



The Alpha's Regret

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Description: For two years, Ezra promised me a mating ceremony—ten times. And ten times, he chose his childhood sweetheart, Alexa, over me. I was his fated mate, yet always second.

When I handed him the bond dissolution papers, I thought I was finally free.

But that's when the powerful Alpha lost control.

Now he wants me back—but I've already learned what it means to choose myself.

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Ezra, the Alpha of the Bitterwind Pack, secretly marked me two years ago. However, he has yet to hold our mating ceremony, which would publicly announce my position.

I've been working as his "assistant," assisting him with pack affairs all along.

Every time Ezra cheats on Alexa, his childhood sweetheart, he promises to hold our mating ceremony.

Two years. There are ten ceremonies promised. Ten broken promises.

After the tenth cancelled ceremony, I gave up. I chose to end the mate bond.

That's when the powerful Alpha went insane.

Ezra Jackson's tenth absence from our mating ceremony coincided with the celebration of his successful defeat of the rogue wolves and expansion of our pack territory.

Alexa planned this grand celebration meticulously.

At the banquet, everyone assumed Alexa was his future partner.

"Alpha Jackson and Miss Alexa have been childhood sweethearts! Now that he's defeated the rogues, we want to see them kiss to celebrate!" The crowd responded with a scream.

"Yes! We want to see Alpha and Alexa kiss!" others chimed in.

The chanting echoed in my ears, each word like a claw scraping at my heart.

I, who he had secretly marked two years ago but never publicly acknowledged, could only shrink into a corner. From there, I watched him look lovingly at Alexa before bending down and planting a tender kiss on her lips.

Two years ago, our wolves recognised each other as true mates, and he marked me without reservation.

But our pack was in danger then, as it was constantly attacked by a powerful rogue wolf pack. He begged me to keep our mate bond secret, fearing that the rogues would target me specifically, distracting him from defending the pack.

I agreed. I adored him and didn't mind being Alpha's mate.

For the past two years, I've served as his "assistant," assisting him with pack affairs in the hopes of quickly strengthening our group. I figured that once we were strong enough to eliminate the rogue threat, we could finally be together openly.

With my assistance, the pack grew stronger by the day, and we eventually defeated the rogues. However, I no longer want to be his mate.

After the party, I waited for Ezra at an intersection near the hotel.

His black car approached slowly. The window rolled down, revealing Alexa's sleeping face in the passenger seat.

Ezra looked at me with his usual arrogance.

"Go home by yourself. I need to take Alexa home."

I lowered my eyes and said nothing.

Ezra suffers from severe germaphobia, particularly the smell of wolf spirits. He never lets that scent linger in his car.

Due to his error, our pack almost lost support from a nearby pack that provided healing herbs.

We were fighting fierce battles with the rogues at the time, and warriors were being severely injured on a daily basis. The healing herbs were essential for us.

Leo, the neighbouring Alpha, enjoyed wolf spirits. I went to apologise to him and accompanied him for drinks until I nearly bled from the stomach.

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But then Ezra wrinkled his nose in disgust and said:

“You smell disgusting. Find your own way home.”

He left me in the forest that day.

My wolf was too drunk to shift, so I was unable to transform.

I walked for five hours using human legs. While crossing the forest, I was attacked by rogue wolves and almost died, barely making it home with wounds.

Yet here was Alexa, drunk and sleeping soundly in his passenger seat.

It appears that his rules only applied to me.

I forced a bitter smile and tried to keep my voice steady.

“Will you come to the mating ceremony tomorrow?”

Ezra hesitated before responding:

“Alexa drank too much celebrating for me tonight. She’ll feel awful tomorrow, and I need to take care of her. I won’t make it to the mating ceremony. Let’s just forget about it.”

My heart became cold, but I nodded gently. “Okay.”

After a pause, I took out the mate bond dissolution papers from my bag and handed them to Ezra.

“Sign these documents, please.”

Perhaps out of guilt, Ezra took the pen and signed the papers without first looking at them.

Then he looked at me with a soft voice and promised:

“I’ll bring home your favourite venison tomorrow.”

With that, he drove off.

When Ezra returned home, it was already noon the following day.

He stood in front of the mirror, removing his shirt, which smelt of Alexa’s perfume.

He paused, tilting his head slightly to look at me sitting on the edge of the bed through the mirror.

“What document did you have me sign yesterday?”

I looked up, a flicker of complex emotions in my eyes, then returned to indifference.

“You didn’t ask when signing, why ask now?”

“Just remembered. Besides, you’re my mate. Why would I fear you’d harm me?”

Ezra laughed casually, unconcerned.

I lowered my gaze, concealing the mockery in my eyes.

“Weren’t you afraid I might have had you sign our mate bond dissolution agreement? Or maybe a transfer of pack assets?”

Ezra’s expression tightened, his brow furrowing with surprise and displeasure.

“Are you joking with me?”

He walked over and gently cupped my face, his touch tender but firm.

“You know if you left me, I’d go insane.”

“If I had to choose between the two, I’d rather it be the pack assets transfer.”

Ezra looked at me, unable to conceal the depth of his emotions.

I knew his statement that he couldn’t live without me was true. His intense emotions were genuine.

That’s why my “joke” was also genuine.

What I had him sign was actually an application to dissolve our mate bond.

In our pack, once a mate bond has been formed with the Alpha, both parties must submit a dissolution request to the Alpha Council. The bond can be broken only with the Council’s approval.

Five years of courtship. Two years of marriage.

My relationship with Ezra Jackson was finally coming to its end.

That afternoon, I marched directly to the pack registry office, clutching my withdrawal application tightly.

Once submitted, I would no longer be a part of the Bitterwind Pack.

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Sara, the pack registrar, glanced up from her desk. When she saw me, her professional smile faded, and shock washed over her.

“Miss Williams?” her voice hitched. “What’s this about?”

I silently slid the paperwork across her desk.

Her eyes widened as she examined the form. “Membership withdrawal? But you’re—” She paused in mid-sentence.

“Are you sure about this?” Sara asked, leaning forward and lowering her voice. “Everyone knows how much you’ve done for this pack.”

