

Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 171

Chapter 171

Hanna's POV:

63%

The VIP maternity ward at Moontouch Medical Center smelled of expensive flowers and new beginnings.

I stood near the window, watching the parade of well-wishers stream into Fiona's private suite, each bearing gifts. The room buzzed with congratulations, the air thick with the scent of success.

"Mrs. Price, what a beautiful grandson!" A woman gushed, her eyes gleaming with calculated friendliness. "Ten percent of Grayson Enterprise! Richard Grayson is incredibly generous."

I forced my smile wider, though my jaw ached from maintaining it. "Yes, we're very blessed."

Blessed. The word tasted bitter on my tongue.

Ten percent. Five hundred billion moonstones. Eighty billion in annual dividends.

The numbers had been circulating through Moonhaven's elite circles since Richard's announcement yesterday.

I'd watched phones light up across the room, watched faces transform from polite indifference to eager attention. The same wolves who'd turned their noses up at Alexander's "new money" status now crowded around us, their previous disdain forgotten.

Alexander stood near Fiona's bedside, his chest puffed out as he accepted congratulations.

I looked away, focusing on Fiona instead.

My stepdaughter lay propped against silk pillows, her face pale but her eyes bright with triumph.

A male pup. An heir for the Grayson bloodline.

Of course it would be.

“Hannah.” Alexander’s voice pulled me from my thoughts. He’d extracted Himself from his admirers and now stood close enough that I could smell the expensive cologne he’d started wearing. “A word?”

I followed him to the small sitting area adjacent to the main room, away from the crowd. He glanced back to ensure we had privacy before turning to me, his expression shifting from public joy to private calculation.

“When does the transfer happen?” His voice dropped to barely above a whisper. “The stock. When does it officially move into Fiona’s name?”

“Richard said during the full moon naming ceremony. I kept my tone neural, though something cold twisted in my stomach. “Three weeks

from now.

“Three weeks.” Alexander’s eyes gleamed. “And the dividends start immediately after?”

“That’s what was announced.”

He nodded slowly, his mind clearly working through numbers and possibilities.

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I watched him, this man I’d married for security, for status, for escape from the shame of my past. When had the lines around his eyes become so pronounced? When had his smile become so... mercenary?

“We should discuss how to best utilize this windfall,” he said. For the family, of course.”

Of course.

“Utilize?” I kept my voice carefully modulated.

He waved a dismissive hand. "We're family. Price Enterprises is on the brink, Hannah. Without a significant capital injection in the next quarter,

we're looking at bankruptcy."

His hand caught my wrist-not hard, but firm enough to stop me. "Think about it. We could secure Mia's future. Set her up properly. Isn't that

what you want?"

I pulled my wrist free from his grip, the contact suddenly unbearable. "Then ask her yourself."

"What?" His eyes narrowed.

"You heard me." I kept my voice steady, though my hands trembled slightly "If you think Fiona should help save Price Enterprises, then you

should be the one to make that request. Not me."

"Hannah, you're her stepmother. She trusts-

She trusts you more." The words came out sharper than I intended. "You're her father. And this your company, your debt, your problem to

solve.

Alexander's jaw clenched. For a long moment, he stared at me. When he finally spoke, his voice was cold.

"Fine. I'll handle it myself."

He turned and walked back toward Fiona's room.

"Fiona, sweetheart." Alexander's tone had transformed completely, warm and paternal. "How are you feeling?"

I couldn't see Fiona's face from where I stood, but I heard the exhaustion in her voice. "Tired, but happy."

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“Of course you are. You’ve given the Grayson family such a precious gift. pause. “I was just thinking... with Richard’s generosity, and the baby’s future secured, perhaps we should discuss how the family can best support each other during this transition.”

Fiona quickly understood what Alexander meant.

Silence.

“Mom,” Fiona called out, her voice carrying into the sitting area. “Could you come here, please?”

I froze. For a moment, I considered pretending I hadn’t heard. But Alexander had already turned, his eyes finding mine with an expression that promised consequences if I didn’t comply.

I walked into the room on unsteady legs.

Fiona looked between us, her expression unreadable despite the exhaustion shadowing her features. “Did you know about this?”

1- My throat felt tight. “Your father mentioned the company was having difficulties.”

Fiona’s eyes narrowed slightly, studying me with an intensity that made my skin prickle.

“Father,” she said slowly, “I’m not stupid.”

Alexander’s smile faltered. “Of course not, sweetheart. I never said ”

“You’re asking me for money before the stock is even officially mine. Before I’ve recovered from childbirth. Before Richard has even announced the naming ceremony details.” She paused. “That doesn’t sound like ‘temporary difficulties. That sounds like desperation.*

“Fiona-

“But you know what, Father?” She shifted against her pillows, her voice taking on a tone of innocent curiosity. Why don’t you ask Hanna first?”

Fiona’s gaze swung to me, sharp and assessing. “Mom, didn’t you say you Have several shops at Howling Plaza? *

My mouth went dry. “I... yes, but-”

“Then surely you could mortgage one or two to help Father.” Her smile was pleasant, almost sweet. “After all, we’re family. And family helps family, right?”

I wasn’t really listening. Her words barely registered as guilt flashed hot across my face- the kind of guilt that came from secrets eating away at you from the inside.

I’d reconnected with that gambling friend recently. The addiction had its claws in me again. From horse racing to gambling.

It had started as revenge, a way to hurt Alexander for his affair. I’d told myself it would be just once, just to feel something other than the hollow ache of betrayal.

