

Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 21

Chapter 21

Tori's POV:

22%2

Morgan rolled her eyes dramatically.

"Megan Howard? Only Lucas's most devoted stalker. She's the doctor's sist-you know, Matthew Howard? He's Lucas's best friend, so she thinks that gives her special privileges,"

Morgan launched into a detailed account of Megan's years-long pursuit of Lucas.

"She's been in love with Alpha Lucas forever, but he barely notices she exists romantically, at least. I mean, he's polite because of Matthew, but that's it."

As Morgan continued her explanation, her mother knocked and entered with a tray of cookies.

"Morgan, dear," she said gently, "I think Tori has had quite enough excitement for one night. The poor girl is exhausted."

As if on cue, a yawn escaped me before I could stifle it.

"But Mom," Morgan protested, "I was just-"

"Whatever it is can wait until tomorrow," Mrs. Baker said firmly. "Tori needs rest, and you have chores you've been avoiding all day."

Morgan sighed dramatically but stood up. "Fine. Sleep well, Tori. I'll see you in the morning."

She gave me a small wave before following her mother out, still arguing in hushed tones about the unfairness of chores.

The door closed behind them, and silence settled over the room.

I couldn't help but envy their relationship-the easy affection, the casual cking that clearly masked deep love.

My own mother had never spoken to me that way, not since I was born.

I lay back on the bed, sinking into comfort that seemed almost unreal after so many years of hard surfaces.

It was worlds away from my accommodation at the Price house—a tiny room in the most remote corner of the mansion, one even the servants considered undesirable.

My “bedroom there contained nothing but a bed with a worn mattress and a rickety desk that Mia had discarded years ago.

Hannah had made it clear that I should be grateful for even that much.

The comfort of this bed, coupled with the physical and emotional exhaustion of the day, quickly made my eyelids grow heavier with each blink, my thoughts becoming fuzzy around the edges.

Mrs. Baker had been right—1 need test, mentally and physically

Just before I drifted off completely, I thought I felt a presence in the roaga gentle touch on my cheek where Hannah had slapped me. Someone’s fingers tenderly tracing the mark, soothing the lingering slig

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Chapter 21

The touch felt cool yet somehow warm at the same time, and strangely familiar.

I wanted to open my eyes, but my body refused to respond.

It’s okay now. Rest.

I couldn’t tell if the words were spoken aloud or simply echoed in my mind, but they carried a deep resonance that settled into my bones.

That night, I slept better than I had in four years.

“Everyone’s staring at us,” I whispered to Morgan as we walked through Moonridge High’s main entrance the next morning.

Morgan shrugged, seemingly unfazed by the attention.

“Let them stare. Maybe they’re just jealous of my amazing fashion sense. She gestured to her standard school uniform, which looked identical to everyone else’s.

I couldn’t help but smile at her attempt to lighten the mood, but the weight of dozens of eyes followed us down the hallway.

“Seriously though,” Morgan said in a lower voice, “just ignore them. They have nothing better to do than gossip.”

When we reached our classroom, Mrs. Blake was already at her desk, sorting through papers.

She looked up as we entered, her face brightening.

“Ah, Tori! Morgan! Perfect timing,” Mrs. Blake exclaimed as we walked in, her face lighting up with excitement.

The rest of the class was already seated, their conversations dying down as they turned to look at us.

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Courage Author: Michael Anderson 22**

Chapter 22

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“You two haven’t heard the news yet, have you?” Mrs. Blake asked, her eyes twinkling with anticipation. Without waiting for our response, she

picked up a sheet of paper from her desk.

“I’ve just received the results from the last diagnostic assessment,” she announced proudly. “And I’m thrilled to inform everyone that Tori

Sullivan has achieved the highest score not only in our class, but across the entire grade level!”

All eyes focused on me with renewed interest.

Morgan gasped beside me, her mouth forming a perfect O of surprise.

“Way to go, Tori!” she whispered loudly, giving my arm an excited squeeze I knew you were a math genius!”

I felt my face grow warm under the collective gaze of my classmates.

Suddenly, the strange looks and whispers we’d encountered in the hallway made sense. News had already spread throughout the school,

explaining all those stares on our way to class.

“Thank you, Mrs. Blake,” I said quietly, wanting to take my seat and escape the attention.

“Oh, wait, there’s more,” Mrs. Blake said, waving me back. “I’ve been informed that the Grayson Corporation has initiated a scholarship program for students showing exceptional promise in lunar mathematics.”

The class collectively leaned forward in interest.

“As this year’s top performer, Tori will receive a ten thousand moonstone award to support her education.”

Gasps and whispers erupted around me.

Ten thousand moonstones was a small fortune-more than I would earn in a year at the café, even with generous tips.

“Seriously?” Morgan squealed beside me, loud enough that Mrs. Blake shot her an amused glance.

“Yes, seriously, Ms. Baker. Perhaps this will motivate you to spend more time studying and less time napping in my class?”

The room filled with laughter, and Morgan grinned sheepishly.

“Absolutely, Mrs. Blake. If I’d known there was money involved, I’d have been front row, taking notes!”

Mrs. Blake shook her head with a smile.

“The Grayson Corporation will be continuing this initiative, so all of you still have opportunities to excel.”

She gestured for us to take our seats, and the regular lesson began

“Ten thousand moonstones, Morgan whispered as we settled in our chairs Do you know what you could do with that kind of money?”

I nodded, my mind already calculating how many months of medication it would cover for my grandmother. With Hannah’s threats hanging over me, this award felt like more than money-it was freedom, at least to a while.

