

CHAPTER 114

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114 Ava: Standing Up to the Alpha Lucas continues to pace, and Lisa folds her arms as she watches him, her chin tilted up in a defiant gesture I know well. She won't back down, even from an alpha. If there's such a thing as an alpha human, Lisa would probably be one. It doesn't surprise me that her parents allowed her to come here; she gets what she wants, one way or another. Lucas stops his agitated steps, the soles of his boots squeaking against the linoleum floor. There's a long, heavy sigh that seems to deflate his broad shoulders. When his golden eyes meet mine, they're filled with a mix of resignation and apology. "You're right, Ava," he says, his deep voice softening. "I'm sorry for trying to control you. It's not my place." Selene snorts in my mind, her presence a comforting weight. He's only sorry because you spoke up. I mentally shush her, not wanting to ruin this moment of understanding with Lucas. It's a small victory, but an important one. He needs to see me as an equal, not 16:33 1/6 114 Ava: Standing Up to the Alpha someone to be ordered around as he pleases. Lucas turns to Kellan, who's been standing silently by the door, his face an unreadable mask. "Change of plans. Ava's going back to Lisa's apartment." Kellan's eyebrows lift in surprise, but he quickly schools his features back into a neutral expression. "Understood. I'll get everything ready and let the nurses know she's ready for discharge." With a curt nod, Kellan exits the room, leaving me alone with Lucas and Lisa. The tension in the air is palpable, but there's also a sense of relief. I've won this battle, small as it may be. Lisa steps forward, her hand finding mine and giving it a reassuring squeeze. "I'll go make sure everything's set at the apartment. You focus on getting out of here, okay?" I nod, grateful for her support. "Thanks, Lise. I don't know what I'd do without you." She grins, her dark eyes sparkling with mischief. "Probably be bored out of your mind. I'll see you soon." With a wink, she's gone, leaving me alone with Lucas. He shifts his weight from foot to foot. looking 114 Ava Standing Up to the Alpha uncharacteristically uncertain. It's a stark contrast to the confident, commanding alpha I've come to know. "Ava, 1..." He runs a hand through his dark hair, mussing it in a way that makes my heart skip a beat. "I know I've made mistakes. I'm trying to do better. To be better. For you." I swallow past the lump in my throat, my emotions a tangled mess. Part of me wants to throw myself into his arms, to let him shield me from the world. But another part, the part that's been burned before, holds back, even as a familiar tingle slides over my skin. That fated bond is trying to bring us together. It hates distance, and every particle of my body wants to rush into his arms. "I appreciate that, Lucas. I do. But I need time. Space. I need to figure out who I am, without anyone else's influence." Lucas steps closer, his broad frame seeming to fill the small hospital room. I watch as his golden eyes darken, pupils dilating with a primal hunger that sends a shiver down my spine. The air between us crackles with that familiar tension, a magnetic pull that draws me in 15:33 3/6 114 Ava: Standing Up to the Alpha despite my reservations. One stolen ki*s isn't enough. "Ava," he murmurs, his deep voice a caress against my skin. "I know you need time, but I can't deny what I feel for you. What my wolf feels for you. I'll do my best, but I need you to understand me, too." My breath catches in my throat as he reaches out, his calloused fingers brushing against my cheek with a gentleness that belies his strength. It's a touch I've c

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raved, one that sets my nerves alight with desire. Careful, Selene warns in my mind, her presence a grounding force amidst the swirl of emotions. Remember what you just told him. You need space. I know she's right, but it's hard to think clearly when Lucas is so close, his scent of pine and musk enveloping me like a warm embrace. My body reacts instinctively, leaning into his touch as a soft sigh escapes my lips. "Lucas," I breathe, my voice barely above a whisper. "We can't. Not now. Not like this." He leans in, his forehead resting against mine as his eyes bore into my soul. "I know. But I need you to 16:33 114 Ava: Standing Up to the Alpha understand something, Ava. You're it for me. My mate. My everything. I'll give you the time and space you need, but I'm not going anywhere. I'll wait for you, as long as it takes." Tears prick at the corners of my eyes, his words both thrilling and terrifying. The bond between us pulses with a life of its own, urging me to close the distance, to claim what's mine, and I can't help it. We've only had one ki*s since that night at the Gala. The bond within me is stirring, desperate to reach out and latch onto our fated partner. It's as if it knows I'm trying to place distance and refuses to allow it. I step forward, my body moving of its own accord, drawn to Lucas like a moth to a flame. His eyes darken with hunger as he reaches for me, pulling me flush against his hard, muscular frame. "Ava," he whispers, my name a reverent prayer on his lips. Then he's ki*sing me, his mouth claiming mine with a desperation that steals my breath. His tongue sweeps past my parted lips, tangling with mine in a sensual dance that sets my blood on fire. 15:33 5/ 114 Ava Standing Up to the Alpha I moan into the ki*s, my fingers threading through his dark hair as I hold him close. His hands roam my body, skimming over my curves with a possessive touch that sends shivers down my spine. "Lucas," I gasp, breaking the ki*s to catch my breath. He rests his forehead against mine, his chest heaving as he struggles to control himself. "Ava, I need you. I can't stay away." I know I should push him back, remind him of the boundaries I've set, but my body betrays me. It craves his touch, his ki*s, his everything. "We can't," I whisper, even as my hands fist in his shirt, holding him close. "I know," he growls, his voice rough with desire. "But I can't help myself. You're my mate, Ava. My everything