

Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Light Finds Dark Corners

— Author: Alex Morgan 401

Chapter 401

Vivian's expression changed dramatically, and she instinctively took a step back. She stared at James in disbelief, "W-What did you just say?"

'Did I mishear him? Vivian thought. "Wait, did James just say Martin and Matthew aren't his sons? How did he find out?"

She'd kept this secret locked down for years, even going so far as to bribe the people at the DNA testing lab.

Whenever anyone tried to test Martin and Matthew's DNA, the results always said they were James's sons.

All these years, Sarah had tests done behind her back over and over, but she never found out.

How did James find out? Vivian wondered, her mind racing,

James's face was cold as he tossed two DNA test reports at Vivian. "What? You still think you can get away with this? Don't bother. These results came from a lab in Betrico. My mom arranged it herself.

"You really thought bribing the lab in Riverdale meant we had no other options? Vivian, the only reason I'm even talking to you about divorce today is because of Nina and Ethan"

James glanced at Nina and Ethan, his voice low and serious. "Even if they don't want me to do this for them, I still appreciate you giving me these two kids. That's why I'm not turning you over to the Enforcement Squad.

"I just want a divorce, and when it comes to the settlement, you'll get every penny you're entitled to. But you need to understand that what you've done could land you in prison for the rest of your life."

Vivian kept backing away, her whole body shaking.

How did things end up like this?' she thought, completely lost.

Everything had been going exactly as she'd planned. She'd already thrown the Lowell family into chaos, and her next move was to go after the Swanson family.

But now, before she'd even done anything, she was about to be kicked out of the Swanson family. And then there were Martin and Matthew.

These two kids she'd raised with such care ended up as criminals.

Vivian was absolutely stunned when she heard the news in Betrico. She didn't dare waste a second and rushed straight back

to Riverdale.

Vivian wanted to know what was going on, but the moment she arrived at the Swanson residence, James slammed the divorce agreement down in front of her and demanded a divorce.

James didn't want to waste any more words on Vivian. He slapped the divorce papers down in front of her. "Sign them now."

Vivian stared at the divorce papers, her fingers curling into tight fists. Then, in a sudden burst of rage, she tore the papers to shreds. "I'm not signing! So what if Martin and Matthew aren't your kids?"

"Nina and Ethan are your children, and Nina is the CEO of SN Corporation. Ethan runs a software company that pulls in millions of dollars every year. They've brought glory to the Swanson family, and that's because of me.

"You want me to sign this? Over my dead body!"

'No way am I getting divorced! Vivian thought. 'I still need the Swanson family to save Martin. If I divorce, I will have no

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cards left to play. The Lowell family wouldn't lift a finger for me.

'As for Lawrence? That selfish jerk is even less likely to help her.'

So Vivian had no choice but to rely on the Swanson family.

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James glanced at the shredded papers on the floor without batting an eye. He said flatly to Anna, "Bring me another copy of the divorce agreement."

Anna nodded and soon came back with a freshly printed copy.

Just as Vivian was about to tear it up again, Nina spoke up, “You’re only refusing to sign because of Martin, aren’t you?”

Vivian froze, her eyes flickering away. “I have no idea what you’re talking about!”

Nina gave a little laugh. “You want to save Martin and Matthew, and you’re hoping to use them as your ticket into the Nicholson family.”

In a flash, Vivian looked up, locking eyes with Nina. “Just what do you know?”

“I know a lot, Mrs. Swanson. What exactly do you want to hear?” Nina replied.

Before Vivian could respond, Nina continued, “Are you curious about Martin and Matthew’s parentage? Or maybe Lily’s background? Or even Lawrence?”

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Chapter 402

Vivian stared at Nina, left speechless. All she could think was, ‘How did Nina find out? I’ve kept all this hidden so well!’

Even if she couldn’t keep it hidden, Lawrence would’ve handled it, no problem. The Nicholson family got serious pull.

‘So how did Nina find out?’ Vivian wondered.

Nina shot Vivian a smug look. "Since there's nothing left to say about Martin and Matthew, why don't we talk about Lily? Mrs. Swanson, did Lily's DNA test results come in yet?"

Vivian just stared at Nina, silent. The results for Lily's DNA test still hadn't come back.

'How the hell did Nina find out I had Lily tested?' Vivian thought.

"So, the results aren't in yet?" Nina smirked, "Lucky for you, I'm feeling generous today. I'll give you Lily's DNA test results, free of charge."

With that, Nina turned to Elaine, who was standing off to the side, clearly enjoying the drama. "Elaine, go to my room and grab the black bag from the cabinet."

"Got it!" Elaine replied, practically bouncing with excitement. She loved nothing more than watching Nina put someone in their place.

Elaine hurried off and came back in no time with the bag Nina wanted.

Nina pulled out two DNA test reports and tossed them to Vivian. "Take them, Mrs. Swanson. Don't bother thanking me."

Vivian took the reports from Nina, and as she read the results, her eyes widened in shock. Anger quickly replaced her shock, and she gritted her teeth. "Lily!"

"Wow, you look seriously pissed, Mrs. Swanson," Nina said, her smile turning wicked. "You spent all that time raising a kid for the Lowell family, only to find out she's not even theirs."

"She's actually Lawrence's daughter, the man you're obsessed with. No wonder you're about to explode!"

Nina's words hit Vivian like a punch to the gut.

Vivian clutched her chest, and for a long moment, she couldn't breathe.

"Already can't handle it?" Nina raised an eyebrow. "I've got even bigger news for you!"

Vivian shot her a look full of hatred. "What else do you have to say?"

"Your precious son Martin? He's known for ages that Lily is Lawrence's daughter," Nina said, circling Vivian with a wicked grin, lifting a strand of Vivian's hair with her fingers. "And he's been helping Lawrence lie to you this whole time."

Vivian couldn't hold back any longer. She suddenly spat out a mouthful of blood.

She staggered backward, eyes wide as she stared at Nina in shock. “W-What did you just say?”

Martin already knew that Lily was Lawrence’s daughter?’ Vivian thought, her mind reeling. ‘He just watched as I got fooled, year after year?’

“And that’s not all. Matthew’s got a thing for Lily,” Nina said, her grin turning downright wicked. “Big brother crushing on his

own sister?

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“Even web novel authors would get banned for writing this stuff, but your precious son made it happen in real life. Shocking, huh? Bet you never saw that twist coming.”

Vivian’s mind just blew up. She couldn’t take it anymore and blacked out on the spot. But before she could hit the floor, Nina jabbed a needle into her. Vivian snapped awake instantly.

Vivian’s eyes snapped open, but before she could get a word out, Nina said coldly, “Don’t even think about fainting yet. I’m not finished with you.”

“T-There’s more?” Vivian stammered, feeling like she was already knocking on death’s door, barely hanging on.

“Oh, there’s a lot more,” Nina replied with a sly, taunting smile. “Aren’t you dying to know who Lily’s mother is?”

Vivian gripped the chair so hard her knuckles turned pale. “Who is it?”

“The Lowell adopted daughter!” Nina paused for effect, then added with a smirk, “Or maybe I should say, Stella’s bastard.”

Vivian shot to her feet, trembling so hard that she could barely stand. “W-What?”

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Chapter 403

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Vivian couldn't believe what she just heard. She thought, 'What? Is Rylie actually my mom's illegitimate daughter?

'And my mom kept this from me for years. She worked with everyone just to set things up for Rylie while manipulating me the whole time. The kid I spent years carefully raising turns out to be the daughter of the woman I hate most.

Everything came at Vivian too fast. Her heart was racing, her head felt light, and she was barely holding herself together.

Vivian clutched her chest, barely hanging on, and shot Nina a desperate look. Just tell me everything.

She thought, 'Just hurry up and spill it all out.'

Nina said, "Oh, and by the way, Rylie is Lawrence's first wife. Besides Lily, she also has a son, who is Mr. Morris Nicholson's most beloved grandchild.

"There's a good chance she'll inherit the Nicholson family, and Lawrence never planned for your son to be part of the Swanson family."

Nina crouched down, locking eyes with Vivian. "Lawrence only loves Rylie. You were just a pawn he used to climb the social ladder."

Vivian couldn't hold on any longer and collapsed to the floor.

