

Chapter 90

Skylar

I only have to drive for thirty minutes until I notice I'm almost out of gas. Luckily, there is a gas station just up the road. I pull in and cut the engine, unbuckling my seatbelt. Jaiden is sleeping in the back, but Lucas is awake. He finally uncrosses his arms, which have been tense since we left the airport, and unclenches his jaw before he turns to me,

"I'll pump" he says.

"Y-you don't have to do that!" I stammer.

His eyes narrow, but I don't dare to look into his mismatched eyes. Just sitting in the car with him is making me anxious. What makes it even worse is that I know Lucas has already figured out he frightens me. His next question confirms it. "Do all men frighten you, or is it just me?"

That question hits me like an arrow through the chest, and I lift my eyes, staring at his muscles and unyielding expression before gulping.

“W-what makes you think I’m afraid of men?”

He shrugs a massive shoulder. “At the airport, you were perfectly calm speaking to a lady who asked for directions. I watched you from afar while Jaiden was in the bathroom. But as soon as Jaiden approached you, you wore this expression...kinda like you would shit in your pants.”

Discomfort wraps around me while Lucas, the brutish idiot, cackles at his own words. “You said I was too short five years ago, and now you can’t even look me in the eye...girls are such hypocrites.”

Really, he is muttering that in front of me? He is so rude! I want to call him stupid to his face, but I’m not brave enough. Instead. I end up glaring ahead. “It’s not very nice to make fun of something someone said in the past. P-people change,” I say before adding, “Don’t ridicule me for my fears either. Y-you don’t know what I’ve been through.”

“Sorry, can you repeat that without stammering? It’s hard to understand what you’re saying.”

The audacity! I turn around to glare into his handsome face, but no matter what, words won’t come to me. I’m too afraid to think or speak in his presence. He knows this, too, and smiles evilly from the passenger seat.

“Also, I’m curious: what have you been through that makes it so hard to speak to men? You’re a grownup-shouldn’t you be more assertive at your age-”

His words get interrupted by me slapping him in the face. Immediately, the car turns silent, the only sound being the soft hum of the AC. He slowly turns his face back toward me, rubbing his cheek with a dumbfounded expression. It’s clear he didn’t expect my reaction, and frankly, neither did I. I stare at my own hand in disbelief. Did I really just slap an Alpha? What the hell has gotten into me?! For the first time in five years, I let my emotions get the best of me because, somehow, Lucas made me think of the past. My own parents abandoned me. I endured years of abuse from the caretakers at the orphanage. Rape. Loneliness, it all turned into rage, and now, I fear what will happen next.

I expect Lucas to punish me for slapping his face, but instead, he chuckles in his seat. “Well,” he finally says, lifting a hand to touch his reddening cheek gingerly. “I guess there is some fire in you.” My only response is to stare at him, a little breathless, with my heart hammering hard against my chest. Even my lips are quivering.

Lucas seems to find that amusing. “You’re such a weirdo...” He shakes his head. “You’re the one who slapped me, yet you’re the one looking like you’re in pain.” His words cut like knives because he is making me feel as if I’m being misunderstood. If only he knew why I rejected the way I did...but is it even an

excuse? Violence should never be okay, and yet, I couldn't stop myself.

"I will start pumping now." Lucas opens the door. "You just sit there and keep being a weirdo."

Despite the unsettling feeling in my chest. I manage to glare daggers at him. "You could be nicer to me... you're mean."

"Nicer? Pfft, as if you deserve that!" Lucas snorts. "And I'm not mean. I say things how they are. There is a difference! I'm honest."

I swallow thickly. Lucas is a bully, yet I say nothing to provoke him further. I just glare at him until his nostrils flare.

"Whatever," he climbs out of the car. "The gas is on me."

Since I don't have a lot of money, I just nod. But then I figure I should contribute with something and quickly ask, "D-do you want something from the store?"

"Sure," he mutters. "We can enter the store together after I'm done here."

I keep my eyes on him as he walks to the pump. His shoulders are broad, and his profile is strong under the harsh sunlight. There's a hardness in him-a callousness that comes from years of anger and loneliness that mirrors my own. Is it because he is

a tribrid? Because that's what he is. I think. At least I heard his dad was a mix of three different species, but I've also heard rumors that his mom has angelic blood. So, maybe Lucas is a quadbrid? Is that even possible? As he finishes and makes his way back to the car, I find myself lost in thought. What would it be like to have such a diverse lineage? Could that be why he's so different?

"Are you coming or not?" Lucas asks in his deep voice, making me jump. His red and green eyes meet mine and for a moment, I feel he can see straight through me, into all my thoughts and feelings.

There's an intensity there that takes me aback. "Oh yeah, c-coming," I stammer, hastily undoing my seatbelt and getting out of the car. The warm afternoon sun beats down on us as we walk together into the store. There are two mean girls from the local pack working the cash register. They snicker when they see me, but their faces fall once their eyes land on Lucas.

"Holy shit, is that a basketball player?" one of them whispers in Spanish, just loud enough for me to catch. The other smirks and leans across the counter, her eyes following Lucas as he strides past them with a nonchalance born of years of dealing with unwanted attention. He opens the cooler to take out an energy drink, and the girl swoons.

"I don't know, but hot damn, he is gorgeous."

“He is. I wonder what the hell he is doing with the nerd from school, though?”

“Maybe he is the ginger’s cousin?”

“Or maybe he lost a bet?” The second one snickers, elbowing her friend as they continue their hushed speculation about me and Lucas. I feel my cheeks grow warm, embarrassment sliding down my spine like trickling ice water. This is why I avoid people and social situations. They never fail to remind me of my place.

Lucas, however, remains unbothered since he probably does not even understand what they are saying. He opens the freezer and glances at me. “Do you want an ice cream cone?” he asks, holding up a strawberry one.

I blink in surprise at his question and the offer of a treat. “Um, ye...yes, thanks,” I reply, feeling even more out of place. Perhaps Lucas is not as mean as I initially thought. He tosses the strawberry cone into our basket along with his drink, his gaze never leaving mine. There’s a new emotion in his eyes. One that I can’t quite decipher – not kindness, but something similar...tolerance, perhaps?

“Get whatever else you want,” he adds casually before moving away to grab a six-pack of beer. I reach for a bag of chips and a bar of chocolate, my favorite. As I make my way towards Lucas again, I see him chatting up the girls at the counter. They’re

giggling and blushing, fawning over him like he's a movie star or something.

"So, you play basketball?" I hear one of them ask in English as I approach, the coy smile on her face making it obviously clear she wants to fuck him.

"I don't," Lucas replies.

"But you're so tall!" the other girl interjects, fluttering her eyelashes at him. "I'm sure you'd be great at it."

Lucas only shrugs in response, paying for our snacks with a laid-back air that sends the girls into another giggling fit. "Coming?" he asks me.

"Y-yes!" Just as we are about to exit the store, Lucas suddenly turns around.

"By the way," he says, his tone flat but authoritative. "The 'nerd' over here is my friend. Treat her decently, or we'll have a problem." The girls' laughter dies instantly, replaced by stunned silence that hangs heavily in the air. Did he just defend me? I blink at Lucas in surprise, my heart pounding against my ribs. Never has anyone stood up for me like that. Even my sister joins in to tease me whenever her friends do.