

Two Years Gone Novel

Chapter 16

ELLA

After dinner, I went home to pack up my things. I didn't know how I was going to explain this to my mom, and I hoped I would come up with something before my mom came home.

I sat in my room, packing up my things into boxes when there was a knock at the door. I opened the front door and my eyes met Zane.

I let out an audible groan.

"Zane, what are—"

"I came to see if I could help. Packing sucks, and I know your mom is busy with my dad planning the BBQ next week," he cut in.

I rolled my eyes before stepping aside and letting him into our small cabin. I suddenly felt self-conscious.

"It's not much, but it's home," I said shyly as we made our way back to my bedroom.

I was oddly nervous, I'd never had a boy other than Declan in my room, and he didn't count.

I watched Zane place his hands on his hips and look around the room.

"Well, what do you need?"

I rubbed my head. I wasn't about to let him touch my clothes. Or my unmentionables.

"Uh, you can empty that bookshelf, I guess. Just throw those books in the box right there on the floor."

Zane nodded and made his way over to the shelf. After about twenty minutes of packing in relative silence, my mom burst in.

"Ells Bells, you've got to be kidding me!"

"Mom! What's wrong?" I walked toward my mom with worry in my eyes.

"Alpha Daniel just told me you're moving into the pack house." I could see the tears forming in her eyes.

“Mom it’s not permanent. Alpha Daniel just wants me close by to begin training to take over your job. Learn all the behind-the-scenes things.”

“And you have to live there to do that?” my mother prodded.

I shrugged.

“I guess. I told him I was more than happy to just come in early and stay late, but he refused.”

My mom huffed before jumping at a small thud from the corner.

Zane gave a guilty wave.

“Sorry. Lost my grip on a book.”

“Oh, Alpha Zane. I didn’t know you were here.” Sophie smiled before turning to me with a look that quietly asked what he was doing in my room.

“Alpha Zane knew you were in a meeting with Alpha Daniel and offered to help me pack. Alpha Daniel wants me in the pack house as soon as possible.”

Mom nodded before rolling up her sleeves.

“I guess we’d better hunker down and get this done.”

We got to packing and the atmosphere of the room had lightened now that Sophie was there to break the tension between us.

“Ells Bells, do you want this?” My mother held up a ragged-looking T-shirt. I walked over and held it to my face and inhaled.

“Of course I want this. It was Dad’s.” I smiled up at my mom before walking back to the desk.

“Ells Bells?” Zane looked at me curiously.

My mom and I both laughed.

“It’s the nickname my dad gave me.”

“When Ella was three, she was playing with some other pups, and her father scolded them for getting into something they shouldn’t. She gave him the biggest look of defiance I’ve ever seen.

He said, 'Hells bells, Ella! You go around looking at people like that and they'll mistake you for Alpha Daniel.' From that day forward, he called her Ells Bells. Because she's a surprise for sure."

My mom squeezed my shoulder and continued packing.

I laughed, enjoying the sweet memory of my father. I missed him.

"I remember your father. He was always kind."

I smiled.

"He was. He was the best person I've ever known." I looked at my mom, whose eyes had become a little watery, and gave her a warm smile.

We finished packing and I looked around the room. I was surprised that we only needed a few boxes to pack up my things. But I didn't have so much stuff.

The three of us walked back up the hill to the pack house with boxes in our arms. We set our boxes down at the foot of the stairs, and Zane turned to us.

"I'm not sure where my dad wants you, give me a minute and I'll find out which room is yours."

My mom and I stood at the entrance of the pack house and I felt small. I could tell Mom was having a hard time keeping it together.

"I love you, Mom." I smiled at her and gave her a tight hug.

"I love you too, sweetheart. You behave yourself, you hear? And if you need anything, just come home, you'll always have a place with me."

We let go of each other as Zane walked back from upstairs.

"Dad said you'll be staying with us. Since you're single and unmated he doesn't want any of the other males in the house getting the wrong idea."