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Chapter 22

“No more late nights at the café, Morgan continued softly. “At least not as many.”

I didn’t respond, simply offering a small smile that didn’t quite reach my eyes.

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Morgan didn’t understand that ten thousand moonstones, while substantial, wouldn’t last forever. The money would help tremendously, but my grandmother’s condition was chronic, and Hannah’s support was unreliable at best.

I needed every moonstone I could earn.

After school, I still headed to Moonlight Shadow Café as usual.

My thoughts drifted to my grandmother as I walked.

She had collapsed upon hearing about my imprisonment four years ago. The shock and grief had weakened her heart, leaving her with a chronic condition that required constant medication.

Every time I visited, I saw how the years had aged her beyond her time-al because of me.

Lost in these thoughts, I didn't notice the person in front of me until it was too late. I collided with someone, stumbling back a step.

"I'm so sorry," I said automatically, looking up.

Mrs. Catherine White stared back at me, her eyes cold and her lips pressed into a thin line.

The hallway around us suddenly felt much quieter.

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Chapter 23

Tori's POV:

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Catherine White let out a small, dismissive huff as she looked down at me.

‘Don’t get too full of yourself, Sullivan,’ she said, her voice lacking its usual venom but still cold. ‘One test score doesn’t erase what you are.’

I stood my ground, surprised by her relatively restrained reaction.

‘Thank you for the reminder, Mrs. White,’ I replied evenly, keeping my expression neutral.

She made a small noise of disapproval before brushing past me, her shoulders stiff with wounded pride.

I watched her retreat down the hallway, somewhat stunned that she hadn’t tried to humiliate me further.

The test results must have really thrown her off balance.

‘Well, that’s a first, came Mrs. Blake’s voice from behind me.

I turned to see her leaning against her classroom doorway, arms crossed and a satisfied smile playing on her lips. ‘I don’t think I’ve ever seen Catherine White walk away without getting in the last word.’

‘She seemed... restrained,’ I offered.

Mrs. Blake chuckled softly. ‘That’s one way to put it. Between us?’ She lowered her voice conspiratorially. ‘She’s absolutely fuming that one of my students outperformed her entire class. We’ve been colleagues for seven years, and this is the first time I’ve had the top scorer.’

I glanced at my watch and felt a jolt of panic. ‘I’m sorry, Mrs. Blake, but I need to run. My shift at the café starts in fifteen minutes.’

‘Of course, don’t let me keep you,’ she said, waving me off with an understanding smile. ‘Go on, and congratulations again on your exceptional performance.’

I gave her a quick nod of thanks before hurrying down the hallway.

Morgan had said earlier she couldn’t join me at the café today-something about her mother needing her help with an urgent family matter. With a quick adjustment to my backpack, I headed for the exit.

The café was quieter than usual when I arrived for my shift.

Greg looked up from the counter with his usual easy-going smile.

“Hey, Tori,” he called as I stashed my backpack and reached for my apron. Oh, before you get started, almost forgot to mention something.”

“Someone came by yesterday after you took leave,” he said. “A woman asking questions about you.”

My fingers froze in the act of tying my apron strings. “What kind of questions?”

Just basic stuff-your schedule, how long you’ve worked here, what time u get off at night.

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He shrugged, but I caught the slight furrow in his brow. “Probably nothing, but I figured you should know. She seemed pretty determined to get answers.”

I felt a cold prickle at the back of my neck. “What did she look like?”

Greg rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

“Middle-aged, precisely dressed-the kind who never has a hair out of place. Very serious looking. And honestly? Something about her gave me the creeps.”

A chill ran down my spine as the description clicked into place.

Lisa Morris. Noah’s mother. The woman whose son had died by my hand four years ago.

Tracy, my wolf, stirred anxiously within me, sensing my sudden spike of fear.

My fingers trembled slightly as memories flooded back-the trial, Lisa Moris’s cold, hate-filled eyes boring into me as she testified, her voice steady even as she called for the harshest punishment possible.

Even after I'd served my sentence, she had made it abundantly clear that justice, in her eyes, hadn't been served.

She'd screamed it at my release hearing-that her innocent" son had done nothing wrong, that my four years in Silver Fang was a mockery of justice, that I deserved to pay with my life for taking his.

"What did you tell her?" I asked, trying to keep my voice steady.

"Nothing specific," Greg assured me. "Just that you were a new hire, and I couldn't share employee information."

He paused, studying my face. "Tori, is everything alright? You've gone pale

I forced myself to take a deep breath. "I'm fine. Just... surprised someone would be asking about me."

That was a lie, and from his expression, Greg knew it too. But he didn't push.

I glanced at the clock on the wall, thinking through my options.

The idea of walking home alone late at night suddenly felt more dangerous than before. After a moment's hesitation, I turned back to Greg.

Actually, do you think I could adjust my schedule a bit? Maybe not stay until closing time like I've been doing?" I asked, trying to keep my voice casual. "Just for a while."

Greg's face immediately brightened with relief. "Of course! Honestly, I never expected you to work those late shifts in the first place.

He waved his hand dismissively. "That was all your idea, remember? Practically had to convince me to let you stay that late.

"I know, I just wanted to earn the extra moonstones, I admitted.

"And I appreciate your dedication, he said, nodding. But your safety com first. We'll work with whatever hours you can manage."

The evening passed in a blur of coffee orders and calculations. I tried to us on the work rather than the knot of anxiety in my stomach.

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Chapter 23

Dusk had settled over Moonhaven by the time I stepped outside.

The street lamps cast pools of light that seemed to emphasize rather than dispel the shadows between them.

