

Their Warrior Luna Chapter 86

I woke up stiff and sore. Partly from sleeping on the floor and partly from the whole my mom trying to kill me thing. I stretched out on my back staring at the off-white popcorn ceiling that could use a new coat of paint. After writing so much last night, I just feel numb. Putting that much of my feelings onto paper has left me feeling nothing. I can't feel angry at her, I can't feel sorry for myself, and I can't feel the usual weight that threatens to crush me constantly.

This Friday my senior year will be over when I walk across that stage. Saturday is my prom... a prom that I have a handsome date for, then afterward we go to a party that I have a date for. It will be my first high school party and I want to be excited about it. Then, on Sunday... Sunday is the day my freedom begins. I should be happy and I should be preparing to celebrate this next step of my life surrounded by a family that loves me. My mom should be crying because she knows I am going off to a good school miles away from her. Not this... not lying on the floor. Not last night... not any of it.

I rolled over, climbing to my feet. I picked my journal up, tied it off, and hid it away in my bag. I stuffed my stiff body into clothes that would cover the bruises and I snuck downstairs careful not to step on the mess she created last night. She was passed out on the couch with the bottle of cheap whiskey on her chest, and that makes me think she is stealing again because that is a new bottle and I know she doesn't have any cash.

My whole body went cold when the door opened singing its usual creak, making her groan and stir from her coma. When she settled down again, I stepped out into the sunlight, forcing myself to calm down. Since there is no one to celebrate my success with me... I will celebrate it myself and I will start that celebration with the largest coffee I can find and then I will find my dress.

The mall was packed with girls and their mothers and garment bags of pinks, blues, and yellows. My heart clenched at the teary-eyed mother clutching her daughter as they left one of the higher-end boutiques that I could never afford. A small part of me wanted that. That small part of me that was still too young to understand schizophrenia and everything that comes with someone you love suffering from it. The little girl that needed her mother still lives inside of me somewhere and she is the one that is hurting right now. If I could, I would hold her and let her know that she has grown up to be the person she needed so badly back then.

I walked into a store that was a bit more my pace and I looked through the racks of rainbow tulle and pastel silks until my fingers touched the soft fabric of the black dress that hung delicately on the hanger. The corseted top looked like intricate lace, and the tulle that ran down the skirt made it look like something a princess would wear. It is within my budget, and it is my size. But what if Grant doesn't like it as much as I do?

“That is a gorgeous choice! Would you like to try it on?” the sales clerk spoke softly, taking note of my infatuation with the dress.

“Could I?” I asked.

“Of course!” She took the dress and I followed her to the back where the changing stalls were. The dress sat perfectly against my curves. I’m not a dressy girl by any means, but this one is incredible. I would wear it every day if I had the choice. I didn’t even have to lace it up in the back to know how much I loved it. This is the one. If you could look over the bruises and the bloodshot eyes, I really did look nice in it.

I stepped from the shop with my dress tucked neatly into the garment bag and the black pumps the sales clerk recommended. My eyes caught a neon sign in the food court and my mouth watered at the thought of a bad mall pretzel. Too bad that hunger vanished when I stepped inside the food court and saw Grant with his lips pressed against Caitlyn Amery. How many girls has he kissed this week and what does this mean for prom? I turned quickly, almost tumbling over Alyssa who was standing right behind me.

“Sucks, doesn’t it?” she asked.

“What?” That one word was the only intelligent response I could muster up and it made me seem ignorant.

“He is just a man w***e, Lennon.” She watched the two of them kissing but I couldn’t look again.

“I’m sorry about your hand. That was stupid of me. I was so wrapped up in his attention that it never dawned on me that he would be a forceful piece of s**t. You are better off seeing this for yourself now before things go too far.” I scoffed at her. He told me he likes me. He gave me my first kiss. We are going to prom together...

I left Alyssa standing there watching the two of them. I may not understand dating or boys, but I know what he told me, and I know how he makes me feel and I can’t let anyone take that away from me. We have shared so much with each other over the last week and I know that is such a short amount of time, but isn’t that how it works, you meet someone and start getting to know them and then you just wake up and you know they could be the one?

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My stomach was knotted on the way to school this morning. I would have to see Grant and I wasn’t sure if we would talk about our kiss, his kiss with Caitlyn, or prom. But my head had been on the verge of exploding all weekend. I tried to keep myself busy with work and school and taking care of mom when she wasn’t fighting against me and nothing dulled my nerves.

Just as he had every day, he came into the library with a big smile on his face.

