

# **Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 16**

Chapter 16

Tori's POV:

24%.

My fingers curled slowly at my sides, nails digging into my palms as I fought to control the rage bubbling just beneath my skin.

I stared at Fiona, keeping my expression neutral despite the anger forming in my chest.

"Does it matter?" I replied coldly. "What's important is that I'm out now."

I leaned in slightly, my voice dropping to a dangerous whisper. "And if you're smart, you won't push me again. I promise you will pay the price

for what you've done."

Fiona's expression didn't falter. Instead, a slow, condescending smile spread across her face as she examined her perfectly manicured nails.

"Is that so?" she asked, her voice dripping with mockery.

"An ex-convict Omega threatening me?" She laughed softly, the sound like glass breaking. "You should worry more about yourself, Tori. You

have nothing, while I have everything."

She leaned closer, her smile only widened, something dangerous flickering in her eyes

"And just so we're clear-Ethan came to me. He chose me."

Her eyes gleamed with cruel satisfaction. "Even your own mother prefers me over her flesh and blood. Isn't it delicious? I have your boyfriend falling at my feet and your mother loving me like the daughter she always wanted."

My fingers tightened around the stem of my champagne glass until my knuckles turned white. There's a voice in my head urging me to throw the contents in Fiona's perfectly made-up face.

Don't rise to the bait, Tracy warned inside me. She's trying to provoke you.

Fiona's eyes flickered down to my hand, noticing my white-knuckled grip on the champagne glass.

A slow, calculating smile spread across her face.

"Oh, look at you," she cooed with mock sympathy. "So angry. So helpless. Her eyes glittered with malice. 'Wanting to throw that drink at me, aren't you? I can see it in your eyes.'"

Before I could react, she lunged forward, her manicured fingers wrapping round my wrist in a surprisingly strong grip.

"Here, let me help you with that," she said, lowering her voice so only I could hear.

With a swift movement, she yanked my arm upward, forcing the champagne to splash across her expensive dress. I tried to pull away, but she'd already let go, stumbling backward dramatically and collapsing to the floor with a theatrical cry.

"Tori! How could you?" she wailed, loud enough for everyone in the vicini to hear. "What did I ever do to deserve this?"

The room fell silent for a heartbeat before erupting into shocked morn

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Chapter 16

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All eyes turned toward us-toward me-standing there with an empty glass while Fiona lay on the floor, champagne dripping from her designer

gown.

The scene spoke for itself-or so it seemed to everyone watching.

The whispers started immediately, slicing through the air like tiny knives.

"Did you see what that Omega just did?"

"So vicious, attacking poor Fiona at her own ceremony!"

“Pretty face, but such a black heart.”

The murmurs grew louder, more confident as people fed off each other’s outrage.

I stood frozen, the empty glass still in my hand, as the crowd’s collective judgment crashed over me like a wave.

Hannah pushed through the gathering crowd, her face contorted with rage “What have you done?” she demanded, rushing to Fiona’s side. “Are you alright, sweetheart?”

Fiona looked up with glistening eyes. “I was just talking to her, and she suddenly got so angry. She... she attacked me!”

“I didn’t- I started, but Hannah cut me off with a furious glare.

“How dare you?” she hissed, rising to face me. “I warned you to behave yourself today!”

The confrontation caused a ripple of recognition through the crowd. I heard the whispers change as people realized who I was.

“Wait, isn’t that Hannah Sullivan’s daughter?”

“Look at her-still in high school at her age. Repeating senior year, I heard

‘No wonder she’s acting out. Jealous of Fiona landing Ethan Grayson while she’s stuck redoing classes.’”

Country blood always shows itself eventually. You can dress them up, but you can’t teach class.”

“Exactly, so petty and small-minded. Attacking her stepsister at an engagement party? Absolutely no breeding.”

The judgments continued to pile up around me, each comment building on the last, transforming me into exactly what Fiona wanted them to see-a jealous, uneducated, uncivilized Omega who didn’t belong in their world.

The unfairness of it burned in my chest. Four years in Silver Fang because of Fiona’s lies, and here she was, orchestrating another performance to paint me as the villain.

Then Ethan came into my sight, his eyes widening as he took in the scene Our gazes locked. His jaw tightened as he took a step toward me, his body language suggesting he was about to intervene.

“Ethan!” Fiona’s voice cut through the murmurs, suddenly fragile and trembling

She reached out a delicate hand toward him. 'It's okay, really. Im sure Tu didn't mean to do it. It was probably just an accident.'

