

Two Years Gone

Two Years Later

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.

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.