“You’ve always stood by Alpha Jackson, supporting him through everything,” she said. “We all say privately that even if rogues took over the entire territory, you’d be the last one standing, fighting until your final breath.”

“Why so suddenly now...?”

Her words trailed off as I lowered my gaze.

Before yesterday, I had the same thought.

Two years ago, rogue wolves nearly destroyed the pack.

I remained by Ezra’s side as we rebuilt from nothing. Every strategy meeting, alliance negotiation, and battle plan—I was present.

We worked together. We fought together.

When I secured the healing herb partnership with the neighbouring pack, Ezra prepared a feast to celebrate.

I could still taste it and see the pride in his eyes as he placed the plate before me.

That night, we sat in our backyard and watched the pack pups play football in the distance.

Ezra hugged me tightly, whispering that he would be lost without me and that he was grateful to have me by his side in this lifetime.

I forced a slight smile at the memory.

“People change. I’ve made my decision.”

Sara looked at me, her eyes full of regret.

“If your mind is made up, then I wish you well in your future.”

I thanked her softly before leaving the registry office.

I’d barely returned to my desk when my phone rang.

It was Alexa. She’d shared a photo on Facebook of Ezra lying in bed, his dark hair tousled across the pillow and his peaceful sleeping face partially visible.

The fresh marks on his neck, which were unmistakably kiss marks, caught my attention right away.

The caption read: “Drank too much last night; thankfully, someone took care of me.” I rewarded him with a kiss. The man was excessively strong. My body was almost unable to withstand his impact. Some men are worth the trouble.

She had specifically tagged me out of fear that I would miss it.

Alexa had pulled this stunt before. Every single one of her Facebook posts over the last two years has either mentioned me or was clearly intended for me to see.

Many were even set with privacy settings so that only I could see them—her private little power play.

In the past, her petty tactics would easily enrage me, sending me storming into Ezra’s office demanding answers.

I had argued with Ezra about it. I had confronted him.

Every time, he casually dismissed it:

“Alexa and I are just friends. We grew up together. You’re the one I want as my mate.” Then came the part that always made my blood boil: “Don’t be so jealous. It’s not a good look for you.”

Ezra was so certain of my love, that I would never leave him, that he hurt me without regard for consequences.

I smiled to myself, despite my jumbled emotions.

Suddenly, a coworker gasped beside me.

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“Look! The Alpha’s future mate is here.”

I followed her gaze.

Alexa walked straight into Ezra’s office, swaying her hips, wearing high heels and not knocking.

Within moments, the blinds dropped with a decisive snap, blocking any view of what was happening inside.

But soon, the man and woman’s panting could be heard. Through the blinds, two figures were seen entangled together.

I lowered my eyes, my thoughts returning to the past.

Ezra once pressed me against the same office desk, his hands urgent but gentle.

His eyes shone with desire as he whispered:

“Don’t you think this feels thrilling? Like we’re having a forbidden affair?”

I’d laughed then, drunk on his attention and desire.

His sweat had dripped onto my skin while he held me close.

I almost laughed aloud at my former self. I felt pathetic for repeatedly believing his empty words.

Allowing him to deceive me ten times was foolish.

But now, touching the mate bond dissolution papers and pack registry withdrawal forms in my bag, feeling the Council's seal under my fingertips, I knew with absolute certainty:

There would not be an eleventh time.

Two hours later, while I was busy delivering my work to colleagues, Ezra sent me a mind-link.

Bring coffee to my office. Now.

The demand was made without a please or thank you, just in his usual commanding tone. As if I still belonged to him. As though nothing had changed.

He was always extremely picky, particularly about his coffee. Not just particular, but tyrannical about taste, temperature, and presentation.

To make him happy, I once spent \$5,000 from my own savings to purchase the highest quality coffee beans available from a speciality importer.

Beans had to be flown in weekly from remote mountain ranges halfway around the world. I'd even attended special barista classes three towns away, driving two hours each way every Saturday for a month to learn proper brewing techniques.

All so he could have the perfect cup.

In the entire pack office, I was the only one who could make his coffee exactly the way he preferred. Something he would brag about to Alphas who came to visit.

“My Zara knows exactly how I like it,” he would say, smiling. My heart used to skip a beat whenever I saw her.

I stared at his message, my jaw clenching at how his tone implied that my devotion was simply expected—a natural right of his.

I gave out a cold laugh. I almost forgot I had purchased those coffee beans with my own money. He had never offered to reimburse me.

I ignored Ezra’s message and got up to make myself a cup. The expensive beans were still in the break room, so I might as well eat them one last time before I leave.

What I hadn’t expected was to find Alexa in the break room.

When she noticed me enter, her lips curled into a contemptuous smile.

“Well, if it isn’t Zara the doormat,” she said, her voice full of mock sweetness. “I thought you’d burst into the office earlier to catch us in the act. You usually do.”

She deliberately tilted her chin up while speaking, highlighting the glaring red marks on her neck. Marks that were clearly meant to be seen, perfectly positioned so that her collar wouldn’t hide them.

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“Is that so?” I kept my gaze down, picking up the freshly brewed, scalding hot coffee and throwing it directly in her face.

Alexa screamed, “AHHH!” as the liquid burned. Her trembling finger pointed at me, mascara running down her face from the coffee. She seemed genuinely surprised that I had finally fought back.

“You psychotic BITCH!” she screamed, wiping coffee from her eyes, her flawless makeup now streaking down her cheeks. “Do you really believe Ezra won’t dissolve your mate bond after this?”

“Let me tell you the truth,” she said, her eyes filled with malice. “Ezra only marked you because of something I said that made him angry. A stupid fight we had.”

“Why else would he mark you but never hold a wedding ceremony?” she insisted, realising she’d struck a nerve. “You didn’t actually think he’d let you become the pack’s Luna, did you? Someone like you?”

“Alexa, what the HELL are you saying?!”

Ezra’s tall figure suddenly filled the doorway and squeezed into the break room. His usually flawless hair was dishevelled. His expression was panicked. His eyes cast a reproachful look at her, clearly saying, “Shut up.”

Instead of backing down, Alexa’s entire demeanour shifted. She pouted childishly and put her arm around his, pressing against him.

