

Chapter 103

Skylar

The following day is spent at the beach. It's two days until my gruesome date with Alpha Max, and I'm currently hiding underneath my straw hat with a pocketbook in my hand. I read a lot on different apps, but it doesn't beat the smell of the real thing in your hands.

"Are you sure you don't want to play volleyball with us?" Irma asks while smearing sunscreen over her legs. She is wearing a revealing bikini top while I have a grey t-shirt on top of my black swimsuit. Unlike my sister, I don't have huge breasts or a very flattering figure. I'm skinny and prefer to hide. If someone asks, I just tell them I'm a ginger that burns easily, which is true.

"No." I try not to shoot a jealous look her way when she arranges her breasts to keep them from escaping her blue bikini top. "I'm fine in the shade."

Irma arches an eyebrow. "You're not hiding under the parasol because you're embarrassed, right?"

“Embarrassed?” I ask, confused.

“Yeah?” She nods at Lucas. He is playing volleyball with Jaiden against two other werewolves from Alpha Max’s pack, and I swear the whole female population is staring at him. My cheeks turn red.

“Why would I be embarrassed?”

“Because the girls who are giving Lucas their attention are all dressed in skimpy swimwear, throwing flirtatious smiles his way, and doing everything they can to get his attention,” she shrugs. “I mean, if you like him, it’s only natural to compare yourself to them even though you shouldn’t...”

“Irma!” I complain, feeling my cheeks heat up again. I glance at Lucas who is completely absorbed in the game, oblivious the flock of women around him.

“I’m just saying, Skylar,” Irma finishes applying sunscreen and stands up, grinning down at me. “If you want to catch a fish you need to step into the water.”

She leaves me with that thought before jogging towards the volleyball net. I watch her join the game on Lucas’ team. To my surprise and slight discomfort, he doesn’t spare her a second glance. His focus remains solely on the game despite the girls fluttering around him.

In a strange way, knowing he's not swayed by their attention comforts me. It verifies what he told me last night-he likes me. But it also makes me wonder if he's being stubborn because he's waiting for me to come clean about my feelings.

I close my paperback and leave it lying on my towel. Taking a quick scan of the area and noticing that I won't get any attention, I peel off my grey t-shirt to reveal my simple black swimsuit underneath. I breathe in and slowly released out. I make my way towards the sea. Each step feels heavier than the last as I start my decision. But when I see Irma glancing back at me with a thumbs-up sign, I shake off my doubt and get into the water, caressesing my bare feet, teasing and inviting. With my heart pounding louder than ever, I take the next step further into the ocean. The cool waves lap against my thighs, sending a shiver up my spine. I glance back towards the beach. Lucas is still at the volleyball court, oblivious to my strides. A few more steps and I'm waist-deep in the ocean, salty air filling my lungs and water playing with the hem of my swimsuit. I turn back to face the sea, closing my eyes and letting the rhythmic sounds of waves crashing and seagulls crying soothe me. For a moment, I forget about Lucas.

Then there it is his laugh. It cuts through everything and sends butterflies fluttering around my stomach. My eyes open in time to see him diving into the water to catch the volleyball someone kicked way too far. 'You're welcome,' I hear Irma tell me through the mind link, a private message just for me. Welcome?

Suddenly I realize exactly why she said that. The volleyball bumps against me and when I pick it up, I find Lucas blinking down at me with water dripping down from his dark curls. His blue and red eyes widen in surprise, taking in the sight of me standing in the water in my swimsuit. He seems momentarily stunned, and I can't help but feel a surge of satisfaction at the fact that I've caught him off guard.

"Didn't expect to see you here," Lucas manages to say after a moment, trying to recover his usual composure. He paddles closer but doesn't make an attempt to take the ball from my hands.

"No?" I ask, arching my eyebrow as I toss the volleyball up and catch it again, pretending to be nonchalant about his close proximity. He stands up and shakes his head, water droplets flying from his hair, and I have the sudden urge to run my fingers through those damp locks.

"No," he finally answers, flashing a lopsided grin that sends my heart racing even faster. "But I like surprises."

An awkward silence descends upon us until he slowly takes the ball from me. I expect him to run up on the beach again, but he throws the ball at Jaiden. Jaiden grabs it, and Lucas shouts, "I think I'm going to go for a swim!"

"Wh-what?!" Jaiden looks like somebody might have slapped him in the face. "But who is going to be my partner-"

Irma steps on his foot to silence him, and I blush when I hear her growl at Jaiden. “Shut up, you f those two are having a moment?”

“Ouch... what did you do that for?” Jaiden whines. “And what moment?”