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Chapter 16

Her performance was flawless-the gracious victim, defending her attacke The crowd's whispers shifted again, now marveling at Fiona's compassion and class.

Ethan froze mid-step, caught in an impossible position.

"This is exactly the reason why she dares to act so recklessly," Hannah snapped, shooting Fiona a disapproving look before turning her fury back to me. "You're too soft with her. She needs to learn her place."

Hannah stepped closer, her voice dropping to a dangerous register as she addressed me directly. "Apologize to Fiona. Now."

I gritted my teeth, meeting her gaze. "I have nothing to apologize for."

The crack of her palm against my cheek came without warning. Pain bloomed across my face, the force of the blow jerking my head sideways.

For a heartbeat, the entire room fell silent, the sound of the slap still echoing in the air.

I stood perfectly still, my cheek burning, tasting the coppery hint of blood where my inner cheek had caught on my teeth.

Something dangerous stirred in my chest – Tracy rising to the surface, demanding retribution.

I could feel my eyes beginning to shift, the silver of my wolf bleeding into my human irises. My fingernails lengthened slightly, the beginning of claws emerging.

But suddenly, the atmosphere in the room changed.

It was as if all the oxygen had been sucked out at once, replaced by something heavier, more primal. The hair on the back of my neck stood up, and Tracy went immediately still inside me.

Alpha, she whimpered.

A wave of powerful pheromones washed over the room cold, commanding, and unmistakable.

The crowd parted like water before a blade, revealing Lucas Grayson standing in the doorway of the private room.

His presence filled the space completely, his silver-white eyes scanning the scene with cold calculation.

He was dressed impeccably in a tailored charcoal suit that did nothing to soften the hard lines of his body or the dangerous aura that surrounded him.

This was the Alpha of Moonhaven's most powerful pack, and he looked... displeased.

Comments

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## **Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 17**

Chapter 17

Lucas's POV:

24%

Dare to touch my fated mate.

I felt Duke surge within me, a primal wave of rage threatening to break through my carefully constructed control.

I scanned the room, noting how the crowd had parted before me, their faces a mixture of surprise, fear, and calculation.

"Alpha Grayson, Alexander Price stepped forward, his voice carefully modulated to show deference without appearing weak. "We're honored by your presence."

I ignored him, my gaze fixed on Tori's reddened cheek.

The mark was already darkening, a violent contrast against her pale skin.

"I've always heard that the Price family understands protocol and etiquette" I said, my voice turning ice cold as I gestured toward the scene before me. "Is this the upbringing and manners the Price family is so proud of?"

The temperature in the room seemed to drop several degrees.

I saw Hannah Sullivan stiffen, her hand-the one that had struck Tori-dropping quickly to her side.

Alexander Price paled visibly. "Alpha Grayson, please allow me to explain-

"Explain?" I interrupted, my tone conversational but laced with steel.

"What is there to explain, Price? Creating such a scene at an event meant to honor our families' alliance." My voice cut through the silence like

a blade of ice. "Are you dissatisfied with this mating ceremony? Or perhaps you find Ethan unsuitable?"

Hannah's face drained of color. "No! That's not-

I shifted my gaze to Hannah, my eyes turning more glacial as I studied her

"Perhaps that's something you should reflect on, Mrs. Sullivan. It makes me question what other... values your family holds."

Hannah's mouth opened and closed, no sound emerging as she withered under my stare.

Fiona stepped forward, her rehearsed expression of innocence firmly in place.

Alpha Grayson, there's been a misunderstanding. Tori was upset about-

The look I gave her silenced her instantly. I didn't need to summon my Alpha aura; the cold in my eyes was enough to make her mouth snap shut with an audible click.

I shifted my attention to Ethan, who stood nearby looking distracted and comfortable.

His gaze kept darting toward Tori, lingering on the angry red mark bloom across her cheek.

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Chapter 17

"And you," I said, my voice dropping even lower, "you can't even maintain control at your own mating ceremony?"

24%

My eyes narrowed dangerously. "If you can't handle a simple social event, than, how do you expect to handle anything of importance in the future?"

Ethan's gaze dropped to the floor, his shoulders slumping as he accepted the public rebuke.

The sight of his defeated posture only fueled my irritation.

"Take your mate somewhere to change," I ordered, gesturing dismissively Fiona's champagne-soaked dress. "Haven't you both made enough of a spectacle tonight?"

Ethan nodded stiffly, moving to Fiona's side without meeting her eyes. "Yes, Uncle. Right away."

As the pair disappeared through the doorway, Alexander immediately launched into profuse apologies, with Hannah quickly joining in, both of them promising that such an incident wouldn't happen again.

