

CHAPTER 19

19 Lucas: Realization (II) 19 Lucas: Realization (II) LUCAS His spine straightens in an instant, and his face goes blank. "Of course not, Alpha. I only worry that this obsession with the Blackwood girl is distracting you from what really matters." I stand in a swift motion, my chair scraping against the floor. Inexplicable rage fans the flames of months of irritation and frustration. "What matters is the safety and security of our pack. If the alpha of Blackwood is plotting against us, if they're using Ava as a pawn in their twisted game, then it is my duty to uncover the truth. Don't you agree?" He takes a step back, his head bowed in submission. "I understand, Alpha. Forgive me for overstepping." I take a deep breath, trying to rein in my temper. "Your concern is noted, Delta. But I need you to trust me on this. I know what I'm doing." He nods, his expression still blank. "Of course, Alpha. I'll leave you to your work." 178 With that, he turns and leaves the room, closing the door behind him with a soft click. I sink back into my chair, rubbing a hand over my face. The letter from the scout lies on my desk, taunting me with the promise of new information. I close my eyes, taking a deep breath as I try to quell the maelstrom of emotions raging within me. I know I need to approach this situation with a clear head, to separate my personal feelings from the cold, hard facts. But it's easier said than done when it comes to Ava. With a heavy sigh, I unfold the missive, my eyes scanning the contents. Each word is like a punch to the gut, and I feel my heart sinking lower and lower with every line. The letter shakes in my hands as I read, a cold fury seeping into my bones with every damning word To: deltathorn@westwoodpack.com From: chawke@westwoodpack.com Subject: URGENT: For Alpha's Eyes Only Attachment: Report.docx 19 Lucas: Realization (II) My source within the Blackwood Pack has provided crucial information regarding Ava's circumstances. She has been enduring severe mistreatment and neglect from her own family, with Beta Alexander Grey being the primary perpetrator of cruelty. Furthermore, her mother and siblings have displayed little regard for her well-being, demonstrating indifference or outright disdain. Ava is consistently subjected to assault by numerous pack members and is treated as an outcast within the community. It's worth noting that Beta Grey's decision to permit Ava's attendance at college has raised eyebrows among the pack. However, rumors suggest that this allowance was motivated by a desire to remove her from his immediate vicinity. Notably, Ava has been working independently to finance her education, receiving no support from her parents. Furthermore, it has come to our attention that Ava has been missing since the night of the Lunar Gala, where she was last seen leaving the building shortly before midnight. Surprisingly, the Blackwood Pack has made no effort to locate her or ensure her safety. It appears they have simply washed their hands of her, as if she never existed. 38 19 Lucas: Realization (II) As troubling as these revelations are, there is more to the story. My source within the Blackwood Pack has confided in me that Ava is a wolfless shifter—she is basically human. It seems that Alpha Blackwood and his inner circle had plans to use her as a breeder to several strong males within the pack. They believed that her family's genes would be passed down to her offspring, potentially increasing their combat power in the next generation. They do not believe her defect would be passed down. My source believes that once she proved her ability to bear children, Alpha Blackwood intended to use her to breed his next heir. With regard to the ambitions of Alpha Blackwood, there is rumor that he wishes to create an alliance via mating with another pack, in hopes of increasing his power in the Council. It is uncertain if this alliance is friendly or with darker designs in mind. Whatever plans he has, he holds close to his vest. Jessa Grey has been seen attending Luna training, but Alpha Blackwood has no intention of mating her. All of this information came at a great cost. The source who provided these details was one of Alpha Blackwood's former lovers. He has seven lovers at this time trying to breed proper alpha heirs. Shortly after 14:44 4/8 19 Lucas: Realization (II) our meeting, my source was found dead under suspicious circumstances. I fear that my own position may be compromised, and I plan to return to the Westwood Pack as soon as possible to ensure my own safety and share any further intelligence I have gathered. Alpha Westwood, I urge you to consider this information carefully. The Blackwood Pack's treatment of Ava and their apparent disregard for her well-being raise serious concerns about the morality of their pack leadership, and what they might do to further their agenda. I trust that you will use this knowledge wisely to protect not only Ava but also the interests of our own pack. Your loyal scout, Ethan Hawke I set the letter down, my mind reeling from the implications of its contents. Ava is a wolfless shifter. My mind focused on that, remembering her delicate face behind those thick-framed glasses. So, the glasses were real. She has no wolf. Probably no enhanced 58 19 Lucas: Realization (II) strength, or sight, or ability to scent the things around her. She is our fated, my wolf insists, snarling and snapping at the air. We would normally know once her wolf appears, but she has no wolf. That is why the connection is only to one piece of her. The revelation yanks the breath out of my lungs. f@ck. f@ck. f@ck. If Ava is wolfless, the odd connection would make sense. The Blackwood Pack never did anything to her. And if I were to be fully honest, the connection had begun on sight, before I had ever scented her. It had to be f

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te. It is, my wolf growls. And you threw our mate away. Shit. I blow out a shaky breath and try to shove all that to the side for a moment. If I don't, I might just throw my f@cking desk through the window. Son of a f@cking bitch. My mate. And I let her go. Let her disappear. f@ck! 19 Lucas: Realization (II) My wolf howled incessantly in my head as I picked up the letter again, re-reading it and letting every word stab into my heart. Mistreated. Neglected. Assaulted. My Ava. My sweet, perfect mate. f@ck. And to know the plans Alpha Blackwood had made for that sweet girl? The pieces of the puzzle are falling into place, painting a picture far more disturbing than I could have imagined. My wolf stirs within me, a low growl rumbling in my chest as the urge to protect Ava surges through my veins. But I can't let my emotions cloud my judgment. I need to approach this situation with a level head, to gather more information and devise a plan of action. The safety of my pack, and now Ava's as well, depends on it. I crush the letter in my fist, a growl building in my throat. How could they treat her like this? Their own daughter, their own blood? The thought of Ava suffering at the hands of her so-called family makes my stomach churn with revulsion and rage. 14:44 7/8 19 Lucas: Realization (II) And now she's missing, disappeared into the night like a ghost. The memory of her in my arms, the feel of her soft skin against mine, the taste of her lips... it all comes rushing back, tainted by the knowledge of her pain. I should have known something was wrong that night. The way she trembled in my embrace, the desperate hunger in her ki*ses, was more than just desire. It was the actions of a woman starved for affection, for the simple warmth of human touch. And I pushed her away. I let my own fears and suspicions cloud my judgment, let my anger at the Blackwood Pack blind me to the truth of the woman in front of me. I need to find her, to make things right. But where do I even begin?

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