

Chapter 91

Skylar

“Don’t just stand there! Lucas growls. “I’m hungry and want to get home as soon as possible!”

“R-right!” I quickly run to the car and take my seat behind the wheel as Lucas slips into the passenger seat, his broad shoulders filling the space. His fingers crack open his energy drink with a hiss, and then he takes a long gulp. After he is done, he wipes his mouth on the back of his hand and asked, “Who is Irwin Deluca?”

My pulse hammers against my neck. Irwin Deluca is the guy who forcefully kissed me when he was drunk. It was terrible and disgusting, but that isn’t the point! Where the hell did Lucas hear his name from?! My eyes dart to him, but he’s looking back at the store, his expression blank.

“He’s a guy from the local pack. The Beta, actually,” I say, my voice small and uncertain. I don’t know why he’s asking about Irwin, of all people.

Lucas doesn't look at me as he continues speaking, his tone is casual, almost offhand. "I read the mind of one of the girls. She has a crush on Irwin, but apparently, that guy is madly in love with you."

My stomach sinks to the pit of my belly. Irwin's face flashes in my mind-his bloodshot eyes, the sour stench of alcohol on his breath before he pushed me up against the wall. His hands were on my breasts and hips, and then he kissed me against my will.

"Y-yeah, well...he isn't my type."

Luca's eyes finally turn towards me, his gaze heavy and intense. "Right. Not your type," he repeats with a ghost of a smirk before muttering in a bitter voice, "Because no one is good enough for Skylar...."

As his words sink in, I feel a knot forming in my stomach, tightening with every passing second. He has no right to say that it to tell him that. Fuck, I wish I was strong he doesn't know anything about me! But, of course, I'm too much of a chicken-shit enough to tell him the truth.

Not much is said around the dinner table the same evening. My mom was too tired to eat after chasing down the rogue, so she went to sleep. Irma is texting with yet another guy, and my dad and Jaiden are discussing the ongoing football game on the fridge's TV. I take another bite of my food, glancing up briefly

when Lucas winces. I can tell something is bothering him in his shoulder. Odd. Did he injure himself during the flight? The seats can be cramped, and although I know he can alter his appearance, I doubt he did that. This guy is too proud to look like somebody else.

“Thanks for the food,” he mumbles, pushing away his plate with a jarring scrape that draws everyone’s attention.

“Are you okay?” My dad asks, his brows furrowing in concern as he glances at Lucas’ barely touched food. Lucas doesn’t meet his eyes, instead choosing to focus on the half-eaten steak on his plate. “Yeah,” he lies smoothly, “Just not hungry.”

He stands from the table abruptly, leaving behind a stunned silence as he disappears down the hall towards the guest bedroom. Once Lucas is out of sight, Irma breaks the tension with a scoff and an eye-roll. “This is typical anti- social Alpha behavior. They all act this way: brooding and disinterested in talking.”

“Y-yeah,” I mumble and look down at my plate. “I guess most Alphas act that way...”

“Except for Alpha Max Deluca,” Irma quickly adds, looking down at her phone with dreamy eyes. “He is a real babe.”

Max is Irwin's brother and not sweet at all. Max is a big bully, but I won't tell my sister that. She can keep living in the illusion of him being nice.

Later that same night, I wake up to a banging sound coming from the basement. I immediately sit up in my bed and look at Irma. She is still sleeping with her eyepatch on. Weird. Didn't she hear that sound? Suddenly, I hear it again. It's faint, but since I'm a werewolf, I can easily pick it up. It's definitely coming from the basement, which is weird. The guys are sharing the guest bedroom and that's on the bottom floor, not in the basement. So, who is down there? I glance at Irma again. The safest option would probably be to wake up my hybrid sister, but something tells me not to. Call it intuition. Slowly, I get up from my bed. I'm only wearing my nightgown, but I don't bother to grab a robe. The house is dark and quiet as I tiptoe down the hallway. The last thing I want is to wake everyone up over a sound that could be anything-a raccoon, the furnace, who knows.

As I near the basement door, the noise becomes louder and more distinct. Now it sounds like grunting, maybe...pain? My heart begins to pound in my chest. Could there be an intruder in our house? Throwing caution to the wind, I open the door and charge down into the basement. If it's an intruder, perhaps a nightgown-wearing teenage girl will take them by surprise, and I can get in good punch or two. It's unlikely, but it's all I've got at the moment.

The light is dim, but my eyes adjust quickly until I see Lucas sitting on the floor. But he isn't quite himself. A large white, angelic wing is folded and pushed up against the ceiling, feathers soaring down to the ground. At the time, there's a leather-clad demonic wing twisted and contorted in apparent pain. I'm shocked into silence. The difference and the contrast between the two wings is striking. It makes me think of old stories where good fights evil. Angels and demons. Black and white. But here, these wings are attached to the same person. Lucas.

