

Two Years Gone Novel

Chapter 1

ELLA

I woke up at five in the morning, just like usual. Then I showered and dressed for the day before meeting my mom in the kitchen of our small cabin for a quick breakfast before work.

“Coffee?” Mom asked as I dragged in.

“Is that even a question?” I chuckled before cupping the warm mug in my hands and taking a sip.

My mother walked around the kitchen and squeezed my shoulders.

“Happy birthday, babe.”

I looked up at my mom and smiled.

“Thanks, mom.”

Mom looked at me with a tear in her eye.

“It’s hard to believe you’re eighteen and about to find your mate.”

She shook her head, willing her tears away.

“So, this morning I’ll do the biscuits if you make the gravy and the eggs,” she stated as we walked out the door toward the main pack house.

“Deal,” I replied, yawning.

My mom, Sophie, was the head cook for the pack. She ran the kitchen in the pack house and planned three meals a day, seven days a week for whoever wanted to come.

She was an amazing chef, and one of the most respected omegas in the pack, mostly because nobody wanted to get on the bad side of the cooks.

I, on the other hand, was a senior in high school and far from respected.

“Don’t forget, after school, I need you to help me start planning for the banquet next week!” my mother shouted as I ran to catch the bus.

I was running late again, having to help clean up the kitchen before school almost always made me miss the bus. But I caught it today, much to my surprise.

I took a seat near the front and let out a sigh. My wolf paced in my head, anxiously awaiting my daily humiliations. I took a deep breath, trying to calm us both down.

Today is going to suck. But we're almost done. Two weeks left until graduation.

When I got off the bus, I made my way into the high school and instantly lowered my head, hoping to pass through the halls unnoticed.

"Well, if it isn't the birthday girl!" Mariah boomed from behind.

I turned around.

"Hi, Mariah."

"You're eighteen now. You know what that means," one of her minions spat.

"Oh, does Little Miss Omega think she'll be getting a mate?" Mariah scoffed. She was the daughter of the pack's beta and self-proclaimed queen of the pack.

I gave a smile that wasn't at all genuine, and the bell rang.

"It's been a pleasure as always, ladies. Thank you for the birthday wishes."

I turned and walked to my locker. Grabbing my books, I made my way to my first class, which thankfully finished uneventfully. I made it all the way to lunch without being bothered.

Happy birthday to me. I chuckled at the thought.

"Move."

I closed my eyes and let out a breath before turning, lowering my head in submission as I did.

"Mariah..." I muttered as I stepped out of the way and she pushed past me, wrapping her arms around Zane, future alpha of the pack.

Suddenly, I smelled something absolutely breathtaking. Like cinnamon and pine. The smell was so intoxicating that it made my mouth water, and I could feel my wolf pace, excited.

I shook myself back to my senses, shrugged, and made my way out of the cafeteria, sitting on a bench outside where I was most likely to be left alone.

“You.”

I looked up to see Zane standing above me.

“Alpha Zane, I—”

Our eyes met, and I felt my whole body electrify.

MATE! my wolf howled in my head.

Zane broke the silence.

“Ella, we aren’t mates.”

“So we didn’t just both feel that?” I asked sarcastically.

Zane scowled at me, and I realized my mistake. I lowered my head again.

“I’m sorry, Zane.”

He was about to speak again when we were interrupted by Mariah and her gaggle of sidekicks.

“There you are, baby!” She saw me and recoiled.

“Why are you talking to that little omega?”

“Leave us alone, Mariah.”

She looked up and down at the two of us and then burst out in laughter.

“Wait...you two? Oh, Omega, you aim high, don’t you? Zane is mine, slut.”

Mariah slapped me, and I flinched, my cheek stinging a bit.

“Mariah, leave!” Zane boomed. I looked up at him, and for a second I thought I saw concern on his face.

“But, baby, she is—”

Mariah stopped talking when Zane turned his glare to her. She stomped off, leaving the two of us alone.

“If you’re going to reject me, then do it,” I spoke defiantly before looking down again.

But there was nothing. I looked up and Zane was gone.

“Great...,” I mumbled to myself.

“Just what I needed today.” Of all the people to be mated to, I had to get Zane Davis. He wasn’t a horrible guy, but he wasn’t exactly amazing either.

When the bell sounded, I made my way to my next class of the day, only to be pushed from behind.

“We aren’t finished here.” Mariah’s voice was low and cold.

“Mariah,” I started as I got up off the ground, “he’s going to reject me, so stop.”

“Yes, he is, because why on earth would an alpha want you?” she snapped.

“You are nothing!”