I pulled my jacket tighter around myself and started walking, my senses of high alert.

I couldn't shake the feeling of being watched. Every few steps, I glanced over my shoulder, but the sidewalk behind me revealed nothing

suspicious.

Still, the prickling sensation at the back of my neck persisted.

Just nerves, I tried to tell myself. Greg's warning has you spooked.

But Tracy wasn't convinced. She paced restlessly within me, hackles raised sensing something or someone-I couldn't see.

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I quickened my pace, taking the most direct route back to the dormitories. My fingers curled around my phone in my pocket, ready to call for help if needed.

As I passed a small pub, a now-familiar scent caught my attention-crisp winter air and cedar, with an underlying note of raw power.

My eyes found him immediately.

Lucas Grayson stood outside the establishment, his tall frame unmistakable even in the dim evening light.

He wasn't looking in my direction, seemingly engaged in conversation with someone just inside the doorway. But his mere presence sent a wave of inexplicable calm washing over me.

I slowed my steps slightly, my rapid heartbeat steadying.

Even Tracy settled within me, her anxious pacing transformed into attentive watchfulness.

I couldn't explain why the sight of him affected me this way. We barely knew each other, had no real connection beyond a few brief encounters. Yet somehow, seeing him standing there made me feel safe in a way I hadn't experienced in years.

What is wrong with you? I chided myself as I continued walking. He's just another Alpha. Your safety is your own responsibility.

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Sooo glad her boss is so kind and understanding

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Chapter 24

Tori's POV:

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As I approached him, I hesitated, debating whether I should acknowledge Him with a greeting or simply pretend I hadn't noticed him.

Before I could decide, his deep voice broke the evening silence, catching me by surprise.

“Just getting off work?”

I stopped, surprised by his direct address. Looking up, I met his intense gaze.

The streetlight cast shadows across his sharp features, highlighting the strength in his jawline.

“Yes,” I answered simply, uncertain why the Alpha would care about my work schedule.

He studied me for a moment, his head tilting slightly. “Why are you still working at the café when you’ve received quite a substantial scholarship?”

How did he know about my scholarship? It had only been announced today

Suspicion flooding through me, I instinctively asked. “How do you know about that?”

For a brief moment, Lucas seemed to freeze, his expression tightening almost imperceptibly before relaxing again.

“Morgan mentioned it,” he replied smoothly. “She was quite excited about her friend’s achievement.”

The explanation made sense. Morgan did live on the Grayson estate and seemed to have some connection to Lucas. I nodded, accepting his

answer.

“The scholarship is appreciated, but it doesn’t cover everything,” I said, no elaborating further. My grandmother’s medical expenses were none of his business.

Lucas frowned slightly. “It’s getting late. It’s not safe for an Omega to walk alone, especially after what happened at the café recently. I can escort you back to your dormitory.”

His offer caught me off guard.

Why would the Alpha of the most powerful pack in Moonhaven concern himself with my safety? Was it because I was Morgan’s friend? Or was there something else I wasn’t seeing?

He seemed a bit too enthusiastic.

“The dormitory isn’t far,” I said, hesitating

Under normal circumstances, I would have declined immediately, but Lisa torris’s interest in me had me on edge.

Lucas seemed to sense my indecision. I'm heading that direction anyway, he added, though I wasn't entirely convinced that was true

After a moment's deliberation, I nodded. "Alright."

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Chapter 24

We walked in silence, Lucas maintaining a respectful distance slightly ahead of me.

I studied his broad shoulders and confident stride, wondering again why he was taking such an interest in my welfare.

"How are you feeling today?" Lucas asked suddenly, breaking the silence. Any lingering effects?"

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I immediately realized he was referring to the night of the ceremony-being locked in the bathroom, drenched with ice water, the humiliation I

had endured.

"I'm fine," I replied, trying to keep my voice steady. "Nothing bad."

As if my body wanted to contradict me, a sudden sneeze escaped before I could suppress it.

Lucas seemed to let out a soft chuckle. "Not very honest, are you?"

I felt my cheeks warm with embarrassment. Tracy stirred within me, seemingly amused rather than defensive at his observation.

"So you're just going to take it?" Lucas asked after a moment, his tone more serious. "Not planning to fight back against how they treat you?"

I hadn't expected someone like him to be concerned about my problems with Mia and Fiona.

I gave a bitter smile. He couldn't possibly understand my situation. "I don't have the resources or position to fight them."

Lucas stopped abruptly and turned to face me, his expression surprisingly serious.

“What if I were willing to help you?” he asked, his voice low but hoarse.

I froze, staring at him blankly. Before I could formulate a response, he continued.

“If you need assistance, don’t hesitate to contact me.”

He inclined his head, those intense gray eyes studying me in a way that made me feel like he was seeing something I couldn’t.

Goodnight, Tori.

It wasn’t until the cool night air hit my face that I realized we had already arrived at my dormitory.

I watched him walk away, his tall figure gradually disappearing into the shadows between the street lamps.

With my thoughts in complete disarray, I made my way back to my room.

My phone rang just as I was hanging up my jacket, startling me from my thoughts. Seeing my grandmother’s name on the screen sent a mixture of warmth and concern through me.

“Grandma?” I answered immediately.

Tori, dear. Her voice sounded tired but warm as always. I hope I’m not calling too late

“Not at all. Is everything okay?” I asked, already sensing something was wrong from the slight tension in her tone.

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Chapter 24

She sighed softly. “Hannah called me earlier today.”

My stomach tightened. Nothing good ever came from Hannah contacting my grandmother directly.