But the rush of cards turning, chips sliding, the electric thrill of risk-it consumed me. Even losing every night couldn’t stop me from craving it, dreaming about it.

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The shops at Howling Plaza were already gone, sold off one by one. The money had vanished into the void of my losses

“I need to make a call, I muttered, brushing off Fiona and Alexander with a vague excuse before leaving the hospital room.

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In the elevator, my thoughts churned. I barely noticed where I was going. I stepped out on the ground floor, walking in a distracted laze

until I collided with someone.

I looked up, freezing. Mother? What are you doing here?”

Mother looked equally startled to see me.

“Anna is sick. I’ve been calling you for days-why haven’t you answered?”

At the mention of my brother’s daughter, my face twisted before I could stop it.

The thought of Anna made me think of my own dead daughter, and hatred surged up from somewhere deep and poisonous. “Why would you call me about her ill? Just let me know when she’s dead.”

“You” Mother’s hand trembled as she pointed at me.

I moved to step around her, done with this conversation.

“Hannah!” Her voice cracked behind me, tears threatening. “You are such disappointment! From now on, I don’t have a daughter!”*

My steps faltered for just a moment. I didn’t turn around. “Whatever you say.”

I kept walking, my wolf silent and dark inside me-as twisted as the rest of me had become.

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William's POV:

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The fluorescent lights of Moontouch Medical Center's pharmacy corridor buzzed overhead as I reviewed the prescription forms in my hand.

Charlotte's injury, Susan's cold silence, the weight of twenty-two years pressing down on every interaction.

I needed to pick up the pain medication for Charlotte before heading back to Sullivan territory.

She protected Susan, my wolf reminded me quietly. As you always do.

I turned the corner toward the pharmacy wing.

Voices cut through my thoughts. Sharp. Angry.

I slowed my pace, my Alpha instincts immediately alert to conflict.

-calling you for days! Why haven't you answered?" An older woman's voice, trembling with emotion and exhaustion.

"Why would I answer? The response came cold, bitter. A voice I recognized-Hannah Sullivan. "Why would I care about her illness? Just let me know when she's dead.

I stopped at the corridor junction, just out of sight. My wolf bristled at the venom in those words.

"You The older woman's voice cracked. "Hannah! You are such a disappointment!"

There was a long pause. I could hear ragged breathing, the sound of someone fighting back tears.

"From now on," the older woman said, her voice breaking completely, "I don't have a daughter!"

Footsteps. Quick, retreating. Hannah's voice, flat and cold: "Whatever you say."

I waited a moment, then stepped around the corner.

An elderly woman stood near the pharmacy counter, one hand pressed against the wall for support. Her shoulders shook with suppressed sobs. Silver-streaked hair pulled into a neat bun. The set of her shoulders, even in distress...

My wolf stirred, alert.

That scent.

Faint. Altered by time and circumstance. But underneath the years, underneath everything else, there was something achingly familiar.

The woman turned slightly, reaching for her prescription bag.

My breath caught.

Those eyes. Even from this distance, even after all this time.

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Impossible.

"Eileen?" The name escaped before I could stop it.

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She froze. Her entire body went rigid, the prescription bag slipping from her fingers. It hit the floor with a soft thud, pills rattling inside their containers.

We stood there, separated by perhaps fifteen feet of sterile hospital corridor, staring at each other across a chasm of twenty-two years.

She looked older, of course. The silver in her hair, the lines around her eyes. But she was unmistakable.

“Alpha William. Her voice came out barely above a whisper.

I moved forward slowly, my Alpha senses on high alert, reading every micro-expression on her face. Fear. Guilt. And underneath it all, a bone-deep exhaustion.

“Didn’t I warn you?” My voice came out cold, sharp as a blade. “Didn’t I make it explicitly clear that you were never to set foot in Moonhaven center again?”

Eileen flinched, taking an instinctive step backward. Her shoulders hunched as if bracing for a physical blow.

“I-I had no choice, Alpha William.” Her words tumbled out in a desperate rush. “Anna, my granddaughter-she’s sick. The treatment she needs, it’s only available here at Moontouch Medical Center. I swear we’ll leave as soon as she’s well enough to travel. We won’t cause any trouble. Please-

The argument she had with Hanna just now flashed through my mind.

“Hannah is your daughter?” I said it coldly, watching her face carefully.

The color drained from her cheeks. She nodded, barely perceptible.

My mind raced, connecting pieces.

Hannah Sullivan-or rather, Hannah who’d married into the Price family. I’d known her, years ago. Before the accident. Before everything fell apart.

At that time, she didn’t even have this name yet. Her name was Frost.

She’d changed so much that I hadn’t recognized her.

And Hanna was Toris mother, which meant-

Tori.” The name came out sharper than I intended. “She is

Please! Eileen’s voice cracked. She took a stumbling step forward, hands clasped together as if in prayer. “Please, Alpha William. Don’t go after Ticari. She’s just a child. A suffering child who knows nothing. She doesn’t know about any of this. She’s innocent. Please-*

ce? The word came out cold, harder than I intended.

Ney wall led side me, remembering. Always remembering.

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*My daughter was innocent too," I said, my voice dropping to something dangerous. "She was barely a year old when she died in that accident."

Eileen's legs seemed to give out. She grabbed the wall for support, tears streaming down her face.

I turned on my heel and walked away.

"Alpha William, please- Her broken voice followed me down the corridor

I didn't look back..

