack lands. "He's alpha of a neighboring pack and I needed an opening to talk to him. We need to start negotiating and making alliances. I've heard he's looking to make alliances with packs. It will only make us stronger to be on good terms with him."

"But today was supposed to be about Alyssa! Not pack politics!"

"I'm an alpha and responsible for making sure the pack comes rst!" Alistair yelled. "She got good grades, that's all ne and dandy but one day she's going to get a mate and leave the pack. She will leave us! I need a son!"

Alyssa's mother pursed her lips together, guilt evident in her eyes. She had had Alyssa after multiple miscarriages.

"You know I'm trying," the Luna mumbled, wiping tears from her eyes.

Alyssa felt tears of her own gather. She wasn't a son and couldn't help her father.

"Try harder!" Alistair yelled, getting out of the car and slamming the car door behind him as he stalked inside.

Alyssa quietly creeped over and patted her mother's shoulder comfortingly.

"Oh Alyssa," her mother sobbed into her hands. "I'm such a failure. I can't give your father children anymore.I've tried but-but-but-" The Luna stuttered before collapsing in on herself and crying uncontrollably.

Alyssa did her best to comfort Mrs. Evans. But she was only 8 and couldn't help but wonder why the moon goddess simply hadn't made her a boy. It would have saved everyone a lot of trouble.

Alyssa couldn't help but remember the last time her mother miscarried. Alistair had been out on a meeting and his Luna had suffered a massive miscarriage. She'd hemorrhaged severely with only Alyssa to witness it. Alyssa could still remember the distinct smell of blood pouring in rivulets from between her mother's legs. She could still remember her mother's cries of pain as she miscarried her fourth child since Alyssa had been born. But this time, it had been much worse.

Finally, Alyssa had managed to call for help and the pack beta arrived to take the Luna to the pack inrmay. Alyssa still shuddered when she recalled that her mother had almost lost her life. After that, Alyssa had pleaded with her mother not to get pregnant again. But it seemed like the Luna was still trying. Trying but failing miserably.

Alyssa pathetically realized that she was of no use to anyone. Her father was always angry and her mother was suffering. All because Alyssa wasn't a boy.

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"Oh! I thought Daddy was in here," Alyssa said.

She'd walked into her father's study to give him a copy of this morning's newspaper. By the age of 12, Alyssa had long ago realized that the main way to get her father's attention was to be of use to him. So she'd made it her duty to give him the morning paper before going to school. He'd thank her, tell her to behave in school and shoo her off. It was the only time he really talked to her.

"Who are you sugar?" asked the 35-year-old man sitting in Alistair Evans study.

He was an alpha of a strong pack that had a meeting with Alistair this morning.

"My name's Alyssa," Alyssa stated, smoothing down the dress she was wearing. "He's usually in his study by this time. I can nd him for you?" Alyssa offered.

"Sugar just sit here and tell me more about yourself," the alpha said smoothly, patting the empty spot on the couch next to him. "I bet you're a smart girl. You're pretty too."

She didn't notice the way he leered at her underdeveloped chest or long legs. She didn't see the way he licked his lips when she bit her small lip undecidedly. She'd be late for school if she dawdled here any longer.

"Alyssa!" boomed Alistair's voice from just outside his study.

Alyssa jumped. Displeasure was evident in her father's voice.

"I'm here!" Alyssa exclaimed, not wanting to upset her father. He yelled a lot when he got upset and broke things sometimes. She opened the door to his study to leave only to nd her father standing on the other side.

"What are you doing here!" snarled Alistair. " Your mother is looking for you. You'll be late for school!"

Alyssa hung her head, ashamed of angering her father.

"Alyssa was just telling me what a wonderful alpha you are," the man stood up and walked over to Alistair. " You've got an amazing child here."

Alistair suddenly stood up straighter.

"Andrew, I didn't know you'd arrived," Alistair said calmly, the complete opposite of the screaming man he'd been seconds ago. He xed his stare on Alyssa sternly. "I hope you were not bothering Mr. Wells with your silly stories."

Alyssa shook her head while Andrew spoke up.

"Not at all! I enjoyed her time. In fact, she promised me a boat ride on the lake behind your mansion. Sounds like a delightful idea!"

Alistair relaxed visibly, happy that this important alpha hadn't been pestered by his daughter. He xed his gaze on Alyssa.

