

## 19 To Grizlo

~Liam~

The next day, I rose early, my bags already packed and ready for our journey to Grizlo. Miles was also awake, and it struck me that this was the first time we would be separated like this. I couldn't help but wonder why our parents had chosen to send our team ahead of the others. The idea of reuniting in four months seemed puzzling as well. I knew I would miss them all, and it was evident that they were already feeling our absence.

Miles attempted to conceal his emotions, but I could sense that he would keenly feel Oliver's absence. Marvin had no twin, so he was fine. Josephine and Charlotte would undoubtedly experience the same separation from their siblings. Even I would feel it because in tough times, Harper was always there to support me. Now, I had to carry on without my twin. Although four months might appear to be a brief period, it was certain to feel like an eternity.

Despite my eagerness to strengthen my bond with Josephine, the thought of finding Sophia and ensuring her safety remained pressing. Oliver's warnings echoed in my mind, and I resolved not to let things escalate to that point.

"We will be having breakfast together," Uncle Leo's words resounded in my head, making it clear that only the team members would join our parents for breakfast. Setting our luggage aside for the staff to load it into the van, Oliver and I made our way to the general dining room. As I approached the entrance, a familiar scent of dill enveloped

my senses, confirming Josephine's presence. I took a deep breath, and Oliver couldn't help but chuckle as he understood what I was going through.

We entered the dining room, and to my surprise, only our fathers were present. Noah and Sebastien appeared ecstatic, and I couldn't blame them; going on an adventure was a rare and thrilling experience.

Without hesitation, I took a seat beside Josephine, immediately sensing my father's disapproval as I was supposed to sit at the tail end of the table.

"Alpha Justin can have the seat," I declared, causing the rest of the team to burst into laughter while teasing Justin with his newfound title. Justin laughed and settled into the chair, but my father's expression grew suspicious. He could sense that something was amiss, but I tried to act nonchalantly. Lord Alexei, too, seemed to be eyeing us with curiosity, and I hoped they wouldn't figure it out for our own sake. Perhaps I needed to dial down our interactions a bit.

"I see you're finally getting along with Liam, princess," Alexei remarked aloud; it was obvious he wanted everyone to hear because he might as well have linked his daughter. I glanced at Josephine, who looked genuinely puzzled.

"We've always gotten along," she innocently argued, though most of our fathers seemed to disagree.

"If that's what you believe, so be it," Uncle Vino chimed in, his gaze directed at Charlotte.

"You knock them dead and show them what the Lawrences are made of," he playfully teased Charlotte, who beamed at him and nodded enthusiastically.

"I am looking forward to the adventure," she replied, prompting Uncle Leo to clear his throat and direct his attention to his sons.

"Stay out of trouble, you two, especially you, Noah," he said, shooting a pointed look at Justin.

"And if they happen to cause you any stress or get into trouble, feel free to dismiss them and send them home. Noah can be quite stubborn and adventurous, and Sebastien has his moments too," Uncle Leo added in a serious tone. I couldn't help but chuckle at my cousins, who were visibly frowning and feeling a bit embarrassed.

"I'm sure they'll be just fine," Uncle David chimed in as the maids began serving our meal.

We delved deeply into the details of the trip, and Justin shared his planned strategy.

"I believe it would be unwise to divulge the purpose of our visit and the details of our investigation to the Gamma and Delta of Grizlo," Josephine interjected, instantly capturing everyone's attention.

"Whatever happened between the Alpha and beta, it's likely known to the Gamma and delta. At this juncture, we can't determine who is at fault. If Mike is to blame, then we can trust the Gamma and Delta. However, if it's Alpha Thompson who's at fault, then involving the other two in our investigation would complicate matters, as they

wouldn't want us to uncover their misdeeds," she explained, making a valid point.

"So, what do you suggest we do?" Oliver inquired, and Noah stepped up to respond.

"Nothing, for now. We can't apprehend the Gamma and Delta based solely on speculations. Even if we have some circumstantial evidence, we need to allow them to remain free and potentially make a mistake that plays into our hands. Revealing our true intentions is out of the question. We cannot let them know we are on a mission to uncover the truth," Noah explained, and his reasoning was sound.

"That's why Lady Stephanie and Alpha Jake Brighton will have to return to Grizlo," Sebastian proposed.

"Their protection will serve as the cover for our presence," Charlotte added, piecing together the rationale. Uncle Vino couldn't help but applaud the idea.

"Ah, this brings back memories," Uncle Vino exclaimed, his excitement evident.

"I genuinely can't wait for the council meeting. Christian must present this matter to the council, and then we can be officially involved," he said with such eagerness that it made me curious about what might have changed to ignite such enthusiasm in him.