Sophie let out a sigh of relief.

"Alright. Goodnight, Mom." I gave her a reassuring smile before grabbing my boxes and following Zane upstairs.

I followed him to the second floor and down the hall. I knew most of the second floor was the alpha's quarters, but I had never been there before.

We walked through a set of double doors, and I was surprised at how homey it was. There was a small kitchen and a family room with a plush sofa and TV.

There were large windows and a set of French doors that led out to a large balcony. I could see down the hall where some bedrooms. As I followed Zane, I wondered which was his.

We stopped at a door, and he opened it for me.

"Home sweet home," Zane said sarcastically, making me chuckle.

The room was large. I was pretty sure it was bigger than my whole cabin. The walls were painted pale blue. In the middle was a king-size bed with white and beige bedding.

The whole room was bright and airy. I was pretty sure I was in heaven.

"This is too much." I turned to Zane, who was watching my reaction. I walked in and made my way to the bathroom.

It had a massive walk-in shower, covered in tiny glass and metallic tiles. The vanity was white with a large mirror above it, and in the center of the room was an enormous standing soaker tub.

I walked back out and let out a breath.

"This is all for me?"

Zane smiled at me.

"I mean, it's just a room, nothing fancy."

I scoffed.

"You have seen my house, right? This place is like a palace compared to my little cabin." I continued to spin around the room, taking the whole place in.

Chapter 17

ZANE

I watched her with amusement as she gawked at her room. I had never noticed how nice the rooms were before. Having grown up here, I was used to them.

"Well, if you need anything, I'm right next door," I offered as Ella turned to me, her face flushed with excitement.

“Thank you for your help.” She gave me a warm smile before throwing herself on the bed.

If I had stayed a minute longer, I would have lost control and kissed her hard, right then and there. I quickly excused myself and went to my room.

I lay in my bed and stared at the ceiling, attempting to calm my heart. I finally was able to do so when I heard her heartbeat from the next room, slowly calming down before resting at a steady rhythm.

“She’s asleep,” I mumbled as I began to drift off myself.

The next morning, my eyes snapped open as I heard an alarm clock go off. I groaned and rolled over, smacking my clock. But it wasn’t mine.

“What time is it?” I mumbled, rubbing the haze out of my eyes. 5:30 a.m. Who got up so early?

I lay there, trying to get back to sleep, but I needed to pee. I grunted as I got up out of bed and made my way to the bathroom.

Half asleep and irritated, I walked out of my room toward the kitchen for a drink of water.

I was surprised when I caught the smell of apple cider. My eyes immediately perked up to see Ella hunched over the counter, nursing a cup of coffee in her hand.

“What are you doing?” I asked as I walked past her to get a glass out of the cupboard.

Her head jolted up.

“Have to start on breakfast,” she said sleepily.

I took a sip of water before looking at her like she was crazy.

“You mean to tell me you get up this early every day to make us breakfast?”

“What, do you think breakfast magically appears in the morning?” she asked sarcastically, rolling her eyes at me.

“Technically I get up at five every day, but now that I’m at the pack house I can sleep in a bit longer since the kitchen is just downstairs.”

Ella cupped her coffee in her hands as if she was willing the warmth to give her the energy she needed. I watched her take a sip, wanting so badly to be that cup and feel her lips on mine.

I shook the thoughts out of my head. Before I could speak again, she hopped off the stool and walked toward the door.

“See you at breakfast.”

“See you,” I replied quietly.

I decided to go back to bed and get a few more hours of sleep. I woke at seven and decided to get up for the day.

I couldn't stop thinking about the fact that she worked so hard, all day, every day. She and Sophie never took a break.

“Good morning.” I smiled as I walked into the kitchen.

“Good morning, Alpha Zane,” Sophie greeted me. Ella gave me a small smile before handing me a plate. My hand brushed hers as I took it, and it sent shockwaves through me.

I had to remember to take a breath. She was starting to affect me more and more.