This time, Nina didn't bother to wake Vivian up. She'd already said everything she needed to.

Nina stood

up and turned to Anna. "Take her to the hospital. Once she wakes up, make sure she signs the divorce papers."

Anna nodded and had someone carry Vivian out.

Nina watched Vivian being taken out and gave a faint, cold smile.

James stood there in shock for a long moment before finally processing Nina's words. "Nina, was everything you just said

true?"

James just couldn't wrap his head around it. He'd always known Vivian had an agenda with him, but he never realized it was all because of a man.

And she loved that man so much; she went so far as to bear him two children.

He didn't feel sorry for Vivian, and he could not understand how a woman could go so far for a man.

What made it truly tragic was that the man had only ever used her and even went on to marry her adopted sister.

No one could survive that kind of betrayal.

Nina shot him a sideways look, her voice cool. "The first part was true."

James paused, looking taken aback. "Then what about that man and Rylie?"

Nina said, dead serious, "Oh, I just made that up."

She barely knew anything about Lawrence, let alone details like that. She said it purely to plant a bomb deep inside Vivian's

heart.

The Lowell family was too insignificant for her to bother with.

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And Vivian wasn't some helpless woman. After all these years in the Swanson family, she was more than enough to handle the Lowell family.

And then there was Lawrence.

Nina thought, 'After all this, Vivian must absolutely despise Lawrence now. When she goes off the rails, things get interesting.

More importantly, Vivian and Lily could serve as her way into the Lowell family.

James paused for a moment, still unsure what Nina was plotting. "Do you think your mother will actually sign the divorce papers?"

Nina squinted. "She's smart enough to know she has no choice."

Martin and Matthew were never getting out of there. And now that Vivian knew Martin had teamed up with Lawrence to fool her, there was no way she'd try to help them.

Without Martin and Matthew, there was no reason for Vivian to stick around the Swanson family anymore.

After all, nobody in the Swanson family liked her.

After the divorce, she would walk away with a sum of money, enough to see her through whatever she planned next.

Of course, James wanted Vivian gone with nothing. After all, she had already taken plenty from the Swanson family over the years.

Yet Nina insisted that James give Vivian a cut, and it was one billion.

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Chapter 404

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When James heard that, he thought Nina had lost her mind. He thought, “That’s one billion, not 10 dollars. Is she really giving it away?”

Nina just shrugged and said she’d get it all back eventually. She said she never made a deal that didn’t pay off.

The next morning, Patrick arrived before Nina had even gotten out of bed.

Nina now held the highest status in the Swanson family. As long as she was still asleep, no one would dare interrupt her, so Patrick was left waiting in the living room.

Patrick waited for over an hour before Nina finally made her way downstairs. He rose to his feet, his expression calm and composed. “Morning, Ms. Swanson.”

Nina gave a slight nod, took the seat, and gestured for Patrick to sit.

Once Patrick was seated, Nina asked, “Is everything set?”

Patrick nodded. “Yes, it is. The people I brought this time are reliable in character and skilled enough. Protecting Ms. Hawthorne won’t be an issue.”

He’d planned to come a few days ago, but Nina wanted the people protecting Miranda to be both trustworthy and skilled, so he took his time choosing.

As for the rest of the Shadowblade Syndicate, Nina said she could arrange jobs for them.

However, after thinking it over, Patrick decided not to take her up on that.

Nina paid him well enough, and he planned to use the money to rebuild the Shadowblade Syndicate.

Therefore, he had the rest of the crew focus on rebuilding the Shadowblade Syndicate.

“You’re not going to be in charge of Miranda’s protection,” Nina said.

Patrick looked taken aback. “Ms. Swanson, do you think I’m not up to the task?”

“I have other plans for you,” Nina replied. She pulled out her phone and made a call.

Soon, a stunning woman with an icy expression strode in. It was Falconer. She gave Patrick a cold glance, then walked up to Nina and said respectfully, “Boss.”

Nina nodded, then turned to Patrick. “This is Falconer. From now on, she’ll be overseeing Miranda’s training. Tell your people their job is just protection, and they’ll take orders from Falconer.”

Patrick frowned. “May I know the reason?”

Before Nina could reply, Patrick continued, “No offense, but the Shadowblade Syndicate has always taken orders from me. If someone just shows up and starts giving orders, I’m afraid they won’t be happy about it.”

“That’s your problem to solve,” Nina said, her tone icy. “If you want my money, you follow my rules. If you can’t, you’re out,”

Patrick panicked. “That’s not what I meant, We were originally hired to protect Ms. Hawthorne. Now the plan is suddenly different, so I just-”

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Chapter 404

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The salary Nina offered was more than enough.

The Shadowblade Syndicate had been having a rough time these past few years. This job wasn’t easy to come by, and he didn’t want to give it up.

Nina said, "Something came up, and I need someone else to train Miranda. I trust the Shadowblade Syndicate, but what you practice isn't right for her.

"I need her to grow fast. Falconer was trained in lethal techniques. She's the only one truly fit for this."

Nina had wanted to train Miranda herself, but she had too much going on right now.

Scarlet was still missing, and she still had to work on her special formula. She needed to get a solid plan together for what was coming next.

She just didn't have time to train Miranda step by step.

"Got it. I'll let them know," Patrick said, pausing for a moment before adding, "So, what do you want me to do?"

"Come with me to Betrico," Nina replied.

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Chapter 405

As soon as Nina finished speaking, a servant led Simon into the room.

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Simon walked straight up to Nina and whispered in her ear, "Waverly and the boys have escaped from the mental hospital."

By "the boys", he meant that Martin and Matthew had escaped, too.

Nina smiled. "Is everything taken care of?"

Simon grinned. "All set. The northern suburb mental hospital in Betrico is where they'll spend the rest of their days."

Nina smirked. "Guess it's time for me to give my two brothers and Aunt Waverly a proper send-off."

Simon nodded with a smile. "So, when do we leave for Betrico?"

Nina pointed at Patrick and said, "This is Patrick from the Shadowblade Syndicate. He's coming with us to Betrico. Get ready. We're heading out tomorrow."

"Sure," Simon replied.

Patrick wanted to ask why he was being taken to Betrico, but for reasons he couldn't explain, Nina unsettled him. Especially now, when she was smiling, she looked more terrifying.

In the end, he swallowed the question and left with Simon.

After Simon and Patrick left, Nina turned to Falconer. "Any updates from Frontierland?"

Falconer had just gotten back to Riverdale from Frontierland at the crack of dawn yesterday. She knew more about the situation there than anyone else.

Falconer hesitated, shooting Nina a cautious look. "Moirra and the girls were-

"It's fine. Just say it," Nina replied, her eyes turning cold and distant.

Falconer said, "Black Wolf searched almost all of Frontierland. There wasn't a single complete body. They had to cremate them first. The ashes will be sent back soon."

Nina's grip on her glass tightened as she forced herself to keep her emotions in check. "I'm heading to Betrico tomorrow. When the ashes get back, let me know. I'll take care of it."

Falconer nodded.

Nina added, "Except for Moira, the rest of them still have family. Get Simon to transfer 30 million and make sure their families are all taken care of."

"Look into them first. If they're decent people, buy them a house, a car, and cover their future expenses. If they're not, just tell them their family is dead."

Nina paused for a moment, then said, "As for Moira's money—"

Nina sighed. "Anyway, the kid she was sponsoring is in Betrico. I'll go check her out. If she seems like a decent person, I'll use Moira's money to keep supporting her."

"Got it," Falconer replied.

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Chapter 405

"What about Scarlet? Still no news?" Nina asked.

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"Not yet," Falconer replied, her expression grim. "We've searched all over Frontierland these days and found nothing. We've questioned the Crimson Syndicate again and again. Still no results. You'll probably have to go yourself."

Falconer paused, then added, "But when I got back, Ryan had already headed to Frontierland. He might be able to dig something up."

Nina squinted. "Since Ryan is already in Frontierland, I'm not going. Tell Black Wolf to hand over the Crimson Syndicate members to Ryan and make sure they work with him. Even if they can't find her, I want some leads."

"Okay," Falconer replied. Then she headed out.

Nina sat in her chair, veins standing out on the hand gripping her glass.

She thought, 'None of the dozen girls had a whole body left. Moira and the others cared so much about how they looked. And now we can't even piece together a whole body. She'd be upset, wouldn't she?'

