

CHAPTER 128

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128 Ava: A Frank Discussion “Flutters from here to here?” Lisa motions with her hand, encompassing her entire abdomen up to just beneath her breasts. I nod. “And your face tingles from the sound of his voice?” I nod again. “Things sound s@xual even when they’re not?” I blush. “Yes. You’ve officially moved into flirtation territory.” Lisa picks her burger up, taking a huge bite with a groan of appreciation. After swallowing, she points it in my general direction. “Congratulations. This is your first crush.” “Not my first crush,” I murmur. There had been a few kids in class... Kids who weren’t mean or cruel, and who didn’t laugh at me. But they always ended up with other girls. We barely exchanged hellos, and I’d dreamed up scenarios between us. Of me leaving my pack to live a human life, of giving up my wolf heritage. Silly daydreams. “First real one, then,” she amends. He’s trying, Selene admits, her begrudging tone making me laugh. I’m not sure if she’ll ever approve of him. +51 I take a bite of my burger, savoring the juicy flavor as I chew. The quiet peace of the apartment wraps around us, comforting and sweet. No hovering Kellan, no constant surveillance... Just blessed solitude, broken only by the crinkling of wrappers and Lisa’s soft chewing across from me. Kellan must have gotten orders from Lucas to give us more space. He dropped off our food earlier with barely a word before heading out to handle important beta duties. I’m not complaining. Having the apartment to ourselves is a rare luxury. As I swallow another mouthful, Lisa’s voice breaks into my thoughts. “So, what was up with that bizarre text you got yesterday?” I pause mid-chew, the reminder sending a chill down my spine. The message had been so unsettling. And then it had just vanished. Like it never existed. I shake my head slowly. “I don’t know. It sounds similar to the last words Sister Miriam said to me.” Lisa sets her burger down, concern flashing across her face. “Okay, that’s creepy. Explain more.” Never underestimate a vampire, Selene murmurs “When Sister Miriam left, she told me to light a candle and say her name, and she’ll find me. I didn’t think too much of it at the time, but-” “The text asked you about the candle.” Lisa bites her lip. “How concerned should we be?” “I don’t know. Creepy text aside, I don’t feel like she’s out to harm me.” If she wanted to harm you, she wouldn’t have sent a text message. Selene perks her head up from her spot on the couch. It sounds like she has information she wants to share with you. “I don’t know if it’s a good idea to open that can of vampire worms.” Perhaps not. But vampires are not inherently evil, as 17:49 39 128 Ava: A Frank Discussion you seem to think. “Mm.” I relay Selene’s thoughts to Lisa, who pokes at her burger in thought. “I think you should try to reach out to her. What’s the worst that can happen?” “Die? Get kidnapped again? Get turned into a vampire?” “All valid points, but do you really think your luck is so bad that you’d be kidnapped again? There has to be a statistic saying how impossible that is.” “Okay, what about dying?” Lisa grimaces, pushing her plate away. Unlike her, my appetite isn’t diminished by the contents of our conversation, so I take another bite of my burger. I’ve been starving lately, probably due to all the training. “Should we tell Lucas and Kellan about Sister Miriam?” Lisa asks, resting her cheek in her hand as she watches me eat. “I know I complain about them being overprotective, but if she’s going to be a danger to your life...” “And what are we going to tell them? That she wants to talk to me about my weird existence and possibly my powers that shouldn’t exist?” I shake my head. “No, I’m not ready for that. I don’t know how Lucas will feel.” “He probably won’t care.” “Maybe.” Being an unshifted wolf shifter is bad enough; all the stares and whispers get to me, no matter how much I try to shrug them off. “We aren’t mated yet. I won’t throw all my baggage on him. He’s already dealing with enough.” Lisa looks unconvinced. “I don’t think that’s a great start to a long-term relationship. You should be able to rely on him, to tell him your secrets.” Avoiding having to answer, I chew my food as slowly as I possibly can. She stares, unblinking, in my direction, waiting for me to finish. I roll my eyes and swallow with a sigh. “Okay. Yes. It’s probably unhealthy. But, Lise, I still don’t know if this is going to work between us.” Her brows arch. “Do you hate him?” “No.” 128 Ava: A Frank Discussion “Does he hate you?” “No.” “Has he apologized?” “Yes...” I flash back to Cedarwood for a moment, a faint smile twitching my lips. “But I’m not sure if you can call breaking and entering part of an apology.” “It counts. Look, Ava. You know I love you. And you know I hate this whole overprotective, guards-everywhere-you-look bullshit. But I don’t think pushing Lucas away is what’s best, either. You’re going to have to tell him all your secrets eventually.” “I don’t know.” Shifting in my seat, I try to take another bite. Lisa yanks my plate away, shaking her head. “Nope. We aren’t avoiding this conversation.” I sigh, again, but don’t protest. What do you think, Selene? My wolf-in-husky-form just huffs and gives a little toss of her head. Your choice of mate is yours. “You don’t trust Lucas. Why?” Lisa asks, holding out her hand. “He rejected you. That’s one reason. What else?” I open my mouth, then close it again. Why, indeed? “He might treat me differently when he knows more about me.” “That’s just your assumption, isn’t it?” I slide my hand across the table, but she just tugs the plate further out of my reach. “Isn’t it, Ava...?” she presses me. Groaning, I give up on the burger. She won’t let this go until we talk it out. I’m pretty sure she’d be a terrible shrink, forcing her patients to face their issues before they’re ready. Still-I get it. I’m a little tired of waffling around. But that doesn’t mean I’m ready to do anything about it. “Okay. Yes. It’s my assumption. I still don’t trust that he won’t change his mind.” Lisa nods. “Okay, Now, what has he done to show you he’ll change his mind?” I shrug. There’s no suitable answer for that one, and I 17:50 7/9 128 Ava: A Frank Discussion

Updates... Discussion know it. “All I’m saying is-give him a fair chance. And for real safety and not something overprotective and overblown, maybe you should be able to rely on him.” “Maybe.” I snatch my plate back, sensing that her interrogation is already over. “But right now, I haven’t even decided to be his mate yet.” “Oh, yes. That’s why you whisper on the phone at night when you think I’m sleeping.” “Exactly.” I munch on my burger, watching as she finally picks hers back up. “Of course I want to be with him. The fated bond is stronger than ever. But I don’t want to choose him just because we’re fated. Fate isn’t strong enough to get past strong feelings; he proved that when he rejected me. Until I’m certain, until I know I’ve chosen to be in this relationship come hell or high water, I’m not going to trust him with my secrets.” “Fair enough.” Wwww.nov@LWorm.com

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