Throughout their stammering explanations, I kept my peripheral vision on Tori. She hadn't moved, hadn't spoken.

The red mark on her cheek seemed to pulse in time with my heartbeat, each throb feeding the rage Duke continued to growl deep within my chest.

Patience, I reminded myself. She's not ready.

As much as every fiber of my being wanted to cross the room and claim her, to announce to everyone present that she was mine-my Luna, my mate-1 knew better.

Making such a declaration now would only place an even larger target on Her back.

As the event gradually regained its rhythm, with Alexander deftly steering conversations away from the incident, I scanned the room once

more.

My brow furrowed when I realized Tori was nowhere to be seen.

A jolt of concern shot through me as I considered her state of mind after such public humiliation.

Worse, Hannah's public display had marked Tori as an acceptable target. I don't know if she will run into any more trouble.

I moved toward a quiet corner, pulling out my phone and sending a quick message to Morgan:

Come to the ceremony. Find Tort Make sure she's okay.

I tucked my phone away, but my thoughts remained with Tori, wondering where she had gone and if she was safe.

When Morgan's reply finally came-a simple 'On it-I allowed myself a small measure of relief.

At least Tori wouldn't be alone for long.

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Chapter 17

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Claimed by the Alpha's Love

Chapter 18

Tori's POV:

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I slipped away while Lucas was still interrogating the Price family, my cheek stinging from Hannah's slap.

The bathroom seemed like the only sanctuary in the crowded venue, somewhere I could escape the prying eyes and whispers that followed me like shadows.

Locking the door behind me, I leaned against the cool marble counter and stared at my reflection.

The angry red mark on my cheek stood out starkly against my pale skin.

I turned on the faucet and splashed cold water on my face, hoping to reduce the burning sensation, but the heat persisted-a physical reminder of my humiliation.

"Some things never change," I whispered to my reflection.

Tracy stirred within me, her anger still simmering beneath the surface. We should never have come here.

I couldn't disagree. Being here was a mistake, but one carefully orchestrated by Fiona.

As I dried my face with a paper towel, the pieces finally clicked together in my mind.

Fiona had made sure Hannah forced me to attend tonight. Not just to witness her triumph with Ethan, but to publicly humiliate me.

The decorations around the venue-silver moonflowers with blue winter frost lilies, arranged in crystal vases tied with silver ribbons-were exactly what Ethan and I had once planned for our own ceremony.

I had shared those details with only two people: Ethan and, foolishly, Fiona during our so-called friendship.

A bitter laugh escaped my lips. "She really went all out, didn't she?" I murmured to myself.

The entire setup was designed to remind me of what I'd lost, to flaunt her victory in the most painful way possible. And she'd almost succeeded perfectly.

The only variable she couldn't have accounted for was Lucas Grayson's unexpected intervention.

Fiona would be too preoccupied with damage control to notice my absence now. I didn't need to stay for the rest of the ceremony either.

I straightened my dress, took a deep breath, and headed for the door.

When I turned the handle, it didn't budge.

"What the I tried again, jiggling the handle with increasing force. Nothing

My heartbeat quickened. "Hello?" I called out, rapping my knuckles against the door. "Is anyone there? The door seems to be stuck!"

"Oh, it's not stuck," came a sickeningly sweet voice from the other side locked."

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## Chapter 18

“Mia?” I recognized her voice immediately. “What are you doing? Open the door.”

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“Why should I?” Mia’s voice dripped with venom. “You’ve been nothing but trouble since you came back. First Ethan, now Hunter? Do you have to try to take everything that doesn’t belong to you?”

This is ridiculous,” I said, fighting to keep my voice steady. “Open the door. Mia. Now.”

“Go ahead and yell,” she taunted. “Scream your lungs out. No one will hear you from this section of the restaurant. It’s closed for renovations-I checked.

The calculated malice in her voice sent a chill down my spine.

Before I could respond, there was a scraping sound above me. I looked up just in time to see a bucket tilting over the partition.

The next second, ice-cold water cascaded down, drenching me from head to toe before I could even react.

I gasped as the freezing water soaked through my dress, my carefully styled hair now plastered against my face.

“Mia, stop it!” I shouted, rage surging through me.

My hands curled into fists as fury replaced shock. “Open this door right now!”

Her laughter echoed from the other side. “Consider this a lesson. I warned you to stay away from Hunter, didn’t I? But you just couldn’t listen.”

The cold seeped through the thin fabric, sending shivers through my body

“I hope tonight’s slap and this little bath help you understand your place, Mia said, her voice receding slightly. “You’ll never win against us, Tori. Never.