“What’s up, Lenny?” He sat beside me dragging his textbooks out.

“I saw you kissing Caitlyn at the mall.”

I didn’t want it to be the first thing that came from my mouth, but here we are. My face flushed red and his face... unbothered.

“She kissed me. I didn’t kiss her. Then I told her I was talking to someone.” He bumped his shoulder against mine, flashing me his boyish smile.

“Are we good?” he asked me softly.

“Yeah. We’re good.” I was taken aback when his lips touched mine quickly.

“I meant what I said, Lennon. I like you.” His brown eyes were searching mine for something, but I wasn’t sure what. I couldn’t admit my feelings yet. I knew better than to jinx myself. He feels like the only good thing in my life right now and I’m not ready to let go of it.

“Would you wanna catch a movie with me sometime? There is this cool little drive-in that plays these really cool old horror movies and they—” he cut me off by holding his finger up extinguishing my excitement entirely.

Did I come on too strong?

“It isn’t that I don’t want to do that, but I am super busy with practice and stuff.” He kept his eyes trained on the paper in front of him and I almost felt like I had crossed some line. I wasn’t supposed to get a crush on Grant, I was supposed to teach him and prepare him for his tests.

We worked in silence until four o’clock and then I had to leave for work.

“Hey. Could you come to my parent’s lake house with me and a few friends tomorrow? We are all skipping school, and I would understand if you aren’t into that kind of thing, but we are all getting together and trying on our prom clothes. You know? All that matching crap girls like to do.” I was very surprised he invited me to do anything with him and his friends. I smiled, probably a bit too eager.

“Sure, yeah. I would really like that!” He bent down quickly kissing my forehead, making my stomach flutter before he left me in the library a hot mess of nerves.

My stomach turned and twisted painfully my whole shift and when it was over, I walked home with those same twisting feelings nauseating me terribly. He was right about one thing. I do not like skipping school but, he asked to be with me and if we can’t do normal

date things because of his football stuff, then I will take what I can get. It isn't like one day is going to matter. I have straight A's, and a perfect GPA. One day wouldn't matter.

I lay down staring at those same off-white popcorn ceilings until out of nowhere a strange feeling came over me. It spread through my soul, warming my skin. Hell, I even felt it in my fingers and toes. I tossed the covers back, tiptoeing over to my door. I locked it and pulled on the handle to make sure it wouldn't open. Then, when I got back into my bed, I realized that feeling that had come over me was hope. For the first time in years, I could envision a new life. One out from underneath those off-white popcorn ceilings.

When I woke up at four this morning, I couldn't lie there any longer. I crossed the hallway, thankful when I heard her snores coming from the living room downstairs. My green eyes didn't seem so dull this morning and I wasn't sure if it was that small spark of hope gleaming in my eyes or the will to live that his presence seemed to be feeding me. I wadded my long curls into a bun on top of my head and after brushing my teeth, I cracked the door feeling relieved that the creaking pipes roaring to life hadn't disturbed her. I crossed the hall in long strides, closing my door behind me. After dressing, I grabbed my garment bag and put my pumps into my backpack before slinging both over my shoulder.

Fearful that she might hear my window from downstairs, I only opened it an inch or so at a time, and when it was open just enough I slid out of it. I ran until my window was out of my sight and then I slowed down. I know exactly where the Conley's Lakehouse is, everyone in this town does.

In the spirit of making new friends today, I stopped at the coffee shop and got my usual drink and a dozen donuts in different flavors. The walk to the lake house would take me about forty-five minutes and as I made my way in that direction and the sun started kissing the sky in hues of orange and pink, my stomach flipped. I couldn't tell if it was the coffee or the nerves, but suddenly I had the urge to go back. Just turn around and pretend I forgot about his invitation. I shook my nerves and continued my walk. If I turned back now, I would miss the time he has offered me, and that time with him is better than the time with my mother or the people lining the hallways who went from pretending I was a virus to pretending I didn't exist at all anymore.

I could smell the lake the moment I stepped onto the paved driveway. I inhaled deeply thinking about my childhood summers that I spent here playing by myself. Mom was more stable back then, almost normal, and if I closed my eyes I could smell the barbeque cooking and hear my voice yelling for her to watch me do a trick on my bicycle. Those memories don't hurt as badly as they used to. Some days I can even smile at them.

The roar of tires on the pavement caught my attention and I turned to see Grant's blue truck coming up the driveway. Looks like I wasn't the only one who came early.

