

Their Warrior Luna

Chapter 84

He made his way over to me, flopping down in the chair next to me. He was so close that I could smell soap and warmth radiating from him. My stomach twisted up when his brown eyes looked into mine for the first time.

“I have less than two weeks to get ready for these tests. I need your help, and I promise, I won’t ask you to do the work for me again. I have to pass.” I nodded, trying to actively listen to him, but I was really struggling with the pain in my hand.

“Look, if you aren’t going to help, I need to know now so I can get the coach to find someone else.” He snapped at me.

“NO, I’ve got you. Here is assignment one for this week. Go through it and show me what you can do and we can go from there.” Slowly, he took the paper from my good hand. He looked over the paper in front of him with his forehead scrunching up.

Thirty minutes later, he still hadn’t answered the first question.

“Is it okay if I…” I made the motion of scooting closer to him and with his nod I went closer with my own paper and pencil. We sat there until 4:30 and while doing the problems on my own paper, I explained the process step by step of how to get the answers. We got about half of the questions done and he was really getting the hang of it.

“I have to get to work, but good job today. You can work on the rest of those by yourself and we can work on more tomorrow.” I was gathering my stuff when he snatched my hurt hand, making me wince in anticipation of a pain that never came.

“What happened?” My stomach fluttered when he softly turned it over, examining the wounds caused by his girlfriend. His touch was so tender that it made me want to laugh. How could a boy so burly be so soft? He was caressing my hand like it was made of flower petals that were far too delicate to touch.

“It’s nothing.” I murmured, pulling my hand away from him.

“Cool. See you tomorrow then?” He patted my shoulder on his way out.

“Yeah, see ya.” I felt idiotic for letting my face flush for a boy so far out of my league.

Pulling my head out of my own ass, I made my way to Bill’s to start my shift and I couldn’t stop thinking about how tenderly he had treated me. Just thinking about it made my stomach tie up in knots. With my mind so wrapped up, I dug through my bag, pulling the old leather-bound journal out. I wrote the words of my heart onto the old paper until one thought made me stop scribbling entirely.

What if he was mine?

Maybe... No.

I should kick myself for letting such idiotic thoughts cross my mind. Grant Conley is, well... Grant Conley and I’m just me. Plain, unextraordinary me.

Bill’s voice pulled me from my scribbling pity party. I hadn’t even realized I had made it here yet.

“Hey. Sorry kid. We’re closing for the day. I have a family emergency. Here’s some cash for the day, just come back on your next scheduled shift and we’ll get back to it.” Bill tossed me a wad of cash that was tied off with a rubber band. I rolled it over in my hand, he gave me more for missing work than I would’ve made during my whole shift. But... I need to work... I can’t go home. I don’t want to face her demons with her.

“Bill, I could put the truck away or something. You should at least let me do something for all of this.” I shook the money at him, praying he could see how desperate I am.

People talk in small towns, it’s no secret that my mother is a fucking basket case. Maybe he listens to all of the gossip that has soaked into the walls of his diner over the years. Maybe he understands that I can’t go home.

“You know what? You’re right. We did have that truck come in yesterday.” He tossed me the keys and a one hundred dollar bill and told me to have at it.

With a sigh of relief, I did just that. I put the truck away. I cleaned the grill, polished the floors, restocked, I rolled silverware and did everything that I knew I could do to keep from going home and that may have been where I fucked up this time. If I had been there, I wouldn’t have the mess on my hands that I walked into when I finally went home. Anything I had left in my reserves was long depleted and between the ache in my hand and the hunger in my stomach, staying awake was just a chore. But from the sidewalk I knew something was wrong.

I slid the key into the front door. The old thing groaned under the weight of the years of neglect that still had a chokehold on this “fixer-upper”. That’s what she had called it before she lost her sh*t. It was a fixer-upper. But now that pretty blue color that we picked out to paint the crusty siding was chipping away just like her sanity... and mine.

The house wasn't empty this time. No, she was there... the tears were rolling down her face, and the blood down her wrists and the sobs... those sobs will haunt me. She's tried to do the one thing that I've thought about doing for the past four years and couldn't find the balls to do it.

She sat in a puddle of her blood that was soaking through the white silk fabric of her nightgown that she'd worn for the past three days. Her hair was matted and she truly looked insane right now.

"Teddy left me. He left us, Lennon. How will we survive?" Her sobs continued.

Teddy hadn't kept the bills paid. I have. I don't know why she can't see that. I'm never there and I'm always tired because I work and I go to school and I make sure she is taken care of when she's not trying to kill me.