At the pharmacy counter, I collected Charlotte's prescription and handed to a passing nurse. "Deliver this to the VIP wing, room 304. Charlotte Shepherd."

"Of course, Alpha William."

I strode toward the exit, my mind already moving past emotion into cold calculation. Once outside in the parking lot, I pulled out my phone

and dialed.

"Leo. My Beta answered on the first ring, as always.

Alpha. How can I assist?"

"The health screening at Lunar Phase Research Institute tomorrow. I need you to personally oversee it."

A pause. Leo knew me well enough to hear what I wasn't saying.

"Of course. Is there something specific you need me to monitor?"

“There’s a student. Tori Sullivan.” I kept my voice neutral, professional. “I feed a blood sample collected during the standard screening.”

“Understood, Alpha. I’ll handle it personally.”

I ended the call and leaned back in the car seat, my expression heavy with conflicting emotions.

I didn’t even know why I needed to confirm whether Tori was my daughter. Given my attitude toward that child all these years—the child I was

accused of fathering through an affair—I should have been doing everything in my power to make her life in Moonhaven unbearable. To drive

her out.

Not going through all this trouble to obtain Tori’s DNA sample.

What will you do if it’s confirmed? my wolf asked quietly.

I didn’t know.

I had no answer. No plan. One thing was certain, though.

Susan couldn’t know.

She hated me enough already. Twenty-two years of accusations, of cold silences, of a bond that had withered into nothing more than a legal

formality.

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If the test confirmed that Tori carried my bloodline—that the affair had been real, that the child had survived—Susan would never forgive me. Not in this lifetime. Not in any lifetime.

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Chapter 174

Tori's POV:

63%

The afternoon sunlight filtered through Moonlight Café's floor-to-ceiling windows, casting geometric patterns across the polished hardwood

floors.

I sat across from Morgan at our usual corner table, my arm still tender from where the phlebotomist had drawn what felt like half my blood

supply.

"I'm telling you, Tori, Morgan said, sliding her third chocolate croissant onto her plate with zero shame, "after what they put you through this

morning, you need to eat something substantial. Blood loss is no joke.*

I raised an eyebrow, watching her tear into the pastry with obvious relish Morgan, they took four vials. I'm not exactly on the verge of

collapse.

“Four vials!” She gestured dramatically with her croissant, sending flakes of chocolate onto the table. “That’s practically a pint! You need iron,

protein, sugar-all the good stuff.”

She pushed a plate toward me. “Which is why I ordered you their special recovery platter. Very medicinal.”

The ‘recovery platter’ consisted of more chocolate croissants, a slice of moon-berry tart, and what looked suspiciously like a double chocolate

muffin.

“This is all dessert,” I pointed out.

“Dessert is medicine for the soul.” Morgan took another enthusiastic bite. Besides, the Lunar Phase Research Institute should provide post-

blood-draw snacks. It’s practically negligent that they don’t.”

I couldn’t help but smile at her logic, even as I suspected the real reason for this café visit had less to do with my wellbeing and more to do with Morgan’s well-documented addiction to their chocolate croissants.

I reached for a croissant, if only to appease Morgan’s hovering. “Fine. But I go into a sugar coma, you’re explaining it to Lucas.”

“Deal. Morgan grinned, then her expression shifted, gaze fixing on something behind me. “Oh. Uh, Tori?”

I turned to follow her line of sight, and my breath caught.

Sophia Morris stood frozen in the doorway, her eyes locked on mine with an expression I couldn’t quite read.

Sophia’s appearance had changed since our last encounter at the club. Her once-vibrant auburn hair hung limp around her shoulders, and dark circles shadowed her eyes.

The fitted designer clothes she’d always favored had been replaced by a simple gray sweater that hung loose on her frame.

She approached our table slowly, each step deliberate, as if she were walking through deep water. The café’s ambient chatter seemed to fade

into white noise.

“Tori. My name came out barely above a whisper. “Could we... talk? Alone

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Morgan’s protective instincts kicked in immediately. “Whatever you need to say, you can say it in front of me.”

I placed a gentle hand on Morgan’s arm.

“It’s okay.” I kept my voice steady, though my heart hammered against my ribs. “I’ll be right back.”

Morgan’s brown eyes flashed with concern, but she nodded reluctantly. “I be watching from here. Any sign of trouble-

“I know.” I squeezed her hand before standing.

Sophia led me outside to the small patio area, where wrought-iron chairs sat empty in the cooling afternoon air.

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The scent of autumn leaves and distant woodsmoke drifted on the breeze. She didn’t sit, instead wrapping her arms around herself as if trying to hold something in-or keep something out.

“Congratulations,” she said finally, her voice tight. “On getting your innocence. On... everything.”

The words should have been warm. Instead, they landed like stones in still water, creating ripples of unease.

“Thank you.” I waited, knowing there was more.

Sophia’s gaze dropped to the weathered wooden planks beneath our feet.

“My mother-Lisa Morris-she’s been...” A bitter laugh escaped her lips. “The Elder Council investigated her for abuse of power. All those enforcement officers who participated in your... mistreatment. They’ve all been dealt with.”

My breath caught. Id known Lucas had been working behind the scenes, but hearing the confirmation still sent a chill down my spine.

She deserves worse, Tracy growled in agreement.

“I’m not here to threaten you,” Sophia added quickly, misreading my silence. “I just thought you should know.”

It was her left hand that drew my attention-the engagement ring there, simple and practical, nothing like the extravagant jewelry the Morris family could afford.