"Hey, Lenny. You are early. I was gonna clean the place up a bit before everyone got there. Wanna ride?" His boyish smile made my heart jump wildly. I nodded, tossed my bags in,

and climbed into the truck next to the boy who was showing me that time is a bit more precious than I realized.

“I could help.” I muttered.

“What was that?” he asked over the roar of the engine. I cleared my throat, willing my voice to be louder.

“I could help clean things up. Or whatever you need to do. I could help.” My voice was clearer this time, but hearing myself sounding so desperate made my cheeks flush.

“You are too good to me, Lenny.” He reached out, tucking a loose curl behind my ear and the way he was looking at me made my stomach flop again. But, this time it was different. It wasn’t a good flop. This one dropped painfully at the sight of his hungry eyes and made my body break out in a cold sweat.

Maybe I should have turned back after all.

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Once we made it to the massive house, he gathered my bags and opened my door for me. The house was a three-story log cabin and right behind the house sat a dock in the lake. I couldn’t help but be amazed by everything. Even when we visited the lake during the summer, it was never this nice.

“Are ya coming, Lenny?” Grant called from the front door.

As badly as I wanted to stay there with the water, I left it. I went inside the huge house, placing the donuts on the first table I found. Looking around at the amazing open floor plan and all of the natural light flowing through the windows.

“This is incredible.” I was fascinated by how fancy and clean everything was, but his boredom with it made me insecure. I forgot the Conleys were rich for a second and people like him are used to places like this.

“Eh, it’s alright I guess.” He looked around at the same room I was looking at but I knew we were seeing two different things. This is the only lifestyle he has ever had. He doesn’t know what it means to struggle and right now I don’t know if I feel jealous of him or happy for him.

“Well, it looks like the cleaning crew already took care of the cleaning stuff. We could have coffee out on the dock if you want to. Everyone should be here in the next few hours. We could just hang till then.” His eyes were back to their boyish charm. That hint of a starving predator that I caught a glimpse of earlier was gone.

“Sure! I could use a refill.” I followed him into the kitchen, and I knew when I spotted the fancy machine that the coffee would be incredible.

I waited patiently, trying not to seem like a complete loser, while he used the coffee machine of my dreams. I jumped out of my skin when there was a knock at the door and my heart decided to join in on the flopping around painfully. He handed me my coffee cup back filled to the brim with coffee made just the way I had asked for. He stepped out of the room to answer the door while I groaned at the coffee he had made me.

Carter came in tossing two garment bags on the island and started eyeballing me like he knew I wasn't meant to be here in this overly fancy, insanely clean lake house. I didn't fit there with my ripped jeans and faded tee that was hanging by a thread and my biggest fear about coming here was that one or all of them would remind me that I had no place among them.

“Hi, Carter. I brought donuts from this great little coffee shop just a bit from my house. If you would like one.” I muttered, losing any confidence the thought of being alone with Grant had given me.

I swallowed hard when his eyes looked over me. This is it, this is where he will remind me I don't belong. I clenched my fists tightly against my jeans preparing for a snarky response, but he surprised me.

“Thanks, Lennon.” He said with the same charming smile that Grant gave me. I wish it had eased my mind some that his words were kind, but the darkness in his bright hazel eyes, as he bit into his donut, made my skin feel too tight. Maybe I should just go.

But I didn't go. Grant leaned over my shoulder, kissing me tenderly on my cheek before rounding the island to get his own coffee. Something about the way he had done it told me he wanted me here, so I stayed despite my heart jarring in my chest and that concrete settling heavily in the pit of my stomach.

Two hours had passed, and Grant and Carter had been playing video games for the last hour. None of the girls had shown up yet, but another one of Grant's friends, who introduced himself as Chad, had come and he was sitting on the floor at the coffee table rolling a joint. It had been a long time since I had smoked. I really couldn't afford it anymore, since all the crap with my mom had gotten worse, but I was kind of hoping they would offer me a hit when they smoked it. I thought it would help me calm down some if I did.

“I think we should all go put our suits on. Well, and dress, of course. Then we can all smoke.” Chad flashed me a sparkling smile and my stomach churned thinking about putting the dress on. I loved it in the shop, adored it actually. But now, standing here in front of all of them, I can think of one hundred reasons for not putting that beautiful dress on.

Grant jogged into the kitchen and came back with two garment bags. One of them was mine. He grabbed my hand and pulled me up the stairs behind him.