“What did she want?” I asked, trying to keep my voice neutral.

“She told me about what happened at the ceremony, Grandma said carefully. “About you... attacking Fiona.

I closed my eyes, anger and frustration washing over me.

Of course, Hannah would twist the story to make me the villain.

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“That’s not what happened,” I said firmly. “Fiona deliberately provoked me and then staged the whole thing to make it look like I attacked her.

“I know, dear, my grandmother responded without hesitation. “I know you wouldn’t do something like that unprovoked.”

The immediate faith in her voice made my throat tighten. After everything that had happened, my grandmother’s unwavering belief in me was the one constant I could rely on.

I sank onto my bed, suddenly exhausted. “I’m sorry she bothered you with his.”

“Don’t be sorry, Tori. Her voice grew softer. “I’m the one who should apologize. If it weren’t for my condition and the expenses, you wouldn’t have to deal with Hannah at all.”

“No,” I said immediately, my voice cracking with emotion. “Don’t ever say that, Grandma. You’ve never been a burden to me. Never.”

Grandma sighed heavily. “I just want you to try and get along with Hanna and her family. I can’t help you much, Tori, and with my condition... I might not have many years left. When I’m gone, Hannah will be the closest family you have.”

“Don’t say that, I choked out, my voice thick with emotion. “You’re going to live a long life, Grandma.

I swallowed hard against the lump in my throat. “And besides, Janet and Anna are my families too.”

The mention of their names cast a shadow over our conversation.

A heavy silence fell between us for a moment.

“Tori, Grandma finally said, her voice gentle but firm, “you need to stop blaming yourself. What happened four years ago wasn’t your fault.”

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Chapter 25

Tori's POV:

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I hung up the phone, my grandmother's words echoing in my head.

"What happened four years ago wasn't your fault."

Even though she'd always stood by me, believed in me when no one else would, I couldn't let it go.

How could I? That night had changed everything.

I'd spent four years in Silver Fang trying to lock those memories away, to build walls around them so high and thick that they couldn't touch

me anymore.

But they always found a way through, seeping into my dreams, where my brother Ryan's eyes still gazed at me as the light faded from them. Where Noah's blood still stained my hands.

And it wasn't just the memories-their families were real, living reminders of that night.

Lisa Morris's vengeful glares burned into me whenever our paths crossed. My aunt Janet-Ryan's mother-refused to see me anymore, her grief transforming our family bond into something unrecognizable.

She'd already lost so much. My uncle, her husband, died in a car accident shortly after she gave birth to my little cousin Anna. Then Ryan died trying to protect me.

Janet nearly lost her will to live after that night; the neighbors told me she wouldn't eat, wouldn't sleep, just sat staring at Ryan's photos for days. Only Anna's cries from her crib had pulled Janet back from the edge of despair, giving her a reason to keep going.

But she made it clear through others that she never wanted to see me again. The girl who had cost her son his life. The girl who had once been like a daughter to her.

I understood. How could I not?

I'd destroyed the only real family I'd ever known. Janet, Anna, Ryan-they had loved me unconditionally, had given me everything Hannah never did. And I'd repaid that love with blood and grief.

In Silver Fang, I could almost pretend the outside world didn't exist, but here in Moonhaven, my past shadowed me like a second skin.

Sinking onto my bed, I pulled my knees to my chest.

The dormitory was quiet this time of night, with most students already asleep. Tracy, my wolf, whined softly within me, sensing my distress as memories I'd tried so hard to suppress came rushing back.

Four years ago. A full moon night. The night of my first shift.

I'd been terrified. At seventeen, I was late for my first transformation-my wolves shifted at fifteen or sixteen.

Being an Omega already made me an outcast, and the delayed shift only added to my abnormality

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Chapter 25

22%

When I felt the first symptoms-heightened senses, burning skin, the restlessness that came with the approaching moon-I panicked and called

the one person I thought I could trust.

“Fiona,” I whispered now, the name still bitter on my tongue.

My best friend. The girl who’d promised to help me through my first shift, who’d offered the address of a secluded villa as a safe place.

“Come alone,” she’d said. “I’ll have everything ready.”

My heart was full of trust and relief that Fiona would help me through this terrifying first transformation.

When I arrived, the lights were on inside, just as she promised they would be.

Full of hope, I pushed the door open. But the moment the door swung wide, I froze in the doorway, my body going rigid with shock.

Instead of Fiona, Noah Morris stood there, his lips curled in a predatory smile that had nothing to do with his wolf. Behind him, I glimpsed

several other young men lounging on sofas, bottles of alcohol scattered across tables.

“Well, well. The little Omega finally arrived,” Noah had drawled, his eyes king over me in a way that made my skin crawl. “We’ve been

waiting.”

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Chapter 26

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I'd tried to back away, but Noah was faster.

His hand shot out, gripping my wrist with bruising force and yanking me side. The door slammed behind me with a finality that still haunts my nightmares

"Where's Floma? I'd asked, my voice small, already knowing I'd been betrayed.

Noah's laugh had been cold, cruel. "Fiona? She thought we'd enjoy your company more than she would tonight. Don't worry, she sends her regards."

I looked around desperately, seeing no escape. Several dangerous males, all from prominent families, all staring at me like I was prey.

In my pre-shift state, with my body already weakened and struggling with the imminent transformation, I was completely defenseless against them.

"Please, I'd begged, let me go. I need to-"

"You need to learn your place, Omega." Noah had snarled, shoving me toward the center of the room.

I'd stumbled. nearly falling, while the others laughed.

What happened next was a blur of hands grabbing at me, voices taunting me.

