

Their Warrior Luna

Chapter 83

“Lennon! ... Lennon Faith Montgomery!” the shrill voice of my mother yelling from behind the bedroom door had me throwing pillows and cussing under my breath.

“I know you are awake, little girl. If you are late for school again, you’re gonna get it.” I’m so used to her threats it doesn’t faze me anymore. It doesn’t matter to her that I was up all-night studying for the exam that she demanded I pass, it doesn’t matter. I don’t matter... nothing matters.

Jeans, tee, sneakers.

I grabbed the clothes I had laid out the night before and ran across the hall to the bathroom. The rickety faucets g*****d from the pressure of the water rushing through the pipes. I didn’t recognize the red-headed thing in the mirror. Who knew green eyes could be so dull?

I dressed quickly and ran back to my room to grab my bag off my bed and then I ran for the door. I wasn’t quick enough though. She caught me.

THWAK

A hard slap across my face had my ears ringing.

“Mom, stop!” I grabbed her wrist before she could smack me again. Hot tears were pricking my eyes, she was off her meds again and had been for far too long this time.

“Get your little slutty a*s to school. I know you were up all night trying to get Teddy to f**k you.” She spat in my face and shoved me towards the door.

Any initiative I had to fight with her about her accusations was long gone. Years of her mental health hanging by a thread would do that to anyone. Hell, Teddy is just another one of her hallucinations that she has been dating for two years now. I think she will kill me one day over him and our affair and, as much as that used to scare me, it would be a welcome comfort now.

The halls of this place are just another reminder of the things I can't do right. The people that are supposed to be “peers” and or “friends” make sure their attendance is perfect so they can try to ruin me on a daily basis and, without fail, the sea of people parted from me like I was contagious. My mother's whelped handprint was across my tear-streaked face and even though I visibly had a hard morning, they added to the mix of bull s**t threatening to push me over the edge.

“Ms. Montgomery, a word please?” Mr. Rockland popped his head out of his office asking for my presence. Reluctantly, I stepped inside knowing he was probably about to rip me one for missing P.E. this morning, but it's just another thing. One more thing to add to the never-ending pile.

“Who gave you the shiner?” His smirk told me he thought that I got this here and that it was funny to him.

“I fell.” I smirked feeling satisfied with my one small victory when the smile fell from his face.

“Listen, I heard you were good at school.” His question made no sense to me and yet he looked at me like I was the one that was a french-fry short of a happy meal.

“I need someone to tutor Grant. We have a big game coming up and the team needs him.” My jaw dropped.

“Grant? As in... captain of the football team, Grant? I laughed until my ribs hurt from the unfamiliar sensation.

“No.” I admit it was almost tempting. Handsome, successful, apparently a bit airheaded Grant Conley. He is fun to look at for sure, but he is an a*s and that ruins it all for me.

“No?” He asked me, standing up to close his office door.

“No.” I repeated.

“Do you want to pass your senior year, Lennon?” Am I being blackmailed right now?

“I will pass my senior year, Mr. Rockland. I work hard and my grades show that.” My graduation is the only thing holding my freedom from this Podunk town and the shitty people in it.

“Really? ... Mrs. Rockland, your second-period teacher, and my wife, who is the one who recommended you as the tutor, said you were Grant’s best choice. She also said if you didn’t agree, she would fail you. Like I said, Lennon. The team needs Grant. Meet him in the library at 3. You two can have the whole space every day until four in the evening. Have him ready in two weeks or I will make sure you never get away from your crazy a*s mother. Capeesh?” Yes, Mr. Rockland... capeesh.

I nodded and left the office. I needed to wash my face or cry... or maybe just leave. If I didn’t have work after school, I would go home and pray I got around my mom unnoticed so I could hide in bed. I don’t know when the depression got so heavy, but here I am with it weighing me down so badly that I feel like I have concrete in my shoes and my head is pounding from the tension gathering in my shoulders. I couldn’t pay attention in my classes. The only thing on my mind was how, for the next two weeks, I would make it through associating with Grant Conley every day. That doesn’t even sound fun. At least he is handsome.

At the end of the day, I flopped down at a table in the stacks waiting for his highness to arrive.

3:15...

3:30...

3:45...

The door opened and shut with a slam and Grant and his best friend Carter came into the library talking about some party they were going to have at the lake after prom. It was like he didn't realize he was forty-five minutes late for this tutoring thing that I was being forced into to graduate.

"You're late." I grumbled, sliding the open book across the table that was turned to this week's assignment.

"This is the assignment for this week, sit down and we can go through it, so I know what you need." I couldn't even make eye contact with him. This will never work.

Carter scoffed at me, fist-bumping Grant, leaving us alone in the stacks.

"Here's the deal, Lennon. I need to know this stuff, sure. But just for this week could you use your big, beautiful brain to help a guy out this week? Then next week, I will be on time, and I will work hard. I promise!" He covered his heart with his hand.

"I have work." I jumped to my feet and started putting my books away. I ran from the library with Grant calling after me.

The whole walk to Bill's Diner was fuzzy. I can't believe his arrogant a*s. This is my freedom that he is f*****g with here and I know that if I were to tell Mr. Rockland that Grant wanted me to do it for him, I would be the one that got screwed over. I was so wrapped up in my own thoughts that I went into the diner and started my shift on autopilot.

"Order up." The cook rang the service bell, snapping me out of it.

It's just been me for the last two hours because the other waitress had to run home to a sick child. Which is fine, I won't have to split tips for this time and I don't have kids, but I am sure it isn't easy when they are sick.

The last three orders were out, things were running smoothly and now I can clean up a bit while I wait for tables to need me.

