

Puppy Love - 01 Too Late For Goodbyes by Karima Sa'ad Usman |

01 Too Late For Goodbyes

~Liam~

Sixteen years Later

Liam: 18

Sophia: almost 16

The music blared loudly, forcing my cousins and me to shout in order to communicate. It made me wonder whose brilliant idea it was to turn the graduation celebration into a club-like event. Furthermore, I couldn't understand why no one bothered to seek our consent for this setup.

"Have you seen the sisters?" I asked Miles, but he shook his head.

Oliver gestured in a direction, and there I found Charlotte, Gemma, and Jewels—the notorious triplets of our class and, coincidentally, my beloved cousins.

I pondered what their plans were after graduation. Being immensely popular in school, I was certain they would find something worthwhile to occupy their time.

Turning to Marvin, I inquired about Sophia's presence. Once again, the answer was negative. "Isn't she supposed to be here? I thought you two were close," Oliver chimed in, taking a sip of his dubious drink. I refrained from guessing its contents, but I was certain it contained alcohol.

"Not really. She's two years younger than us. I think she'll turn sixteen in a few months," Marvin replied, and Miles playfully punched me while chuckling.

"But she should be here to give you moral support," he said, winking and emphasising the words 'moral support,' which elicited laughter from me.

"I haven't mustered the courage to ask her out yet," I confessed, surprising them both.

"What are you waiting for? She's gorgeous, and now that we're done with school, guys will be lining up for her. The only reason they've held back is because they're afraid of you, and you won't be here to scare them," Oliver asserted.

"You've been friends with Sophia since you were ten, and she was eight, which feels like an eternity. By now, you should have figured out your feelings for each other. I'm aware that she's

the reason you convinced our parents to send us to Grizlo's Academy. So, Liam, I don't understand why you haven't made a move," Marvin questioned, leaving me at a loss for words.

"You shouldn't waste any more time. You know every moment counts," Miles added with conviction, and I knew deep down they were right.

I hadn't wanted to divert my attention during my studies, as my parents expected nothing but the best from me, and I didn't want to disappoint them. Romance hadn't been a priority, but now that I had graduated, I felt ready to explore that realm.

However, I also acknowledged the importance of waiting and seeing if we were destined for each other. Sophia had yet to turn eighteen, so I couldn't be certain. The last thing I wanted was to break her heart.

I had heard stories about Uncle Leo and my mother, and I vowed never to inflict that kind of pain on anyone. Not everyone is as fortunate as they were. Nonetheless, I couldn't deny the growing intensity of my feelings for Sophia. The difficult part was that she remained oblivious to them. To her, we were simply friends. I was unsure if confessing my intentions would complicate our friendship or create an opportunity for both of us, but I was willing to take that risk now and confront the possibility of being mates, if it were to ever occur. My affection for Sophia ran deep, and I cared for her immensely.

I rose from the couch in the VIP section and made my way outside to give Sophia a call. I had genuinely believed she would be present at the event.

"Where are you headed?" Harper's voice echoed in my mind. Harper was my twin, and we were always together.

"Just going out to get some fresh air," I replied, continuing on my way.

"We're breathing just fine in here," she playfully teased. "You mean you're going to call Sophia, right?" she inquired, knowing well enough not to expect a response from me.

I could envision her laughter.

My sister understood my feelings for Sophia, and she had been incredibly supportive by keeping it a secret from our friends and cousins. It remained between us; even our younger brothers were unaware of my crush. Harper and I had a strong bond in that regard, and as far as I was concerned, she was the greatest twin sister one could ask for.

I stepped away from the bustling entrance of the club-like hall, seeking solace in the quietness outside. Wanting privacy, I dialled Sophia's number, anticipation building within me. After a few rings, she answered, and her sweet and gentle voice greeted me with a warm hello.

"Hey," I responded, feeling a surge of happiness. The sound of a television playing in the background assured me that she was home.

"What are you up to?" I asked, my tone playful. She chuckled in response.

"I'm at home, watching television," she replied, and a sigh escaped me.