Nina tried to keep her emotions in check, but she couldn't. Her hand tightened, and the glass crushed apart.

Sarah had just come downstairs and was shocked by what she saw. She rushed over, grabbing Nina's hand. "Nina, are you okay?"

Then she quickly called out to Anna, "Hurry up and get the medical kit."

Nina looked down at the blood streaming from her hand, lost in a daze. She thought, 'Looks like I still can't control myself!

Anna rushed over with the medical kit and carefully wrapped up Nina's hand. "Ms. Swanson, no matter how angry you get, you can't hurt yourself. If something happened to you, Mrs. Sarah Swanson would be worried sick."

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Chapter 406

Nina pressed her lips and said to Sarah, "Grandma, I'm fine."

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Sarah hugged Nina close and said softly, "Sweetheart, if you need to cry, just let it out. I know you've been carrying a lot these days, and you keep holding it in because you don't want me to worry.

“But the more you force yourself to stay strong, the more I worry. It’s okay. Just cry if you want.”

Maybe those words hit Nina right in the heart. She finally couldn’t hold it anymore and started crying quietly in Sarah’s

arms.

Sarah felt Nina trembling and knew she was crying. She let out a quiet sigh.

Nina didn’t even dare cry out loud.

It broke Sarah’s heart, but she didn’t dare say anything more. She was afraid that if she kept going, Nina would never show weakness in front of her again.

Nina hadn’t cried for many years. No matter what happened, she never allowed herself to cry.

She didn’t want to seem weak, but today, in front of her grandmother, the emotions she had suppressed for so long finally

broke free.

After a while, Nina calmed down. When she lifted her head, a faint smile rested on her face, as if she had never cried.

She said, “Grandma, I’m heading to Betrico tomorrow and won’t be coming back anytime soon. Martin and the others have been dealt with. The rest of them may have their flaws, but none of them will harm the family.

“I’ll leave the household to you. As for the company, I’ll hand everything over to Dad. I won’t interfere anymore.”

She only stepped up and took charge of the Swanson family business because the whole place was falling apart. Now that everything was back on track, the rest no longer required her attention.

Besides, she truly could not handle everything anymore.

Sarah nodded. “Alright. Go take care of what you need to do. You don’t have to worry about the family. I will hold the Swanson family together. If you ever need us, we will support you fully.”

“Okay,” Nina said.

After breakfast, Nina headed over to the Carroll residence and gave Loren a quick update on Scarlet's situation.

As for Miranda and Philip, she told them to stay in Riverdale and keep up with their studies.

After sorting everything out, Nina went home to pack.

She was going to the research institute this time, so clothes weren't necessary, but she had to bring the compounds. There were a lot of things needed for the experimental drugs, and none of them could be rushed, so packing was a hassle.

It had just rained in Betrico, and the night was a little chilly. Suddenly, footsteps shattered the silence in the woods outside the northern suburb mental hospital.

Waverly was running like hell, constantly glancing back in panic,

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Uniformed guards were right behind her, refusing to let up.

When Waverly glanced back, she slipped and fell hard. She landed straight in the mud, covered all over

Yet she couldn't afford to stop because the footsteps behind her were closing in.

She scrambled to her feet and bolted forward, not daring to look back. Her eyes locked onto the mental hospital, which was just 300 feet away now.

As long as she made it inside the hospital, she would be safe.

Fueled by that hope, Waverly kicked it into high gear, sprinting for her life.

At last, she reached the entrance. Joy surged through her as she raised her hand to knock, and suddenly, two men rushed toward her from both sides.

Waverly turned her head and froze when she saw who they were. "Martin? Matthew? What are you doing here?"

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Chapter 121

Tori's POV:

I could feel Megan's glare burning into my back as we walked away.

"That was amazing, Morgan whispered once we were safely around the corner.

Her eyes were wide with admiration. "I can't believe you just put Megan Howard in her place like that!"

I shrugged, trying to appear calmer than I felt. "Always backing down would just encourage her."

We continued our shopping, my phone vibrating.

Lucas's name flashed across the screen, sending an involuntary flutter through my chest.

I answered immediately.

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"Hi, I said, my voice softer than intended.

"Little wolf. His deep voice rumbled through the phone, warming me from the inside out. "How's the shopping going?"

“Good. I think I’ve found something suitable for your mother.” I adjusted the diamond necklace, watching how it caught the light. “Morgan’s been helping me.”

“Don’t exhaust yourself,” he said, concern evident in his tone.

The genuine care in his voice made something in my chest ache pleasantly

“I should go,” he continued after a brief pause. “Call me when you’re finished?”

I realized he was waiting for me to end the conversation-not rushing me off the phone but giving me the choice. It was a small gesture, but one that showed respect for my time and agency.

Another warm wave washed through me.

‘I will, I promised, smiling despite myself. ‘See you tonight.’”

Morgan was waiting with a knowing grin that made me instantly suspicious.

“What?” I asked, removing the necklace and carefully placing it back in its velvet box.

‘Nothing,’ she sang, following me to the counter. “Just that you’re practically glowing. Let me guess-Lucas Alpha called?”

Heat crept up my neck. “He was just checking in.”

Morgan sighed dramatically. “I also want an Alpha just like him. Strong, powerful, but gentle enough to make his Luna smile like that.”

‘I’m not his Luna,” I corrected automatically, though the denial felt increasingly hollow with each passing day.”Not yet, at least.”

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Chapter 121

After purchasing the gifts, we stopped for coffee.

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Morgan was enthusiastically describing the last Grayson family dinner when I noticed a slender woman hovering nearby, her nervous gaze fixed on me.

My pulse quickened as I recognized her-Sophia Morris, Noah's sister.

She approached our table hesitantly.

"Tori? Could I speak with you for a moment?" Her voice was barely above a whisper, her eyes darting around anxiously.

Morgan raised an eyebrow, looking between us with curiosity.

"It's important, Sophia added, wringing her hands.

"I'll be right back," I told Morgan, who nodded but watched us carefully as we moved to a quiet corner of the café area, still within her sight

but out of earshot.

Sophia's shoulders hunched as if carrying a tremendous weight.

She had the same amber eyes as her brother, but where his had been cruel hers were guarded and tired.

"I can't stay long," she said, her voice barely above a whisper. "My mother as spies everywhere."

From her purse, she withdrew a small encrypted storage device and pressed it into my palm.

"This contains an audio recording I made accidentally four years ago. It's Iona Price and my brother Noah, plotting to lure you to our estate." Her fingers trembled slightly. "Fiona set you up. She told Noah you wanted him to claim you, that you'd been fantasizing about him."

My throat tightened. "Why are you giving me this now? Why not four years ago when I was on trial?"

Sophia's expression turned haunted. "I tried," she whispered. "I had the evidence ready to give to the Pack Council, but my mother found out."

Her voice became eerily calm, as if she was talking about someone else's e. She was... furious."

Comments

Chapter 122

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"She nearly killed me, Sophia continued. "When I woke up from the coma you'd already been sentenced, and the original recording my mother had destroyed."

She nodded toward the device in my hand.

"This is a copy I secretly made. My mother had powerful connections in enforcement. I was afraid if I gave it to the wrong person, she'd have it destroyed too. So I hid it."

"Now that our family's power has diminished, you can use this recording t petition the Council for a new hearing." Sophia looked at me, smile crumbling as tears slid down her face.

"This time, they won't be able to twist the truth."

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"Thank you," I managed to say, clutching the device.

I stared at the small device, still processing everything.

"I'm sorry," she continued, her voice breaking. "I was a coward. I knew wha Noah planned, but I was too afraid to warn you directly. When I learned he'd invited you to our estate, I... I finally told your brother Ryan bout it."

Her shoulders shook slightly. "I'm sorry. If I'd warned you sooner, you wouldn't have been tricked by Noah, and Ryan wouldn't have died trying to save you. It's my fault. All of it."

Sophia's eyes, so like her brother's yet so different, brimmed with years of guilt and regret.

She squeezed my arm once, then hurried away, disappearing into the crowd before I could respond.

I stood frozen, the weight of the device in my hand feeling impossibly heavy.

My brother had gone to Morris Manor deliberately to save me, not by chance.