“Did I say anything wrong, Ezra?” she enquired, her voice sweet and innocent now. “You only agreed to marry Zara because you were fighting with me at the time, right? It was never supposed to be permanent.”

Ezra’s expression became extremely complicated. His gaze darted around the room. His expression was filled with guilt and uncertainty.

And at that moment, I knew.

I stood frozen, Alexa’s words echoing in my mind, slicing through years of self-deception.

In my relationship with Ezra, I was always the one who put in the most effort. The one giving everything while receiving nothing in return.

I’d begun falling for him when I was fifteen, pursuing him for three agonising years while he maintained that infuriating ambiguous attitude—never rejecting me outright to keep me on the hook, but never fully accepting me either.

Until we turned eighteen and our wolves awoke, recognising one another as mates.

I vividly recall that night—the full moon, the rush of power as my wolf appeared, and the overwhelming certainty when our gazes met across the ceremonial circle.

Mates. It was meant to be destiny.

I couldn’t sleep all night after Ezra proposed marking me. I had paced my bedroom until dawn, planning our future together and imagining the life we would create.

I foolishly thought I’d finally won his heart, that he genuinely cared about me. I thanked the Moon Goddess a thousand times for uniting us.

But now, the cruel reality sliced through all of my illusions like a sharp knife, revealing the lie I'd been living.

I was not his chosen one. I was his consolation prize. When things with Alexa did not go as planned, he devised a backup plan.

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My lips twisted into a bitter smile as I returned to the coffee machine and made a second cup on purpose.

I picked up the steaming mug, walked calmly over to Ezra, and threw the scalding liquid directly in his face. “Alpha,” I quipped, “here’s your coffee. This is the last one I’ll ever make you. I’m leaving now.”

Without waiting for his response, I turned and walked away, ignoring his calls behind me.

That evening, as I was packing the last of my personal belongings, my phone suddenly rang.

It was Ezra.

“Zara,” he said as soon as I picked it up. “Why are you blocking my mind-link? Everything Alexa said this afternoon was nonsense. Complete garbage. Don’t take it to heart.”

I held the phone, my voice deliberately flat: “Mmm, I know.”

My unusual calmness appeared to catch Ezra off guard.

“Next month,” he finally explained, his voice softening to the tone he used when he wanted something from me, “on the 18th, it’s the two-year anniversary of our marking.”

He paused, waiting for my response. When none arrived, he added:

“Let’s hold our wedding ceremony then. The real one, with the whole pack attending. I’ll announce you as my Luna officially.”

I tightened my grip on the phone, unconsciously tense my fingers around it. The same empty promises. It’s the eleventh time.

I did not want to drag this out any longer. I needed to inform Ezra about the dissolution of our mate bond.

“Do you have time tomorrow?” I enquired, cutting through his promises. “About the mate bond dissolution application-” Before I could finish my sentence, Alexa’s provocative voice appeared on the phone.

“Ezra, baby, do you like this bikini?” Her voice was deliberately sultry and intended for me to hear. “Come take a look! If you like it, I’ll bring it to the Maldives with us.”

I heard rustling on the other end, hushed whispers that I couldn’t make out. Then Ezra’s voice returned, noticeably low and urgent.

“Zara, what were you saying? I didn’t catch that.” His tone was dismissive and distracted.

I gripped the phone even tighter, my knuckles turning white.

The mate bond dissolution papers were on my lap, with the official seal catching the light.

“I said “I began, but he cut me off.

“Look, I need to go on a business trip tomorrow. Whatever it is, we can discuss it when I get back.”

The queue went dead abruptly. Not even a goodbye.

I smiled bitterly and tossed the phone onto the couch beside me. I’d wanted to discuss the dissolution with him face to face, but he wouldn’t even give me that opportunity.

My inner wolf whined. Soon, we’d be truly free.

In the days that followed, I methodically cancelled my pack registration, packed up my belongings, and relocated to temporary housing in my new pack territory.

The Ashwood Alpha had been surprisingly welcoming, offering me a position immediately after learning about my organisational abilities.

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Throughout this time, Ezra would occasionally send me photos of wedding venue decorations.

[I asked designers to create five different mating ceremony layouts. Which one would you prefer?] One message was read, accompanied by elaborate displays of flowing fabrics and flowers.

[Do you think the beach setting would be nice? Another person imagined white chairs on golden sand as the sun set.

I looked at those intricate designs, and a sense of mockery rose in my chest.

He has marked me for the past two years. Countless nights spent awake, anticipating the mating ceremony, only to be disappointed time and again.

Now that I was leaving, he became more invested in the wedding.

Meanwhile, Alexa's Facebook page was updated on a daily basis, as if she were managing a dedicated Ezra Jackson fan account.

It was either sweet photos of them together with captions like "movie night with my favourite person" or videos of Ezra's meticulously prepared surprises for her—flowers, jewellery, surprise dinners.

Alexa's Facebook page featured a proposal video the day before Ezra's promised wedding date, which also happened to be the deadline for the Alpha Council to consider our mate bond dissolution application.

Alexa wore a pristine white dress in the video, and she stood in a flower-filled garden.

Ezra was down on one knee. He was holding up a sparkling diamond ring that reflected sunlight.

Everyone around them was chanting, “Kiss, kiss!” Their packmates and his family.

The final freeze-frame showed Ezra smiling, holding Alexa tightly in his arms and burying his face in her hair.

I watched it calmly from beginning to end, surprised at how little it hurt. I left a single “Congratulations” comment and immediately blocked Alexa.

Shortly after, as if on cue, Ezra called me.

He sounded excited and energetic, which was very different from his usual reserved tone with me.

“Zara, I’ll be back tomorrow,” he said without preamble.

“I’ve had the entire pack prepare everything. When I return, we can hold our mating ceremony right away. I’ve even arranged for your favourite flowers.”

The next morning, I did not go to the beach where the mating ceremony was scheduled to take place.

By noon, I still hadn’t received a call from Ezra asking why I hadn’t arrived.

It wasn’t until the evening that Ezra returned to our shared house, exhausted but with a lingering scent of perfume that wasn’t mine on his clothes.