“Mia!” I pounded on the door. “This isn’t funny anymore!”

‘It was never meant to be funny,” she replied coldly. “Enjoy your evening, ster.”

I heard her footsteps fade away, leaving me alone in the locked bathroom with water soaking my dress and shoes.

I leaned my forehead against the door, trying to control my breathing and the panic rising within me.

We need to get out, Tracy urged. Break the door down.

I shook my head firmly. “I can’t, I whispered.

I’ve just been released. I’m not allowed to shift for two months. If I do...

The consequences didn’t need to be spoken aloud. We both knew what would happen-immediate return to Silver Fang-

Id already come dangerously close to losing control during Hannah’s slap arlier.

“I can’t go back there, Tracy.”

My wolf growled in frustration but didn’t push further. She understood as well as I did what was at stake.

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Chapter 18

This vulnerability was likely why Mia felt so confident locking me in here. She knew exactly what I could and couldn’t do.

I pulled out my phone to call for help, only to realize I had no one to call

22%.

Morgan and Mrs. Blake wouldn't be at an event like this. And everyone else... well, they either hated me or didn't know me well enough to care.

I scrolled through my meager contact list anyway, desperate for options. Just as I was about to try Morgan, my phone screen flickered and went black.

Dead battery.

'Perfect, I muttered, sliding down against the wall to sit on the wet floor.

I hugged my knees to my chest, trying to preserve some body heat as the air conditioning chilled my wet clothes.

I'm not sure how long I sat there, the minutes stretching into what felt like hours.

The humiliation of my situation weighed on me more heavily than the cold or discomfort. I had promised myself I wouldn't be a victim again, yet here I was.

Just as despair threatened to overwhelm me, I heard something-faint footsteps approaching from the hallway outside.

"Hello?" I called out, scrambling to my feet. "Is someone there? I'm locked in!"

The footsteps paused, then quickened toward the door.

"Please help me!" I pressed my palm against the door, hope rising in my chest for the first time since Mia had walked away.

The handle jiggled from the outside, followed by a concerned voice.

"Tori? Are you in there?"

Comments

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## **Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 19**

Claimed by the Alpha's Love

Chapter 19

Tori's POV:

"Tori? Is that you in there?"

Morgan's concerned voice called again through the door.

"Morgan!" I nearly sobbed with relief. "Yes, it's me. I-" I stopped, my teeth chattering too hard to continue.

"Hold on, I'll get you out."

I heard her fumbling with something, then a metallic scraping sound.

A moment later, the lock clicked and the door swung open.

"Oh my goddess!" she gasped, taking in my soaked dress, dripping hair, and shivering form. "What happened to you? Who did this?"

I tried to answer, but my lips were trembling too badly.

The restaurant's air conditioning had turned my wet clothes into an ice pack against my skin.

"Never mind, we need to get you warm first." Morgan's voice hardened with determination. She disappeared briefly, returning with a tablecloth she'd snatched from an empty dining section. "Here, wrap yourself in this."

She draped the makeshift blanket around my shoulders, her touch gentle but efficient.

"Let's get you out of here. We can go through the side door to avoid everyone."

I nodded gratefully, pulling the tablecloth tighter around me as Morgan guided me toward a service exit. The night air hit me like another bucket of ice water, intensifying my shivering.

“Just a little further, Morgan encouraged, her arm supporting me as we hurried toward the parking lot.

We had barely reached the sidewalk when headlights illuminated our path and a sleek black car pulled up alongside us.

The window rolled down to reveal Jack Green, Lucas’s assistant, behind the wheel.

“Morgan? Is everything alright?” he asked, his gaze shifting to my huddled form.

Morgan’s face brightened. “Perfect timing! Jack, we need a ride to the estate.

Before I could process what was happening, Morgan was ushering me toward the back door that Jack had opened.

I hesitated when I saw who was sitting in the front passenger seat.

Lucas Grayson’s piercing eyes found mine in the reflection of the side mirror, narrowing at the sight of my bedraggled appearance.

I froze, mortification washing over me.

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11:35 Tue, Feb 3 G GG.

Chapter 19

“It’s okay, Morgan whispered. “He’s heading home anyway.”

Too cold and exhausted to argue, I slid into the backseat with Morgan, clutching the blanket tightly around me.

I kept my gaze fixed on my lap, but I could feel Lucas’s eyes on me from the front seat. Curiosity got the better of me, and I glanced up, catching his reflection in the rearview mirror.

The anger in his eyes made me look away immediately.

Was he upset that I was dripping all over his expensive car?