The ding of the doorbell wasn't enough to get my attention and man... I wish I would've looked up.

"Welcome to Bill's. How many?" I stood from under the counter where I had been stocking straws and silverware to see Grant looking me dead in the eyes. Carter, Alyssa, and Alice were all there. The four people who I would give my left leg to never see me here were looking me dead in the eyes. I broke out in a cold sweat. I had to fight my hands to steady themselves.

"Four? Booth or table and what can I get you to drink?" I went through all the formalities before giving them their drinks and menus. My cheeks were red hot and even with the air conditioner blowing in the diner, it wasn't keeping me from burning inside out.

"I am so sorry about that!" Jennifer came back looking as disheveled as I was.

"Goodness, you are burning up! Are you getting sick too?" I flinched when she went to touch my forehead.

"I'm fine. Just some kids from school came in. I wasn't expecting it, that's all." I dropped back down to finish stocking the counter.

"I will take that table then. Go take a break, Lennon." I didn't miss the way she reached out to touch me again and then changed her mind.

She knows now too. She will treat me like I am contagious from now on... just like everyone else.

I stepped out into the alley, taking in the warm summer evening. I don't usually smoke, but when the cook's cigarettes caught my eye on the table, I took one, inhaling the first draw of it deeply. I stood there hoping that if someone was up in the sky listening that they would hear me begging for relief. I need this to be over, I need the pain to stop. But no, nothing from the above took me out of my misery.

The rest of the shift went off as normal. It got much easier when Grant and his friends left, but that heaviness that I had been carrying around all day inside of my shoes just kept getting heavier and heavier.

The whole way home it was like the entire planet was baring down on my chest and as if that weren't enough. I opened the front door to a ransacked house. Mom was nowhere to be found but her liquor bottles were shattered everywhere, and the furniture had been turned over. Two hours and a lot of Band-Aids later, I finally fell into bed, praying once more that if there were someone really there that they would hear my call. Maybe when she gets back, she will think that, because the house was cleaned after her rampage, it never happened and she would just go on to bed. Or maybe... maybe tonight is the night she sneaks in to end the misery.

Just imagine my disappointment when the low buzzing of my alarm clock broke me from the only peace of mind that I ever get. I made sure to give myself extra time to get out of the house this morning. I couldn't handle a repeat of yesterday. Getting caught up in her chaos is only a sour reminder of what I will look like if I live to see thirty-five.

I fooled myself into thinking today would be a good day just because I had time to stop for coffee. I don't often treat myself but I did this morning and it was ignorant to think that one cup of coffee would change my life.

"Freak."

"Pathetic."

"Ugly."

The whispers in the hall were no different than usual. The coffee did seem to make their whispers quitter and for that I was thankful. Unfortunately, my thankfulness was short-lived when Grant's f**k buddy Alyssa Sinclair caught me at my locker slamming my fingers into the sharp metal with a clank.

"I don't know what you are planning, but you had better not speak to Grant outside of those library stacks, and if he doesn't pass and the team loses the

championship, I will make sure your pathetic a*s doesn't have working legs to walk the graduation stage." She stormed away with a flip of her hair leaving me to fight the locker door open on my own.

The b***d ran down my hand as the metal dug deeper into my skin. Finally, I stopped fighting, forcing myself to get control of the pain radiating from my hand and the anger washing through my already haywire system. I wanted to rip her head off and lay down and die all at the same time, and if that isn't a f****d up confusion, I don't know what it is.

"You are late, Ms. Montgomery." Hissed Ms. Hundley.

I wanted to scream at her for worrying about my tardiness when my damn hand was being crushed but she saw it the moment I turned. Her face paled and she ran to me to help me pry the door open. My fingers didn't look broken, just busted up good.

"What happened, Lennon?" Ms. Hundley asked, trying to wrap my hand up in her handkerchief.

"Nothing." I snatched my hand away from her and turned to go to the nurse. I knew if I didn't, that I would break over and cry my sorrows to the only teacher in this building who ever seemed to give a rat's a*s about me. Instead, I snapped at her, and I hated myself for that. If she starts treating me as an untouchable virus, I will have lost the only person who offered me any kindness that I had accepted.

The nurse wanted to call my mother and, in a panic, I came up with a lie from the seat of my pants about why she couldn't come down and pick me up. Much to my surprise, she let me sign myself out.

I ran home, climbing up the tree that would lead me through my window, and just like every time something like this happens, I pulled the kit from under my bed and started stitching the deep wounds closed. I was getting used to numbing physical pain. I would give my two front teeth to be able to numb

my mental pain in the same way, but a girl like me... I could never get so lucky.

With the wounds closed off, there was only one thing left that I could think of doing. If I hurry back to school, I can finish out the day, do Grant's tutoring, then do my shift at Bill's. I can hear my mom talking to God knows what downstairs and trying to stay there with her that way,

I just can't do it.

I climbed back down the tree, careful not to snag my hurt hand and within twenty-five minutes I was back at my desk in school. But I could barely pay attention to anything besides the throbbing in my hand. Luckily, I had some ibuprofen left in my locker, but it still didn't cut it because, by the time I got into the last period, it was throbbing so bad I couldn't focus on anything but the beating of my heart radiating through each stitched area.

I waited in the stacks just like yesterday. Sweat soaked my forehead and, no matter the distraction, I couldn't stop looking at the stitches that ran across the top of my index finger. If I paid enough attention, it was almost like I could see it throb every time my heartbeat. I didn't expect Grant to show up on time, so when he walked through those doors alone at three o'clock, I forced myself to stop paying mind to my finger and give his studies my attention. Showing up on time shows initiative and if he wants to put in the effort to graduate, I will make sure he does.