“Exactly. Nobody wants me,” I turned to walk away, trying my hardest to fight the tears that were threatening to fall. I didn’t want to admit that I was hurt by the fact that my mate didn’t seem to want me.

I made it back home to be surprised with a cake and a small present. Even though we were at the bottom of the pecking order, my mom was always bright and kind.

“I love you, sweetheart,” my mom hugged me as she cleaned up before we headed to the pack house to make dinner for everyone.

We worked together in the kitchen, making my favorite meal for the pack dinner as a small celebration between ourselves. We were laughing and enjoying ourselves until Zane walked in. Our eyes met, and he walked toward me.

“I need a minute with Ella.”

My mom nodded and he led me to one of the back offices.

Chapter 2

ZANE

I was genuinely happy. There were only two weeks of school left before I left for alpha training at Camp Young in Minnesota. I spent most of my time with my friends and with Mariah.

I hoped that we would be mates, but we wouldn’t find out until after I got back. Her eighteenth birthday wasn’t for another two months.

It was a normal day. Everything was fine until the little omega from the kitchen walked into the cafeteria. I caught her scent immediately. She smelled like apple cider, and it was intoxicating.

I tried and mostly succeeded in ignoring her, but when Mariah came up and wrapped her arms around me, I was distracted.

I knew what that meant. That little nobody was my mate. But I wasn't about to have her as my luna. I needed to take care of it, and fast.

I left Mariah and my friends in the cafeteria and went looking for her. She was sitting outside, and I had to stop myself when I got close.

The mate pull was palpable, and I could feel my wolf pacing, whining for his mate. She smelled so damn good. Her scent washed over all my senses. All I could do was stand there.

"You." It was all I could muster. When she looked up at me with her deep hazel eyes, my wolf just about lost it.

"Ella, we aren't mates," I said, speaking as much to my wolf as to her. My wolf began howling in my head, fighting to take control.

When I tried to reject her at school, we were interrupted by Mariah's gang. Ella was a loser, but I didn't have the heart to reject and humiliate her in front of a crowd. I would have to do it later.

Thankfully, I found her at the pack house after school. She was working in the kitchen with Sophie.

"I need a moment with Ella," I said, not really asking. Sophie nodded, and Ella followed me to one of the empty pack offices down the hall from the kitchen.

I entered the office and took a deep breath. I didn't know what was going to happen when I rejected her. But it had to be done before the mate pull got out of hand.

I turned around and leaned against the desk, staring at her for a minute before standing up straight. Here goes...

"I, Zane Davis, reject you, Ella Matthews, as my mate."

I could see the pain tear through her. She groaned, falling to the floor as tears streamed down her cheeks.

I felt so bad, I almost wanted to take it back right there and then. My wolf howled inside my head, begging me to do just that.

I watched Ella take a deep breath before standing up, tears still falling.

“I, Ella Matthews, accept your rejection.”

I gripped the desk tightly, slightly bending over and letting out a low growl. My wolf howled in pain, the rejection ripping through both of us. I hadn’t expected how much it would hurt.

She walked out of the room, leaving me there alone. Once I knew she was out of earshot, I finally released the breath I had been holding in and fell to my knees.

It was the worst pain I had ever felt. But it was over now. I could look forward to choosing Mariah and making her my luna when I got home from training.

I straightened myself and made my way out of the office to the training grounds to let off some steam, glad it was over.

Chapter 3

ELLA

“Jerk,” I whispered as I made my way back to the kitchen. My eyes were puffy, and my face was flushed. My mom looked at me with horror as I continued with my work.

“Ella?” Sophie spoke quietly as she opened my bedroom door. I pretended to sleep, hoping my mother wouldn’t push it. But she did. Mom sat beside me on the bed, stroking my hair.

“I know you’re awake, Ells Bells.”

I smiled a bit at the sound of my nickname. I sat up and let my mom hold me.

“He rejected me,” I finally said.

My mom snapped up and looked at me.

“Who? Who rejected you?” She grabbed my shoulders and shook them lightly.

“You found a mate?”

I nodded.

“It was Zane. We felt it at school. He doesn’t want me.” I could feel myself crying again.

My mom shook her head in disbelief and then spoke quietly, petting my hair.

"Maybe it's for the best. You've always put on a brave face, but I know things aren't easy for you. You'll find another mate and things will be better."

I laughed bitterly.

"I never want a mate again."

When I woke the next morning, my mother was asleep next to me in the bed. She had spent the night holding me and comforting me.

Even though I knew I was nothing to him, the rejection still stung. I had always thought that my mate would love and accept me, the kind of love I had seen my parents have.

