

CHAPTER 100

100 Clayton: Clashing Alphas CLAYTON Lucas's voice booms through the room, frustration palpable in every syllable. The scouts cower under his scrutiny, and I can't blame them. The Blackwood leaders have proven more elusive than any of us anticipated. I should be focused on the task at hand, strategizing our next move, but my mind drifts to Ava. Is she healing well? Has she found any measure of peace. after the trauma she's endured? Even though the mating bond didn't take, my wolf and I feel bonded toward her. It's one-sided and fragile, -but it consumes my thoughts. I long to see her, to offer comfort and support. But Lucas guards any information about her whereabouts with a possessiveness that borders on obsession. I don't blame him, but after a week of knowing nothing, the frustration is getting to me. As the meeting concludes, Lucas and I make our way back to the alpha's house. The promise of paperwork 100 Clayton: Clashing Alphas and hacked computer files looms ahead, a necessary evil in our quest for answers. Yet, even as I try to center my thoughts on the investigation, Ava's face flickers through my mind. I glance at Lucas, wondering how to broach the subject of contacting her. His jaw is set, eyes hard with determination. I know he sees me as a threat, a rival for Ava's affections. And perhaps I am. Everything I feel toward her is undeniable, something I've never felt toward a woman before. It's like a whisper of fate that I can't ignore. And yet I'm not the one she's fated for. I don't want to come between them, not if Ava has truly chosen Lucas. I respect her choices, her autonomy. Still, the fact that she hasn't fully committed to him, that she hasn't borne his mark, and that he doesn't have hers, gives me a glimmer of hope. Maybe, just maybe, there's still a chance for us. I take a breath, preparing to voice my request, but the words die on my tongue. Lucas's posture is rigid, his eyes fixed ahead. 100 Clayton Clashing Alphas Now isn't the time. I need to tread carefully, to find the right moment to express my desire to see Ava without igniting Lucas's ire. "So, what's our next move?" Lucas's voice cuts through my reverie, his gaze piercing. I try to shove thoughts of Ava to the back of my mind, focusing on the task at hand. "We've been over this a thousand times, Lucas." My voice is steady despite the turmoil within. "We don't know anything. Our best bet is that Renard is going to try to come back, to take his wolves back." The integration of the Blackwood pack into Westwood has been a tumultuous process, to say the least. While many have embraced the change, seeking a fresh start and a more stable future, there are those who cling to their old loyalties. Interestingly, the division seems to fall along gender lines. The men, proud and stubborn, struggle to let go of their ties to Renard Blackwood. I can sense their unease, their resistance to this new reality. Men were superior in the Blackwood pack. That is not true of Westwood, Aspen, or any of the surrounding large packs, where male and female live with relative IT 100 Clayton: Clashing Alphas equality. The men remain rogue, unsworn to any alpha. But the women? They surprise me. In a society where a female's loyalty is expected to lie with her mate above all else, these she-wolves are breaking the mold. They gather their cubs close, eyes bright with determination as they step forward to pledge their allegiance to the Westwood pack. It's a sight that would be unthinkable in most shifter communities. A female, leaving her mate behind to join a new pack? It goes against every tradition, every deeply ingrained expectation. We've had to keep several of their mates separated and under guard, for the safety of their own families. And yet, here they are, ready to forge a new path for themselves and their young. I can only imagine the strength it takes, the courage to break free from the constraints of the past. Lucas sighs, frustration evident as he runs his hands through his hair. The silence stretches between us, heavy with unspoken tension. Then out of nowhere he speaks. "Ava asked for space. 10

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0 Clayton: Clashing Alphas I haven't been able to talk to her in days." My heart stutters in my chest, a flicker of hope igniting before I can quash it. Guilt follows swiftly on its heels. I shouldn't feel this way, shouldn't want what isn't mine. Lucas mutters under his breath, his words barely audible. "I want to kill you every time I see you." He meets my gaze, eyes flashing with barely restrained anger. "But I don't want to upset Ava." I swallow hard, unsure how to respond. The air between us is charged, dangerous. "Are you truly not bonded?" Lucas asks, his voice low and deadly. I hesitate, knowing my answer could be the spark that ignites the powder keg. But I can't lie, not about this. "I tried to mark her," I admit, my voice barely above a whisper. "But it didn't take." Lucas's reaction is instantaneous. He lunges at me, a snarl ripping from his throat as his wolf takes over. I barely have time/to brace myself before he collides. with me mid-shift, all fury and feral possessiveness. My own wolf surges to the surface forcing a shift a 100 Clayton Clashing Alphas roar tearing from our throat as we tumble across the ground in a tangle of fur and fury. Claws rake against my flank, drawing blood. I retaliate with a vicious bite, my jaws clamping down on his foreleg. The taste of copper floods my mouth. Distantly, I hear shouts of alarm, the pounding of footsteps. But no one dares to intervene. They know better than to get between two alphas locked in battle. We clash again and again, a whirlwind of snarls and snapping teeth. The world narrows to this moment, to the primal need to assert dominance, to prove my worth. To lay our claim. Vester's shout cuts through the haze of rage and bloodlust. "Ava's on the phone!" Those simple words are enough to bring us back to ourselves. In an instant, fur recedes, bones shift, and we stand as men once more, chests heaving, blood dripping from our wounds. But the physical pain is nothing compared to the ache my heart. Ava. The thought of her, reaching out. in 100 Clayton: Clashing Alphas after days of silence, is enough to bring me to my knees. I meet Lucas's gaze, seeing my own desperation mirrored there. In this moment, we are not rivals, but two men bound by our love for the same woman. Vester approaches us cautiously, holding out the phone like a peace offering. I reach for it, my hand trembling, and Lucas lets me. Right. She'd asked for space; he won't reach out, because he's scared of hurting her. "Ava?" My voice is hoarse, barely above a whisper. Comment 2 View View All > RV Leave the first comment for this chapter VotewWw.n0v3lw0rmm.c0m

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