“You fool! Can’t you see that?” Irma shoots him an exasperated look and takes the ball from his hands before turning around. “Just play, idiot...” Jaiden looks like he wants to argue but eventually follows my sister back to rejoin the game.

“I didn’t think nerds ever left the safety of the beach,” Lucas suddenly says in a teasing tone. He is floating on his back in the water now, watching me with his stunning red-and-blue eyes that sparkle under the sunlight. My cheeks burn, and I swim deeper into the ocean. Lucas, however, follows me.

“I’m not a complete chicken-shit.”

“No?”

His response makes me splash him with water. He laughs in surprise before diving underneath me. A strange light surrounds him, and the next thing I know, he has taken the shape of a cute orca. I squeal in surprise when he uses his nose to flip me up on his back. My heart races when he takes us deeper into the ocean, and then he dives down into the water to get me entirely wet. The bastard even uses his powerful backfin to

splash water all around me, causing me to blink and sputter until I'm no longer blinded by seawater.

"Hey! That's not fair!" I complain playfully, pushing his snout when he comes up to look at me. But what does the idiot do? He releases this strange clicking sound, which tells me he is laughing. "You think this is funny?" I protest again, the salty taste of seawater lingering on my lips. He clicks again, his massive body shaking with laughter under me. The sudden movement throws me off balance, and I flail in the water, shrieking when I nearly go under.

But then, Lucas dives underneath me and resurfaces with me sitting on his back, right in front of his fin. 'You okay?' he asks through the mind link.

"Yeah, I'm fine," I reply, my heart still beating fast. "Just don't ever do that again." He clicks again, a teasing note to it. I get the feeling he's deciding whether or not to obey my command. "Don't even think about it, or I will take back every towel I know you've secretly stolen from me," I growl at him.

'Okay, okay! No need to get scary,' he finally says, a grin evident in his mental voice. He turns his massive body back towards the shore, slowly gliding through the water so as not to unseat me. I realize he isn't taking me to where the humans are. Instead, we reach the shallows far away from other people, and Lucas morphs back into his human form – strong, attractive, and dripping wet. He turns to look at me with a sheepish grin.

“Could you bring me a towel?” He moves his hands to his crotch area, and I snort. “Seriously? That’s why you don’t shape-shift at the beach, you idiot!”

“You can’t expect me to think through all the details when there’s fun to be had,” Lucas mumbles, attempting to preserve what’s left of his dignity as he awkwardly covers himself. I try to suppress my laughter at the ridiculous sight he makes, but it’s futile.

“You’re so silly.”

“Am not...”

“You are.” I finally manage to croak out between bouts of giggles. “I also find it interesting that you seemed quite detailed in your thinking when you assaulted me in your orca form, yet didn’t think of the consequences of where your clothes would go after you shape-shifted.”

“Careful with your teasing, Skylar...”

“Or else, what?”

“Or I could throw you back into the ocean if you’d prefer,” he threatens playfully, a sly glint in his eye signaling mischief.

“I’d like to see you try.” I retort, folding my arms across my chest and raising an eyebrow, challenging him. His grin widens.

“Careful, nerd,” he says teasingly. “I might just take you up on that offer.” Before I can respond, Lucas bolts forward without a care in the world. I shriek in surprise, laughing when he picks me up and throws me over his shoulder.

“No!” I shout through tears and laughter. “Put me down!”

“Nah.” he says with fake innocence, “You need exercise, and you know swimming is good exercise, right? Especially for nerds. who sits all day.”

“Lucas!” I gasp, feigning anger. But despite myself, I can feel an undeniable warmth spreading throughout my body as he carries me deeper into the water. But when the water gets so deep that even Lucas is having trouble standing. I realize I have to save myself. “Lucas, stop! I can’t swim!”

“You were swimming perfectly fine earlier,” he looks up at me hanging over his shoulder.

“But that’s different. I was on your back.” I stutter out, my voice wavering as I realize how deep the water has gotten. Lucas continues to wade deeper into the ocean, laughing at my futile attempts to wriggle free.

“Oh, you’re not getting off that easily.”

“Lucas, if you let me drown-“

His laughter grows louder, echoing around us. "Trust me, Skylar I won't let you drown." Just then, a large wave washes over us, causing me to shriek in surprise and cling to Lucas's shoulder. He stumbles but regains his balance quickly. "See? Nothing to worry about- Before he can finish his sentence, another wave crashes into us. This one is much larger, and it catches us off-guard, Lucas loses his footing, and we're both pulled under by the strong current. Fucking perfect.