I knew school was going to be torture. I would be a hot mess if I ran into Zane. The mate bond didn't just go away overnight. It took time to fade, and it was still strong inside me.

Last night, I was woken up by feelings of Zane. I could feel him having sex with Mariah and sense the intense pleasure and emotions.

My mate was with someone else, and it hurt so much that I almost screamed.

"So what's it like being rejected?" Mariah spat out as I entered the school.

I lowered my head and kept on walking, hoping she would drop it. She didn't.

"Omega, I'm talking to you!" Mariah yelled, making the whole hallway pause to see the commotion.

I let out a breath before turning to Mariah.

"Eh," I replied, shrugging my shoulders.

"I'm not a big fan of sloppy seconds. You can keep him."

There were audible gasps from the onlookers, and fury flashed through Mariah's eyes.

"Who do you think you're talking to like that, Omega?"

I realized what I had just done and lowered my head.

"I'm sorry. I am nothing. That's why I was rejected." I turned and walked to class, angry that I wasn't even allowed to stand up for myself.

I turned the corner, fighting back tears when I crashed into someone. Cinnamon and pine.

I knew exactly who it was without even having to look up.

“Excuse me...,” I whispered.

He towered over me for a moment before stepping aside and letting me pass.

“Jerk...,” I whispered in my own little act of defiance as I quickly walked away.

When I returned home from school, I collapsed on my bed, mentally exhausted from the horrible day.

The entire day was spent keeping my head down and hoping nobody spoke to me. Nobody did, but it didn’t keep me from hearing the whispers.

“Rough day?” My mom walked in and sat on the bed, rubbing my back.

“Literally the worst,” I managed to choke out.

“Well, hun, why don’t you stay home? We have dinner covered. You sit and eat junk food and feel a little bad for yourself. Then tomorrow we’ll start fresh.”

My mom pushed some stray hairs from my face before giving me a warm smile.

“Okay...,” I mumbled.

Mom left for the pack house, and I changed into my comfiest PJs. I sat on the bed watching chick flicks and gorging myself on chocolate and ice cream and hot Cheetos.

I looked like a hot mess, but I didn’t even care. I only had one more week of school. Then most of these people will have gone to college, training, or new packs with their mates.

I cried at that thought, knowing that they’d all be moving on, and I would still be here, rejected and working in the kitchen for the rest of my life.

Chapter 4

ELLA

Finally, it was graduation day. It came after what felt like the longest week and a half of my life.

After Zane had rejected me, I had become secluded, keeping to myself so nobody would bother me. My hurt and sadness had become anger.

Not that I could do anything about it. He was an alpha and I was an omega. I would never be able to speak my mind to him. I would never be able to tell him how much I hated him.

When I pictured graduating high school, I always imagined my family being together. My father died two years ago, and I missed him so much.

It hurt knowing he wouldn't be there to see me graduate. Thankfully, Mom, my biggest fan, was there for me.

After the ceremony, my mom was a blubbery mess.

"Sweetheart, I'm so proud of you!" She gave me a tight hug.

"I love you so much."

"I love you too, mom." I smiled and returned the hug.

"Alright, we need to head back. We have to finish up some of the food before the alpha's party tonight. Zane leaves tomorrow morning for training."

I winced at his name.

"Sorry...", Mom said, squishing her nose.

"It's fine. I'll have to get used to it. He's going to be alpha, after all."

We made our way back to the pack house and finished up the food for the party. Zane walked through the kitchen, and I felt his gaze as he passed by.

I shivered, hoping that the pull would go away while he was gone. Maybe I'd even find someone else. But I didn't dare hope.

"I am nothing," I whispered to myself. If Zane didn't want me, nobody would.

The next morning the entire pack gathered to send Zane off to training. It was mandatory, or else I wouldn't have gone. I stood there with my head lowered as everyone bid their alpha-to-be goodbye.

I looked up as he got into the car, and we made eye contact. His gaze lingered on me, and I turned away. Even though I hated him, the mate bond wanted me to hold him and love him.

I worked hard over the summer, learning all the skills I could from my mom. I had decided to be an assistant cook for the pack, hopefully taking over for my mom when she would retire.

I worked hard every day. It was early mornings and late nights, always making food for somebody.

The months went by, and even though there was less abuse now that I was out of school, I was still treated harshly.

Those who tortured me in school still made it a point to drop by once in a while and remind me of my place, and all I could do was keep my head down and take it.

I was glad Zane had left for alpha training. It would have been unbearable to be around him all the time. The rejection still stung, and I knew it would take some time for the mate bond to diminish.