"Maybe we'll take Mr. Wells on the boat this coming weekend," he suggested, looking down at Alyssa politely.

Alyssa nodded, happy that Alistair was actually looking at her. Her father never looked at her the way he was looking at her now. Like she was doing something right. Like she wasn't a total disappointment.

"Off you go now. You've got school," Alistair said, patting the top of her blonde head affectionately.

Alyssa smiled brightly, walking off and unable to believe that her father had actually talked to her for more than ve seconds. For once, he'd actually noticed her!

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Mr. Wells was an important Alpha her father was trying to form an alliance with. And Mr. Wells seemed to enjoy Alyssa's company. He didn't have a mate and didn't have any children. He said he enjoyed spending time with Alistair's family.

"You're a lucky man," Andrew said groy one day as he sat with Alistair out back grilling burgers.

A couple of other men were over too. It was a nice reprieve for all of them since they all held important positions in their packs ranging from alpha to beta and even gamma.

"I don't have a son," Alistair said sadly.

"You have a wonderful family," Andrew retorted. "Take it from me. I'm completely alone." He looked back at the house where Alistair's wife and daughter resided. "It's hard being alone," he murmured.

Alistair wanted to disagree. He might as well be alone since he didn't have a son, but held his tongue as all the other men around them agreed with Andrew's comment.

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"Daddy's not home," Alyssa stated, letting Mr. Wells into the house.

Her mom had gone out on Luna business and Alyssa had just gotten home from school.

"I know," Mr. Wells said smoothly. "I was hoping you could help me? I needed to nd an important document in his study?"

"I can try," Alyssa replied meekly.

She wasn't allowed to poke around in her father's study.

"It's just a draft for the alliance we're supposed to sign. I lost my copy and decided he'd probably have a copy at his house." Mr. Wells said conversationally as he walked with Alyssa.

She didn't know it, but his eyes were focused on her tiny butt. She was wearing skinny jeans and a tank top. Her blonde hair was in two braids and her tiny blue eyes were scrunched up in concentration as she tried to think of the different places her father might have put the important papers..

Andrew's eyes lit up as they entered the study and Alyssa shut the door behind her. For a few minutes, they looked over Alistair's desk together until Andrew found it.

"Here it is! You're such a good helper," Andrew praised.

Alyssa smiled. "Anytime Mr. Wells!"

"Please, call me Andy," Andrew said kindly, sitting down on the couch and inviting Alyssa to sit next to him.

Alyssa did so without hesitation. Mr. Wells often came over and her father always encouraged her to be nice to him. Hopefully, he'd say a few good words about her to her dad.

"You're such a smart girl," Andrew whispered, his hand coming to pat her head affectionately. "Such a pretty girl," Andrew added, his hand going down to stroke her neck. "Like a tiny doll," he murmured huskily.

Alyssa blushed, feeling uncomfortable with the way his ngers skimmed her neck. Then they carefully wandered over to the strap of her tank top.

"Can you read this sugar?" Andrew asked, handing her the document.

Alyssa nodded proudly. She was one of the best readers in her class!

"Alliance agreement between-" Alyssa suddenly gasped as Andrew's hand dipped down below the neckline of her tank top..

"Between?" Mr. Wells encouraged, as if nothing he'd done was out of the normal. Alyssa's mind blanked, her body unable to move and her voice unable to cry out in protest.

"B-b-between Silver Creek Pack-" Alyssa's voice trembled.

Mr. Wells licked his lips.

"And?" he prompted.

"And the Two Moon Pack," Alyssa ended in a low voice.

Humiliation was evident in her voice. He was touching her inappropriately and she couldn't do anything about it.

"You're such a good girl," Mr. Wells crooned. "I'll be sure to tell your daddy just how good you are. Come here sugar."

Mr. Wells pulled her into his lap. Alyssa dared not move and anger him. He'd say something bad about her to her father and all the wonderful attention Alistair had been giving her would disappear. Alyssa scrunched her eyes shut as Mr. Wells tried to elicit a reaction out of her.

By the time Alyssa's mother arrived home, Mr. Wells had left. But he'd promised to come back again tomorrow and he'd tell her dad what a good girl she was.

Alyssa wasn't sure if she liked what he did or not. It felt good, but was it right? It felt wrong too. But when Mr. Wells returned the next day, promising he'd convince her father to spend more time with her, Alyssa complied. Afterall, her father thought very highly of Mr. Wells.