The moment was ruined when Mariah walked up to the counter.

“Omega, where is my breakfast?”

Ella lowered her face in submission and turned to grab Mariah's breakfast. Hers was different from the others—apparently she got a special one every day. I could feel my eyes darken.

“Mariah, you will no longer be receiving special meals.”

Every pack member in the dining hall looked up in shock. Mariah let out a laugh.

“What?”

“You heard me. The pack cooks are not required to cater for requests. They are here to feed the entire pack and are only required to make changes for those with restrictions.

“Starting tomorrow, you will no longer be receiving a special meal from the pack house. You want it, you may cook it yourself.”

I could see the fury in Mariah's face as her glare went from me to Ella.

“Did you complain about me, Omega? Is making my breakfast just too hard for you? Weak skank... I don't even want to know what you did to get him to leave me.”

Mariah walked away before turning back.

“You are nothing compared to me you little omega slut.”

I could feel my wolf trying to take over. He was on the edge. I looked back at Ella, only to find she was gone.

I looked up to Sophie, who nodded toward the back hallway.

“Ella?” I called as I entered the hallway. I could see her standing by the wall, her arms wrapped around herself and her shoulders tight.

For a moment, I thought she was crying, but she wasn’t—she was standing there with her eyes closed, taking deep breaths.

“Ella, I—”

“Don’t,” she interrupted, her blunt response taking me by surprise.

“Ella, are you okay?”

Ella turned to me, anger and defiance in her eyes. I had to keep from laughing at her look, imagining that was what her father saw that day he gave Ella her nickname.

“Am I okay?” she fumed. Her anger tore me from my amusement.

“Zane Davis, I don’t need your help. I’ve been doing just fine on my own without you.”

“It didn’t look like—” I started before Ella interrupted me again.

“What did you think happened when you left? That once you rejected me and went away, everything would be fine? I spent months digging myself out of that hole.

“Every day being reminded by Mariah and her little posse that I was nothing, that I meant nothing. Every day having to deal with her verbal abuse and torment.

“Every day having to sit there in submission while she talked down to me about the fact that I wasn’t wanted and she was the one in your bed, in your life.

“Every day having to hope that the mate bond would fade and go away so I could stop hurting and stop feeling. It was all gone! My mate bond was gone! It took two years, but I was over you.

“You didn’t want me, and my wolf and I accepted it. After two years, I was finally piecing myself back together again.”

I stood there in shock as I watched the dam finally break. Ella wiped tears from her face.

“After two years, I was okay. I was making a life for myself. And then you came strolling back in, claiming you own me, claiming you want me. You don’t get to switch it on and off like that, Zane!”

“You don’t get to decide after rejecting me, without even giving me a chance, that now you want me. Just because you got bored with Mariah doesn’t mean I need you to be my knight in shining armor.”

I finally woke from my stupor and my wolf flashed through my eyes. I stepped forward, forcing Ella’s back against the wall.

“Little wolf, I’m warning you. You need to stop before I can’t control myself anymore.”

Ella’s face went from anger to fear in a split second. Suddenly, I realized what had happened and took a step back.

“Ella, I’m sorry. I—”

Ella slapped me across the face before running upstairs to her room, leaving me frozen in confusion in the middle of the hallway.

Chapter 18

ELLA

I fumed as I paced around my room. I had never been so angry in my entire life. Suddenly, my anger turned to panic as it dawned on me that I had just slapped an alpha.

I rubbed my face and sat down on the floor at the foot of the bed.

Yeah, but he deserved it, my wolf snapped.

I chuckled. Yeah, he really did.

I had to admit it had felt good, cathartic even. Letting out everything I had held in for two years. Yelling at him, finally telling him what I had been through because of him—it was almost therapeutic.

I sat on the floor with my head in my hands for a long time, wondering how I would ever show my face downstairs again. Zane was probably on his way up to rip my head off.

I was snapped out of my thoughts by a knock at the door.

“Zane, go away!” I yelled, hoping he would get the hint and finally leave me alone.