"I'm sure Tamia, Avery, and Linda will relish the thrill," Uncle Marcel chimed in, and they all shared a laugh. It seemed like this had become a favourite pastime for them.

After finishing our meal and discussing various topics, the time came for us to prepare and depart. We spent more time with our cousins and friends, but eventually, it was time to go.

Miles assured us not to worry and promised that they would find a way to join us before the four months were up. I had a hunch that our parents wanted us to settle in first before allowing the others to follow. The sooner we got everything in order, the smoother the journey ahead.

As we boarded the van, Josephine willingly sat beside me, bubbling with excitement.

"I can't believe it's finally happening!" she exclaimed, and I nodded in agreement. My mind, however, couldn't help but dwell on Oliver's warning. Josephine was now joining us on this adventure to save Sophia, the very girl I had professed my love for. I hoped that as we spent more time together, a genuine connection would form between us, and any sparks that may fly would do so naturally. The last thing I wanted was to hurt Josephine in any way.

Upon our arrival at Grizlo, the Delta and Gamma warmly received us, showing great respect towards Justin, despite their seniority. They extended the same courtesy to the rest of us. I was certain they already knew we were there to take over their positions. Instead of heading straight to our grandparent's house, we were led to the packhouse, which would serve as our accommodation. Alpha Thompson and Beta Mike, being mated, lived elsewhere while we, still single, would find the packhouse suitable.

We each settled into our assigned rooms, but I attempted to

persuade Charlotte and Josephine to stay on the beta's floor. Secretly, I wanted Josephine to be on my floor, but I didn't want to raise any suspicions, so I included Charlotte in the request as well.

"I don't know, Li," Charlotte responded uncertainly, and my attention turned to Josephine.

"How about you? Do you mind?" I inquired, hoping she would choose to stay on my floor.

"I was actually planning to stay on Noah's floor," Josephine replied, and my heart sank. I had hoped she would want to stay closer to me. I knew it was unwise, but I longed for more time with her without the watchful eyes of others.

As we continued chatting, Oliver approached us, confessing that he couldn't help but overhear our conversation. He proposed a solution, stating, "You can't have all the smart ones on your floor, Li. Josephine can stay on your floor while Charlotte can bunk with me." His suggestion brought me immense relief, knowing that Oliver was indeed coming to my aid and managing to manoeuvre the situation in my favour.

"Sebastien and Noah are paired up, Marvin is a loner, leaving Liam and me as the odd ones out. Well, at least until Elaine joins us," Oliver added playfully, winking at Josephine.

"Then Josephine should stay on your floor instead," Charlotte quickly interjected, and in that moment, Oliver realised he had unintentionally undermined his own effort. Saying no to Charlotte might offend Josephine and send the wrong message that he didn't want her on his floor. The situation suddenly became more delicate than he had

anticipated.

"Well, we barely speak, and Josephine has been good friends with Li. She will be more comfortable on Li's floor," Oliver quickly asserted. I looked at Josephine, hoping she would consider his suggestion. She gazed back at me, seemingly waiting for an invitation.

"I'd love to have you in the beta's wing, Joe. I'm sure we'll have a blast," I said, trying to sound as inviting as possible, but Charlotte couldn't resist making teasing noises, insinuating all sorts of things.

"Stop it, Charlotte. Must you read into everything?" Oliver scolded her, but my focus was on Josephine, and I couldn't care less about the argument brewing between them.

"I think I'll stay on Li's wing," Josephine finally decided, and suddenly, I could feel Alex howling in my head. I knew my wolf had momentarily flashed, and the way Josephine furrowed her brow suggested she had noticed it too. I needed to find a way to gain control over Alex quickly; otherwise, we might get exposed soon.

"It looks like that settles it, but I'm not hanging out with you, Oliver. I'm staying in the Alpha's wing with my favourite cousin," Charlotte declared, clearly upset with Oliver. I wasn't sure what had transpired between them, but he must have said something that deeply offended her.

I picked up Josephine's bag and chose a room next to mine for her. As I helped her settle in, I felt a reluctance to leave her side, but eventually, I had to step out of the room. 1

This marked a new phase in our lives. No schools, tutors, or parents;

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it was just us now. I hoped we could make our parents proud with what we were about to undertake.

Hurriedly, I went to my own room to freshen up and settle in. As I glanced at my phone, a habit I had developed since the last time I spoke to Sophia through Charlotte's phone, I noticed there were no missed calls or texts from her. The worry inside me was genuine, but now that we were actively investigating the situation, I held onto hope that we would make progress and find both her and her mother safe and sound.



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