He stared at me from the couch, guilt and unease flashing in his eyes as he saw my packed bags by the door. “Alexa wasn’t feeling well,” he explained, the excuse coming naturally. “It delayed my return.”

“But don’t worry,” he said quickly. “I promise you, the next mating ceremony will definitely happen. I’m thinking next weekend. I’ll make sure everything is perfect.”

I felt nothing when I heard those words—the same empty promise for the eleventh time. There is no anger. No disappointments. No pain. Just... nothing.

I looked at him quietly before pushing the Alpha Council-approved mate bond dissolution papers across the coffee table towards him.

“Don’t bother,” I said calmly, my voice more stable than it had been in years.

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“The Alpha Council has approved our mate bond dissolution application. You’re no longer my mate.”

Ezra stared at me, his expression shifting from confusion to shock as the gravity of my words hit home. The colour drained from his face, and his confident Alpha demeanour crumbled before my eyes.

“The Council approved what?” he enquired, his voice barely above a whisper.

Before this point, I had forgiven him ten times. Ten broken promises. Ten humiliations. Ten chances for change.

Perhaps in his eyes, those ten forgivenesses represented infinite tolerance—an unspoken permission to do whatever he wanted without consequence.

“You heard me,” I said, standing my ground. “Our mate bond is officially dissolved.”

“Zara, are you joking with me right now?” Ezra’s voice lowered to a dangerous level.

Though he freely engaged in affairs and lived recklessly outside of our relationship, the prospect of actually dissolving our mate bond appeared to strike him like a physical blow.

“This isn’t funny,” he grumbled.

“I’m not laughing,” I said calmly.

The reality was painfully obvious. He wanted both—he couldn't let go of Alexa's affection, but he clung desperately to what I gave him. The stability. The loyalty. The unquestionable support. The ideal assistant who kept his pack going while he played Alpha.

"If you're still upset about Alexa, there's absolutely no need." He ran his hand through his hair, a gesture I'd seen a thousand times when he was about to lie. His words were clear. "I've told you countless times, Alexa and I are just good friends."

I gave out a bitter laugh. "Good friends who sleep together and get engaged?" I responded without hesitation. "Does the entire pack know about this special definition of 'friendship'? Or is it exclusive to you two?"

He froze for a moment, his jaw clenched.

"Zara, listen to me," he said, softening his tone. He took a step closer, reaching for my hand, which I quickly yanked away. "What happens between Alexa and me has never affected what's between us. What we have is just physical. You're the only one I truly love."

Is it just physical?

It was laughable.

I couldn't understand Ezra's brazen audacity—how he could say such things with a straight face.

"It's complicated," he said, as if that clarified everything.

"No, it's really not."

Wolves have always been loyal companions. We mate for life, choosing one partner with whom we will be forever bonded.

“So, in this monogamous society,” I said, my voice steady despite the anger rising within me, “why should I tolerate my husband having a ‘good friend’ for physical relationships on the side?”

I moved closer to him, no longer intimidated by his Alpha presence.

“Did you ever actually plan to honour our bond? Or was I just convenient-the loyal, devoted mate who would run your pack while you pursued Alexa?”

His silence was the only answer I needed.

Furthermore, Alexa’s presence had far-reaching consequences for our relationship.

She was gradually taking my place, making me look like a disgraced, abandoned mate to the rest of the pack.

As Alpha, Ezra understood the limits of pack law better than anyone else. He knew exactly how far he could push things without facing formal consequences.

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He wouldn't stop himself as long as he didn't cross the absolute red lines. He'd push right to the brink, straddling the line between acceptable behaviour and outright betrayal.

"We can work this out," he said, changing tactics. "Whatever you think you know about Alexa and me—"

"I know everything," I interjected. "And so does the Council."

My questions and arguments always felt weak and ineffective under his silver tongue—because my identity had always been that of his mate, not an equal. I'd been taught to listen to him, to believe his explanations, and to doubt my own perceptions.

Not anymore.

"Ezra, you married me with ulterior motives from the start," I grumbled. "Trying to keep me now is beyond ridiculous." His eyes blazed with rage. "That's not true!"

"Isn't it? Alexa told me everything in the break room. About your fight. About how you marked me to make her jealous."

To develop a passionless relationship with someone you don't truly care about, and then desperately cling to that relationship when it falls apart, pretending to be deeply in love rather than relieved, was the behaviour of a performer, not a genuine mate.

"We could have dissolved our mate bond months ago and given each other freedom," I said later. "Allowing us both to pursue our own lives with dignity instead of this

endless charade.”

He rubbed both hands through his hair, his breathing ragged. “You can’t do this. Not now. Do you know what this will do to the pack’s reputation? To my standing with the other Alphas?”

So there it was. His genuine concern.

Now that the Alpha Council had approved the dissolution of our mate bond, he had no valid reason to continue this precarious relationship. Most importantly, he would lose face.

No matter how you looked at it, he was the story’s heartless villain.

Even if he escaped formal punishment from the Alpha Council, he would still face moral condemnation.

Other packs would despise him, affecting our entire pack’s reputation in the werewolf community. Alliances would be questioned. Trade agreements were reconsidered. His leadership was scrutinised.

“You should have thought of that before the first time you chose Alexa over me,” I said calmly. “Or the second. Or the tenth.” I cleared my throat and looked him straight in the eyes.

“I don’t have time to argue with you anymore. I’ll see you at the Alpha Council in three days.”

With the Council’s approval, we still needed to formally register our mate bond dissolution with them to officially end the connection. A final ceremony to undo what had been done that night under the full moon two years prior.

With those words, I turned and left without looking back.

However, Ezra was stern: “Zara, you’d better think this through. You’re still in my pack. You can’t go anywhere. If I exile you, you’ll be killed by rogue wolves within a day.”

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His voice dropped to a threatening growl, and his eyes were filled with wolf rage. “Your career, your future, your very life-they’re all in my hands.”

He stepped closer, towering over me—a cheap intimidation tactic.

“Can you really afford the price of leaving me?”

I had expected this. Ezra would not give up easily.