The door opened, and I was about to yell again when Alpha Daniel walked in.

“Alpha, I’m so sorry. I thought—”

“You thought I was Zane. I picked up on that.” He smiled warmly before walking over and sitting next to me on the floor.

“You want to talk about it?”

I tucked my hair behind my ear and looked down.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Ella, I heard the entire thing. You guys were practically standing right outside my office.”

I winced.

“Everything?” Daniel nodded and I let out a breath.

“I don’t know what to say.”

“Well, was all that true?” he asked.

I nodded.

“All of it.”

“Why didn’t you ever come to me? If I had known they were treating you that way—”

“It wasn’t your problem, Alpha. They were smart and made sure to do it when you weren’t around.

“And since you never mentioned Zane’s rejection, I just assumed you felt the same way they did. I didn’t know it was because he never told you about it in the first place.”

Daniel patted my knee with his hand.

“I’m sorry, Ella. You really are something else.”

I gave him a warm smile. He was a kind man, and he reminded me a lot of my father.

“Not going to lie though, I would kill to have seen the look on Zane’s face when you slapped him.”

I chuckled.

"It was priceless."

Daniel laughed deeply.

"I believe it."

We sat in comfortable silence for a while until Daniel finally stood.

"Well, I believe your mom probably needs you downstairs to help with lunch prep. How about you come to my office after lunch, and we'll start your training."

"Sounds good," I stood up and placed a warm hand on his arm.

"Thank you, Alpha, for listening. I thought for sure I was dead meat after our little fight."

"If it had been anyone else, they probably would be." Daniel laughed.

"Zane has a soft spot for you."

I smiled.

"Sure, he does. I think our definitions of 'soft spot' differ."

We made our way downstairs and parted ways.

"Remember, after lunch, my office."

"Yes, Alpha." I smiled before turning to walk back into the kitchen.

Sophie and Declan sat at the large island and looked up at me, their eyes wide.

"What?"

"Are you banished?" Declan asked, only slightly joking.

"No?" I stared at them, playing dumb.

"Why would I be banished?"

"Your fight with Alpha Zane! Nobody understood what you said, but we definitely heard the yelling. Nobody yells at an alpha like that and lives!" Sophie replied, worry evident in her voice.

I rolled my eyes.

"I don't want to talk about it."

I turned around and crashed into a wall of a man. I looked up to meet Zane's glare.

"Yes, Alpha?"

I heard Declan and Sophie gasp from behind me.

"When you are finished with lunch prep, I need to meet with you. My office."

I pulled out my most innocent look.

"I'm sorry, but I'm meeting with Alpha Daniel after lunch."

"Then you'll meet with me now." Zane took my hand and dragged me down the hall to his office. He pulled me inside and closed the door.

"Sit."

I glared at him before sitting down in the chair across from his desk. Zane sat down, anger still fueling him.

"What do you need from me, Alpha Zane? The menu for next week? Do you have a meal request?"

I heard Zane growl and shut my mouth, opting to keep quiet and stay alive.

"Ella, I can't have you acting like this. I am an alpha and you need to remember that."

"I remember just fine, Alpha Zane." I crossed my arms and sat back in the chair.

"It's the reason you rejected me after all."

Zane jumped up from his chair and bounded over to me in two long strides. He leaned down, his hands gripping the armrests on either side of me.

"Ella, stop!"

"Or what, Zane? You'll reject me? Oh, wait..."

I was not about to back down. I had come this far. The floodgates had opened and if he wasn't going to leave me alone there was no way I was going to let him forget what he had done.

Zane stood up and ran his hand through his hair.

“Ella...”

I watched him through angry eyes, hoping he would get tired of this and leave me alone.

You have to admit he looks pretty damn hot when he’s all angry like that, my wolf said in my head.

“Oh, shut up...,” I mumbled.

“What did you say?” Zane snapped back around, his glare meeting my own.