Once in a while, I would have this pain in my chest, and I knew it was my mate bond leaving me. Sometimes my mom would notice my wincing, and a worried look would flash across her face.

But I was determined to be rid of the bond. If he wanted nothing to do with me, I would have nothing to do with him.

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ONE YEAR LATER

I walked into the pack house at 5:30 a.m., the same time I did every morning. I drank my coffee and began gathering things for breakfast. Nobody was up this early besides the cooks.

Usually, it was just me, my mom, and one or two other omega cooks. There was a big breakfast planned this morning for Alpha Daniel's birthday. The whole pack would be attending, so we had extra staff.

"Hi! Where do you want me to set up?"

I looked up to see a tall, dirty blond boy standing in front of me. I had never seen him before, and, as a cook, I had seen practically everybody.

"Well, what are you setting up?" I replied.

"They are having a smoothie and mimosa bar for breakfast. I need to set up the bar."

"Oh, I guess over there is fine." I pointed to a spot just off from the kitchen near the dining hall.

"Thanks." He smiled brightly before walking over. I gave him a sideways look before continuing with my work.

The breakfast went as most pack events do. It was loud and busy and full of everyone else enjoying themselves while my mom and I cooked.

Finally, everyone had been served, and we were able to sit down to eat for ourselves.

I was talking to Mom when two smoothies were placed in front of us. I looked up to see the blond-haired boy.

“Smoothies for the two most important people in the pack,” he said, winking playfully.

Mom laughed and took a sip of her smoothie.

“I’m Declan. I just transferred here from another pack west of here.”

I smiled warmly.

“I’m Ella, this is my mom, Sophie.”

Declan nodded his head.

“I’m glad to meet you. If there’s one thing I know, you always get in with the cooks.”

I laughed.

“I see, you just want a front-of-the-line pass.”

Declan smirked.

“Definitely.”

Sophie smiled and shook her head.

“Where’s your family, Declan?”

Declan frowned.

“I’m afraid it’s just me. Both of my parents were killed in an attack last year. It’s part of the reason I moved here.”

Sophie rested her hand on his.

“Well stick with us, dear. You’ll always be welcome. Do you have a place to stay?”

Declan nodded.

“Alpha Daniel gave me a room in the pack house. He said after a year I can apply for my own place.”

I was happy to have a new omega around.

“That’s good. Why don’t you come over tonight? You can have a welcome party, Matthews-style!”

Sophie laughed.

“That just means we’ll have popcorn and watch a movie.”

Declan smiled.

“That would be awesome. I’ve been here a few days, and nobody has said anything to me.”

I lowered my head.

“It’s because you’re an omega. The only people who will really talk to you are other omegas.”

Declan let out a sigh.

“That’s too bad. I can already tell a lot of people are missing out on knowing you.”

I looked up at him with a smirk.

“That was smooth.”

“I thought so,” Declan replied, laughing.

After that morning, Declan and I became fast friends. My mom had practically adopted him.

Chapter 5

ELLA

It had been a whole year since Declan joined Green Ridge. I had just been promoted to lead cook, working directly under my mother. And I was good, even surpassing my mother in skill.

Zane was returning from two years away at alpha training and the pack was hosting a gala event, inviting alphas from all over to introduce Zane as the future alpha of the pack.

We worked hard all day making hors d'oeuvres and desserts for the party. I knew I couldn't attend the gala, which was a little disappointing, but I had a job to do.

Besides, everyone I didn't want to be around would be at that party.

"Hey, Ella, do you know where they hid the booth for the bar?" Declan called out as he walked into the kitchen.

Declan had become my best friend and almost like an older brother. He was an amazing bartender and always worked the big pack parties with us. He was kind and funny and the best person I knew.

"It should already be in there," I replied, not looking up from my work.

"I told them to leave it until I knew what I needed." He shook his head in irritation.

"Leftovers date after the party?" He asked, smiling as he walked away.

"Mhm," I hummed, concentrating on piping some filling into some desserts. I continued to bustle around the kitchen with my mom and the other cooks, trying furiously to get everything finished.

"You look good," a voice in front of me said.

I looked up to see Zane. He had grown up a lot in two years. He was taller and had clearly been working out. Even his muscles had muscles.

"Zane," I replied, my voice flat. The two years apart had let the mate pull vanish completely, leaving me only with my hurt feelings.

"How have you been?" he asked politely.

I looked up in anger and confusion.

"You mean how have I been since you rejected me?"

He recoiled, and anger flashed through his eyes.

"I was being polite. Is that the way you speak to your alpha, Omega?"

I had forgotten my place. Again. I was really going to get myself in trouble one of these days. I lowered my head and groveled.