I fought as hard as I could, but I was outnumbered and overpowered.

Just as Noah pinned me against a wall, his face inches from mine, the front door had crashed open.

“Ryan,” I gasped now, tears welling in my eyes.

He d burst in like an avenging angel, his face contorted with rage.

“Get your hands off my sister! he d roared, launching himself at Noah.

The fight was brutal. Furniture splintered, glass shattered. Ryan landed several powerful blows, but soon they had him surrounded.

Noah, already bleeding from a cut on his cheek where Ryan had struck him circled my brother with hatred in his eyes.

“I’ve been wanting to teach you a lesson for a long time,’ Noah had growled. “Always interfering when I try to talk to your sister.”

“Talk?” Ryan had spat blood onto the floor, his eyes burning with rage.

“You sick bastard I know exactly what you were planning to do to my sister. Too pathetic to find someone whod actually want you? Everyone knows what you are, Noah-a coward who can only feel powerful when huing someone weaker.

Nala pyes had flickered something starker.

The all in the room shifted as his control slipped, his rege taking over.

I watched in futur as he began to transform, bones cracking face long into a smarting mile.

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Chapter 26

“Ryan, run!” I’d screamed, but it was too late.

Noah lunged, jaws snapping, and caught my brother’s throat in his teeth.

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There was a terrible sound-a wet, tearing noise that will haunt me until y dying day-and then blood, so much blood, spraying across the

hardwood floors, across my face and clothes.

Ryan fell, his eyes finding mine in his final moments, filled with apology and unwilling before the light in them dimmed forever.

The room erupted into chaos.

The other guys scrambled over each other in their desperation to escape, hocking over furniture and shattering glasses in their panic.

I crawled to Ryan, my hands slipping in his blood, cradling his head in my lap as sobs wracked my body. Beside us, Noah shifted back to human form, looking down at us with no remorse in his eyes.

“Unfortunate,” he’d said coldly. “But he attacked me first. It was self-defense.”

I looked up at him through my tears, feeling something inside me crack and break.

The grief, the rage, the betrayal-it all converged into a single point of blinding fury.

The shift I’d been so afraid of rushed through me in a wave of fire and pain.

My bones broke and reformed. My skin stretched and sprouted silver-gray fur. My vision sharpened, colors fading as scents intensified.

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Chapter 27

Noah’s expression changed from cold indifference to shock, then to calculating hunger.

Your first shift? he’d murmured, stepping closer.

I backed away, a growl building in my throat, but he just smiled wider.

You think shifting is going to save you?” he sneered, circling me like I was prey, “You’re just a pathetic little Omega. Your for don’t change

what you are.”

Actually, this works out perfectly,” he said, his voice dropping lower as his eyes gleamed with cruel intent.

“Since you’re so eager to embrace your wolf tonight, I might as well claim you properly. A permanent mark will teach you your place

He began to shift again, his bones cracking as he transformed, clearly intending to force a mating bond-to mark me as his property forever

The thought of being tied to him, to my brother’s killer, ignited something primal and ferocious within me.

When he lunged for my throat, expecting to dominate an inexperienced Omega, I reacted with a speed and strength that surprised us both

My jaws clamped around his throat just as his had closed around Ryan’s moments before-before he could even lay a finger on me.

His eyes widened in shock and fear-emotions he’d never expected to feel toward someone like me. He never even had the chance

Just one decisive bite, and the life drained from him in seconds.

Noah’s body crumpled beside my brother’s, his blood mixing with Ryan’s on the floor.

In the sudden silence that followed, I shifted back to human form, my body naked and trembling, surrounded by death and betrayal

That night changed everything.

Two deaths. One accused murderer.

The Pack Law Council deliberated for less than a day before delivering the verdict: excessive force in self-defense.

I wiped away tears I hadn’t realized were falling. Tracy whined again, sharing my pain.

And in the nightmares that still came, night after night, painted in crimson

Morning light filtered through my curtains, harsh and unforgiving.

I dragged myself to the bathroom, wincing at my reflection-bloodshot eye stared back at me, the white almost completely overtaken by red veins. Dark circles hung beneath them like bruises.

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18:32 Fri, Feb 6 BGR

Chapter 27

Thank goodness it was Saturday. No need to go to school looking like this

I splashed cold water on my face, trying to wash away the memories along with the tear stains.

Just as I was heading back to my room, my phone buzzed with a text from Morgan.

Rise and shine, sleepyhead! Mall trip? See you in an hour?

My first instinct was to decline.

59%

I was exhausted, emotionally drained. But then images from my nightmare flashed through my mind again-blood pooling on hardwood floors, the light fading from Ryan's eyes, Noah's shocked expression as my teeth closed around his throat.

Sure. See you soon. I texted back.

Anything was better than being alone with those memories right now.

After quickly tidying up, I went out the door.

One hour later.

"There you are!" Morgan waved enthusiastically from the mall entrance, her brown curls bouncing as she practically skipped over to me. Her energy was as overwhelming as always.

"Hey, I managed a smile that didn't quite reach my eyes.

Morgan tilted her head, studying my face. "Rough night?"

"You could say that."

She linked her arm through mine, steering me toward the first shop. "Well today is going to be better. I need your help with something important."

"What's the mission?" I asked, letting her pull me along.

“Mom’s birthday is next week, and I need to find her something amazing. She grinned. If I get something Mom really loves, she might let me skip some chores for a week. Strategic gift-giving!”

For the next two hours, we wandered from store to store.