“I said I need to get back to work. If that’s all, Alpha, I should be on my way.”

I stormed out of his office before he could stop me and made my way back to the kitchen. There was no way this was going to end with me apologizing.

I was done being submissive. I was done playing the weak, sad girl. He had busted open the dam, and I wasn’t going back.

Chapter 19

ZANE

I punched the wall of my office, leaving a sizable dent in the drywall. This girl was going to make me lose my mind. I was angry and embarrassed to say that I was madder at myself than I was at her.

If I wasn’t so frustrated, I would have thought her little display of anger and defiance was hot.

I sat down at my desk and rested my head in my hands.

“What the hell did I do?” I mumbled.

“You broke that girl.”

My face shot up to see Sophie standing in the doorway. I hadn’t even heard her walk in.

“Sophie, I—”

Sophie raised a hand.

“I need to say this, and I need you to listen.”

I watched her sit down and take a breath, choosing her words carefully.

“Things got bad for her when you left.”

“I’m beginning to realize that.” I shook my head.

“She doesn’t know that I know, but the night after you rejected her, she could feel you through the mate bond. She felt you have sex with that horrible girl.

“It just about tore her in two. And she felt it every time you were with her for those two weeks before you left.”

My jaw dropped as she spoke.

“I—”

“Let me finish,” she interrupted.

“For months, she would lie awake at night, hoping that bond would go away. It finally began to fade, but it affected her in more ways than just the hurt of rejection.

“Mariah made sure Ella never forgot that you didn’t want her, that you rejected her for Mariah. Every day she would make some jibe about Ella being nothing, about being a little omega.” Sophie’s eyes began to well with tears.

“I wish I had been born to a better place. Ella shouldn’t be an omega. She’s so much stronger.

“But she was born to omega parents, and she has had to spend years making herself small. Now she believes she is, she believes Mariah when she tells her she’s nothing.”

I shook my head. Today was too much.

“I’m not telling you this to make you feel bad. I’m telling you this because if you want to win her back, you’re going to have to step up and find a way to make her see that she isn’t nothing.”

Sophie stood and turned to walk out.

“Wait, you want me to fight for her?” I asked, confused at her change of heart.

Sophie shrugged.

“I know what it’s like to lose a mate. Neither of you will ever be whole if you both don’t drop your pride and stubbornness and give in to each other.

“Like I said, make her trust you, prove to her that she isn’t nothing. Show her that she’s everything.”

Sophie left my office, and I spent the rest of the day sitting there, trying to figure out how to do exactly that.

When I finally emerged, it was almost time for dinner. I walked to the kitchen to see Ella working furiously to finish everything. I sat down at the island and watched her.

She almost seemed to dance around the kitchen, her black leggings hugging her body like a second skin and loose T-shirt giving just the smallest glimpse of her cleavage.

I watched the wisps of her hair falling on her face as she moved, the flush of her cheeks from the hot kitchen—I wanted to hop over that counter and wrap my arms around her.

“Can I help you?” Ella’s words snapped me out of my trance, and I met her hazel eyes.

“Nope, just watching.” She gave me a curious glare before starting back on her work.

“What are you doing after dinner?” I found myself asking.

“I’m busy,” she answered, not even looking up.

“Doing what?” I asked, a little disappointed.

“It’s really none of your business,” she clapped back coolly.

I let out a huff before walking over to the dining table.

“Alright! We have cookie dough ice cream and Die Hard. Your room or mine?”

My head snapped up, wondering who was speaking to Ella like that. Of course, it was Declan.

Ella laughed, stoking my fury to new heights.

“How about mine, you’ll die over how comfortable my bed is.”

“Okay! But then I can’t be held responsible if I fall asleep in it,” Declan joked.

I didn’t think it was funny. I almost let out a growl before catching myself.

That evening after dinner, I tossed in my bed, being kept awake by their laughter and the explosions coming from the TV.

After a while, the laughing stopped and all I heard was the television. I rolled my eyes and made my way next door.