“I can’t wait to see your dress, Lennon. I know you are going to be gorgeous in whatever you picked.” My heart fluttered and I was thankful that it wasn’t painful this time. He called me gorgeous and any fear or misunderstandings I had flowing through my mind dissipated entirely at that one word. He was the only person that had ever offered to comment on my looks and I hated the way it made me turn into putty. It felt as addicting as the table full of pot downstairs.

“You can change here if you want. I will just be right there. Okay? I hope you are having fun. I told my parents we were all coming after school, so around that time we could have some food sent over and we could all just catch a buzz and eat. It will be a good time, I promise.” His hand wrapped around my waist, pulling me into a feverish kiss and when he let go of me, my tender lips spread across my teeth in a stupid grin.

“Okay.” I whispered.

He turned me towards the bathroom, where I reluctantly went lugging the big bag behind me. My stomach was raging as the fabric slid over my skin. I put it on backwards and tied it tightly before turning it around the proper way. Despite how bad it looked with the bra. I had a hard time deciding to take it off. But I did.

I stood at the door with my palms sweating and my legs shaking.

“Just open the door, Lennon. You can do this.” I told myself more than once before I finally grabbed the knob and turned it. I was surprised when I stepped out to see Grant looking very handsome in his black and white suit.

“You look beautiful, Lennon.” He stepped against me with his thousand-watt smile. His fingers tangled in my hair tie, he pulled it from my hair, letting my red curls fall free around my back.

“Perfect.” He said, licking his soft lips.

He took me by my hand and walked us back down the stairs where Chad and Carter sat in their suits. Both of them had a joint in their lips and those butterflies raged again when Grant lit one, taking a long draw before putting his lips against mine, and shotgunning the smoke into my lungs.

He handed me the joint before lighting one of his own and the more I toked on the sweet smoke the more relaxed I became. I sat back letting myself relax against the soft chair I had chosen for myself. Maybe today could be fun after all.

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Chad walked over, taking the joint from my fingers. I had only smoked about half of it, but for some reason, I couldn't move anything. My arms and legs felt too heavy, and my body felt like it didn't belong to me and I learned why when the three of them moved to stand in front of me.

"I think you made the right choice with Ketamine, Chad. She is absolutely blitzed." Grant laughed.

That same concrete that has been in my chest since I agreed to this bullshit is swirling again. Now I understand what it means. That small voice that kept telling me to run knew this would happen. Knew that an invitation to anything involving these people and making new friends was too good to be true.

Grant leaned over me, whispering in my ear, and his words made the fear that was bubbling in my stomach rise into my throat.

"Now the real party starts." He kissed my cheek and down my neck and I could feel the muscles in my arms twitching to move and slap the s**t out of him. But instead, I have to lie there while Grant Conley bites into my breast.

Tears rolled down my eyes the whole time that I fit my body for control. I am just now realizing that I can have something. I could have a life and a career outside of my misery and here the three of them are trying to take it away from me.

"P-Please... I... th-thought." My mouth finally came around to form the question plaguing me. I thought he liked me, so what the hell is he doing?

"What? Did you think I seriously had a thing for you? Were you expecting dinner and flowers? He scoffed.

I cringed at his words. The truth is... I had often found myself daydreaming over the last two weeks about us going off to college together and getting successful careers and a nice life. I thought about us growing old together and discussing mundane things over morning coffee.

I see now how idiotic that is. You don't fall in love in two weeks. You don't even fall in like in two weeks. I was naive and ignorant and now... here we are. In a moment, my life will change forever and I can't even move to stop it from happening.

I can do one thing though, and as badly as I hated it, I couldn't stop it... I sobbed. I sobbed because maybe someone would be out there by the lake and would hear me. I sobbed because I wish I had paid more attention to the small bud of sadness that bloomed a little more in me every time he showed no interest in the things that I loved so much. I wish I had listened to that still small voice in my head that said his excuses were all lies. I wish I had listened to my body when the cold sweat broke out across it, telling me I didn't like the way his skin felt against mine. But I didn't... I didn't take heed to all the ways the

universe screamed he was all wrong for me and now Grant is scooping me up and packing me up the stairs to the room he had changed in. My eyes were so heavy that the swaying movements of his broad steps rocked me to sleep.

When I opened them again, I was lying on a bed with rough hands skating up my thighs pushing my tulle skirt up around my waist. My head was spinning and my skin was on fire, but I still couldn't move. No matter how hard I pleaded with my brain, the drugs held on too tight.

My panties were pulled off and thrown into a corner to be forgotten. Grant slid between my thighs and the handsome face that just minutes ago made my stomach flutter could now only make it churn. How did I not see the monster lurking behind those hazel eyes?

