

The Alpha King Call Boy

Chapter 231 No Better Friend

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Third person

“Think it’s coming soon,” Tuesday whispered.

“Daylight. They been gone a while.”

Lucas shushed her so faintly, the sound could have been mistaken for an exhale.

If she was right, great. If not... she should not be talking about their plan, not yet. Not when they could still be near. Not when there was even a slight chance they might be close enough to hear.

“What’s your favorite... dessert?” he whispered to distract her.

She had started asking him things like this, and now they did it practically nonstop. Traded questions about favorite things, firsts, memories. It did occur to Lucas that this was the kind of stuff normal people probably talked about on dates. Getting-to-know-you things.

Not that he had ever been on a proper date, himself.

“Pie,” Tuesday whispered.

They talked about food a lot. That was what your brain made you do when you were starving, they’d learned. Think about food. Talk about it. Dream about it.

“What kind?”

“Yeah, it was weird not to specify, huh? That’s cuz it’s a tie. I couldn’t decide which would win in a fight. Peach and pecan. My mom makes ’em both.”
“Wow. That sound delicious.”

“Yeah.” Her voice was thin as paper when she added, correcting herself, “Made. Used to make.” Because her mother was dead. That’s who Tuesday had come to the resort with, for a vacation. For her mother’s birthday.

“How ’bout you?”

For a second Lucas thought she was asking what kind of pies his own mother baked. That was hard to imagine—his mother in a kitchen, working with her hands.

“Cake,” he said, remembering the question.

“Chocolate.”

“Mmm. That sounds good.”

They exchanged a couple more silly questions to pass the time. And then Lucas finally got up the courage to ask a more serious one. One he couldn’t stop thinking about.

“Tuesday... why are you so nice to me?”

She sighed. And was silent for a long moment.

“Well, for one thing, you’re brave enough to help me,” she finally answered, “when no one else is. And I guess I just don’t really care about all that stuff they say about you. Dunno how anyone

could care about the past, at a time like this. The only thing that matters to me right now, is right now. And right now, I've got no better friend than you."

Lucas could not respond. He had to focus on holding back tears that suddenly welled in his eyes.

Everything—the vampires, the torture, the pain, the blame and guilt—for whatever reason,

Tuesday's forgiving words made him feel all of it all at once. He was afraid he was going to burst into sobs.

But he didn't. He managed to hold it in.

Tuesday didn't say anything else.

Until the first gray hints of sunrise started making shapes out of shadows and set both their hearts racing.

"It's time," she breathed.

And she began to move.

The vampires, assuming they overpowered the werewolves so completely, didn't pay much attention to the contents of their prisoners' pockets.

So Tuesday found herself locked up down here with something on her person that she knew instantly would be useful. All she had to do was hide it so her captors wouldn't find it while taking turns drinking her blood and abusing her. And then wait for the right time to use it.

The nineteen-year-old worked in a psychiatric hospital in the rural mountain town where she'd resided all her life. She dreamed of being a nurse. She had to finish teaching herself to read and then get through high school equivalency tests first, before she could even start on college, so realizing that dream was a ways off. But Tuesday figured the time was going to pass anyway. For now, she worked graveyard shifts filing paperwork at the hospital's front desk, and she loved it. She made minimum wage and only got the job because she lied on her resume, but she was proud of having found a way to stick her foot through a crack in a door that might lead to her dreams. One full moon's night a few months back, almost all the RNs had called out from work, leaving Tuesday alone in the hospital with the charge nurse. They had lots of intakes so he asked her to help him, even though she wasn't actually qualified to have her hands on patients. That was when he gave her a universal handcuff key. She'd tried to give it back at the end of that wild shift, but the nurse told her just to keep the peculiar little cylindrical key. In case she needed it again. She'd never needed it again at work. But she also never had a reason to take it off her keyring.

And she had her keys in her pocket on the night she was abducted by a swarm of vampires that fed on her blood till she blacked out and then locked her up in this dungeon.

Tuesday had tried the key in the lock of her wrist cuffs once already. She could've died right then and there when she felt it click and turn. She cried silently with relief and said a prayer of thanks to the gods. She also prayed for blessings for the charge nurse, whose faith in her competence at work might just save her life.

The handcuff key now lived in a little valley between two stones on the floor. She didn't dare retrieve it until that moment – that long-awaited moment when sunlight promised several hours before the vampires could rise from the dead again and return – but once she had the key in hand, she made very fast work of plugging it into the cuff locks and opening them up. She tried to be as quiet about it as she could.

Lucas was hovering his body around hers to try to obscure her activities from the other prisoners.

They'd start yelling at her again if they knew what she was doing. And she just wanted to focus for a minute, make sure she did this right.

Tuesday's whole body was trembling with excitement. She got her ankle cuffs released next and

had an immediate, ridiculous thought about wanting to do a cartwheel now that her limbs were free.