As I walked back to Morgan, my mind was swimming.

That night when I woke on the floor, Ryan was already dying, his last word simply 'don't cry. He never woke again.

I'd always wondered how he knew to find me there.

Now I knew.

Hours later, I stood on the moonlit terrace of Lucas's private residence, the cool night air caressing my skin.

I wore a simple pale blue dress that flowed around my ankles, my hair loose around my shoulders.

Lost in thought, I didn't hear Lucas approach until his warm scent-pined winter frost-enveloped me.

His arms wrapped around my waist from behind, and I instinctively leaned into his embrace.

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Chapter 122

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“What has my little wolf looking so far away tonight?’ he murmured against my hair, his voice a deep rumble that vibrated through my body.

I turned in his arms, looking up into those impossibly blue eyes.

Something in my chest eased at the sight of him, and I found myself reaching up to touch his face, tracing the strong line of his jaw.

Lucas guided me to the wicker chair on the terrace, sitting down and pulling me onto his lap. His arms encircled me protectively as one hand

began to stroke soothing patterns on my back.

“Your heart is racing, he observed, his lips brushing my temple. “Tell me what’s troubling you.”

I hesitated, unsure how much to reveal.

“Sometimes,” I began carefully, “I wonder if the past is better left buried. digging up old wounds only creates new ones.”

Lucas’s hand stilled on my back. “Is this about what happened at the ceremony? Tori, no one believes-

“No,” I interrupted. “Not exactly. It’s just...” I took a deep breath and met s gaze.

“Today I received new evidence about what happened five years ago. Evidence that proves Fiona set me up.”

Lucas’s eyes narrowed slightly. “What do you want to do with it?”

“I want to appeal my case,” I said quietly but firmly. “Clear my name officially.”

Comments

**Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real
Courage Author: Michael Anderson 123**

Chapter 123

Tori's POV:

<% 17%

Lucas remained silent behind me, his breath warm against my neck.

I turned to face him, my heart racing.

“But I’m worried about the implications,” I continued. “Fiona is pregnant with Ethan’s pup now. Exposing her would throw the Grayson family

into chaos. I don’t want to cause problems for you.”

The silver moonlight cast shadows across Lucas’s features, making his expression difficult to read. His blue eyes seemed to glow in the darkness

as he studied me.

“There’s something you should know, little wolf,” Lucas finally said, his voice deceptively calm. “I’ve been aware of Fiona’s involvement for some

time now.”

I blinked, not sure I’d heard him correctly. “What?”

“I had my team investigate what happened five years ago. His expression remained neutral, but I sensed a tightly controlled anger beneath. “Roman Pierce, my chief legal counsel, has already been working on your case for days.*

I studied his face carefully, noting how unsurprised he seemed about Fiona’s involvement. “You even know why she set me up, don’t you?

He didn’t deny it, his silence confirming my suspicion.

‘I will clear your name, Tori,’ he promised, his voice resolute. “No matter what it takes.”

Without thinking, I leaned forward and pressed my lips to his cheek in gratitude. “Thank you,” I whispered against his skin.

Lucas stilled for a moment before one hand came up to cup my face.

Slowly, he turned my head until our lips met. Unlike our previous kisses, this one was gentle, almost reverent. I melted into him, my hands finding their way to his shoulders as the kiss deepened.

A distant howl echoed through the night, followed by another, reminding we weren't alone in the world. Lucas pulled back slightly, resting his forehead against mine.

"The night patrol," he murmured, a small smile playing at his lips.

I nodded, suddenly self-conscious. "Lucas, I'm still worried about how this will affect your family. What they will think when-

'Don't," he interrupted, his voice gentle but firm. "They can judge for themselves. They won't blindly believe rumors or allegations, especially not after they meet you."

His confidence was reassuring, but I couldn't help wondering if he was being overly optimistic. "Are you sure?"

Lucas smiled, squeezing my hands. "Trust me. Except for Ethan, perhaps, you'll find nothing but smiles waiting for you at the estate.

"The estate?" I asked, surprised. "We're going there now?"

1/3

20:12 Thu, Feb 12 G C

Chapter 123

"Soon," he nodded, helping me to my feet. "My mother has been waiting long enough to meet you."

Luna. The word hung between us, weighted with meaning.

Not just a girlfriend or companion, but a true mate-the other half of an Alpha.

The thought was both exhilarating and terrifying.

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As Lucas drove us toward the Grayson estate, my anxiety grew with each passing mile.

My palms dampened with sweat, and Tracy, my wolf, paced nervously within me.

"You're tense," Lucas observed, reaching over to place a reassuring hand on my knee. "There's nothing to worry about. Just be yourself."

"Easy for you to say," I mumbled. "You're not the Omega with a Silver Fang record about to meet the Alpha family of Moonhaven."

Lucas's lips twitched with amusement. "You faced down Garrett Woods without flinching, but my family terrifies you?"

Before I could retort, we pulled up to an intersection.

"Finally!" Arabella called out. "We thought you might have gotten lost."

"Miss Tori!" Leo waved frantically. "Are you coming to our house?"

I couldn't help but smile at his enthusiasm. "I am. How are you, Leo?"

"Great! Will you play chess with me tonight? I've been practicing!"

'Of course,' I promised, surprised by how the simple interaction calmed my nerves.

Arabella's eyes shifted between her brother and me, a knowing smile playing on her lips. 'Follow us, then. Mother's been rearranging flowers

for hours.'

The staff appeared immediately to take the gifts we'd brought. Arabella pried Lucas aside while Leo grabbed my hand, tugging me toward a

fountain.

"Have you seen our water wolves?" he asked, pointing to the stone carving of wolves that formed part of the fountain design.

I knelt beside him, grateful for the distraction, though I could still hear spets of the siblings conversation behind us.

-so she's really going to be your mate?' Arabella was asking, her tone playful but pointed. 'Arent you worried about the gossip? People will say you stole your nephew's girlfriend.'

"Enough," Lucas's voice was low but carried a clear warning. Watch what you say around her.

Arabella glanced my way, and I quickly turned back to Leo, pretending I hadn't heard.

A warm voice called from the main entrance.

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20:12 Thu, Feb 12 3 GO

Chapter 123

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“So this is the young wolf who’s captured my son’s heart.”

I turned to see Elizabeth Grayson descending the steps, elegant and poised in a silver-blue dress that matched her eyes-Lucas’s eyes.

Despite her welcoming smile, I felt myself tense.

“Mother, Lucas greeted her, coming to stand beside me. His arm slid around my waist in a gesture that was both protective and possessive.

Mrs. Grayson,” I managed, extending my hand. “Thank you for having me in your home.”

“Oh, none of that ‘Mrs. Grayson’ formality,’ she said, bypassing my hand entirely to pull me into a warm embrace. “Elizabeth, please. Come, come inside! I’ve had the chef prepare some special dishes I think you’ll enjoy.”

One by one, other family members emerged from the house.

I looked around at what appeared to be the entire Grayson family gathered to greet us.

The tension and embarrassment in the air were palpable.

“Everyone, Lucas announced, his voice carrying easily across the gathering, “I’d like you to meet Tori Sullivan. My future Luna.”

The simple declaration sent a wave of whispers through the assembled family members, and I felt the weight of their stares intensify.

Almost immediately, Richard stepped forward, his expression tense. “Lucas a word,” he said, placing a hand on his brother’s shoulder and drawing him away from me.

Left suddenly alone in the center of curious and judgmental gazes, I fought the urge to shrink back.

A woman stepped toward me-Cecilia Grayson, whom Morgan had once described as Ethan’s sister and someone who had an interest in

Matthew Howard.

Her eyes narrowed slightly as she recognized me.

'So you're the famous Tori Sullivan,' she said, her voice carrying just enough for nearby family members to hear. "I can certainly see why my brother Ethan can't forget you. You're quite beautiful."

The comment landed like a stone in still water.

Conversations halted abruptly, and the atmosphere around us instantly froze. Several family members exchanged uncomfortable glances, and Elizabeth's smile became somewhat fixed.

Comments

01

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3/3

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Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 124

Chapter 124

Tori's POV:

17%

Cecilia's words hung in the air, sharp and pointed like daggers.

I stood there, feeling every pair of eyes in the room fix on me.

