

1. Alana, the abused

Alana.

"Hey monster! Catch!"

I opened my hand in an instinct to try to catch the mongrels and scraps of food thrown by Sophia from the hole in my prison in the basement.

It was a half-bitten stale bread with molds all over it but instead of throwing it away, my mouth began watering and I devoured the bread like a hungry beast that I am. It's my first meal for the week. They only gave me half a glass of water for the whole day and that was only yesterday. Now, I have nothing but a growling stomach and since this morning, I've been throwing up acid because I haven't eaten for days.

"Yuck! She really ate it!" Sophia laughed loudly and invited her friends to take a peek at my sorry state below.

Sophia is my step-sister, a daughter from the marriage my father had with a young single mother when my mother died after giving birth to me.

"Didn't she know it was my dog food? Hey Alana monster! You are just like a mutt! A mutt!"

All of them laughed in chorus but I was too hungry to mind it. I need to eat because I am famished. I need to survive no matter what, even though I don't know what purpose I have to keep on living.

Everybody in the pack resents me. Nobody even wants to look at me every time I am paraded in the streets like a criminal to mark my mother's death anniversary.

"Hey Alana, did you know that the alpha prince is coming to the mansion for dinner? He will be attending the ceremony. All of the girls are invited so he could pick a future wife from all of us," Justine, one of Sophia's friends and the daughter of our pack's beta, said. "And you're the only one who can't go there."

I didn't reply and just continued munching on my food.

I already heard it yesterday when Minerva, my stepmom, boasted to me that the son of the alpha king is coming to ask Sophia's hand for marriage and that my father prepared a sumptuous festive dinner for them.

"I... It's okay," I said, trembling in hunger when the scraps barely filled my stomach.

I don't want to see whoever that is. I just want to eat real food. It's been a year since I tasted meat and vegetables. And it came from a guest who took pity on me.

"Of course you cannot be there! I'm sure the alpha prince won't look at you twice. You are the most horrendous-looking person in the entire world!"

"I know," I said while getting back into my curled position on the dirty floor. I'm sure he won't even want to look at me.

I don't know what bath is and I haven't changed my clothes since last month. I stink in contrast with the alpha prince whom I imagined to be a handsome, strong alpha.

All I knew was that I had to endure more of this just so my father would accept me. He said he would accept me back as his daughter if I behaved well according to his standards.

One of Sophia's friends regurgitated food out of her mouth and threw it at me while the other one was recording the scene on her phone.

"Here you go mutt! Eat this too!"

The squad laughed again when I took out the wet undigested bread that was stuck in my hair and smelled it and set it aside. No, I can't eat it.

"Eat it! Eat it!" they chanted.

"Damn you!" Sophia shouted from above when she saw that I did not obey her friend. "Why did you throw it away! Didn't you hear what she said? She said you should eat it! So take that again and eat it!"

But I did not move and just stared up at them. Why are they outside while I am rotting here alone? Does it mean their parents do not love them?

"Sophia, I thought she was not a picky eater. Why won't she eat my vomit?"

"Wait, I'll come down and I'll show her what will happen if she won't obey me. Give me the key!"

The guard opened the door of my cage and Sophia, with her dainty and beautifully-made fingernails, dug into my hair as she pushed me to the ground where the vomit was.

"I said eat it!" she screamed while laughing as she held me down towards the ground, forcing me to eat the vomit on the dirt. "Don't embarrass me in front of my friends!"

She kicked my butt and I lost my balance as I fell directly into the vomit crying helplessly and silently.

"You will obey everything I tell you to do because I am the princess of this pack and I am the favorite of my daddy, you understand me?" she asked in a laughing tone clearly enjoying my suffering.

"N-No," I said, trying to keep my head from touching the ground anymore.

I moved my head to free my hair from her gripping tight hold causing some of the food bits to fly into her skin, which enraged her.

"Ew! What did you do?! Dad! Dad! Help me! Alana hurt me!"

I looked up, shaking all over when she called for dad. No! He will beat me again!

"What happened?!" My stepmom came in the door.

"She spit on me!" Sophia showed her mom the food on her skin.

I shook my head fervently when she looked at me angrily. No, that's not true, I wanted to say but couldn't out of fear.

She hitched my arm and slapped me on the face. "You fucking monster! Why did you do that?!"

"What is happening here?" the authoritative, powerful voice of a man came in.

"Dad, dad!" Sophia ran into his arms sobbing and pointed at me. "Alana here just spat on me for no other reason. I tried giving her food but she did this to me instead."

"N-No... dad nooo." I found my voice despite trembling.

I didn't do that, I wanted to say but I know he still won't believe me. He just won't. He always refused to believe his own daughter.

"Hon, your daughter is such a brat. How could she do this to Sophia? Our daughter will face the alpha prince later!" My stepmom walked up to him, caressing his arm.

My father's face is grim and I know where this is going.

"Don't worry. I'll teach her a lesson. Bring me my whip."

I swallowed the fear in my throat and began shaking more profusely. My feet went cold as sweat trickled out of my body.

I hated being beaten that way. I hated having so many wounds and bruises after. It hurts. It's so painful.

"N-No... dad... no..." I ran to the wall as if it could save me but the first lash came into my back.

I grunted in pain and fell to the ground.

He beats me like I'm an animal. He's whipping me like he is not my father and I am not her daughter.

With every lash I received, his words ringing in my head like the gospel truth.

"Do you know why no one loves you? Because you are a disgusting piece of shit that should not have been born in the first place!"

I fell to the floor writhing in pain and crying. Please stop! Make it stop, please!

"Did you know what you did to your sister?! Tell me, you monster!" he released another series of lashes again, not even caring if my eyes are already bleeding.

"I-I'm sorry..."

"Don't tell it to me. Tell it to your sister!"

"I'm sorry Sophia," I said in a whisper as I coughed out blood, crawling towards Sophia's feet to kiss them just as my father taught me.

Sophia got down and smiled at me innocently, hiding her cruelty behind her smile. "It's okay, Alana. I forgive you."

"Be thankful my daughter is so kind, Sophia," my stepmom said, brushing off the hair of her daughter lovingly who was giggling back at her. The act made me wonder how it feels for someone to do that for me.

Will they touch my hair gently too? Lovingly?

"You can go. I still have to discipline her because it seems like she has forgotten who she is in this family," dad said and picked up his whip on the floor that was drenched with my blood.

And with every moan of pain I let out and his joyful sound he made every time he struck me, I wanted to ask him if he had forgotten about it. Has he forgotten that this is the day that his beloved wife died?

"D-Dad, today is my birthday. Can you please not beat me more today?" I asked when he stopped for a while.

Dad, can't you love me just for today because it's my birthday? It's my 18th birthday today. I should be in the ceremony today receiving recognition for reaching this age.

"Are you proud of the day that you killed your own mother?! Do you want me to celebrate it with you?! Huh!"

He raised his hand again and beat me like he always did while I was silently crying, hoping for this to end.

I did not say anything more and just covered my mouth to not let a suffering growl. My father hates it that much because, according to him, it only means that I am not wholeheartedly accepting his way of handling and disciplining me.

The beating stopped after my whole body was bleeding all over and I could not stand anymore.

"I hope you learned your valuable lesson, Alana," he said before leaving me in the same room that had been my cage for my whole life.

That night, while curled up on my side in the corner of my dark cell, I hugged myself and wished that someone would save me from my misery.

"Anyone, please. Just take me away from here."