

## Chapter 23 – The Orphan Child

“Leave my birth parents out of this, Ava,” I growled, my head getting hot with anger. How dare she think she had any right to invoke their names.

“You know I’m only speaking the truth,” Ava said, a smirk on her face. “You might have forgotten where you really came from but trust me, there are other people who haven’t.”

I glanced over at Ella and saw that she had a frown on her face, “Liam, what is she talking about?” Ella asked.

“Don’t worry about it, let’s just get you to the room,” I said. I didn’t want to go into things with Ella. Not right now.

“Oh, come on Liam, so you’re just going to keep lying to Ella? She deserves to know the truth,” Ava said. She had a righteous look on her face as if she was just trying to make sure that I did what was right but of course, I knew that this was all just for show.

“I never lied to her,” I growled.

“A lie by omission is still a lie and you know it,” Ava said. I wanted to turn into my wolf form while Ava turned into hers so that I could grab her by the neck and toss her out of my way. But of course, I couldn’t. I wouldn’t deal with her in that manner. Not here, not now.

Ella grabbed onto my arm and pulled me back, stopping me from continuing forward. “Liam just tell me what she’s talking about? The Graven’s, aren’t they your parents?”

I nodded my head yes, but just as soon as I did, I shook my head no. “Yes, they’re my parents. But… they’re my adoptive parents,” I said.

I didn’t know why the words felt like a mouth full of bricks when I let them out. I thought after finding this fact out years ago, it would have been easy for me to say it out loud.

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I was 13 when I first found out that I wasn’t really the second son of the Gravens family. Noah and I had been playing a game of garbage can basketball in the room that we shared. For as long as I could remember, Noah and I had always shared a room.

“That’s nine to six,” I said to Noah when the little paper basketball that we had created swished right into the garbage can after I shot it in.

Noah frowned, “No it’s not, I have eight points.”

I shook my head. Noah always tried to do this. He’d pretend that there were missing points of his that I hadn’t accounted for and then he’d get close enough to beat me. He always cheated. But today. I wasn’t in the mood to deal with his usual bull shit.

“No. You only have six points and you know it,” I said, going to the garbage can and pulling out our little fake basketball. Noah walked up behind me and shoved me aside. He grabbed the ball out of the can and ran to our shooting point and shot the ball.

I was too quick though, I swatted the ball out of the air before it could get into the garbage.

That made Noah mad. He ran towards me and shoved me hard and I fell back onto my bed, hitting the back of my head on me, headboard.

“Watch what you say to me orphan. Or I’ll tell mom and dad to send you back to wherever the hell it was that you came from,” Noah said. His eyes were furious and something in me told me this wasn’t some lie Noah told to try to get at me.

I ran out of our room and found mom in the kitchen.

“Mom! Am I really not your kid,” I asked. Tears were in my eyes.

Mom looked back and forth between me and Noah who had followed me out of our room and was now standing behind me. She had a frustrated sad look on her face. For a few seconds, she didn’t say anything. Then finally, she spoke.

“Liam, honey, we were going to wait until you were a little older to tell you,” Mom said.

“Tell me what?” I asked, desperate for her to just spit the sords out.

“No, Liam, you aren’t our biological child. You aren’t really a Gravens. Your father and I took you in after a sad situation with your birth family. Your real family,” Mom said.

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“My mom and dad should never have brought you home,” Noah mumbled now, from the heap he was still in on the floor. He had woken up from the daze I left him in after punching him.

Ava rushed over to Noah and crouched down beside him, “Baby, are you okay?” She tried to brush Noah’s hair out of his face but he slapped her hand away.

“You were supposed to keep him away from her!” Noah said.

Ava winced and pulled her hand back, “I tried,” she wined, “But he didn’t fall for it. He could sense something was wrong with her.” Ava snarled and looked at Ella then.

Noah ignored Ava’s words and turned back to face me. “You’ve been a fucking pain in the ass ever since you arrived at our doorstep.”

Back then, I was slightly smaller than Noah. It wasn’t until the next year that I hit my growth spurt as an Alpha and became twice his size practically overnight. Noah knew that I could beat him physically. That’s why he was smart and hardly ever challenged me that way.

But he knew that reminding me that I was left by my birth family was where he could hurt me the most.

“Fuck you, Noah,” I growled.

“I don’t know what this bitch sees in you. You’re a stray. I swear, I should have strangled you the moment mom and dad said you were going to be my new brother. If it wasn’t for who your birth family actually was, mom and dad would have thrown you back out into the streets,” Noah said.

I stormed up to Noah and drew my hand back in a fist. I wanted to kill him. I wanted to shut him up and make him feel even more pain.

“Liam, don’t!” Ella yelled from behind me. I stopped at the last minute. It was like a blind rage had entered my body and all I could see was red as I looked at Noah. But the fear in Ella’s voice is what really stopped me.

I knew that humans could fear werewolves. We were big and unpredictable. And no human could control a werewolf.

I turned around and saw that Ella was scared that I might kill Noah. Of course I wouldn’t, but she didn’t know this. And this fact broke my heart. I never wanted Ella to be afraid of me. I wanted her to always feel safe in my arms. Safe and protected.

I turned back to Noah and pushed my face right into his, “You’re lucky I’m here with Ella. She’s the one who is saving your ass right now even though you don’t deserve it.”

I walked back to Ella and held her hand, “Ella, let’s go.”

As Ella and I walked away from the bathroom, I turned back and looked at Noah and Ava, “You have one hour to get the hell out of the resort.”