I clenched my fists at my sides, digging my nails into my palms until the pain helped clear my head. I kept my expression neutral, refusing to

give her the satisfaction of seeing me affected by her words.

“After all,” she added, her voice carrying through the silent room, “it’s not every day an Omega manages to captivate not one but two Grayson

males. First Ethan, now Lucas. One might almost think there’s some... special talent involved.”

The implication was clear, and I heard a few shocked gasps from around the room.

“Cecilia!” Elizabeth’s voice was sharp with disapproval. “That’s enough. Go check if dinner is ready.”

But Cecilia wasn’t finished. She tilted her head, false innocence painted across her features.

“I’m only making conversation, Grandmother. Everyone is curious about the... convicted Omega who’s suddenly becoming part of our family. After all, we do have standards to maintain.”

The room fell completely silent.

Elizabeth’s face transformed, her welcoming warmth replaced by a cold fur I hadn’t expected from the elegant older woman.

She moved to close the distance between herself and Cecilia.

The sound of the slap echoed through the room.

Cecilia’s head snapped to the side, her hand flying to her reddening cheeks she stared at her grandmother in shock.

“Is this the family education I gave you?” Elizabeth’s voice was low but carried a dangerous edge. Is this how I taught you to treat guests in our home? With disrespect and cruelty?”

Cecilia stood frozen, her eyes wide with disbelief. “You... you slapped me? or her?” Her voice cracked with emotion. She’s just an Omega! A

criminal!

‘She is our guest, Elizabeth stated firmly. And regardless of her status of past, she deserves basic respect in this house. Something you seem

to have forgotten.”

Tears welled in Cecilia’s eyes.

She looked around the room, perhaps seeking support, but found only uncomfortable expressions.

With a choked sob, she turned and rushed up the stairs. A moment later, woman I assumed was her mother Morgan’s descriptions – excused herself quietly and followed.

Grace Freeman, based on

The tension in the room was palpable.

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Chapter 124

Before anyone could speak, Fiona Price stepped forward, one hand resting on her slightly rounded belly.

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“Oh!” she exclaimed, her face lighting up with exaggerated delight. “The puppy just kicked! Would you like to feel it, Elizabeth? It’s quite strong

for only being a few months along.”

Elizabeth’s expression softened immediately, her anger melting away as she moved to place a gentle hand on Fiona’s stomach.

“Already kicking? That’s wonderful news.” She smiled, the tension visibly leaving her shoulders. “A strong pup indeed.”

As the family’s attention turned to Fiona, Elizabeth caught my eye and gestured subtly for me to join her. I approached cautiously, uncertain of

what she wanted.

To my surprise, she reached for my hand. “Don’t mind Cecilia,” she said softly, her eyes apologetic. “I’m afraid she’s been spoiled all her life. She

doesn’t know how to behave properly sometimes.”

I found my voice at last. “Please don’t worry about it. Cecilia is only concerned about your family’s reputation. Her intentions are good, even if

her approach was... direct.”

The words surprised even me as they left my mouth. “As an Omega with my history, I understand her concerns.

Elizabeth’s eyebrows rose slightly, her eyes held a new warmth, a mixture of pride and something deeper.

“That’s remarkably generous of you,” Elizabeth said, studying me with new interest. “Most would not be so understanding after such treatment.”

She patted my hand gently and gestured to the seat beside hers at the long dining table.

‘Come sit by me, dear. Lucas has been called to Richard’s study for a moment. They’ll likely be talking for a while.’ Her voice lowered conspiratorially. “Family business, I’m afraid. But don’t worry-no one will dare bother you while you’re at my side.”

I nodded, grateful for her protection, and took the offered seat beside her

I settled into the chair, feeling strangely like I’d found safe harbor in an unexpected place.

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Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 125

Chapter 125

Lucas's POV:

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The mahogany door of the study slammed shut behind Richard, the sound reverberating through the room like a gunshot.

My brother's face was a mask of barely controlled fury as he turned to face me.

"What the hell are you thinking, Lucas?" he demanded, his voice low but sharp. "Taking that Omega as your Luna? Have you completely lost

your mind?"

I leaned against my desk, arms crossed, watching him with deliberate calm

This confrontation had been inevitable since the moment I'd announced my intention to make Tori my Luna.

'I wasn't aware I needed your permission for my personal decisions, Richard.'

His nostrils flared. "This isn't just personal, and you know it. You're the Alpha of this pack. Your choices affect us all.

He paced across the Persian rug, agitation evident in every movement. "And Ethan- have you forgotten he was involved with her? Your own

nephew?"

'I'm quite aware of that fact.'

"And you don't see a problem with it?" Richard stopped pacing to glare at me.

*The Alpha taking his nephew's former girlfriend as his Luna? Do you have any idea what people will say? What kind of scandal this will

create?"

I met his gaze unflinchingly. "External gossip and rumors aren't worth our consideration."

'Not worth- Richard let out a bitter laugh.

"That's rich coming from you. Weren't you the one who said we couldn't let her tarnish Ethan's reputation? That she was too damaged, too controversial for him to be associated with? And now suddenly you don't care about reputation?"

His words struck me like a physical blow. I couldn't deny the truth in their

I had said those exact things before I knew Tori was my fated mate. The hypocrisy was undeniable, and for a moment I stood silent, unable to formulate a response that wouldn't sound hollow.

Finally, I felt my wolf, Duke, stir inside me, pushing past my momentary doubt with absolute certainty. I pushed off the desk and stood to my full height, allowing just enough of my Alpha presence to seep into the room.

"Tori is my female," I said, my voice dropping an octave. "Whatever opinions you may have about her, Richard, when in her presence, I expect you to show her the respect due to your future Luna."

Richard's jaw tightened, but he didn't back down. "This isn't about respect Lucas. This is about my son. Ethan is devastated. He still loves her."

"Ethan made his choice when he agreed to marry Fiona Price," I replied coldly. "He cannot have it both ways."

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Chapter 125

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Richard stared at me for a long moment, fury and frustration battling in his eyes, before he turned and stormed out of the study, slamming the door again with enough force to rattle the bookshelves.

I exhaled slowly, releasing the tension that had built in my shoulders.

I left the study and walked along the second-floor gallery, the moon's pale light filtering through the tall windows.

Below, on the moonlight terrace, I spotted Tori standing with my mother.

She wore a simple silver-white dress that caught the moonlight, making her seem almost ethereal. My breath caught as she turned, somehow sensing my presence, and our eyes met across the distance.

The smile she gave me was tentative, a mixture of nervousness and trust that made something in my chest tighten.

I noticed my mother watching our exchange with sharp eyes.

Despite her initial reservations, she seemed to be accepting the reality of my choice. The slight softening of her expression as she glanced between us told me more than words could have.

I made my way downstairs, drawn to Tori like a moth to flame.

I placed my hand at the small of Tori's back, a subtle gesture of possession that I knew wouldn't go unnoticed by anyone present.

"Dinner should be ready soon. Shall we?"

The ancient Grayson dining hall could be intimidating to outsiders.

Centuries of pack history hung on the walls in portraits and trophies, and the long table carved with lunar phases was designed to showcase

the family's hierarchy.

I guided Tori to the seat at my right—the traditional place for the Luna-ware of every pair of eyes following our movements.

Ethan sat across from us, his face grim, barely acknowledging our presence.

He mechanically went through the motions of eating, his eyes focused on his plate. Fiona sat beside him, one hand occasionally resting on her slightly rounded belly, her eyes constantly flicking between Tori and me.

Throughout dinner, I found myself instinctively attending to Tori's needs.

I selected the choicest pieces of roasted venison for her plate, removed fish bones before passing the dish to her, ensured her wine glass remained filled with the non-alcoholic elderflower cordial she preferred.

These small gestures came naturally, driven by an instinct deeper than conscious thought.

I didn't miss how Fiona's expression tightened at each interaction.

I knew she was wondering if I would reopen the investigation into Noah Morris's death—the event that had sent Tori to Silver Fang for four years. If she was behind the framing of Tori, she had reason to worry.

After dinner, my mother rose with a formal grace that silenced the table.

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Chapter 125

She nodded to Martha, who disappeared briefly before returning with an anate wooden box.

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“Tori,” my mother said, her voice carrying the weight of generations of ritual, “This is the first time you’ve come to our home as Lucas’s future

mate.”