“You’re engaged.” The observation came out flat, emotionless.

Sophia’s laugh was bitter. “Engaged. What a pretty word for what it actually is.”

“My father’s medical bills are astronomical. The treatments, the specialist-none of it’s covered by basic pack healthcare. So yes, I’m marrying Marcus Webb. He’s forty-three, one with a modest business and a kind heart.”

She touched the simple ring with something like resignation. “He’s a good male. That’s enough.”

The way she said it-as if she were trying to convince herself as much as me-made my stomach turn.

“Sophia, I could- I started, thinking of the compensation from the Council.

“No.” The word came out sharp, final. “I’m not taking charity, Tori. Especially not from you.”

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She softened slightly, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear.

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“Besides, what difference does it make? I lost my favorite mate four years ago. Ryan was... Her voice cracked. And I let my family convince me to stay silent when you needed help most. This?*

She gestured to the engagement ring. This is exactly what I deserve.”

Before I could respond, my phone buzzed. Lucas's name flashed across the screen with a simple message: On my way. Five minutes.

"I should go, Sophia said, apparently reading something in my expression

Sophia smiled, and this time it reached her eyes-tired, but genuine. "Tori I hope you can acquire happiness. Really happy. You deserve that."

The sincerity in her voice caught me off guard, warming something cold inside my chest.

I watched her walk away, her shoulders hunched against a wind I couldn't feel.

The familiar rumble of Lucas's Maybach drew my attention to the street.

The driver's side door opened, and Lucas emerged. His ice-blue eyes found mine immediately.

"Tori. My name on his lips sent warmth cascading through my chest. "Everything alright?"

I glanced back toward the café, where Morgan pressed her face against the window.

"Nothing important," I said, my voice steady. "Just an old acquaintance. We can head back whenever you're ready."

Before Lucas could respond, Morgan's voice cut through the moment.p

"Are you two going to stand there all day, or are you coming back inside where there's actual heat?" www

I felt heat flood my cheeks as I tugged Lucas's hand, pulling him toward the café entrance. He followed with that low chuckle that always made

my stomach flip.

Once we were back at the table, I wrapped my hands around my now-lukewarm tea. "Actually, I need to head to the Grayson estate this

afternoon. Elizabeth invited me to see Fiona and the baby."

Morgan's eyebrows shot up. "Seriously? You're going to visit her?"

"Just a formality," I explained.

Morgan studied my face for a long moment, then nodded decisively. “Okay I’m coming with you. Though I’ll probably just hang around the main house. My mom mentioned something about needing help with inventory.”

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Chapter 175

Fiona’s POV:

63%

The afternoon sunlight streamed through Grayson Manor’s floor-to-ceiling windows.

I adjusted my position on the cream-colored sofa, cradling my newborn son against my chest with practiced tenderness.

The weight of him felt both precious and strategic, a living shield I'd carefully cultivated over nine months.

Elizabeth Grayson swept into the room with her characteristic grace, and straightened instinctively. Even after giving birth to a Grayson heir, her approval still mattered. Still controlled everything.

"Tori, Morgan-how wonderful you could make it." Elizabeth's warm greeting made my stomach clench.

I kept my expression serene, maternal, unthreatening. But inside, my wolf stirred with something darker.

Through my lashes, I watched Tori Sullivan enter beside that enthusiastic friend of hers.

The baby squirmed in my arms, and I made a show of soothing him, cooing softly.

I watched Lucas excuse himself toward the study, his broad shoulders disappearing down the corridor. Morgan's mother called her away to help

with something in the kitchen. And just like that, the stage was set.

Tori remained in the sitting area, examining a silver picture frame on the side table. Alone. Vulnerable.

Finally.

I rose slowly, careful to appear slightly unsteady-the exhausted new mother.

"Tori," I called softly, my voice honey-sweet. "Would you mind keeping me company? Everyone's so busy, and I'd love to chat."

She turned, wariness flickering across her features before she masked it with politeness. "Of course."

I settled back onto the sofa, arranging the baby's blanket with deliberate care. Tori took the armchair across from me, maintaining distance.

"It's strange, isn't it?" I began, letting my fingers drift to my engagement ring, stroking the band with obvious satisfaction. "After everything, all the twists and turns... we've ended up as family anyway."

Tori's expression remained neutral, but I caught the slight tightening around her eyes.

I continued, my voice dropping to something more intimate, almost conspiratorial, "I should thank you. Really."

“You know,” I mused, adjusting the baby’s position, “I was sentenced too. But here I am-free, with a beautiful son.”

I paused, letting the knife twist. “And you? You spent four years in Silver Fang, lost everything, everyone. While 1...” I gestured around the

opulent room. “I gained everything I wanted.”

Silence stretched between us. Then, unexpectedly, Tori smiled.

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It started small. Then she laughed, the sound bright and genuine, like ice breaking in spring thaw.

My triumphant smile froze. The satisfaction curdled in my chest.

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“What-I frowned, glancing instinctively toward the second-floor study. knew the soundproofing was excellent, that nothing we said down here would reach Lucas’s ears.

Still, years of ingrained wariness made me lower my voice further. “What are you laughing at?”

She kept laughing, and something hot and ugly twisted in my gut.

“Stop it,” I snapped. “Are you insane? Stop laughing!”

Tori’s laughter faded, but that maddening smile remained, edged with something that looked almost like pity. “I’m just happy for you, Fiona. Isn’t that what you wanted? You told me all this to make me acknowledge your victory, didn’t you?”