Morgan rejected a cashmere scarf (“Too generic), a leather handbag (Way over budget), and a set of artisanal bath products (She’s allergic to lavender”),

“Maybe we should take a break, I suggested after the sixth store.

My energy was flagging, but Morgan’s determination seemed inexhaustible.

“Just one more place, she promised, pointing to a boutique with elegant plays and subtle lighting. Moonlight Treasures. They have beautiful jewelry.”

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18:32 Fri, Feb 6 BBR

Chapter 27

The shop was quiet, with just a few customers browsing under the watchful eyes of immaculately dressed sales associates.

Morgan and I moved to a display case filled with necklaces.

“Oh my god, Tori, look!” Morgan whispered, pointing to a delicate silver necklace with a crescent moon pendant.

Small blue stones were set along the curve of the moon, catching the light

“It’s perfect. Mom loves anything with moons on it.”

I checked the price tag and winced. “It’s...a little steep.”

“If I use next week’s allowance, I think I can just barely afford it,” Morgan said, her eyes not leaving the necklace.

She waved to a sales associate. “Excuse me, could we see that necklace please?”

Just as the associate reached for the display case, a manicured hand shot out and snatched the necklace first.

“I’ll take this one,” a familiar voice announced.

59%

We turned to see Mia Price, her lips curled into a smug smile. She dangled the necklace in front of us, the pendant spinning and catching the light.

“Mia,” I said, my voice flat. “Morgan saw it first.”

“Did she?” Mia’s eyes widened in mock surprise.

“I didn’t realize there was a line for browsing.” She turned to the salesperson. “Gift wrap, please. And add it to my father’s account.”

Morgan stepped forward, her usually cheerful demeanor replaced by pure indignation.

“Put it back,” she growled, her voice dropping to a dangerous tone I rarely heard from her.

“That necklace is mine. I saw it first, and if you know what’s good for you you’ll hand it over right now.”

Mia laughed, the sound sharp and cutting.

“Please. I saw you checking the price tag. This store is a bit out of your league, isn’t it?”

Her gaze traveled from Morgan’s sensible boots to my secondhand jacket,

“Maybe try the discount stores on the lower level? They have cute plasticwelry that might be more...accessible for you both.”

Comments

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Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 28

Claimed by the Alpha's Love

Chapter 28

Tori's POV:

59%

I watched Morgan's face fall as Mia triumphantly shook the curtain of strings in her hand.

Something inside me snapped.

I was used to being Hannah's punching bag, used to Mia's petty cruelties directed at me. But watching her deliberately crush Morgan's hopes just to spite us-that was something I couldn't stand by and watch.

"Mia," I said, stepping between her and Morgan. "If you have a problem with me, fine. Deal with me directly. But leave my friend out of it."

Morgan's surprised gaze darted to my face, but I kept my eyes locked on Ma.

"This necklace is something she picked out carefully for her mom's birthday. It means something to her. Why not find something else? There's plenty of jewelry here."

I reached for the pendant, trying to take it back, but Mia quickly moved it away.

Mia's perfectly arched eyebrow rose.

"Figured it out, did you?" she said with a smirk. "Yes, I'm taking this specifically so you two can't have it. So what?"

I felt my hands ball into fists at my sides, my nails digging into my palms Tracy growled inside my mind.

Mia glanced down at my clenched fists and let out a delighted laugh.

"Oh my, is the little Omega actually getting angry?"

She twirled the necklace carelessly. "I guess the water I dumped on you didn't wash away your pride."

She leaned closer, her voice dropping to a stage whisper.

"What can you do then? Lock me in a bathroom and throw water on me like I did to you? Oh wait, you don't have the guts, do you?"

Before I could reply, Morgan's head snapped toward me, her eyes widening

"Wait-you were the one who locked her in the bathroom and dumped wat on her?"

Mia shrugged, examining her perfect manicure.

"So what if I did? What are you going to do about it? It's not like either of you can touch me."

Morgan's face flushed dark with anger. "This isn't just about the necklace anymore."

Before I could react, she lunged forward and grabbed a fistful of Mia's perfectly styled hair.

Mia let out a piercing scream.

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18:32 Fri, Feb 6 BBQ

Chapter 28

59%1

"Let go of me, you savage! How dare you touch me?" Her eyes found mine filled with fury. "Tori! Control your friend right now! I said make her stop!"

For a moment, I stood frozen.

Every instinct I'd developed over the years told me to defuse the situation to pull Morgan back, to apologize and retreat. That's what an Omega was supposed to do.

But something inside me rebelled against those old patterns. I was done with that.

Morgan was fighting for me, and it was time I fought too.

I stepped forward and grabbed Mia's wrist, preventing her from striking back at Morgan.

This time you picked on the wrong people," I said, my voice steady and clear. "You don't get to hurt my friend."

"You'll regret this!" Mia shrieked, flailing her arms as she tried to break free from Morgan's grip. Both of you will pay for this!"

"That's for locking Tori in the bathroom!" Morgan yanked again. And that's for the water!"

The sales associate gasped, backing away from the counter as the commotion grew louder. Other customers were staring now, some with phones raised.

Before things could escalate further, a thunderous voice cut through the chaos.

"STOP THIS RIGHT NOW!*

Everyone in the boutique froze.

Hannah Sullivan stood at the entrance, her face contorted with fury. Her expensive perfume couldn't mask the scent of her anger as she

marched toward us, the crowd parting before her.

Morgan immediately released Mia's hair, taking a step back as Mia ran crying into Hannah's arms.

"Mom! They attacked me! *

Hannah cradled Mia against her chest, stroking her hair while glaring daggers at me.

Shh, it's okay, sweetheart. I saw everything."