She opened the box and removed a card carved from moonstone, etched with ancient wolf pack symbols.

“This contains five million moonstone credits,” she announced, holding it out to Tori. “A welcome gift from me to you, child.”

Tori hesitated, her eyes widening slightly. I leaned closer to her, speaking softly. “The elder’s gift cannot be refused. It’s tradition.”

Tori accepted the card with both hands, bowing her head slightly in a gesture of respect. “Thank you, Elizabeth. I’m honored.”

My hand found the small of her back, a subtle gesture of reassurance.

“I’ll be called upstairs with my father shortly. If anything happens while I’m gone, message me immediately.”

She turned slightly toward me, giving a small nod of understanding.

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Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 126

Chapter 126

Tori's POV:

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Dinner at the Grayson estate had left my nerves frayed.

The rich venison and various delicacies had also taken their toll on my stomach, unaccustomed as it was to such abundance.

I leaned toward Elizabeth, who had just finished explaining some ancient Grayson family tradition. "Would you excuse me for a moment? I

need to use the restroom."

She nodded graciously. "Of course, dear. Down the hall, third door on the left."

The Grayson mansion was a labyrinth of corridors and rooms, but I managed to find the bathroom without difficulty, thanks to Elizabeth's clear

directions.

After relieving myself, I splashed cold water on my face, trying to calm my racing thoughts.

I dried my hands and stepped back into the hallway, only to freeze in my tracks.

Ethan stood leaning against the opposite wall, moonlight from a nearby window casting half his face in shadow.

His scent-pine and cinnamon-reached me before he spoke, stirring unwelcome memories.

"I just wanted to see you," he said quietly, pain evident in his voice.

I remained silent, watching him warily as he studied me.

'He takes care of you," Ethan continued, his voice barely above a whisper.

trailed off, shaking his head. "You've changed him."

never thought I'd see my uncle like this... so attentive, so..." He

The moonlight shifted across his features, and for a moment, I caught a glimpse of the boy I had once loved-earnest, gentle, kind.

But that boy was gone everything could never go back.

'You look just like you did five years ago,' he murmured, taking a step toward me.

"Except your eyes. They used to look at me with such love... now there's only wariness and distance,"

I took an instinctive step back, my wolf Tracy stirring uneasily within me Don't, Ethan. We can't go back."

Without waiting for his response, I retreated into the bathroom, quickly taking the door behind me.

My heart pounded against my ribs. Being caught alone with Ethan would only add fuel to the Grayson family's suspicions. The last thing I needed was another scandal-Lucas had already faced enough opposition cause of me.

My hands trembled as I pulled out my phone and sent Luca. a link message: I want to leave now. Followed quickly by: Fm in the first-floor

bathroom. Please come get me.

I stood with my back against the door, listening for footsteps in the hallway

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Chapter 126

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Minutes passed like hours until finally, I heard familiar footsteps approaching—heavier, more deliberate than Ethan’s. The distinct scent of cedar and snow that was uniquely Lucas seeped under the door.

“Tori?” His deep voice was controlled, but I detected the concern underneath.

I unlocked the door and practically fell into his arms, my body finally relaxing as I felt his warmth envelop me.

Lucas didn’t ask questions; he simply held me, one hand cradling the back of my head.

“Let’s go home,” he said quietly.

We made our excuses to Richard and Elizabeth at the front door, but before we could leave, Elizabeth followed us outside.

“Wait, wait, she called, grasping my hand with surprising strength for her age. “Child, don’t use any protection tonight. I’m desperate for

grandchildren.”

Heat flooded my cheeks as I stared at her in mortification. Lucas remained impassive beside me, but I could sense his discomfort.

Elizabeth studied my slender frame with a critical eye. “You need to feed her more, Lucas. She’s too thin to carry pups properly.”

I wanted the ground to swallow me whole. Lucas cleared his throat. “Mother—”

“What’s that look for?” Elizabeth frowned, sudden realization dawning on her face. “You haven’t fully mated yet, have you?*

“Mother,” Lucas said firmly, taking my hand. “Our personal matters are not up for discussion.”

Elizabeth sighed dramatically. “You’re thirty-one years old and still dragging your feet. Perhaps I need to take matters into my own hands.”

“That won’t be necessary,” Lucas replied, guiding me toward his car. “Goodnight, Mother.”

As we drove away from the estate, the tension gradually eased from my shoulders.

Lucas kept one hand on the steering wheel, the other resting on my thigh our fingers intertwined. Occasionally, he would stroke the back of my hand with his thumb, the gentle motion oddly comforting.

I need to go north for a couple of days," he said, breaking the comfortable silence. "There's a border dispute between packs that requires

mediation."

I glanced at him, surprised by the unexpected twinge in my chest at the thought of his absence. Will it be dangerous? The question slipped out before I could stop it.

His fingers tightened around mine, "Just routine diplomacy. Nothing to worry about.

The rest of the drive passed in companionable silence.

When we arrived at Lucas's residence, Lucas walked me to my, his hand resting lightly on my lower back.

"Get some rest," he said, bending down to press a gentle kiss to my forehead. "It's been a long evening

I stood there, confused, as he turned to leave.

2/3

20:13 Thu, Feb 12 3 G

Chapter 126

"You're not staying?" The words tumbled out before I could think better of it.

Lucas paused, turning back to look at me with an unreadable expression. "Would you like me to?"

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My heart hammered against my ribs. "I just thought... I mean, you usually I swallowed hard, then shook my head. "Never mind, it's nothing."

I slammed the door shut with a bang, my face burning with embarrassment. I leaned against it, mortified by my own boldness. What had I been

thinking?

After several deep breaths, I pushed myself away from the door and headed to the bathroom. A hot shower would help clear my head.

Twenty minutes later, wrapped in a light purple silk nightgown, I stepped back into the bedroom.

And froze.

Lucas reclined against the headboard, a thick leather-bound book open in his lap. He wore a dark gray sleep robe, his hair still damp from his

own shower.

“What are you doing here?” I asked, my voice higher than I intended.

He looked up, one eyebrow raised. “Didn’t you invite me to sleep here?” he asked casually, turning a page.

I stood rooted to the spot, acutely aware of how the sheer fabric of my nightgown clung to my still-damp skin.

My eyes kept wandering to the exposed strip of his chest that appeared and disappeared as he shifted. Damn him for tempting me like this, I thought, feeling heat rise to my cheeks.

The faint cedar and snow scent of him filled the room, mixing with the clean smell of soap.

Lucas glanced up from his book, his eyes studying me as I remained frozen in the bathroom doorway.

“Are you afraid of me, little wolf?” he asked, amusement dancing in his eyes.

“Of course not,” I replied too quickly, lifting my chin in defiance.

I took a tentative step toward the bed, then another.

Just as I reached the edge, Lucas’s hand shot out, grasping my wrist and pelling me down beside him in one fluid motion.

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pine and winter frost has been his scent until now you’ve changed it to cedar and snow, why? consistent story line please

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Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 127

Chapter 127

Tori's POV:

* 3.17%0

The warmth of Lucas's body radiated through his sleep robe as he pulled me down beside him.

My heart hammered against my ribs, a wild rhythm that surely his heightened Alpha senses could detect.

The light scent of cedar and snow that was uniquely him enveloped me, making my wolf Tracy stir with contentment.

I hesitated, unsure where to place my hands or how close I should allow myself to be. The silk nightgown suddenly felt too thin, too revealing

against my skin.

"Your heart is racing, little wolf," Lucas murmured, his eyes never leaving the book in his hands. "Are you afraid of what might happen?"

My throat felt dry as I swallowed.

"No," I whispered, finding courage I didn't know I possessed. "I'm afraid of what I want to happen."

His eyes lifted from the pages then, piercing blue meeting my silver gaze.

“And what is it you want, Tori?” His voice had dropped an octave, rumbling from deep in his chest.

Instead of answering with words, I leaned forward and pressed my lips to his.

The kiss was tentative at first, a question rather than a demand.

For a heartbeat, Lucas remained still, and panic fluttered in my chest. Had I misread the situation? But then his hand came up to cradle the back of my neck, and he returned the kiss with gentle pressure that quickly built to something more urgent.