Since the emotional approach failed, he naturally resorted to his usual tactic: intimidation. The same way he kept me in line when I questioned Alexa’s role in our lives.

Even in today’s society, someone with enough power can decide another person’s fate. And as an Alpha, Ezra wielded significant power.

But he had underestimated me. Again.

“We may have a loveless relationship, Ezra, but I’ve been by your side for seven years,” I replied calmly, refusing to back down. “I’ve watched how you operate. How you manipulate. How you threaten.”

“I might not know your every thought, but I can predict most of your moves by now.”

I smiled slightly, feeling a weight lift off my shoulders as I prepared to strike the final blow.

“I forgot to mention-I’ve already cancelled my pack registration and joined the Ashwood Pack. The process was completely legal and smooth. Even you can’t reverse it.”

His eyes widened as the implications hit home. The blood flowed from his face, leaving him pale and stunned.

“You’re no longer my Alpha,” I said, each word precise and deliberate, “and I no longer have to obey your commands.”

After saying this, I took a deep breath and felt years of oppression leave my chest.

After enduring Ezra’s oppression for so long, I was finally standing up for myself.

Even as Ezra pleaded for forgiveness, I remained deaf to his words.

I turned and walked towards the door with purposeful strides, my heart pounding but my resolve unwavering.

Just before leaving, I looked over my shoulder and said in a formal tone:

“I know you’re extremely busy, Alpha, but I’ve already scheduled our final meeting in three days with the Council.”

My eyes remained fixed on his.

“For our last encounter, I advise you not to be late.”

The stunned look on Ezra’s face as I closed the door behind me was nearly worth the two years of agony.

Ezra's anxiety grew worse after I left.

His only advantage, his Alpha status, had become ineffective against me. He couldn't think of any other tactics to keep me by his side.

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Ezra, desperate, called the pack registry office right away.

“What’s this about Zara’s withdrawal?” he questioned.

His tone was harsh enough to make Sara, the registrar, nervous and confused.

Normally, Ezra didn’t pay much attention to a pack member’s withdrawal. Every week, he received routine paperwork on his desk.

“Don’t worry, sir,” Sara said nervously. “Ms. Williams’s work has been completely handed over. It won’t affect any pack operations.”

She stopped and said, “Besides, this report already received your approval. Is there something specific you’re concerned about?”

Ezra massaged his temples, noticing a headache developing behind his eyes.

He vaguely remembered the documents he had recently approved. He was certain there had been a withdrawal form among them. However, at the time, his thoughts were consumed by Alexa and their upcoming trip to the Maldives. He had completely forgotten about those “insignificant” documents.

He never imagined that one of them would be my formal withdrawal from the pack.

When we worked together at the pack house, I was always in charge of such routine paperwork. Ezra’s sole responsibility was to sign his approval without asking questions.

Because of my exceptional abilities, Ezra was able to delegate all of the work to me, freeing up his time to spend with Alexa.

However, to avoid pack gossip and speculation, Ezra had never publicly acknowledged my status as his mate.

No wonder my withdrawal went so smoothly. Nobody realised they were losing their Alpha's mate; they just thought they were losing a particularly capable assistant.

Sara became increasingly nervous as Ezra continued to remain silent.

“Alpha Jackson? Is everything alright?”

Her voice quivered slightly. “I still have Ms. Williams's contact information. I can try to reach her and report back to you.”

Ezra remained silent for a moment longer, aware of the irony of the situation.

What he needed was not his friend's contact information. He could reach me through our bond if he really wanted to—or could have before the dissolution.

“Zara is my mate,” he finally blurted. “Why would I need you to get her contact information for me?”

He caught himself and realised how his words sounded.

“Forget it. Talking to you is pointless.”

Ezra abruptly ended the call, exhausted and irritated.

Sara sat frozen on the other end of the phone line, unable to process what she had just

heard.

Throughout my time with the pack, I was constantly rushing from one task to the next, barely pausing to breathe. I was constantly working, resolving issues, and putting out fires.

Nothing in my position had ever suggested that I was the Alpha's partner.

Sara was taken aback, and she quickly spread the shocking news around the pack office.

One of my former colleagues couldn't contain her curiosity and sent me a direct message:

"Zara, you've been hiding the truth from all of us! Wait, should I call you Alpha Female now?"

The message made me smile bitterly. If only they knew.

"Your news is out of date," I responded simply. "I'm not an Alpha Female anymore."

"Ezra and I filed for mate bond dissolution not long ago. I'm a free wolf now, with no connection to him."

My departure had undoubtedly thrown Ezra off balance.

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His identity, which he had kept hidden for years, had now been revealed by his own slip of the tongue.

And all of his pack members had seen his interactions with Alexa firsthand over the last two years.

It was fitting, in a way. Allow them to see the true nature of the Alpha they were blindly following.

My chat screen with my former colleague quickly filled with exclamation marks and several recycled memes that had clearly circulated throughout the office.

“Alpha Jackson is THAT kind of man?! People are so deceitful!”

“Zara, don’t be too heartbroken. He’s not worth it. And that Alexa—I always knew something was off about her.”

Ezra’s carefully constructed facade had finally been torn down. Behind it was a face so ugly that no one could respect him any longer.

The phrase “beautiful on the outside, rotten on the inside” aptly describes him. He was essentially a worm dressed as a wolf.

I had finally removed the heaviest burden from my shoulders. Ezra’s emotions, whether angry, sad, or joyful, had nothing to do with me.

Without me, Ezra became like a lost bird with nowhere to land, flying aimlessly

through the sky, up and down in confused circles.

After wandering for hours, he returned alone to our former home.

Eight years together. It would be a lie to say that we had no feelings for each other. But whatever emotion remained was insufficient to convince me to turn back.

Ezra seldom drank at home. The lingering odour of alcohol in our living space would have been terrifying for someone with his germaphobia.

But tonight, he drank himself to a stupor in the living room.

He didn't understand it. I'd tolerated his behaviour ten times before, forgiving every broken promise. Why had I abruptly changed this time? Why was I so determined to end our mate bond?

Only I knew the truth. The accumulation of disappointment and anger had finally broken the dam that kept my emotions in check.