Her head tilted slightly. “So now I’m happy for you. Why does that make you unhappy?”

The casual dismissal in her tone-as if my words had slid right off her without leaving a mark-made my blood boil.

Before I could respond, she stood. “Actually, I should check on Morgan.”

“Wait.” I shifted forward, making my voice gentler, more inviting. “Would you like to hold him? The baby?”

Tori’s gaze dropped to the bundle in my arms, and for a moment, something flickered across her face.

“No, thank you,” she said quietly.

The rejection stung more than it should have. “Are you sure? Most women can’t resist.” I lifted the baby slightly, his tiny face peaceful in sleep. “He’s really quite-”

“I’m sure.”

Morgan appeared in the doorway. “Everything okay here?”

“Of course,” I said quickly, my voice taking on a wounded quality. “I was just offering to let Tori hold the baby, but...” I let the sentence trail off, injecting just enough hurt into my tone.

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Morgan’s eyes narrowed. “Tori doesn’t need to do anything she doesn’t want to.”

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“Oh, I understand.” I looked down at my son, stroking his soft hair. “I suppose some people just... aren’t comfortable around babies. Especially when they belong to their used to love.”

The temperature in the room seemed to drop.

“What’s that supposed to mean? Morgan demanded.

I widened my eyes, the picture of innocent confusion. “Nothing, dear. Just that Tori and Ethan were so close once. It must be difficult, seeing him move on, start a family...”

Tori’s jaw tightened, but she said nothing. That infuriating calm held.

Elizabeth’s voice cut through the tension like a blade. “That’s quite enough”

We all turned. Elizabeth stood in the doorway, her expression thunderous. How long had she been there?

“Fiona, Elizabeth said, her voice cold enough to frost glass. “I think you need rest. You’re clearly overtired.”

“I was just-

“Overtired,” Elizabeth repeated, each syllable precise. “And confused. Because surely you weren’t suggesting that

harbors inappropriate feelings for your mate.”

The emphasis on “future daughter-in-law” made my blood run cold.

“Of course not,” I managed. “I would never-”

my

future daughter-in-law

“Good.” Elizabeth moved into the room with predatory grace, her eyes sweeping over me and the baby with cool assessment. “Because I’ve been meaning to discuss something with you, Fiona. About the child’s upbringing.”

The words hit like a physical blow. “What? No—he’s my son. He He needs his mother.”

“Does he?” Elizabeth’s eyebrow arched delicately. “Or does he need an environment free from... questionable influences? We wouldn’t want him learning the wrong lessons, would we?”

She’s taking him. She’s taking my only leverage.

“You can’t do this,” I said, my voice rising despite myself. “A child belongs with his mother. That’s—that’s pack law.”

The baby whimpered, sensing my distress.

The front door opened. Ethan appeared in the doorway, travel bag still in hand.

Elizabeth noticed Ethan first. “Darling, you’re back. Come, I want your opinion on something.”

Ethan didn’t move. His eyes were locked on Tori with an intensity that made my stomach churn.

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No. No, no, no.

“Ethan,” Elizabeth said again, her tone sharpening. “I asked you a question about the baby.”

That broke his trance. He blinked, turning to his grandmother. "What?"

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"The baby's care. Your son." Elizabeth's expression was carefully neutral, but I caught the steel beneath. "We need to discuss his upbringing. Fiona seems to think she'll be his primary caregiver, but I have concerns."

My arms tightened around the baby instinctively. "What concerns?"

Elizabeth's gaze swept over me with cool assessment. "A child needs stability, proper guidance. Not a mother who she paused delicately, "with ill intentions."

"I'm his mother," I said, my voice rising despite myself.

"Yes, Elizabeth agreed. "But that doesn't mean you're fit to raise him."

Ethan's eyes flickered to Tori again, then back to me and the baby.

"He should be with his mother, Ethan said finally.

Relief flooded through me. "Thank you-

I couldn't help myself. I shifted the baby to one arm and threw the other around Ethan, pressing close. Over his shoulder, my eyes found

Elizabeth's disapproving face, then swept to where Tori stood with Morgan in the garden doorway.

See? I wanted to shout. He chose me. He's choosing us.

Ethan's hand came up, settling on my head with what might have been tenderness. His fingers threaded through my hair, and for one perfect moment, I felt like I'd finally won.

"Don't worry," he said softly, his voice carrying just enough to reach the others. "No one's going to take your child away from you."

Something in his tone made me pause. The words were right, reassuring, at there was an edge beneath them-something cold and sharp that

didn't match the gentle touch of his hand.

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Fiona's POV:

63%

The grand ceremony hall of Grayson Manor gleamed under crystal chandeliers, their light catching the silver and blue decorations that adorned

every surface for the Welcome Baby Party.

I stood near the entrance, cradling my son against my chest, watching the steady stream of distinguished guests arrive.

Perfect, I thought, adjusting the baby's silk blanket. Everything is going according to plan.

Representatives from all four major packs had come-Grayson, Sullivan, Shepherd, and Freeman. Beyond the pack elite, I spotted city council members, prominent business leaders, and even a few carefully selected media representatives Elizabeth had personally approved.

The air hummed with Alpha power, political maneuvering, and the scent of expensive perfumes mingling with champagne.

On the massive screen behind the main stage, a slideshow cycled through professionally shot photos of my son-his tiny fists, his sleeping face,

his first smile captured in perfect lighting.