His other arm wrapped around my waist, pulling me closer until I was practically in his lap. My wolf howled in approval within me, pushing forward until I could feel her just beneath my skin.

Lucas broke the kiss, his breathing uneven. “Tori,’ he said, his voice straining with restraint. We need to be clear about what’s happening. Are you certain this is what you want?’

He cupped my face, his expression intensely serious.

For an Omega, marks are irreversible. If, for any reason, our bond had to be broken later, the process would be excruciating; many Omegas don’t survive the removal, and those who do can never accept another man. I need you to understand what you’re agreeing to.

The significance of his words wasn’t lost on me.

‘I understand,’ I whispered, tilting my head. ‘I’m sure.’”

His eyes searched mine, looking for any hesitation.

His lips trailed down my neck, sending shivers through my body. When he reached the spot where my shoulder began, he paused, his breath warming my skin. Then, with deliberate care, he bit down—not hard enough to break skin, but firmly enough to leave a mark that would last

for days.

1/3

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Chapter 127

A bolt of pleasure-pain shot through me, and I gasped, my fingers digging into his shoulders.

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The sensation was unlike anything I'd experienced-intense and intimate, connecting us in a way that transcended the physical. I could feel

something shift inside me, like pieces of a puzzle finally clicking into place.

Lucas soothed the mark with his tongue before pulling back to look at me, his expression a mixture of possessiveness and tenderness.

This is only temporary," he explained, his thumb gently brushing over the mark. "It's enough to let others know you're claimed, but not the permanent bond. That will come when you're truly ready."

His eyes held a promise. "Perhaps on our mating ceremony night."

I understood what Lucas was doing-giving me space, offering me a path back if I needed it.

But as I looked into his eyes, I could see the intensity he was holding back the barely restrained desire that made his pupils dilate and his

breathing deepen.

"You're being considerate," I whispered, my fingers tracing the strong line of his jaw. "But I can feel how much restraint this is taking."

His body tensed beneath my touch, confirming my words. The air between us seemed to thicken, charged with unspoken possibilities.

There are other ways I could..." I hesitated, my cheeks warming as I leaned closer to whisper in his ear. The suggestion made his breath catch. his hands tightening reflexively on my waist.

"Tori," he groaned, his control visibly slipping. The moonlight cast shadows across his features, highlighting the sharp angles of his face and the struggle playing out there.

"Are you certain?" he asked, his voice rough with restraint.

My answer was to press closer, the thin silk of my nightgown doing little to separate us. 'I want to be close to you,' I breathed against his skin, "In every way we can be."

His eyes, now more wolf than human, locked with mine. With deliberate slowness, he took my hand and pressed it over his below.

Feel what you do to me, he murmured, his voice dropping to a register I hadn't heard before-primal, possessive.

The air around us seemed to vibrate with tension. My skin felt hypersensitive, every point where Lucas touched me burning like gentle fire.

His lips found my newly marked neck again, tracing a path that made me hiver and arch against him.

The cedar and snow scent that was uniquely him intensified, wrapping and me like an invisible claim. My fingers threaded through his hair, holding him closer as a soft sound escaped my throat.

"The things I want to do with you," he whispered against my skin, the way I want to worship every inch of you

Words gave way to sensation as he gathered me in his arms, laying me back against the pillows with a gentleness that contrasted with the barely leashed power in his movements.

The moonlight painted silver patterns across our entwined figures, casting the room in an otherworldly glow that seemed fitting for such a

moment.

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20:13 Thu, Feb 12 G

Chapter 127

Time slowed, then quickened.

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Whispered endearments mixed with sounds of pleasure. The boundaries between us-physical, emotional, spiritual-blurred until I couldn't tell

where I ended and he began.

Through it all, Lucas remained attentive, his eyes never leaving mine, always seeking confirmation, always ensuring my comfort.

Later, as we lay tangled in sheets with the moon high overhead, Lucas traced lazy patterns on my bare shoulder. The temporary mark he'd

placed throbbed gently, a pleasant reminder of our connection.

His heartbeat beneath my ear had slowed to a steady rhythm, comforting and strong.

“Sleep now, little wolf,” Lucas murmured, pulling the covers over us. “I’ve got you.”

And for the first time in longer than I could remember, I felt completely safe, completely whole-like I'd finally found the place where I truly

belonged.

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Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 128

Chapter 128

Tori's POV:

成念 17%售

I woke to sunlight streaming through the windows and an empty space beside me.

I vaguely remembered him getting up earlier, how he had pulled me against his chest when I stirred.

“Go back to sleep, little wolf,” he had murmured, his voice deep with authority yet gentle. “I need to handle some pack boundary issues in the

North. I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

His lips had brushed against my forehead. “Make sure you eat breakfast when you wake up.”

I had drifted back to sleep then, lulled by his warmth and the promise of his return.

Lucas had left as he’d said he would, but the lingering scent of cedar and snow on the pillow reassured me that last night hadn’t been a dream.

My fingers drifted to the mark on my neck, still sensitive to the touch.

It felt right, like I’d been waiting for this connection my entire life.

I couldn’t help myself-I rolled around in the sheets, hugging his pillow close and breathing in his scent.

My phone rang, interrupting my reverie. An unfamiliar number flashed on the screen.

“Hello?” I answered cautiously.

‘Ms. Sullivan? This is Roman Pierce, Alpha Grayson’s legal counsel. I’m calling to arrange a meeting to discuss your case. Would you be available to meet at Alpha Lucas’s residence in an hour?’

The formality in his voice made me sit up straighter. “Yes, that would be fine.”

‘Excellent. I’ll see you then.’

Martha had prepared breakfast, a spread of fresh fruit, pastries, and coffee waiting for me when I finally made my way downstairs.

I stared at the food, not feeling particularly hungry despite the delicious ma.

But then Lucas’s words echoed in my mind: “Make sure you eat breakfast hen you wake up

I smiled to myself, imagining his stern expression if he found out I’d skipped a meal.

My Alpha had given me a directive, even if it was a gent. one. With a sigh that was more contentment than resignation, I settled into the chair and methodically worked my way through the plate Martha set before me.

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By the time I finished the last bite of blueberry pancake, I had to admit it better.

Roman Pierce was already waiting when I arrived, a tall man with sharp features and calculating eyes.

He rose when I entered, offering a brief but professional smile.

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"Ms. Sullivan, thank you for meeting with me. He gestured to the chair across from him.

On the desk between us lay a blue folder, closed but clearly filled with documents.

Alpha Lucas has instructed me to prepare a comprehensive appeal regarding your case from five years ago, he explained, opening the folder. I've drafted the necessary documents based on the evidence he's collected

He slid the first document toward me. "This is the formal criminal appeal to the Wolf Council.

"The second document," Roman continued, producing another paper, "is a criminal complaint against Fiona Price for solicitation of harm."

My breath caught. After five years, someone was finally acknowledging what I'd always known-Fiona had set me up.

The validation was both vindicating and painful.

"What happens now?" I asked, my voice steadier than I felt.

'Once you sign these documents, I'll file them with the Wolf Council. Your will likely be expedited. Fiona will be summoned for questioning

within days.

I stared at the formal complaint before me. Taking a deep breath, I prepared myself for the inevitable backlash.

The Grayson family would have questions, maybe even anger.

Yet my hand didn't hesitate. I took the pen and signed my name with decisive strokes on every marked line.

This wasn't just about clearing my name-it was about justice for my brother Ryan.

After Roman left with the signed documents, I spent the rest of the day in a state of nervous anticipation.

I expected my phone to explode with angry calls and messages, but strangely, there was silence from the Grayson household.

The calm broke just after dinner.

My phone lit up with Hannah Sullivan's name, and I braced myself before answering.

'How dare you!' Her voice crackled with fury. "Do you have any idea what you've done?"

I remained silent, letting her rage wash over me,

She continued. 'Fiona was taken in for questioning this afternoon. Questioning! Like some common criminal! She's pregnant, for heaven's sake! She's carrying Ethan's child-the Grayson baby-and you're trying to desti her lite!

I kept my voice level.

'Did you ever know Fiona did what to me?

I could practically hear her indignation through the speaker as her voice rase in pitch.

"It doesn't matter what she did, that's all in the past, Hannah snapped, he words clipped and hostile even through the slight distortion of the

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call. 'Isn't your time in prison enough? Do you need to send her there too

I closed my eyes, grateful that she couldn't see my expression.