What she actually did was pass the key to Lucas, pressing it into his palm and feeling his fingers close over hers, and whispered into his ear, "I'm going for it. I'll meet you at the top of the stairs fast as I can."

And then she got up, wobbling for a few seconds on shaky legs, and disappeared into a shadow.

"What are you doing?" screamed one of the other prisoners. "How did you—"

"She's trying to escape! Stop, you're gonna get us all killed!"

"They're going to kill us either way," Lucas shouted. He freed his wrists and suddenly felt unstoppable. "Stay here and wait for them to do it slowly if you want. But we're gonna escape or die trying."

"How'd you get unchained?!"

Lucas couldn't help but groan with relief as his ankles came free. "I can unchain you, too. But it's now or never. We have to get out before the brainwashed ones upstairs can stop us."

He tried to stand, but couldn't. He had to crouch for a few seconds, catching his breath and summoning his strength. He gripped the handcuff key in his palm. The others continued to scream

about Lucas and Tuesday being stupid.

“Who’s coming with us?” he interrupted, pressing up off the ground. “Please. We only have a few seconds though.”

He glanced over to the stairwell that led up to the ground floor.

Tuesday was out already. She was small enough that she’d squeezed through a high and tiny window at the back of the decrepit chamber. It was a narrow space through which Lucas would definitely not have been able to get his body.

Tuesday’s plan was to go back into the hotel in order to let him out through that door at the top of the stairs that the vampires used when they came to select their food every night.

When his friend told him about this part of her plan, Lucas had urged her not to come back for him. It was too risky; why not just save herself, start running as soon as she could get out?! But she insisted she needed someone else with her, if she were going to survive the flight by foot that would follow escaping the prison. After all, once they got off the resort property, they’d be at the mercy of the desert.

“There’s nowhere to go,” the angry man growled.

“You can’t escape this place!”

The dripping water kept Lucas grounded in reality as seconds slipped by.

“Please,” he cried hoarsely. “Anyone? Come with us. Please.”

“I’ll go,” croaked a voice from nearby.

It was the blood-soaked, skeletal woman who had lost her daughter. The one that Lucas was sure would kill him if she had the chance.

Lucas crossed the chamber on unsteady legs.

He heard pattering footsteps overhead, getting louder as they neared the stairwell.

He crouched down and unlocked the woman’s ankle cuffs. Her skin was sickly soft and cold to the touch. He got her wrists freed next. Forced his way back up to his feet. And reached out his hand to help the woman stand.

“Come on,” he urged. “I know it hurts. But we have to go—now.”

Her shaking, filthy, bony hand found his.

The door at the top of the stairs flew open, and standing there in a rectangle of blinding artificial light was Tuesday, smiling, her green eyes shining. She looked like an angel.

The woman was too weak to stand. She really tried. A surge of adrenaline kicked Lucas’s body into overdrive. He lifted the crippled woman up into his arms, cradled her like a baby, and sprinted up the stairs.

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Chapter 232 Battle Plan

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Alexander

I hardly noticed the hours slipping by as the team and I stayed up all night, strategizing in my study. Grayson, Chase, Kayden, and a handful of my Gammas worked together until at last we had our battle plan completed, just as the morning sun started warning us that our visitors would need to depart soon.

Our new allies were returning home today, starting with a mid-morning flight and then a long train ride deep into the desert. A trip that I would be making soon myself, along with almost all my soldiers.

Only a few members of the pack would be staying behind from this mission. Three men had been injured in training last week and weren't fit for battle, and a half dozen others would be staying at the palace for the important job of keeping an eye on Fiona and Alexis while I was away.

That trip out to Grayson's property, long as it would take, would be the simplest part of this journey. After camping with the Cold Moon pack, the true challenge would begin.

We knew now where the vampires were hiding. We had found their lair. And now we had plotted exactly where we would lay siege.

And I had made a decision about how we were going in. There would be no explosives. The threat of ecological destruction was too great. We would have to make our approach down into the canyon caverns much, much more slowly and carefully. It would be laborious and painstaking.

The important thing was that we had a plan, and it was apt to work. But it was going to cost us.

Climbing down into the canyon manually was going to deplete and weaken us. I would be foolish not to be concerned about this part of the plan. How many hours it would take and how much strength we might have left once we finally invaded the enemy's nest... at which point, there would be much work still to be done. Some of those vampires were bound to awaken and struggle when we made our attack—they always did.

Caius would awaken the quickest; I was sure of that. And he was the fiercest among all those evil creatures. The strongest by far. That demon was a truly ancient evil, a deeply powerful devil I hope to never face on my own, without the strength of my pack behind me. Caius was sure to hear us when we broke into the tomb, and he was going to put up a good fight.

“That leaves just one last thing to decide,” Kayden said, finally tearing his tired eyes away from the map on the table. He was right, everything had been discussed by now—all but one last detail.

“When do we leave?”