The hall itself had been transformed into something out of a fairy tale.

Elizabeth had spared no expense. This party wasn't just about welcoming a new baby-it was a statement. A declaration of the Grayson family's

continued dominance and prosperity.

And I was at the center of it all.

“Fiona, darling.” Hannah appeared at my elbow, resplendent in a champagne-colored gown. “You look radiant. Motherhood suits you.”

I forced a smile, though my arms ached from holding the baby for the past hour. “Thank you, Hannah. I’m so glad you could make it.”

“Wouldn’t miss it for the world.” Her eyes swept the room with calculating precision. “You are simply the pride of our family.”

My gaze drifted across the room, and I spotted them almost immediately: Lucas Grayson and Tori Sullivan, making their entrance through the

main doors.

Six months ago, the sight would have sent jealousy searing through my veins. Three months ago, it would have sparked rage.

But today? Today I felt nothing but smug satisfaction.

Look at me now, Tori, I thought, adjusting the baby in my arms so his face was clearly visible to anyone watching. Look at what I have.

“Fiona, darling.” Hannah’s voice pulled me from my thoughts. “You’re smiling. What are you thinking about?”

“Just how fortunate I am,” I said, meaning every word.

“Ladies and gentlemen.” Elizabeth’s voice carried across the room, commanding immediate attention. “Thank you all for joining us this evening to celebrate the full moon naming ceremony of my great-grandson.”

I moved toward the front, positioning myself where the cameras could capture me and my son in the best light. This was my moment. My

triumph.

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Chapter 177

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“As is tradition,” Elizabeth continued, “we will begin with the blessing, followed by the formal presentation of gifts to secure the child’s future.”

The ceremony proceeded according to ancient protocol.

“And now, Elizabeth announced, the presentation of the inheritance gift.

A murmur rippled through the crowd. This was the moment everyone had been waiting for—the formal recognition of my son’s place in the Grayson hierarchy.

“To my great-grandson, Elizabeth said, her voice carrying the weight of generations, I bestow ten percent of Grayson Corporation shares, to be held in trust until his eighteenth birthday. Until that time, these shares—and their considerable voting rights and dividends—will be managed

by his mother, Fiona Price-Grayson.”

The room erupted in gasps and whispers. Ten percent of Grayson Corporation. Not just wealth, but power. Real, tangible power in one of the

most influential companies in Moonhaven.

I felt my knees go weak with triumph.

Hannah, standing near the back with Alexander, looked like she might faint from sheer vindication.

See? I wanted to shout at Tori. See what my son is worth? See what I’ve secured? Not just for him, but for myself?

But when I looked toward the main table, Tori wasn’t even watching. She was engaged in what appeared to be a chess match with Lucas and a

small boy I recognized as Arabella’s son, Leo.

The three of them were bent over a board, Tori’s face animated as she explained something to the child.

She’s pretending not to care, I told myself firmly, even as something cold wisted in my stomach. She has to be dying inside.

“Fiona? Elizabeth’s voice held a note of formality. “We’re ready for you.”

I straightened my shoulders, adjusted the baby in my arms one final time and moved toward the ceremonial table with what I hoped was graceful confidence.

The contract lay waiting, beside it sat an elegant fountain pen and the official Grayson Corporation documents that would transfer those

precious shares into trust.

All I had to do was sign.

But something made me pause. Some instinct made me turn to look at Ethan.

Ethan stood near the edge of the platform, his phone pressed to his ear.

As I watched, his expression shifted—a smile playing at the corners of his mouth. But it wasn't a warm smile. It was cold. Detached. Almost...

satisfied in a way that made my stomach clench with sudden unease.

What's wrong? I wanted to ask.

But before I could form the words, a commotion erupted at the entrance to the ceremony hall.

Footsteps—rapid, desperate, echoing against marble—growing louder.

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Chapter 177

Then a voice, trembling with rage and grief and absolute conviction, rang across the stunned silence:

“Fiona Price! Give me back my son!”

Comments

Write Comments

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Chapter 178

Fiona's POV:

63%

The voice cut through the ceremonial hall like a blade through silk.

My arms tightened instinctively around the baby. The crowd's murmur die instantly, replaced by a suffocating silence that made my pulse thunder in my ears.

A man stood in the doorway-tall, disheveled, his chest heaving as if he'd run a marathon. His eyes locked onto mine with an intensity that made my wolf recoil.

Zane.

No. No, this couldn't be happening. Not now. Not here.

"Security!" Elizabeth's voice rang out, sharp and commanding. "Remove this man immediately!"

But Zane was already moving, pushing past the stunned security guards with surprising strength. His gaze never left me, never left the bundle in my arms.

"That is my child, Fiona!" His voice cracked with raw emotion. "You can't let the Grayson family pay for another man's bloodline!"

The hall erupted. Gasps rippled through the crowd like a physical wave.

I felt hundreds of eyes turn toward me-calculating, judging, hungry for scandal.

My legs trembled. I stepped backward, clutching my son-my son-closer to my chest.

“You’re insane,” I managed, but my voice came out thin, reedy.

I forced myself to stand straighter, to project the confidence I didn’t feel.

“Don’t listen to him! This man has been stalking me for months. He’s delusional-obsessed! Security, please remove him before he causes more of a scene!

“I have proof. Zane’s hand shot into his jacket.

He produced a manila envelope, holding it high above his head like a banner of war.

“Blood test results from Moontouch Medical Center,” he announced, his voice carrying to every corner of the room. “This child shares my wolf lineage. Not Grayson blood. Mine.”