17%

"Ryan is dead because of her," I replied, my voice dropping to a temperature that seemed to chill the air around me. "Fiona worked with Noah Morris to set me up. They orchestrated everything, and an innocent person died."

The line went silent for a moment, and I could hear Hannah's uneven breathing.

"You've never once asked what really happened that night," I continued. "Not once in five years did you question whether your stepdaughter might actually be innocent. And now you're here defending the person responsible for all of it."

"Ryan's death was his own fault!" Hannah spat. "He should never have interfered."

The casual cruelty of her words stunned me. My fingers tightened around the phone as ice spread through my veins.

Hannah hissed. "And if anything happens to Fiona's baby because of this stress you're causing, I will never forgive you. Hasn't taking one child from me been enough for you?"

I felt as though I'd been slapped.

I knew Hannah had never cared for me-that much had been clear since my childhood. But to hear her speak so callously about her own nephew's death... it elevated my understanding of her coldness to an entirely new level.

There was nothing left to say. No words could bridge the chasm between us.

With a swift, decisive movement, I disconnected the call.

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Chapter 129

Fiona's POV:

17%

I sat rigid in the center of the Grayson family living room, my hands trembling as I caressed my slightly swollen belly beneath my designer dress.

The room felt impossibly cold despite the crackling fireplace.

Richard Grayson's knuckles were white as he gripped his teacup, looking as if he might shatter it at any moment. Elizabeth sat with perfect posture, her eyes hard as she stared at a spot just above my head, refusing to meet my gaze.

The other elders wore expressions ranging from shock to outrage.

Only Cecilia seemed to be enjoying the moment, her red lips curled into a smirk.

"Well," Cecilia finally said, her voice dripping with false concern, "I always said that Omega was trouble. A disaster waiting to happen."

She smoothed her immaculate dress. "And now look-our family name dragged through the mud because of your... entanglements."

I swallowed hard, fighting the urge to snap back at her. My position was precarious enough without antagonizing Ethan's sister.

"Cecilia," Elizabeth warned, though her tone lacked its usual conviction.

Arabella leaned forward, her eyes flickering between me and Ethan who stood by the window, looking out at nothing.

“Doing wrong things has consequences,” she said softly. “Isn’t that what we always say, Ethan?”

Ethan didn’t respond.

He hadn’t looked at me once since we’d arrived, not even when I’d clutched his arm in panic as they informed me I needed to come in for

questioning.

Elizabeth’s gaze softened slightly as it dropped to my swollen belly. She sighed, a hint of reluctance crossing her features.

“Perhaps,” she said more gently, “we could speak with some of our contact on the Council. See if there’s some way to…”

‘Mother,’ Arabella interrupted, ‘you can’t be serious. That would mean dietly opposing Lucas. Roman Pierce is handling it personally.’

Everyone knew what that meant. Roman Pierce was the Grayson Pack’s most feared lawyer, ruthlessly effective and completely loyal to Lucas.

She glanced at my stomach with significantly less sympathy. And let’s be honest—if she wasn’t carrying Ethan’s child, she wouldn’t be sitting here comfortably right now. She’d already be in custody.”

Elizabeth’s brow furrowed as she looked between Arabella and me, clearly sure who to be more frustrated with.

She let out a deep, exasperated sigh, throwing her hands up in surrender.

“I don’t know what to do with any of you anymore,” she said, her voice tired. Handle this yourselves. I’m done.”

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She reached for her husband’s arm. “Come. Let’s go to our room.”

17% L

Elizabeth's departure seemed to break whatever tension had been holding the family in place. One by one, they all stood to leave-Arabella with a backward glance at Ethan, Cecilia with a final smirk, Grace quietly following her husband Richard.

Within minutes, the vast living room had emptied, leaving only Ethan and me.

I turned to him desperately. "Ethan..."

He remained at the window, his broad shoulders tense beneath his tailored shirt.

"It wasn't me," I pleaded, rising from the couch and moving toward him. You have to believe me. I didn't plan to hurt Tori."

Ethan finally turned, his expression unreadable.

He lit a cigarette-something he only did when deeply disturbed-and took a long drag, still not acknowledging my words.

"Please," I whispered, desperation clawing at my throat.

My hand went instinctively to my belly. "The evidence they have is fabricated. Someone is setting me up." My voice cracked. "You have to help me and the baby. Your baby."

Ethan's eyes flicked to my stomach, then back to my face. He exhaled smoke slowly.

"They have witnesses," he said flatly. "And recording."

His voice hardened. "They have everything, Fiona.

Fear clutched at my chest.

I moved closer to him, desperate for any sign that he still felt something for me. "We're supposed to be a family. You promised me."

Ethan shook my hand off his arm. He climbed the stairs without looking back, leaving me standing alone in the vast living room.

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Chapter 130

The house seemed to close in around me as memories flooded back unbidden...

Four years earlier

My phone vibrated against the nightstand. Tori's name flashed across the screen. I answered with practiced concern in my voice.

"Fiona," Tori's voice was trembling. "I think it's happening. My first shift. I can feel it-something's changing inside me. I'm scared."

"Take deep breaths," I said, trying to sound calm and supportive. "Where are you now?"

"At school. I can't-I can't go through this here."

Perfect. This was exactly what I'd been waiting for.

"Listen, I know a place," I said quickly. An estate. It's private and secluded-perfect for a first shift."

"You will wait for me there?" The relief in her voice almost made me hesitate.

X17%

"Of course, I assured her. "That's what friends are for. Text me when you arrive."

After hanging up, I grabbed my keys and headed straight for the Morris estate, my heart pounding with anticipation.

'Fiona Price, he drawled, looking up with mild surprise. "To what do I owe the pleasure?"

I closed the door behind me, leaning against it with practiced casualness. I have a proposition for you,

His eyebrow raised with interest. "I'm listening."

Noah.

"It's about Tori Sullivan,' I said, watching his expression shift instantly-hinger flashing in his eyes. 'I've seen how you look at her. How you've wanted her for months."

Noah sat up straighter, suddenly alert. 'What about her?"

'I know where she'll be tonight. Alone. Vulnerable. I smiled slowly. Her st shift is starting.

"And you're telling me this, why?" He was suspicious, but I could see the predatory interest beneath his question.

"Because I want to help you get what you want, I replied smoothly. And in return, you'll help me get what I want."

Noah leaned forward, a wolfish grin spreading across his face. "You have full attention now, Fiona."

After I told him about my plan.

Noah said, his voice dropping to a predatory growl. I've wanted her for a long time. Tonight she'll learn where Omegas truly belong.

"Just remember our deal, I reminded him. 'I help you get Tori, and you make sure Ethan sees her for what she really is-a worthless Omega

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who'll spread her legs for any male who commands it."

'Don't worry, Noah laughed. "By the time I'm finished, she'll be ruined for anyone else. Especially your precious Ethan."

17%

I was jolted back to the present by my phone buzzing. Hannah's name flashed on the screen.

With shaking hands, I answered.

"What happened?" I demanded immediately. "Did you talk to her? Is Tori going to withdraw the appeal?"

"That little bitch hung up on me, Hannah spat, her voice trembling with rage. "She wouldn't even listen!"

I gripped the phone tighter, panic rising in my chest. "What about her grandmother? Eileen adores her-if you could convince Eileen to talk to

Tori-

"Don't you think I tried that?" Hannah cut me off. "I called the old woman right after. Apparently, Tori had already spoken to her about everything. Eileen refused to even discuss it with me."

"No, no, no," I whispered, desperation clawing at my throat. "Hannah, they're going to send me to prison. Do you understand? And when I fall, the Price family falls too. Your position, your status-everything we've built will be destroyed. You have to do something!"

There was a long silence on the other end of the line. When Hannah spoke again, her voice had changed-colder, more calculated.

"Maybe there is another way," she said slowly. "A way to force Tori to withdraw her appeal."

"What do you mean?" I asked, hope flickering dimly.

'Don't worry,' Hannah said, pulling out her phone. "I'll handle everything.

She dialed a number, her voice suddenly smooth as honey. "Hello? Yes, I need someone to take a little trip to the remote district. There's a girl named Anna I need you to find her."

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