A person who constantly pushes the boundaries of the law will eventually break them. Similarly, someone who consistently tests the boundaries of love will eventually destroy it.

Alexa heard about Ezra's condition and rushed to our house right away.

Previously, no matter how brazenly she had behaved in front of me, I was still technically Ezra's friend. Despite her arrogance, she was not recognised by the Alpha Council.

Now that I'd filed for mate bond dissolution, she had the perfect opportunity to take my place.

Alexa looked at the dejected Ezra and secretly thought the situation was ideal for her. He was vulnerable and sensitive right now, and he needed someone gentle and caring by his side. “Ezra,” she said softly, sitting next to him on the couch. “I heard about what happened with Zara.”

She put a comforting hand on his arm.

“Forgive me for being blunt, but what’s done is done. Let the past stay in the past.”

Her voice softened to a whisper, sweet and promising. “A new life awaits you, and I’ll make you some hangover soup.

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Alexa appeared to be skilled in the kitchen; even in this unfamiliar environment, she moved confidently.

Perhaps it was simply that she knew exactly what to do when she was with Ezra.

While Alexa was working in the kitchen, her phone rang on the coffee table.

Ezra, still foggy from the alcohol, managed to sit up, intending to hand it to Alexa, but a quick glance revealed it was a spam call.

As he went to put down the phone, something made him pause: a nagging suspicion, perhaps, or simply drunken curiosity.

Alexa had always tried to show that her relationship with Ezra was more than just physical; they shared an emotional bond, she insisted, and they had great potential together.

In all their time together, Ezra had never bothered to investigate what Alexa might be deliberately hiding from him, and what he discovered in her Facebook account shocked him to the core.

There were dozens of posts set to be visible only to me, each of which boasted about Ezra's love for her and how they were meant to be together.

Photos of them that he had never intended to share, private conversations that were twisted to sound romantic, and the implication that our relationship was already over.

He finally understood how I knew so much about his relationship with Alexa.

For years, Ezra had no idea what kind of humiliation I had been going through; he would simply dismiss it all with a casual “Alexa is just my friend.”

Ezra’s drunken mind erupted with rage.

He stormed into the kitchen, rage seeping from every pore.

Alexa, unaware of what had happened, smiled at him.

“You are too impatient! “The soup is not yet ready.”

She held out a spoon and asked, “Would you like a taste?”

Ezra pushed her outstretched arm back and thrust her phone in front of her face, displaying the Facebook posts. “Alexa, what the hell is this? Explain yourself!”

His voice trembled with rage. “Have you forgotten everything I told you before? You have really gone too far!”

Alexa looked at her old Facebook posts, then at Ezra’s enraged expression. Cold sweat broke out on her skin, and she grabbed his sleeve, pleading: “Ezra, let me explain!”

“Take your hands off me!”

Ezra’s feet were unsteady due to the alcohol, and he glared at Alexa with bloodshot eyes.

“It’s no surprise Zara wanted to break off our friendship. It’s no wonder she was so

determined. It was all because of you.”

He jabbed his finger at the front door, yelling, “Get out!” NOW!”

Alexa stared at Ezra, the sadness in her eyes gradually turning to resentment.

“Who are you to accuse me?” she spat, abandoning the submissive act completely.

“Aren’t you the person in those photos? Aren’t you the one who did all that?”

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Her voice became stronger and more confident: “I only told Zara the truth.”

Ezra’s rage stalled, stifled by shame.

The photos, the meetings, and his betrayals were all true, despite Alexa’s manipulative tactics.

Nobody had forced Ezra to pursue Alexa; their relationship was born entirely out of desire and self-interest.

He deserved no sympathy.

Ezra physically pushed Alexa out the front door and leaned against it, alone with his misery.

If I had witnessed this scene, I might have wondered if Ezra had discovered Alexa’s Facebook posts sooner. Would he have made different decisions?

Would he have stopped damaging our relationship?

Perhaps the answer had been the same.

After all, a leopard cannot change its spots, just as a wolf cannot change its nature.

During his three days without me, Ezra slept little.

According to Sara, who reluctantly kept me updated, he had been pacing his office

like a caged animal, snapping at anyone who dared to disturb him. The dark circles under his bloodshot eyes told the story that his pride would not allow him to tell.

He spent countless hours imagining what would happen when we met at the Alpha Council: would I soften if he showed enough remorse? Would I give this terminally ill relationship one more chance? Would his tears move me as they had so many times before?

Meanwhile, in these three days without him, I'd already found peace.

No more checking my phone every five minutes, wondering if today would be the day he finally chose me, or mentally practicing arguments for the next time Alexa provoked me.

I slept better than I had in years, wrapped in blankets that did not smell of him.

After breaking free from his many cages, I had not yet considered where I might fly. The possibilities stretched before me like an open road, terrifying and exhilarating at the same time.

Alpha Rowan had already given me my own suite in the Ashwood packhouse, a new beginning with wolves who only knew me as Zara, not Ezra Blackwood's mate or assistant.

As long as he showed up to the Alpha Council on time, I would pretend the past never happened; there was no need to reopen old wounds or rehash ancient arguments.

Three days later, we convened outside the Alpha Council chambers as scheduled.

He had missed all ten of our scheduled mating ceremonies.

However, for this one and only mate bond severance, he arrived exactly on time, five minutes early.

The irony was not lost on me.

When Ezra saw me, he approached quickly, his normally confident stride hesitant; he appeared thinner, his designer suit hanging loosely on his frame.

“Zara,” his voice was lower than usual, almost a whisper. “I’ve been thinking a lot these past three days.

Perhaps we have not reached the end yet.”

His hands twitched at his sides, as if he wanted to reach for me but lacked the courage.

He took a deep breath and searched my eyes with an intensity that I once mistook for love.

“I finally understand what it feels like to lose someone you love.” A bitter laugh threatened to escape my throat. Of course, he would only recognise the value of something after it was gone, which was typical of Ezra.

“I could never betray you again,” he added, his voice cracking slightly. “It’s too painful. I can’t bear the thought of you with another pack, another Alpha.

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For two years, Ezra had refused to change his ways, resulting in broken promises and shattered trust.

