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ABIGAIL

Abby pushed her sweaty hair off her forehead.

The heat had set in before breakfast, and every lake and swimming hole in the territories would be put to good use. Thousands upon thousands of acres of once neutral territory had been scouted and settled over the years.

Logan and Mara had resettled in the east to oversee the territory there. A month after the Failed War, they'd discovered Mara was with pups, three of them. Logan had been ecstatic. Mara had been in shock.

Now, their friends were loving every minute of it. Roman was convinced there were more than three, and he could never tell them apart.

Rye and Bell had settled in the west. They'd also been blessed a few years after the Failed War.

Their boy had been born during a storm and earned the name of Thor, for the God of Thunder. Their girl had been born during the first moon of the spring. She was still in a blanket and attached to her mother's breast.

Her friends couldn't be any happier, their lives full of love.

As the truck bounced along, Abby kept glancing in the rearview mirror to make sure the large tubs of ice cream in the back hadn't popped open. The last time she'd done an ice cream run, it had been a mess.

Mr. Graves had assured her the lids wouldn't pop off again. He'd delivered replacements, a feat in itself since he was scared to death of Roman. She smiled and shook her head, a laugh escaping as she drove.

"Mom!" Mason shouted from the back seat. "What's so funny?"

Abby grinned at her son. "Just thinking about the last time we picked up ice cream for the pack and it exploded in the back of your dad's truck."

Maisie started laughing with her brother. “Mommy, remember Daddy trying to still eat it?”

The trio guffawed as she took the turn into the new entrance to the pack lands. She waved at Tory, who was with a group of warriors, and he ran up to the truck as she slowed down.

“Yes! Ice cream!” He sniffed the large containers in the truck. “I see you got the alpha’s favorite.”

“I sure did. I’ll save you some.” Abby smiled and waved again before slowly rolling down the newly paved lane to their house.

Her mate was coming down the stairs to meet them as she came to a stop.

ROMAN

When Roman reached the bottom of the steps, his son scrambled out of the back of the truck and ran toward him. “Dad, I had to save Mom!”

Roman growled. “From what?”

“Mr. Graves was smiling and laughing at Mommy, and he *touched* her!”

Roman bared his teeth at Abby as she helped Maisie out of the truck. “What did your son just say?”

“Don’t worry, Dad,” Mason said. “I growled at him and told him you would rip his arms off if he touched my mommy again.” He crossed his arms over his little chest, mimicking Roman’s stance.

Abby snorted and rolled her eyes. “Mason, stop trying to make your dad mad.”

“He touched you, Mommy!” Mason’s tiny canines poked out from under his lips.

“*Mason*,” Maisie said scornfully. “He just shook Mommy’s hand. That’s being polite, right, Mommy?”

Abigail smiled fondly at both pups. “Yes, that’s called being polite.”

Roman rumbled as he reached for Abigail, pulling her into him. He pressed his nose into her cheek and ran it slowly down her neck and to her mark.

“Polite, huh?” he whispered, feeling goosebumps rise across her skin.

“Yes, Alpha. He was being polite.” She looped her arms around his neck, and his purr quickly replaced his rumble.

He felt a deep ripple of pleasure come from her and remembered the light silver halo that had appeared around her the night before. “Your heat is coming.”

She smirked. “Are *you* feeling polite?”

Roman burst out laughing, then swooped in for a passionate kiss.

“Ewwww,” the kids said in unison before running off, hollering to the other pups there was ice cream.

Roman and Abby held each other and laughed. Their life together had never been fuller than at that moment. The birth of their twins five years prior had been a gift.

As they embraced, he could feel the pups’ surge of excitement for a cold treat on a hot day.

“Save some of that triple chocolate for the cabin, Luna.” He winked. “We’re going to be overrun with pups screaming for ice cream any second now.”

Abigail started laughing. “Do you think when you’re licking that ice cream off my leg that we can talk about another pup or two?”

Roman grinned wickedly. He *had* been thinking about licking ice cream off her inner thigh. He shook his head, unable to stop the laugh that was coming. “Are you trying to bribe me with ice cream, Luna?”

She shrugged, flashing her green eyes at him. “Did it work?”

He flashed his golden eyes right back. “It did.”

He pulled her in for another kiss but was interrupted by the sound of a small stampede coming over the hill. Mason led the charge, screaming about ice cream, while Maisie skipped alongside, plucking flowers.

Roman grinned as a swarm of pups gathered around them. Their energy and excitement were contagious.

He pulled Abby into his side, and the two of them took a moment to enjoy their pack, their love and pride flowing through the lands.

This was family.

This was life.

The End