A silent breath of surprise leaves my lips. "Lucas?" I ask in a small voice, not wanting to startle him. His eyes instantly snap towards me, surprise and a hint of annoyance flickering across his handsome face.

"Oh, great. It's you," Lucas grumbles and looks away as if wanting to hide his face from my prying eyes. I can tell why: tears of blood are running down from both his green and red eyes, almost as if they, too, are fighting among themselves. I swallow, finding it difficult to look away from the strange and eerie spectacle before me.

"Lucas," I dare to say his name again, keeping my voice soft and my movements slow as I approach him. "Are you alright?"

He scoffs a sound that's almost drowned out by a shuddery gasp of pain as he attempts to adjust the position of his massive wings. His breath hitches, a raw noise that rips at my heart

despite my fear of him. “Do I look alright?” he spits out between gritted teeth.

“No,” I answer honestly, stepping closer until I’m barely a foot away from him. “You don’t.”

“You should leave me alone for your own good, Skylar,” he growls in a voice that speaks of his agony. There is anger in it, too. “You’re already afraid of men, so looking at this...” He gestures at himself. “Is probably too much for your small weirdo brain to process.”

His words make me swallow hard. Not because he is wrong but because he is right: I’m terrified of him. All men scare me after I was sexually assaulted, especially the 6’8 foot Alpha, who seems to hate me to the very core. But he needs me, so, for him, I will bleed myself dry. I step forward, my heart pounding painfully against my chest, but I refuse to let my fear control me. I can do this. I need to do this for Lucas. “You’re right. I’m afraid of you, Lucas,” I say, and it surprises me how steady my voice sounds despite the thunderous pounding in my ears. “But you’re in pain, so I can’t just leave you alone in here.”

He snorts. “There is nothing you can do to help me.”

“Maybe there isn’t, I interrupt. “But I won’t know unless I try.” I brace myself, taking a deep breath and pushing past my fear. I edge closer, my hand outstretched tentatively towards him. Lucas recoils slightly but doesn’t stop me. The moment my

fingers touch the edge of his demonic wing, he winces audibly. My hand retracts instinctively, but his sharp intake of breath stops me.

“Sorry,” I mutter, unsure of what else to do or say.

“You should really stop trying to play the hero, Skylar.” Lucas rasps with a bitter laugh, though his voice lacks humor.

“Maybe I want to.”

“Then you’re an idiot.”

“Maybe,” I lower myself to a squatting position so that we are almost face-to-face. “But so are you for trying to handle something like this on your own.” It looks like he wants to argue with me.

I can see the smoke in his eyes-but then more pain shoots through his body, and his lips close shut. He winces, and I act without thinking, I scoot forward and place my palm against his chin. It’s drenched. in a cold sweat, yet I don’t pull away. Instead, I gaze into his eyes-they are so different, yet the pain is the same-relentless, hard, and not fair. “Let me help you. Lucas.” I whisper, even though I have no idea how to fix him.

His laugh is harsh and without humor. “Why do you even care I’ve done nothing to deserve your attention.”

“You exist, Lucas,” I say simply, shrugging. “That’s enough reason for me to care.”

He looks at me then, for the first time, really looks at me, and something shifts in his posture. It happens slowly, but those wings shake a little before retracting into his back, vanishing as if they’d never been there at all. His eyes pain, reflect a strange mix of disbelief and wonder. “I don’t understand you,” he confesses, his voice hoarse from the ordeal.

“That’s alright. You don’t have to. Just let me help you.” He opens his mouth to argue further, but no sound comes out. Instead, he stops and simply looks at me, studying every inch of my face before collapsing. I try to sit up in time to stop his fall, but I stand no chance. Lucas is huge, and I’m tiny. So...yeah...we go down like timber. The back of my head hits the hard floor, and my heart beats rapidly against my chest when I realize Lucas’ face is pressed against my breasts.... or lack thereof. The worst part, though? I think he is asleep! Or at least unconscious.

Lucas is so still against me, his weight heavy and yet not entirely unwelcome. I can feel the rise and fall of his muscular chest, a rhythm that makes my head spin. This is the closest I’ve ever been to a man I find attractive, and it’s embarrassing how flustered I am.

“Hey,” I say, gently nudging the giant Alpha at first but adding force when he doesn’t respond. “Lucas?” I call again, this time

adding a sharp elbow jab to his ribs. Nothing. “Dang it,” I mutter to myself, about to yell before I hear him mutter in his sleep.

“Skylar...” Did he just say my name in his sleep? A blush spreads over my cheeks, and I relax. Maybe this isn’t so bad after all... I close my eyes and eventually fall asleep on the cold floor. But the next time I wake up, I’m lying in my bed, and Lucas is nowhere to be found.