I shifted to minimize contact with the leather upholstery, trying not to get anything wet.

22%.

Lucas no longer paid attention to me, but I noticed him adjusting the car heater. Whether it was for his own comfort or to provide me with more warmth, I couldn't tell.

The drive to the Grayson estate was mercifully short.

When we arrived, a middle-aged woman hurried down the front steps to meet us.

"Morgan! You're finally home-oh dear!" she exclaimed, noticing me as I climbed out of the car.

"Mom, this is my friend Tori," Morgan explained. "She needs a place to stay tonight."

"I'm so sorry to intrude, Mrs. Baker," I said, my voice still shaky from the old.

"Nonsense, Dear," she smiled warmly. "I have already received a phone call in advance. We have a guest room ready for you in the main house. Come inside, the wind is much too strong out here."

As we walked toward the house, I glanced back to thank Lucas, but he was already striding away, his tall figure disappearing into the main residence without a backward glance.

Mrs. Baker efficiently took charge once we were inside.

"First things first-let's get you warm. I'll make some ginger tea while Morgan shows you to the bathroom. A hot soak will do wonders.

Comments

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## Chapter 20

Ten minutes later.

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I was submerged in a steaming bathtub, the heat gradually seeping back into my bones. As feeling returned to my fingertips and toes, I sighed

with relief.

After soaking until the water cooled, I reluctantly got out and dressed in the borrowed pajamas Morgan had left for me.

They were slightly too small but clean and dry-a vast improvement over my ruined dress.

I ventured out to find Morgan, following the sound of voices to the living room.

As I approached, I heard an unfamiliar female voice speaking in animated ones.

\*-been looking for him all evening! Do you know where he went? I specifically wore this dress because he once said blue brings out my eyes. He has to notice me tonight!"

paused in the doorway, taking in the scene.

A stunning girl with glossy dark hair was pacing the room. She stopped abruptly when she noticed me, her eyes narrowing as she took in my appearance-damp hair, borrowed pajamas, and bare feet.

"Who's this?" she asked, her tone sharp.

Morgan appeared from another doorway, looking relieved to see me. "Tori: Feeling better? Megan, this is Tori Sullivan, my friend from school."

Megan's expression softened marginally at Morgan's explanation, though suspicion still lingered in her eyes.

"Nice to meet you," she said, her assessment of me obvious in her gaze. "Are you staying here tonight?"

“Just tonight,” I confirmed quietly. “Morgan was kind enough to help me out of a... difficult situation.”

Before Megan could respond, Lucas appeared in the doorway behind her. His presence immediately commanded the room, and Megan’s demeanor transformed.

“Luke! There you are,” she exclaimed, her voice turning honeyed. ‘I’ve been looking everywhere for you.”

Lucas barely acknowledged her, his eyes briefly meeting mine before he addressed Megan.

“What did you need to discuss that couldn’t wait until tomorrow?” His top was coolly professional.

Megan faltered slightly before recovering. “It’s about the charity gala next month. I had some ideas for-

“Come to my study,” Lucas interrupted, turning to leave.

Morgan seized the opportunity, gently taking my arm

“Let’s go back to the room,” she whispered, guiding me away from the award scene

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Chapter 20

Once we were safely in the bedroom, Morgan closed the door and turned me with concern etched on her face.

“Are you feeling better? Is there anything still hurting? Who exactly hurt you? I swear I’ll—”

“I’m fine now,” I assured her, touched by her protectiveness.

“Who did that to you?” she demanded.

I hesitated, not wanting to drag Morgan into my family drama. Instead of answering, I simply shook my head.

22%

Morgan studied my face for a moment, then sighed. “You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to. But remember, we’re friends now. If you ever need help dealing with... whoever did this, just say the word.”

I managed a small smile at her righteous indignation.

“Thanks for finding me,” I said softly. “But how did you happen to be there tonight?”

Morgan’s cheeks flushed slightly, and she suddenly became very interested in straightening her bedspread.

“Oh, that... well, I was supposed to... um...” She bit her lip, looking embarrassed. “I had to deliver some documents to Alpha Lucas.”

She spoke in a rush, not quite meeting my eyes.

“Alpha Lucas needed them urgently, and since I was free, I volunteered to bring them. Total coincidence, really. Lucky for you, though, right?”

“Very lucky,” I agreed with a grateful smile. “I don’t know what I would have done if you hadn’t found me.”

Morgan’s shoulders relaxed visibly, and she let out a small breath.

“By the way,” I asked, changing the subject, “who was that girl downstairs She seems... familiar with Alpha Lucas.”

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