"I was hoping you'd come to the party and keep me company," I teased, to which she giggled.

"With all those girls fawning over you, I'd rather spare myself the envious glares. Some of them actually think I'm your girlfriend," she revealed, and I pinched the bridge of my nose.

"And what's wrong with that?" I questioned, and a brief silence ensued.

The atmosphere turned awkward. Tonight, I had planned to ask her out, but doing it over the phone felt insensitive.

"I would have loved for you to be here," I finally confessed, breaking the uncomfortable silence. She let out a sigh.

"You know my father. He's on a mission with the alpha and hasn't returned yet. I couldn't get permission to leave the house, and my mother wouldn't let me go without my father's approval," she explained, grumbling.

"Honestly, I wanted to be there, Li. I wanted to see you," she admitted, and I sighed.

"Now that you've graduated, when are you leaving Grizlo?" she inquired, and I chuckled.

"I'll stay if that's what you want," I assured her, and she laughed.

"Oh, come on. You're destined to be a king someday. Grizlo is too small to contain you," she remarked, tinged with a hint of sadness.

"Are you already missing me?" I teased, and she laughed.

"You wish," she retorted, though I knew it was a lie. She didn't want me to leave.

"Alright, you know what? I'll swing by your place after the party," I decided.

"The rooftop?" she suggested, and I chuckled.

"No need to make a grand entrance through the front door. Beta Mike is intimidating, especially when it comes to his daughter being visited at night. The rooftop by your window will suffice. I'll let you know when I'm around," I suggested, and she laughed, well aware of her father's protectiveness.

"What if I let you into my room?" she playfully teased, and for the first time, it felt like an enticing invitation.

"I hope I can handle it," I teased back, and she giggled.

"See you later, Li," she said in her soothing, seductive voice, and we ended the call, a sweet anticipation filling my heart.

I did not know I was smiling and pacing about the place while talking to Sophia until I hung up. As I turned around, I was taken aback to see Charlotte, Gemma, and Jewels looking at me mischievously. They had overheard everything. Frustration overwhelmed me, knowing my cousins couldn't keep a secret.

"How much did you hear?" I asked Charlotte who was their ringleader.

"Enough, Liam," she replied with a teasing kissing sound, prompting laughter from the others.

"When are you going to ask her out?" Jewels inquired, and I shook my head. They were always teasing me, although they were fun to have around.

"Not in the mood," I muttered, walking past them.

"Well, Grandma will be," Gemma remarked, causing me to cringe. It would be a disaster if our grandmother found out. She would surely invite Sophia, and I didn't want to imagine how she would handle it.

"Please don't tell her," I pleaded, and they laughed.

"You know we've got your back, Your Highness," Charlotte said with a wink, making a zipping motion across her lips. "We won't spill the beans."

I thanked them and went inside.

Since they didn't follow me, I assumed they were done with the party and leaving. I was ready to call it a night too, but I knew my classmates had prepared a surprise for us, and it would be impolite to disappear, considering the effort they had put into it.

Returning to join my cousins on the couch, Maya approached me before I could update them on the situation. I wasn't in the mood for her attention-seeking antics.

"I was hoping you'd want to dance," Maya said, and I couldn't stand her. She had no business being there, being two years younger than us. Unless she was accompanied by someone, she shouldn't have attended. However, I guessed her parents were okay with it, as she was already sixteen.

"What are you doing here, Maya Rivers?" Marvin snapped, clearly irritated. She smiled at him, undeterred.

"I'm here to have fun," she replied, flashing a smile.

Her choice of dress was inappropriate, giving off the impression that she had ulterior motives. She was too young for this, and I couldn't fathom why her mother allowed it.

"No," I curtly responded, causing her smile to fade. But she didn't give up.

She proceeded to ask everyone, and eventually, Miles agreed to save her from further embarrassment. I was relieved because her eyes had begun to well up, and she seemed on the verge of tears.

As time went by, I received a meaningful present from my classmates—a plaque adorned with their signatures and heartfelt messages, pledging their loyalty when my time to lead arrived.