When Alistair Evans returned from his trip, Mr. Wells told him that Alyssa had helped him nd the draft document and that he was ready to proceed with the alliance.

"You've got a smart girl there. Don't underestimate her. She's going to do great things!" Andy (as she'd started calling him) exclaimed. "It's thanks to her this alliance is going happen."

Pleased that his daughter had been instrumental in helping Alistair form his rst alliance, Alistair looked at Alyssa fondly.

"Yup, that's my Alyssa. She's the smartest kid in a low class," Alistair said proudly, pung out his chest proudly. "Her teacher says she's gifted!"

Alistair looked at Alyssa and smiled down at her. Alyssa beamed. Thanks to Andy, her father was nally seeing her for who she really was.

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"Alyssa, what's wrong with you honey?" Mrs. Evan asked worriedly. "You've started looking like you're sick! I heard you throwing up the other day. And you're always so tired! Are you not sleeping properly?"

Alyssa looked up at her mother sadly. Andy had stopped visiting after signing the alliance agreement. She missed him and how he always involved her in conversations with her father.

"I'll be ne, mother," Alyssa said, brushing off Mrs. Evans worried remarks.

She rubbed her eyes tiredly. She really did feel tired lately and always felt like she was going to throw up. She could barely stomach her breakfast these days. Alyssa got up and tiredly grabbed her bag for school.

"You haven't eaten anything!" Mrs. Evans protested.

"I'm not hungry," Alyssa snapped crabbiy.

She made her way to the front door, waiting for her mother to follow. But before Alyssa could realize what was happening, she'd fallen into a dead faint.

When she woke up, her face bruised from the fall, she was in the pack hospital. Mrs. Evans lips were a thin stern line as she sat next to Alyssa.

"What happened?" Alyssa asked groggily. She winced, her face hurt.

"You fainted and fell at on your face," Mrs. Evans said tersely, leveling Alyssa with a glare. "How could you do something like this Alyssa?"

"Do something like what?" Alyssa asked in confusion.

She was sick and her mother was looking at her like she'd committed an unforgivable sin! It wasn't her fault she'd fainted! Instead being worried, her mother was blaming her!

"You're such a responsible girl. I never expected something like this from you!" Mrs. Evan exclaimed, standing up angrily.

"What are you talking about mom?" Alyssa asked hysterically. "You're not making any sense!"

Mrs. Evans gave her daughter a hard , stern look. It was then that, completely thunderstruck, Alyssa realized the full repercussions of her actions.

"What will your father say when he nds out?" Mrs. Evans asked wearily.

Alyssa's face became panic-stricken. Her father...would never forgive her. He'd look at her as if she was the biggest disappointment of his entire life. Because that's how he'd always looked at her until Andy had entered the picture and helped him see that she was of use. No...if her father ever found out....

"Please-" Alyssa begged. "Please...dad can't nd out!"

Mrs. Evans shook her head sadly. What were they going to do now?

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Alyssa lay in her room, her face streaked with tears. There was a discreet knock on her door before Alistair entered.

"Honey?"

There was serious concern in his voice. Alyssa sat up in bed, rubbing her face and hoping she looked presentable.

"Yeah Dad?"

Alistair walked over to his daughter worriedly, taking in her pale and gaunt face.

"Your mother says you haven't been well. I just wanted to check in on you."

"I'll be ne Dad," Alyssa assured, leaning back in bed.

"You were in the hospital for three days," Alistair murmured. " I think you need a break. You study all the time and work so hard during cheerleading practices."

He got out a pamphlet from his back pocket and handed it to her. Alyssa stared down at a resort in Bali.

"I told your mother once you're feeling better, the both of you should go on a vacation," Alistair suggested. "I'll book the dates and talk with your teachers. You need a week off for yourself."

Alyssa looked up at her father.

"Will you be coming?" she asked anxiously.

Alistair shook his head.

"You girls go enjoy yourselves. I've got important pack work to look after."

And with that, he kissed her forehead tenderly before turning and leaving the room.

Alyssa threw the pamphlet across the room. She didn't want a week in Bali with just her mother. She wanted her father too. He was worried about her, that much was evident. But not worried enough to go with her and spend quality time with her.

Sadly, she thought back to the three torturous days she'd spent in the hospital, bleeding profusely. All because she wanted her father to keep thinking she was the perfect daughter.

Breaking down into uncontrollable tears, Alyssa cried herself to sleep.