"I forgot my place. Forgive me, Alpha."

Even though he wasn't officially alpha yet, he still had the power and the presence. He walked off, leaving me flustered and angry.

I left the kitchen and hid in the hallway, closing my eyes and leaning back against the wall. Suddenly, there was a large hand on my arm. I yelped and turned to see Zane standing over me, his eyes burning.

"You should watch yourself. Defiance doesn't do well in this pack, Omega. Know your place!" he growled before throwing me to the floor.

"Yes, Alpha." I didn't look up at him, knowing that the defiance in my eyes would betray my words.

He stood above me silently, almost like he was waiting for me to get up. I finally looked up to meet his eyes, and it looked as though he almost felt bad.

I wasn't going to let him get inside my head. I stood and bowed slightly before turning to walk away.

"You really do look good though, Ella."

His statement made me freeze, and I shook my head before walking away.

My arm was tender, and I knew there would be a bruise later. I made my way back to the kitchen, my mom giving me a reassuring look before we continued with our work.

I worked intensely, channeling my frustration. Who does he think he is, coming here and acting like that? I thought to myself. I could feel my wolf pacing, angry that he had hurt us like that.

A few hours later, my mom and I rushed back to the house to quickly shower and change into better clothes. Even though we weren't allowed at the party, we still had to look presentable.

I chose to wear a pair of black skinny jeans with a loose, floral blouse. I threw on a pair of flats and tied my hair up into a messy bun.

Applying a bit of makeup to make myself a little less of a hot mess, I stepped out of my room and walked back to the pack house with my mom.

ZANE

As I stepped out of the car, I looked up at the pack house and smiled. I was finally home after two years. Soon, my father would retire, and I would take over as Alpha. I felt ready.

As I stepped into the house, I smelled something I hadn't in a long time: apple cider. I walked into the kitchen to see Ella; her face flushed from working in the heat.

She had stray hairs falling on her face and was smiling brightly at something someone had said. I felt a slight twinge, an unexpected vestige of the mate pull, but shrugged it off.

Two years should have been plenty of time for the mate pull to disappear completely. I had rejected her. I didn't want that little omega as my luna. She was below me, and she was weak.

But as I watched her, for a moment I didn't see the little omega from school. This girl was a woman. I shook my head and walked over to her.

"You look good."

The disgust on her face as she realized who I was upset me. When I saw her in the hallway afterward, leaning against the wall, I wanted to take her right then and there.

Instead, I had frightened and threatened her.

I paced around my room, running my hands through my hair. I had rejected her. Why was I feeling like this? My thoughts were interrupted by a knock on the door.

"Come in."

In walked Mariah. Just the beautiful distraction that I needed.

"Welcome home, baby." She gave me a sweet smile and immediately dropped her dress on the floor.

I just about ran over to her, picking her up and throwing her on the bed. My lust and passion took over.

I plunged into her and rode her rough and hard, hoping to find the release I needed to get that omega off my mind.

Mariah left my room to get ready for the gala, and I took a long shower before getting dressed up in my tux.

"Not too shabby," I muttered as I stopped in front of the mirror before heading downstairs to the party. I walked through the kitchen, and Ella caught my eye again.

Her dark hair was pulled up in a knot on her head, leaving her neck bare. My wolf moaned at the sight.

My wolf had been angry at me since the day I rejected her. But I couldn't take that weak omega and make her a luna. She was nothing.

I made my way into the large ballroom, which was filled with high-ranking pack members and visiting alphas.

My father, Alpha Daniel, took me around and introduced me to all of the visitors. I wasn't a fan of having to play politics, and I could tell some of the visiting alphas felt the same way.

I saw Mariah walk in looking real sexy in a cherry-red dress that hugged every inch of her body.

I knew she wasn't my mate, but she was good for a little fun. If I didn't find someone better, I would make her my luna. I excused myself and dragged her onto the dance floor.

"If I hadn't just finished with you earlier, I would take you right here," I whispered in her ear. She smiled and pushed her body closer to mine, her hips rubbing against me.

I growled as she took my hand, and we snuck out of the ballroom and down the hall to the pack offices. I closed the door behind me before unzipping her skin-tight dress and peeling it off her.

I picked her up and set her on the desk, ripping her panties off and thrusting into her, taking her hard and fast, spurred on by her moans.

When we finished, we opened the door to the office and were met with a crash. I looked down to see Ella on the floor, a tray of food scattered everywhere.

Mariah groaned.

"Clean this up, Omega."

We walked away, leaving her on the floor. I suddenly had the urge to turn back and help her, but I shook the thought away and rejoined the party.