It was a truly exquisite gift. In addition, my cousins were also honoured with plaques, as they were destined to become future lords of the north. The ceremony was a sight to behold, filled with beauty and significance.

Once the event concluded, I entrusted the plaque to Marvin and hailed a taxi to make my way to Sophia's house.

Despite the lateness of the hour, I disregarded the time.

This was a now-or-never moment. I fervently hoped that she would accept my proposal and be willing to give our relationship a chance.

If the fated mate connection ever came into play, we would confront it together when the time arrived.

My wolf, Alex, was ecstatic about the prospect.

Meanwhile, my mind raced, contemplating how I would express my feelings and strategising how I would handle any potential positive or negative response from Sophia.

One thing I resolved to do tonight was to share a kiss with her if circumstances allowed.

I held onto the hope that she reciprocated my affections.

In my eyes, Sophia was the embodiment of perfection, leaving no room for doubt or hesitation.

I had a strong inkling that my mother would approve of her as well.

I got to her street and asked the cab to park a few blocks away from her house and leave. I planned to shift and run back home.

I tried to link her as usual so she would know I was around, but there was no response.

As I approached her house, I saw the light in the living room and kitchen, but there was none at her window.

I wondered if she had waited and fallen asleep.

Her father's car wasn't in the driveway, so I figured he had not returned from his mission with Alpha Thompson.

Partially transforming my physical form, I silently scaled the house, aiming to reach her window undetected.

I suppressed my scent to prevent my overpowering aura from alerting anyone inside.

I tried to feel for her presence, but I got nothing, and it made me a bit nervous.

Crouching by her window, I knocked lightly, but no response came.

Then I squinted to look through the window, relying on my night vision. Sophia wasn't in the room.

I cautiously descended from the roof and stealthily made my way through the house, desperately longing to feel her presence. As I reached the back, Beta Mike emerged, shirtless, clearly having just finished bathing.

His expression was cold and unwelcoming. I stood frozen in place, undeterred by his hostility. Although his demeanour instilled no fear in me, I cleared my throat and faced him with resolve. I was eighteen, after all.

"Good evening, Beta Mike," I uttered softly, and he responded with a growl.

"Isn't it too late for you to be lurking around my residence, Your Highness?" he sneered, leaving me without a retort.

"Sophia didn't attend our graduation party, so I came to check on her," I explained, and he nodded.

"At midnight. Couldn't it have waited until tomorrow? Besides, she has no business being at that party. She's not even sixteen yet and two years your junior," he remarked, and he was correct, but Sophia was only two months away from turning sixteen. I stood there, wordlessly gazing at him.

"Regardless, she isn't home, and she won't be returning. I've sent her and her mother far away from this forsaken place," he revealed, and a sinking feeling engulfed me. I couldn't quite describe the sensation, but it surpassed mere heartbreak.

"Where?" I inquired, my voice barely audible.

"Far away from here, and she won't be coming back," he stated bluntly, shattering my composure. Anger surged within me.

"Tell me where!" I demanded, my voice trembling, but he resisted my compulsion.

"I anticipated someone trying to force the information out of me, so I instructed Margret not to reveal their destination. If you truly care about her, Your Highness, you'll forget about her. I sent her away for her own good," he explained, and I battled the urge to confront him.

He had torn something precious away from me. It felt as if my entire world was collapsing at that very moment.

I had spoken to her just a few hours ago. I should have left the party immediately and rushed to her side. I would have seen her, confessed my feelings, and taken her away from there. If protection were what she needed, I would have provided it.

Gazing at the man before me, I stumbled backwards, aware that he wouldn't divulge any further.

"I'm sorry, Your Highness. I didn't anticipate it affecting you like this, but I had no choice," he uttered remorsefully, and I snarled at him.

My wolf, Alex, began to emerge. Mike took a step back, assuming a defensive stance, prepared to defend himself. Yet, I had no intention of attacking him. I wouldn't engage in a fight.

Stepping away, I shifted and sprinted towards the woods, unleashing a howl that carried the anguish of my soul. The most painful part was that I never had the chance to express my feelings to her or bid her farewell.