I heard Fiona talking as I opened our bedroom door.

“Yes, that will be fine,” she was saying in a business-like tone.

She was seated at the table with Lexi at her breast, feeding the baby and multitasking. Her phone was flat on the table nearby. I recognized the female voice that rang out on speaker. It belonged to the interior decorator Fiona had been working with this past week, who I’d met once.

My eyes caught briefly on a neat row of gift bags arranged on Fiona’s desk, shiny gold and lavender colored bags with tufts of white and purple tissue paper peeking out from the tops.

Fi looked up at me when I entered and smiled a little, but did not break pace in her conversation.

She thanked the woman for giving her some information and wrapped up the call while I finished sloughing off my shoes and jacket, sniffing myself as I did so and realizing that I was in bad need of a shower. “Hi,” Fiona finally called out to me.

“Hi, beautiful.” I crossed the room and kissed my wife’s forehead. And then the baby’s. Lexi was

less receptive of my affection than Fiona; she pushed my face away with a surprisingly strong hand and narrowed her steely little eyes at me angrily. “Sorry,” I mumbled, chuckling and backing away. Fi giggled, shaking her head down at Alexis. “So, I’ve made a decision,” she said, clearly excited about whatever it was she’d just been discussing with the decorator. “I’ve decided that I want to go through with it. Turning that room in the East Wing, the big empty one, into a hospice suite for Grandfather.” “Oh.” I was a little surprised, considering we’d only just learned last night that Fi’s grandfather was in pretty bad shape and couldn’t even have visitors anymore. But Fiona is a rational person. I had to believe there was some logic behind this idea of hers. I nodded encouragingly and waited for her to continue. “I started looking into it and asked Isabel if she’d be up for overseeing such a project. She was on board and even seemed to know a little about how to get started.”

“Well, that’s good.”

“I know that now is not the right time, of course.” Fi shook her head, then shrugged. “For Grandfather to move in here. And perhaps there will be no right time. But I just want to have it ready, in case. In case there is a time when he is up for the move, and we can bring him here

safely, and then I can spend some of his last days with him. Who knows if such a time will come, but if it does, I'd like to have the room ready and waiting."

"Makes sense." I reached out and stroked Fiona's cheek. "How can I help? Anything you need from me to get the renovation started?"

She leaned into my hand and smiled up at me. "Not really. Just your support, which you are already giving me. Thank you."

I leaned down to give her a kiss. "That," I told her, "you can have any time, sweetheart."

"I'm sorry," she said, suddenly shaking her head. Reprimanding herself, I realized. "I was so wrapped up with my project, I didn't even ask you how your night went. Did you guys get a plan worked out?"

"It was good. And yes, we've finalized our battle plan."

Fiona exhaled thoughtfully then moved her eyes from me to the baby. Lexi was finished eating. I gestured for Fi to hand her off, so that I could burp the baby and clean her face while Fiona pieced her nursing bra and button-down top back together. Finally, she asked the big question. I wondered if perhaps Fiona had actually been stalling this whole time since I walked in, waiting to get the baby off of her before she found out the answer.

“When are you guys going to leave?” she asked.

“Have you decided upon a day?”

“Yes,” I said with a sigh. “Saturday morning.” She nodded. “Two days.”

“Yes.” I held little Lexi close to my chest, cradling her head with one hand ever so gently and gazing down into her aquamarine eyes.

Leaving these two for the battlefield... This was so different than the last time I left this palace for war. I had so much to lose this time. So much I was leaving behind.

“Good,” Fiona said quietly. “Time to get this over with, I suppose.”

I smiled at her sadly. “I suppose you’re right.”

“Have I missed our guests’ departure?” she asked, glancing at her watch.

“No. Though I think they’ll be heading to the airport within the next half hour or so.”

“I’d like to say goodbye. And I prepared a few parting gifts for the ladies.” She used her eyes to point at the pretty bags on her desk.

“You’re going to make me look bad,” I mumbled, admiring the beautiful wrapping job she’d done.

“What? What do you mean?”

“I didn’t prepare any gifts for Grayson or his Beta.”

She laughed. “Hm. Well, perhaps it will put your mind at ease to know there are a few items in

those bags that the ladies' husbands are sure to appreciate.”

I felt one of my eyebrows lilt lecherously. “Is that so?”

Fiona grinned. “Yes. If the men are disappointed to leave without goodie bags of their own, they may not be disappointed for too long.”

“Well. That’s a very thoughtful gift, indeed.”

She shook her head at me, pressing her lips against a smile. “There are other things, too. Not just lingerie and bubble bath. I also went through my closet for items that I thought they might like. I have too many clothes, in so many different sizes, and I hardly wear any of them anymore... I thought it might be nice to share.”

I looked at my watch to check the time for myself now. Fiona followed my eyes.

“Yes,” she said, standing. “We should head out now, if we’re going to catch them.”

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