Her cold gaze shifted between Morgan and me, "What is wrong with you to? Attacking my daughter in public?"

Hannah ignored my status entirely, focusing instead on comforting Mia.

"We weren't- Morgan began, but Hannah cut her off.

'I don't care who you are or what your explanation is," Hannah snapped at Morgan "Stay away from Tori if you know what's good for you. Nothing but trouble follows that girl. She's poison."

Her cold gaze fixed on me.

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18:32 Fri, Feb 6 BGR.

Chapter 28

🔍 59%

And you haven't you caused enough problems? First you ruin Fiona's announcement ceremony, and now you're attacking Mia in public? Is there no end to your shameful behavior?"

Morgan stepped forward, her chin raised defiantly.

"Mrs. Sullivan, with all due respect, Mia grabbed the necklace I was going to buy for my mother's birthday. And did you know that on the day of the ceremony, Mia locked Tori in the bathroom and dumped water all over her?"

Her eyes narrowed as she delivered the final blow.

"It's interesting how you're always protecting someone else's daughter while treating your own flesh and blood like garbage."

A hush fell over the boutique. Several customers gasped quietly, and the sales associate's eyes widened in shock.

Hannah's face went chalk white before flushing crimson.

"How dare you speak to me that way," she hissed, her voice shaking. "You know nothing about our family situation."

"I know enough," Morgan replied, standing her ground.

Hannah turned to Mia, her voice suddenly gentle. "Darling, is what she's saying true? Did you lock Tori in the bathroom and pour water on

her?"

Mia's eyes filled with tears on command.

"Of course not, Mom. How could you even ask me that?" Her bottom lip trembled perfectly. "I would never do something so childish and cruel."

She's just making up stories. I was just looking at the necklace, and she attacked me out of nowhere."

Hannah nodded, satisfied with this answer, then turned back to us with cold fury in her eyes.

"You two have crossed a line today. Assaulting my daughter, spreading vicious lies..." She straightened her shoulders. "I'm going to invoke pack

law for this. The Council will hear about your behavior toward Mia and take action."

Comments

T Tammay H

Um witnesses and maybe cameras???

6 days ago

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Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 29

Claimed by the Alpha's Love

Chapter 29

Tori's POV:

I watched as Morgan's expression shifted from defiance to alarm.

The color drained from her face when Hannah mentioned invoking pack law.

"Pack law?" Morgan whispered, her earlier bravado evaporating. "They can... they wouldn't..."

I squeezed her arm gently, trying to steady her.

Morgan might be outspoken and brave, but she was still a teenager whose family depended on the good graces of powerful wolves.

Being involved in a formal pack complaint could jeopardize her family's position.

"It's okay," I murmured, then stepped forward to face Hannah directly.

"Are you really going to do this?" I asked Hannah, my voice steady despite the tension filling the room.

"A formal complaint doesn't just mean an investigation for us. Mia will face punishment too. The pack laws don't discriminate." I held her gaze, letting the implications sink in. "Is that what you want for your daughter?"

Tracy growled approvingly in my mind as I spoke. Nice move.

I watched Mia's eyes widen with sudden understanding.

She tugged at Hannah's sleeve, her previous crocodile tears forgotten.

"Mom," she whispered urgently. "Maybe we should just go. It's not worth all this drama over a stupid necklace."

Hannah looked between Mia and me, her jaw clenched tight.

"Fine," Hannah finally spat. "But don't think this is over, Tori."

She put a protective arm around Mia's shoulders, but couldn't resist throwing one last glare my way.

The shop fell silent after they departed, with the few remaining customers whispering behind their hands.

Morgan sagged against the display case. "Holy moonstone," she breathed. That was intense."

I nodded, suddenly feeling exhausted.

I glanced down and noticed something glinting on the floor.

Bending down, I picked up the silver moon pendant necklace that had fall during the scuffle. The delicate crescent caught the light, sending tiny rainbows dancing across my palm.

“Look what I found,” I said, holding it up for Morgan to see.

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59%

18:32 Fri, Feb 6 BGR

Chapter 29

Her eyes lit up. “The necklace!” She reached for it reverently, as if it might disappear. “I can’t believe it survived that whole mess.”

I placed it in her palm, closing her fingers around it. “Your mom is going love it.”

Morgan looked at the necklace and then at me, a slow smile spreading across her face.

“We kind of won that round, didn’t we?”

59%

I nodded, relief washing through me. “Thank you for standing up for me back there.”

“Are you kidding? That’s what friends do,” Morgan said, bumping my shoulder gently. “Besides, I wasn’t about to let Mia walk all over you again.”

We paid for our purchases and headed toward the exit.

My stomach growled audibly, reminding me we hadn’t eaten since breakfast.

“Let’s find somewhere to grab lunch,” I suggested.

Before Morgan could respond, a commotion near the plaza's central fountain caught our attention.

A small crowd had gathered, respectfully parting as a distinguished man walked through.

Morgan grabbed my arm. "Oh my god," she whispered.

"That's Alpha William Sullivan. The head of the Sullivan Pack."

I followed Morgan's gaze across the plaza, my eyes landing on the tall man who commanded such respect from the crowd around him.

Even from this distance, there was something commanding about him. Unlike Lucas Grayson's cold intimidation, William Sullivan radiated a

warmer kind of authority.

"He's here for the quarterly Alpha Summit," Morgan explained. "All four park Alphas meet to discuss city matters. It's a big deal-they only

happen four times a year."

How do you know all this?" I asked, glancing at her with curiosity.