No. No, no, no.

My mind raced. The blood test. How had he-

“This is absurd,” I said, louder now, forcing steel into my tone. “This man clearly disturbed. *

Elizabeth swayed suddenly, her hand flying to her chest. For a terrifying moment, I thought she might collapse right there on the platform.

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Chapter 178

“Mother! Lucas moved swiftly to her side, steadying her.

“I’m... fine, Elizabeth gasped, though her face had gone ashen. Her breathing came in short, sharp bursts as she gripped Lucas’s arm.

The crowd murmured with concern, several guests half-rising from their seats.

It took a full minute before her color began to return. When she finally straightened, releasing Lucas’s arm, her eyes fixed on me with an

intensity that made my blood run cold.

“Explain yourself. Her voice was dangerously quiet, each word precisely enunciated. “Explain to me, right now, what is happening here.”

“Mrs. Grayson, 1- My voice cracked.

63%

I swallowed hard, forcing myself to meet her gaze. “Yes, I knew Zane. He was... he was my boyfriend before. But I swear to you, I never betrayed

Ethan. Never! This child is your great-grandson. Zane is just-he’s bitter. He can’t stand to see me happy!”

I turned toward the crowd, my voice rising with desperate conviction.

“Someone put him up to this! Someone who wants to destroy me,

wants to ruin this family’s reputation. Can’t you see? This is all a setup!”

who

Zane’s cold laugh cut through my words like a knife through silk.

“A setup?” His voice dripped with contempt. “Is that really the best you can do, Fiona?”

“You’re the one who messaged me before the wedding, Fiona. You asked me to run away with you. You said your fiancé was cold and distant,

that you wanted revenge. You planned to get him drunk on your wedding night and sleep with me instead.”

Zane's voice grew harder, more bitter. "You used me and then threw me away like garbage.

"That's a lie!" I burst out, my voice shrill with panic. "I never sent you any messages!

Comments

Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 179

Chapter 179

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"A lie?" Zane's smile was cruel. "I have evidence on my phone. Photos of us together. Messages. Everything. Do you dare let me connect to that

big screen and show everyone the proof?"

My eyes darted to Ethan. He stood at the edge of the platform, his face a mask of stone.

I reached for his sleeve, my fingers trembling. 'Ethan, please. You have to believe me. I never betrayed you. The baby is yours-"

Ethan's gaze was ice.

"He sounds pretty damn convincing, Ethan said, his voice deadly quiet. "How am I supposed to believe you?"

Around us, the whispers grew louder. I caught fragments-"bastard child, affair," "cheating"-each word like a physical blow.

My face burned with humiliation.

If I refused to let Zane show his so-called evidence, everyone would think was guilty. Even if we later proved the baby was Ethan's, my son would grow up with this scandal hanging over him. He'd be mocked, whispered about, forever tainted by today's accusations.

I couldn't let that happen. I couldn't let them destroy my baby's future.

I glared at Zane with pure hatred. How dare he ruin my son's ceremony? How dare he try to destroy everything I'd built?

“Fine!” I spat. “I have nothing to hide. Connect your phone. Show everyone your ‘evidence.’ I want to see what lies you’ve fabricated!”

Zane’s smile widened. He pulled out his phone and began tapping at the screen.

The crowd fell silent. Every eye turned toward the massive screen behind the ceremonial table.

I held my breath, my heart hammering against my ribs, as I waited to see what nightmare Zane had prepared for me.

The screen flickered to life.

At first, there was only darkness. Then came the sound—a woman’s breath moan, unmistakable and intimate, echoing through the ceremonial hall’s premium sound system.

My stomach dropped.

The image sharpened. A bedroom. Moonlight streaming through gauzy curtains. And there, on the screen in horrifying clarity—me. My face. My body. Tangled with a man who wasn’t Ethan.

No. No, this can’t be—

Gasps erupted throughout the hall. Parents rushed to cover their children’s eyes and ears. The moans continued, obscene and damning, as the video played on.

“Turn it off!” I shrieked, lunging toward Zane. “Turn it off right now!”

But security held me back. The baby wailed in my arms, sensing my panic.

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Chapter 179

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“This is fake!” I screamed over the sounds still emanating from the speakers. “It’s doctored! Zane, how could you-why are you doing this to

me?”

“Why?” Zane’s voice was cold, satisfied. “Because you’re mine, Fiona. You were always mine. That child is mine. And I have plenty more videos where this came from-all backed up, all very, very real.”

Alexander suddenly charged forward, his fist connecting with Zane’s jaw. You bastard! He grabbed for Zane’s phone, managed to yank it away,

frantically trying to stop the video.

But the damage was done. Even as the screen went black, the images were seared into everyone’s minds.

“Ethan, please.” I turned to him, desperate. “That’s not- I swear, I love you. I would never-

But Ethan’s face was a mask of disgust. When I reached for him, he jerked away as if my touch burned.

Around us, the whispers had become a roar. I caught Elizabeth’s expression-pure devastation mixed with fury. Richard looked ready to commit

murder.

“How could you?” Alexander’s hand cracked across my face before I even saw it coming. The slap echoed through the hall, sharp and final.

“You’ve completely embarrassed me.”

I staggered, my cheek burning. Hannah rushed forward-not to comfort me, but to stare at me with horrified recognition.

“No,” I sobbed. “No, you don’t understand. None of you understand! Why won’t anyone believe me?”