He spread me open, squirting something cold all over me. His fingers were so close to going inside of me and I cried harder than I ever had, I was trying so hard to find the words to beg them to let me go. I'm a virgin and the only boy I ever thought about giving my virginity to is trying to take it from me. I don't understand why he would take something from me when I might have given it to him after more time.

"No!" I grumbled, pulling and pulling until my legs tried to work. I managed to get his fingers about an inch away from my entrance when Chad and Carter tied down my wrists using the black ropes that were tied to the headboard.

Chad pulled out his phone and started recording while Grant thrust himself into me, stealing my innocence. The fire consumed me, it started in my center and worked its way everywhere else. With every thrust he made the fire seemed to burn me worse.

I don't know how long they had been at this, I was going in and out of sleep the whole time. But this time when I woke up, Chad forced himself into my mouth. I gagged and gagged until finally, I bit down on his d**k as hard as I could and when the taste of copper sparked in my mouth I bit even harder.

His screaming reminded me of the hours that I had spent there doing the same thing and I refused to let go, it was their turn to scream. Their turn to hurt. His fist tangled in my hair while the other fist started thumping me in the back of my head. I told myself, no matter what, I couldn't let go. Even as the stars danced in my vision and the room blurred around me, I couldn't let go. The vice my jaw had created had to be my ticket to freedom. It had to!

"Let me go, you stupid b***h!" He grabbed the table lamp from the nightstand and with one hard thud to my head the glass base shattered around us. I could feel the warmth of our blood running down my forehead and back and I smiled as darkness swallowed me. I did it. I hurt him how they hurt me... I did it.

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“What the f**k did you do, Chad?!” I could hear Carter’s panicked screams yelling at Chad for hitting me with the lamp.

“This wasn’t supposed to happen! We all just wanted to know what it would be like. She wasn’t supposed to be killed.” Grant yelled out.

“Why did you put your d**k in her mouth? Are you f*****g stupid? First, you almost gave her an overdose on ketamine, and then you f*****g killed her!” Carter was losing it.

“Whatever, Carter. It is done! Newsflash boys, none of us wore a rubber. Do you prissy boys know what that means? It means if her body is found, all three of us go down because she is full of all of us. Now get shovels, we have to get rid of her.” He barked at them.

“This is so f*****d up.” Grant whined.

“Shovels? No, I am alive!” I tried so hard to make the echoes of my mind project into the room, but it never would. My body isn’t moving, but I am here! I’m here!

Chad picked my limp body up, bitching with every other step he took because he kept stepping on my tulle skirt. The three of them made their way out into the woods that surrounded the lake. They picked a spot about a mile into the woods and when they got there, Chad tossed me to the ground like a bag of garbage. I thought the impact would hurt but I barely felt it and that scared me. It confirms the fear that is choking me out. I am dying.

My breathing is shallow, my heart is barely beating, and the pain that was in my head from the lamp had been long gone too.

“Please. Please... one of you see that I am alive.” My voice still wouldn’t leave the confines of my mind. I was about to be buried alive and for a second all I could think about was how I had never been this close to dying before and here I am fighting it tooth and nail after praying for death for so long.

This is why old people say the saying “Be careful what you wish for”, isn’t it?

Because while I lay here listening to them digging a shallow hole to put me into, there is only one thing I am certain of. I do not want to die. I have so many things that I am just now realizing that I want. I want a cat after college. A fat fluffy boy that always wants to be in my face, but I hate it because his hair gets too close to my mouth. I want to try all of the food that I swore was too gross for me to ever taste. I want to have a first date and fall in love with a man who has no intention of hurting me with his touch. I haven’t even seen what life was like outside of the off-white popcorn ceilings.

I felt four hands wrap around my wrists and ankles and with one hard tug and a small shove, I landed in the hole that was made for me.

I can hear my sobs. Why can't they? Why can't they hear me screaming and crying for them to hear me?

I just need them to look at me and see past their fear of being punished and see me. I am breathing. I know those breaths are far between, I know they are small. But they are there. I'm not dead yet, but I will be if they don't stop.

They're piling dirt onto my cold skin now, and the more they throw into the hole the heavier it gets on my bones. My lungs are struggling to get that small breath that they were already fighting for and, before I knew it, they were gone, leaving me here all alone, unable to move, being bear-hugged by the same dirt that I spent so much time being a child on.

I learned to ride my bike on this dirt.

I played with my dolls on this dirt.

In the end, when my time here is over, if I think of this dirt... this will be the memory that I think of first.