Could three days really be enough for such an epiphany? Three days to reverse three years of deliberate decisions?

I shook my head and smiled bitterly, strangely calm; the storm of emotions I had expected was no longer present.

“Ezra, over the past two years, I gave you exactly thirty-three chances.”

His eyes widened slightly at the precise number; he hadn’t realised I was counting.

“Ten mating ceremonies,” I added. “Fifteen times I confronted you about Alexa. Eight times, I threatened to leave.

I kept my voice steady, refusing to tremble: “If you had ever truly wanted to change, even once, we wouldn’t be here now.”

I met his gaze steadily, no longer intimidated by the Alpha presence he radiated like a shield. “If you really care about me, then give me a path that belongs to me alone.”

Ezra’s body trembled visibly, and his usual confidence crumbled completely.

He understood why he had never valued the chances.

I’d given him before, and he’d always thought his opportunities were limitless—that I

was an infinite resource he could use whenever he wanted.

Perhaps someday, when he was tired of playing and wanted to return to domestic life, all he had to do was hold a wedding ceremony. He assumed I would always be there, loyal until death, never abandoning him.

“I’ll change,” he whispered, in a last desperate gambit, “and announce you as my mate today. We can host the ceremony this weekend. I have already made arrangements.”

I shook my head again: “More promises.”

If that had happened—if I had accepted his last-minute conversion—would I still be his wife in any meaningful way?

I would have become a puppet for him to manipulate, a permanent appendage at his side, never having my own rights as a person, a victory trophy he could show off when convenient and ignore when not.

“The choice before you now is simple,” I said gently, surprised by the genuine compassion I still felt for him despite everything. “Why struggle with this any longer?”

I pointed to the council doors and said, “For the sake of our future happiness—separately—let’s end this.”

Ezra remained silent for a long time, his gaze fixed on the marble floor; eventually, tears of regret streamed silently down his cheeks.

“I really did love you,” he said quietly, almost inaudible. “In my own way.”

“I know,” I admitted honestly, “but your way of loving hurts too much.”

With a trembling hand, he signed his name on the documents Elder Lucian presented, his usual flourish missing; the signature was small and uncertain, like a child’s.

I added my own name alongside his, the letters firm and clear.

I smiled, relieved: “Freedom for me and for you.”

I had signed many documents on Ezra’s behalf over the years, such as contracts, treaties, and pack agreements, but they had all been routine and without emotion.

As we entered the council chamber for the final ritual, I could feel the fresh air seeping into my lungs.

The ceremony itself was brief, almost anticlimactic in light of everything we’d been through.

When the dissolution certificate was placed in my hands, a tingling sensation spread throughout my body, and the last threads of our bond dissolved like morning mist, leaving only a faint memory of connection.

My wolf, long suppressed by the pain of rejection, awoke inside me, alert and alive.

I’d struggled for so long in a world dominated by Ezra.

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Finally, in one decisive act, I had removed all of the constraints of my previous life, arriving in a land where everything could bloom again.

As we exited the chamber, Ezra stopped me one last time.

“Zara,” he began, but appeared to struggle to find the right words.

“It’s okay,” I said, surprised by how much I meant it. “We both get a second chance now.”

He nodded once, his expression unreadable, before turning and walking away.

I watched him leave, feeling neither joy nor sorrow, only a deep sense of rightness.

Here, in this new chapter of my life, I would have everything I didn’t need to share with anyone.

No one would risk disappointing me again.

I would live solely for myself: my body is my world, and my heart is my law.

No one could threaten or judge me.

But Ezra’s experience was diametrically opposed to mine; he, too, entered a new world—one that was vastly different from mine—but it was desolate and barren.

As we exited the Alpha Council chambers, he caught up with me in the corridor, his steps hurried and desperate.

“Zara...” he said, his voice softer than I’d ever heard it. “Since we’re no longer connected...”

He ran his hand through his hair, a nervous habit that I used to find endearing. “As a stranger now, I should still have the right to pursue you.”

His eyes had a determined gleam that I knew all too well.

“I will show you a man worthy of your love again. I will prove myself to you.”

His words irritated me, and despite everything, he still didn’t get it.

“Stop right there, Mr. Jackson,” I said with a smile. “If it were possible, I’d prefer never to see you again from this moment forward.”

I squared my shoulders, my wolf growling inside me: “Your disgraceful behaviour has sickened me enough already.” “Birds of a feather flock together. You and Alexa are clearly a better match. “I wish you happiness.”

The final words came out naturally, a social nicety I had said without thinking.

My heart twinged unexpectedly; Ezra’s happiness or lack thereof was no longer my concern, but the words had come from some deeply ingrained habit, a final echo of the woman who had cared so deeply for him.

Ezra’s brow furrowed, his face clouded with sadness. “But without you...”

I turned away resolutely, interrupting him before he could finish.

“Ezra, the world continues without anyone. Whatever ‘pain’ you can’t erase right now, time will help you overcome.”

I walked away without looking back, my steps becoming lighter as the distance between us increased.

Leaving Ezra behind never made me feel insecure; I had always handled the most important aspects of the pack’s business, and my skills and connections were more than enough to carve out my own territory.

Staying with him would have resulted in stagnation, whereas leaving meant growth.

I thrived at the Ashwood Pack from the start.

Alpha Rowan immediately recognised my administrative skills and promoted me to pack strategy advisor within my first month. By the third month, I was managing diplomatic relations with neighbouring packs, and by the sixth, I had my own office and a small team reporting to me.

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When I was motivated, time flew by, and I soon forgot what it was like to be under Ezra's control.

Even his face began to fade from my memory, the sharp edges of hurt and betrayal softening into vague impressions, until a phone call one year later jolted me back to that life.

The voice on the other end was Lyra, a pack member who had previously expressed outrage on my behalf when the truth about Ezra's deception was revealed.

"Zara? Is that actually you? Her voice sounded hopeful but strained.

While I was confident in my position, I couldn't help but wonder how Ezra's pack had fared without me.

"It's me," I confirmed. "Are you calling for business or personal reasons?"

Her voice became hesitant: "Business?" Alpha Jackson's pack has completely disbanded. What kind of business might there be?"