Comments

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Chapter 180

Fiona's POV:

63%

Most guests' whispers trailed behind them like poison.

"I always knew she was too ambitious for her own good."

A female trying to pass off some random man's bastard as Grayson blood. The audacity."

"I heard the baby might not even be Zane's. Who knows how many men she's been with?"

"And to think, she almost got away with it. Ten percent of Grayson Corporation!"

"The Price family is finished in this city. Absolutely finished."

I stood frozen near the platform, my arms still aching from where security had pried my son from my grasp.

"Everyone, please. Elizabeth Grayson's voice cut through the remaining murmur, though it trembled with an emotion I'd never heard from her

before. "The Grayson family and Price family will retire to discuss this matter privately."

I watched as she gestured toward a side corridor, her movements stiff and mechanical.

The warmth that had radiated from her during the ceremony had vanished, replaced by something cold and terrible.

My legs felt like lead as I followed the procession. Alexander walked ahead his shoulders rigid with fury. Hannah clutched his arm, her face pale beneath her makeup. Behind me, I could feel Ethan's presence like a physical weight, though he hadn't looked at me-

The private sitting room was smaller than I expected, intimate in a way that made my skin crawl.

Elizabeth sank into a leather armchair, her hand pressed against her chest. Lucas moved to her side immediately.

"Mother, you need to rest-

'I need answers. Her voice cracked on the last word.

She looked up at me, and I saw tears streaming down her face. "Tell me this is all some terrible mistake, Fiona. Tell me that man was lying."

The baby stirred in his carrier, letting out a soft whimper. I moved toward him instinctively, but Alexander's hand shot out, blocking my path.

"Don't." His voice was deadly quiet. "Don't you dare touch him until we know the truth."

"He's my son!" The words burst from me, shrill and desperate. "I gave birth to him. I carried him for nine months. That video was fake-

doctored somehow. Zane must have-

"Enough. Richard Grayson's voice boomed through the room.

He stood near the fireplace, his face mottled with rage. "We will conduct another paternity test. Immediately. At Moontouch Medical Center,

with witnesses present."

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Chapter 180

“Yes.” I forced the word out, my voice steadier than I felt. “Yes, let’s do that. Let’s do it right now.”

63%

I lifted my chin, meeting Richard’s furious gaze directly. “I have nothing to hide. That man is lying-he has to be. The baby is Ethan’s. He’s a

Grayson.”

I looked around the room, searching for an ally, someone who might believe me. But no one.

“Of course. Richard pulled out his phone. “We’ll arrange for neutral counsel. Alexander, Hannah-I think it’s best if you return home for now.

We’ll contact you once we have results.*

Hannah’s head snapped up. “But she’s my daughter-”

Richard corrected, his eyes cold. “And this is a Grayson family matter now

The dismissal was clear. I watched as Hannah’s face flushed with humiliation, but Alexander was already guiding her toward the door.

The door closed behind them with a soft click that sounded like a gunshot

The hours that followed blurred together in a nightmare of sterile white rooms and cold metal instruments.

The medical team at Moontouch Medical Center worked with clinical efficiency, drawing blood samples from both the baby and me. They’d

already obtained Ethan’s DNA from his medical records.

I sat in a private waiting room, flanked by two members of Grayson security.

Through the window, I could see the city lights of Moonhaven twinkling in the darkness. Somewhere out there, people were living normal lives, unaware that mine was crumbling to pieces.

My phone buzzed. Mia.

The video is everywhere. Social media is going crazy. I need to know exactly what happened in order to help you.

I stared at the message, my fingers hovering over the keyboard. What could I possibly say? That I'd been set up? That someone had orchestrated the perfect revenge?

It's complicated, I typed back. I'll explain later. But I promise I didn't cheat.

The door opened, and a nurse entered. "Ms. Price? The preliminary results are ready. The Council is assembling in Conference Room Three."

My legs felt numb as I stood. The security guards flanked me as we walked down the pristine white corridors.

Through one window, I glimpsed Elizabeth being wheeled toward the elevators, Lucas at her side. She looked so small suddenly, so fragile.

Conference Room Three was dominated by a long table. Richard sat at the head, his expression carved from granite. Lucas stood behind him, arms crossed. Ethan leaned against the far wall, his face turned away from me.

A doctor I didn't recognize stood near a projection screen.

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Chapter 180

63%

The results are conclusive,” he said without preamble. “The infant shares no genetic markers with Ethan Grayson. However, there is a 99.9%

probability match with the DNA sample provided by Zane Morrison.”

The words hit me like physical blows. Around the table, I heard sharp intakes of breath. Richard’s hands clenched into fists.

“No.” My voice came out as a whisper. “That’s impossible. I never-Ethan and I-*

“The facts are right in front of you, Fiona.” Ethan’s voice cut through my protest, sharp and cold. “What more is there to say? What possible

excuse could you have?”

“I didn’t know!” The words burst from me, tears streaming down my face. swear to God, I thought he was yours. I believed-

But even as I spoke, the pieces were falling into place with horrible clarity

Someone had set me up. Used the same tactics against me that I’d once used against Tori.

To lead me into a trap without my knowledge, without raising my suspicions-it would have to be someone close to me. Someone I trusted

implicitly. Someone who knew all my secrets, all my vulnerabilities.

There weren’t many people who fit that description. Even fewer who had a motive.

And only one person who satisfied both criteria.

The realization hit me like ice water in my veins. My face drained of all color as the truth crystallized in my mind.

Ethan.

Comments