"You sorry fucking bitch." I snarled at her.

"Get up. Teddy isn't even a real person, mom. He doesn't exist. I'm the one who pays our bills and puts food in the fridge." I yanked the wad of money I made today out of my pocket. That's our power bill and the groceries for the week, but she is so sick in the head she doesn't even realize she's nothing but skin and bones and smells like piss, she doesn't realize that I am killing myself to keep us going and she doesn't see that I am circling the same damn drain she is.

"Don't you see how fuckin' crazy you are right now? You're off your meds again and look at you. You've cut yourself all to hell and over what? A freaking hallucination." I grabbed her by her arms, her wide eyes were locked on me like for the moment she had dipped her toes into the pool of sanity.

I wrapped her arms tightly in dish towels and ran upstairs to get the same kit I had used earlier on myself. I slammed it on the counter beside her and when she saw the contents of the kit she spoke.

“Lennon, what’s going on?”

“You fucked up again. I can handle your physical abuse and your mental abuse. But if I am forced to live in an existence I never asked for, then you don’t get the liberty of Death’s peace either, you crazy bitch.” The second I started stitching her she screamed. I remember the first time I stitched myself. It sucked. The burning pain of your skin being tied back into place is nauseating. She fell over on the counter with a thud passing out from the burn that I had grown used to.

“Weak bitch.” I grumped, as I kept stitching her wrists. When I was done and my mess was cleaned up, I dragged her over to the couch, managing to get her awake long enough to shove her meds down her throat. I’m done taking care of her. Once I graduate, she can kill herself, commit herself, or stay in this hell hole and fight with herself. I don’t care!

I stomped upstairs leaving her blood coating the kitchen. It’s her mess to clean up.

I cranked the shower wide open, wincing when the hot water hit my stitches. I wanted to just stay here and rot away in the steam and the anger that is strangling me. How dare she? If anyone could justify those actions it’s me, but here I am trying to wash her b***d off my hands with the sounds of her wailing for a man that doesn’t exist to come back home to her.

When the water ran cold, I stepped out. I stomped to my room, throwing an outfit out for school, and then rolled up into my bed like a pissy little burrito, falling asleep with a prayer that I’d be the next one on Death’s list.

It seemed like I floated through the week looking forward to nothing but the simple conversations Grant and I had started sharing. We talked about life and music and the things we enjoy and he is really picking up on everything with the tutoring. I think he will be fine for the finals. In fact, I'm sure of it. But... if I told anyone that he wouldn't need my company anymore. I had never felt more connected to another human being and it made this mundane existence more bearable. We had started talking outside of the stacks even though it pissed basically every girl in the school off. People had stopped their hateful whispers in the hallway and that was only one week of being his friend.

Mom was like a zombie, devastated by the loss of Teddy still. But I had managed to get her medicine in her for three days now and I wondered if that was why he hadn't returned. A small part of me had hoped his absence meant she was getting better. That the mom who picks porch paint and makes me hot chocolate when I am upset was coming back to me. But that is barely even a pipe dream at this point. It's unrealistic to believe that she will ever be anything but the hollow version of the woman she once was and I mourned her loss long ago. There is no reason to think that person will come back from her grave now.

"You know, I was thinking. The prom is next week. We have the championships the day after tomorrow, and thanks to you, the team will be bringing that trophy home. Why don't you come to the after-party with me?" I fumbled at his words, spilling my books onto the floor of the empty library. The noise echoed from the walls like the eruption of a volcano and I just knew I hadn't heard him right. I turned, looked around, and when no one else was there, I had to do a double take.

"Me?" I cringed at the way I sounded. My voice was dripping with nerves and hope, and my face flushed thinking he could sense how desperate I was for him to say yes.

He stepped towards me with a look in his eyes that made my blush run deeper. My heart was trying to escape from my chest and I felt like if I

didn't hold it down it might leap right out of my shirt. My back hit the bookshelf and his muscled arm pinned me in. I sank deeper into the books letting them dig into my back as the cold sweat coated my skin.

“Yes. I really like you, Lennon. You are a beautiful girl and I think we have more in common than we know. I thought maybe you could be my date to prom. We could celebrate and go to the party together after.” My throat closed off entirely at his words, locking away any sound with it.

I nodded yes, and the moment his lips touched mine I lost it.

Call me starved for touch, or a whore. Whatever you want. I let go of the fear that someone else's touch would only cause me pain and when those walls I had carefully built around me crumbled, I ran my fingers through his thick blonde hair, leaning in closer to deepen my first kiss.