Morgan grinned. "That's the perk of living on the Grayson estate. You get the juicy news first-hand."

She lowered her voice conspiratorially. "Lucas has been completely wrapped up in preparations for it lately, Jack says he's been in meetings till

midnight most days this week."

I nodded slowly, remembering how exhausted Lucas had looked when I saw him last night.

No wonder he'd seemed so weary.

Morgan sighed dreamily as she continued to watch Alpha William

'He still looks amazing for his age, doesn't he? So distinguished."

2/3

18:32 Fri, Feb 6 BBR

Chapter 29

She shook her head with a hint of sadness.

“It’s such a shame the Sullivan Pack doesn’t have an heir.”

↻ 5, 59%

“No heir?” I asked, curious despite myself. “Why not?”

Morgan’s voice dropped, taking on the tone she used for sharing particularly juicy gossip.

“They had a daughter once,” she said, her normally bright expression sobering.

“But she died in a car accident about twenty years ago.” She glanced around to make sure no one was listening.

“His mate, Susan—who is both the Luna of Sullivan pack and the Alpha of Shepherd Pack—was also in the car. She survived, but her injuries were devastating. Her legs were paralyzed, and…” Morgan hesitated, lowering her voice even further, “the damage was so severe she couldn’t have any more children.”

“That’s awful,” I murmured.

“It really is,” Morgan nodded solemnly. “They say Susan was never the same after losing her daughter. She went from being one of the strongest Alphas in Moonhaven to barely making public appearances. William had to take over most of the Shepherd Pack responsibilities.”

She sighed wistfully, watching William in the distance.

“Can you imagine how happy their daughter would be if she were still alive? The beloved princess of two powerful packs, with both Sullivan

and Shepherd blood.”

Morgan shook her head sadly. “And she would have been the sole heir to both packs.”

I felt a strange twist in my chest.

“Life is strange,” I murmured. “The children no one wants fight to survive, while the ones who are loved beyond measure are taken too soon.”

I looked at William’s distant figure, the weight of his loss somehow palpable even from here.

'Fate has a cruel sense of humor.'

Comments

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Write Comments

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Chapter 30

Tori's POV:

I stood there staring at William Sullivan's distant figure, feeling a strange emptiness wash over me.

"Earth to Tori!" Morgan waved her hand in front of my face, breaking my trance.

"You okay? You've been staring into space for like five minutes."

I blinked, trying to push away the heaviness in my chest. 'Sorry, just thinking.'

Morgan's expression softened.

"Well, stop thinking and start walking. I know this amazing place that makes the best moonberry tarts in all of Moonhaven."

She grabbed my arm, tugging me away from the plaza.

"Trust me, one bite and you'll forget all your problems."

The small café Morgan led me to was tucked away on a side street, its warm yellow lights glowing invitingly against the late afternoon shadows.

Inside, the scent of fresh pastries and spiced tea filled the air.

We found a quiet corner table, and Morgan immediately launched into an enthusiastic description of every item on the menu.

“We’ll take the moonberry tart and the cinnamon moon roll,” Morgan told the waitress with confidence. They’re absolutely the best-sellers here.”

When the waitress brought our order, Morgan leaned forward eagerly, her eyes fixed on my face.

“Try it! Try it!” she urged, practically bouncing in her seat as she waited for my reaction.

I took a small bite of the tart, the sweet-tart flavor exploding on my tongue. The buttery crust melted in my mouth, and I couldn’t help but close my eyes for a moment.

“Well?” Morgan demanded.

I nodded, taking another bite. “You weren’t exaggerating for once.”

“Hey! I never exaggerate, she protested, then immediately giggled. ‘Okay maybe sometimes.’

For a brief moment, I allowed myself to enjoy this—just being a normal teenager with a friend, eating sweets and laughing

No pack politics, no painful past, no uncertain future.

But then I glanced up and my blood froze.

Across the café, a pair of eyes burned into mine with pure, undiluted hate

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59%

18:32 Fri, Feb 6 BBR.

Chapter 30

Lisa Morris.

59%1

Noah's mother sat three tables away, her coffee forgotten as she stared at me with such venom I could almost feel it like a physical blow.

The same face that had screamed at me in the courtroom, demanding my execution rather than detention.

I forced myself to look away, my appetite vanishing instantly.

Maybe I shouldn't have left the dorm today after all, I thought grimly. The universe seemed determined to parade every ghost from my past in front of me.

I needed to get Morgan away from here-now.

Lisa Morris made Hannah look like a model of stability and restraint. The woman was practically unhinged with hatred, and I had no idea what she might do if she approached our table with Morgan present.

"Morgan," I said quietly, keeping my voice steady through sheer force of will. "I just remembered I have to pick up some supplies for class. Would you mind heading back first?"

Morgan frowned, clearly confused by my sudden change in mood.

"We could go together after we finish-"

"They're about to close soon. Plus, I might be a while choosing the right materials." I interrupted, the lie rolling off my tongue with surprising

ease.

“And you mentioned you have that assignment due tomorrow, right? You should get back and finish it.”

I hated lying to her, but keeping her safe from Lisa’s unpredictable rage was worth it.

“Are you sure? I don’t mind-

“I’m sure.” I managed a smile that felt brittle on my face. “Really, go ahead I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Morgan looked uncertain but eventually nodded.

“Okay, if you’re sure.” She gathered her things and stood. “Text me when you get back to the dorm, okay?”

I promised I would, watching her leave with a mixture of relief and guilt.

The moment the door closed behind her, I felt Lisa’s presence before I heard her. The chair across from me scraped against the floor as she sat down uninvited.