“Ella?” I opened the door quietly to find the TV still on but Ella and Declan asleep. In the same bed. Next to each other.

I saw red and almost pulled Declan right out of the bed by his hair when I saw Ella stir and look up at me with her sleepy hazel eyes.

“Zane? What are you—”

“You left the TV on. I was coming in to turn it off.” It was hard for me, seeing her lying there next to Declan. My eyes kept shifting, my wolf fighting for control.

Ella sat up quickly and took my hand. She led me out of the room and into the hallway.

“Zane, what do you need?” Ella asked, crossing her arms in front of her.

“I told you, the TV—”

“Yeah, the TV was on, but the TV was across the room. Not above my bed. So what do you need?”

I was losing the fight. My eyes darkened as I moved closer to her, forcing her back against the wall again. I put my hands on either side of her against the wall, blocking her in.

“I need you,” my voice was husky with desire, and Ella began to protest when my lips crashed to hers.

I kissed her gently, savoring the lips I had been craving to taste for ages. They were even softer than I had imagined. Every touch of our lips sent shockwaves through my whole body.

Ella hesitated for a moment, but then she kissed me back, all of the anger she had toward me channeled into her kiss. I wrapped my arms around her, pulling her close.

She threw her arms around my neck, tangling her hands in my hair. We stayed like that for a heated few minutes until Ella realized what she was doing and pushed me away, angry at herself for giving in.

She glared up at me with anger before slapping my face again.

“Well, goodnight.” I ran my finger along her jaw before entering my room, leaving a furious Ella in the hallway.

Chapter 20

ELLA

I woke with the events of the night before playing in my head again like they had for hours after I had stumbled in shock and heat back to my room.

I got up, took an exceptionally long shower to calm myself down, and began to dress for the day when I saw Declan stir.

“What time is it?”

“Five thirty.”

Declan grunted and rolled back over. I chuckled at my friend before walking out of the room toward the kitchen.

I started a pot of coffee and turned around, resting myself on the counter and replaying what had happened in my mind.

I had yelled at him, challenged him, and was fully prepared for his wrath. I hadn’t expected him to kiss me, or to give in as much as I did. And I was angry at myself for it.

“Good morning.” Zane walked sleepily to the kitchen island before resting on a stool.

“Good morning.”

I filled two cups with coffee and set one across the counter in front of him.

“Thanks,” he mumbled, gripping the warm mug in his hands.

I took a sip from my cup, watching him squirm in silence for a few moments. His head still lowered, he spoke, “About yesterday... I’m sorry.”

My eyes widened. Did he actually just apologize?

“I can’t seem to do the right things when it comes to you.”

I inhaled sharply, surprised at his blunt comment.

“I don’t exactly make it easy,” I teased, hoping to lighten the tension. I saw Zane smirk and knew I had been forgiven.

I looked down at my watch.

"I should head downstairs." I pushed off from the counter and headed toward the large doors of the alpha quarters.

"Ella?"

I turned around to face him.

"Hmm?"

"Spend the day with me?"

I was frozen, not knowing how to respond.

"I, uh... I have work."

"I'll take care of that, don't worry."

"I don't know," I replied. Even though that kiss last night had blown my mind, I was still hesitant to let him in.

"How about just this morning then?" Zane countered.

"Why?"

"Why, what?" he asked, giving me a sideways glance.

"Why do you want me to spend the morning with you? We aren't exactly friends. Actually, we aren't friends at all," I said softly.

Zane shrugged.

"I have a lot to make up for. And maybe I want to become friends."

I hesitated for a moment.

"That's fine, I guess. Breakfast is slow anyway."

"Great!" A huge smile spread across Zane's face.

"Go back to your room and relax for a bit, I'll go tell Sophie you'll be out this morning."

I gave him some side-eye, curious about what he had planned.

I decided to sit on the couch in the living room. Declan was still asleep in my room, and I didn't want to wake him again. I picked up a book and began reading.