The news did not surprise me, but hearing it confirmed sent a strange feeling through my chest.

"Many pack members are wandering now, hoping to find a new pack to accept us," she continued. "But you must be unique, Zara. Is your career going well right now?"

Actually, these developments were predicted a year ago, and Ezra's flaws were

already apparent.

He had never been a rational leader, and with me by his side, he could act recklessly because I was always there to clean up his messes. My departure was like chopping off his arm.

How could such a person survive in the highly competitive world of pack politics?

His professional downfall was largely self-inflicted.

“Is he...” I paused, unsure whether I wanted to know. “Is Ezra all right?”

Lyra’s pause revealed everything before she spoke.

“He’s alive,” she said carefully. “After you left, things went downhill quickly. Alexa stayed for a while, but as the pack’s resources dwindled, she found reasons to go elsewhere.”

I nodded, though she couldn’t see me; it sounded like Alexa.

“Ezra’s absence from three consecutive summit meetings brought the alliance with the Northern Packs to an end. The subsequent territorial disputes...” She trailed off. “We never realised how much you were handling until you weren’t there anymore.”

I wondered how Ezra felt knowing that his former subordinates were looking for me; the irony was not lost on me.

Those who stay on the right path gain support, while those who stray lose it. Ezra undoubtedly understood this principle better than anyone else.

There is nothing new under the sun.

Ezra's current situation was the same old story told by countless others before him.

According to one of my former pack members, the Bitterwind Pack fell apart less than two months after my departure.

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This collapse wasn't just because Ezra had grown accustomed to being an absentee leader, leaving the pack without a leader when I was gone; it was also because his personality had become more obsessive and erratic, causing him to squander opportunities that could have been easily secured.

"It was like watching someone deliberately sabotage themselves," Lyra explained during our call. "He'd arrive at meetings still drunk from the night before. He would insult potential allies. He didn't always show up."

Despite my disdain for Ezra, I had to admit that he had once been exceptional in terms of business acumen and strategic thinking.

However, in terms of overall leadership ability, his other qualities—selfishness, impulsivity, and inability to maintain relationships—dragged him down like anchors.

"How about the Northern Alliance?" I enquired, curious despite myself; that collaboration had been my crowning achievement, requiring months of delicate negotiation.

"Broken within weeks," Lyra grumbled. "Alpha Zack offered support after hearing you'd left, but Ezra accused him of trying to steal pack territory and threatened him."

Even when former Alpha allies offered to help bring the pack back from the brink, Ezra turned them all down.

His heart was no longer in pack management; his mind was lost in bitterness, resentment, and self-pity. "And Alexa?" I enquired, even though I already knew the

answer.

“She saw the writing on the wall,” Lyra said with a stern expression. “The moment the pack’s finances started dwindling, she discovered urgent business overseas.”

Alexa, ever the opportunist, recognised that Ezra had become a dead end, a path not worth choosing, and she quickly left, never to see him again.

With such a deteriorating state of leadership, the pack struggled to survive for a year. However, the inevitable happened: the rogue wolves returned, stronger than before, and without proper leadership or alliances, the entire pack splintered apart.

“We fought as long as we could,” Lyra said, her voice cracking slightly. “But Ezra...” He did not even show up for the final battle. Just locked himself in his office with a bottle of whisky while the rogues ploughed through our defences.”

As I listened to my former pack member’s bitter account, I felt neither satisfied nor vindicated.

If anything, Ezra’s current situation appeared entirely predictable—neither deserving of mockery nor sympathy.

He had chosen this path for himself, and how he continued on it had nothing to do with me.

I smiled slightly and made a quick decision.

“Since you don’t currently have a pack, why not join ours?”

The voice on the other end brightened, rising a few notes with excitement.

“Zara! Even though you left the pack, you’re still my anchor in the storm.”

Her relief was palpable: “If you’re offering, I’d be a fool to decline.”

She paused for a moment before adding hesitantly: “But... I still do not understand. You and Alpha Jackson were friends, after all. How can you be so calm about everything right now?”

Hearing this made me smile.

“If you lose a piece of gold,” I explained quietly, “you will naturally think about it all the time. Even though it will never be found again...”

I traced a pattern on my desk with my finger as I carefully considered my words.

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“You’d still regret not treasuring it more while you had it.”

I let that sink in before proceeding.

“But if you throw away a heavy stone, you’ll only feel relieved to be rid of the burden. Why would you even consider picking it up again?”

There was a brief silence on the other end before a soft laugh broke through.

“You always explain things so clearly,” Lyra said appreciatively. “If I could hear your advice more often...”

Her voice took on a hopeful tone: “It would undoubtedly benefit me greatly.” Please give me this opportunity.

I smiled, having already mentally reorganised my team to include her.

“I will.” Remember to adjust your schedule and prepare for the interview. Alpha Rowan is fair but thorough.” When I hung up, I felt a deep sense of lightness wash over me.

I hadn’t become a workaholic, sacrificing my health to prove my worth without Ezra.

Nor had I been so devastated by our failed relationship that I had succumbed to depression, wasting my days in misery.

At this point, the scales in my heart had reached a near-perfect balance: work and

personal life, ambition and contentment, memory and growth.

The gavel of justice had finally fallen, restoring my freedom and happiness.

Standing at my office window, I watched the Ashwood pack members go about their day: children playing in the training yard, warriors practicing their combat skills and elders teaching the younger generations about our history.

Zara Williams, strategist, leader, and wolf, had found a place for herself here, rather than as someone's mate.

Ezra's downfall was his own doing, just as my rise was mine.

Later that evening, as I was preparing for Alpha Rowan's strategy meeting, my phone vibrated with a text message.

Unknown number: Is it correct that your new pack is accepting applications?

I recognised the number right away, even though I had deleted it from my contacts.
Ezra.

My thumb lingered on the screen for a moment.

Then, without responding, I blocked the number and placed the phone in my pocket.

Some chapters should be closed permanently.

Tomorrow would present new challenges, opportunities, and growth.

And I'd face them all as the woman I'd become, not the one Ezra had tried to shape me into.

Free, strong, and complete.