“What are you doing?” I heard Zane say from the doorway.

“It’s called reading a book. You should try it sometime,” I teased sarcastically.

“I mean why aren’t you back in bed?”

“Declan is still sleeping in there, I don’t want to wake him,” I replied with a shrug before looking back down at the book.

I heard a quiet growl and looked up to see Zane’s eyes darkening, his wolf fighting for control.

“That wolf slept with you in your bed, all night?”

“He’s my best friend. It’s not the first time we’ve fallen asleep watching a movie.”

He frowned.

“Ella, I’m not okay with that.”

I sighed.

“Well really, you don’t need to be okay with it, because it’s none of your business. And here I thought we were going to have a nice day. You know what, I think I’ll just go to work.”

I stood and made my way to the door when Zane grabbed my arm.

“No, I’m sorry.”

He shook his head, trying to gain back his control.

“Here, why don’t you come rest in my room?” Zane didn’t let go of my hand and I found myself being pulled into his room.

“Zane, I’m not going to—”

“Ella, just go lie down. I’m going to take a shower.”

I was hesitant but also tired. Zane took me to his bed, and I climbed in, squishing deep into the soft sheets. I fell asleep quickly, being lulled to sleep by the sound of the shower in the other room.

An hour later my eyes fluttered open, and I sat up on my elbows, taking in my surroundings.

My eyes wandered around the room until they rested on Zane sitting in a chair on the other side of the room, reading a book.

My stirring alerted him, and he looked up to meet my eyes.

“Nice nap?”

I nodded, rubbing the residual sleep from my eyes.

Zane slapped his thighs.

“Ready to go then?”

“Where are we going?”

“Not far. Grab your boots and a change of clothes just in case.”

I went to my room and grabbed a pair of old tennis shoes. I didn’t have any boots, so I figured this was the next best thing.

After putting them on, I grabbed a pair of running shorts and a T-shirt and met him in the hallway.

“Where are your boots?” He looked down at the clothing in my arms.

“I don’t have boots, but these old running shoes will work fine.”

Zane glared down for a moment before making a quiet grunt and led me downstairs and out of the pack house.

He made a sharp turn and I followed him to the edge of the forest.

“Uh, where are we going?”

Zane shook his head and grabbed the straps of his backpack.

“You do know the concept of a surprise, right?”

I gave him a sarcastic glare before following him into the woods. We walked down the path deeper into the forest for thirty minutes before I saw the trees thin.

“We’re here!”

A smile spread across my face as I saw the scene before me. My eyes widened as I stared out at the crystal-clear lake, the waters rippling with the hot sun shining down on them.

“Zane, this place is amazing.”

“It’s just the lake, Ella,” Zane chuckled as he took my hand and walked to the end of the dock.

“Well, I’ve never been here so it’s amazing to me,” I replied.

Zane looked at me confused, “What are you talking about? Of course you’ve been here before.”

“I think I’d know if I’ve been here, Zane,” I said as I rolled my eyes at him.

“Everyone has been here,” he replied as he pulled a picnic blanket from his backpack and laid it down at the end of the dock.

I sat down beside him.

“When you say everyone are you talking about everyone you know?”

Zane winced. He had forgotten I was an omega. And not only an omega but the target of several upper pack members’ torture. He rubbed his head.

“Yeahhhh, sorry.”

I smiled at him.

“It’s okay. I’m glad to be here now, though. It’s beautiful.” I looked out over the water, more relaxed than I had been in a long time.

Suddenly, I was snapped out of my daydream by a splash and a sprinkle of water coming down on me.

“Hey!” I yelled.

Zane popped up out of the water, wiping his face with a big smile.

“Come on in!”

I laughed and shook my head.

“I’m fine right here.”

“Oh, come on. When was the last time you let loose? Jump in.”

I sighed before standing and jumping into the water with a run. I made sure to splash him as much as possible.

“See? Nice, huh?”

I closed my eyes and floated on my back for a moment, the water calming me.