

Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 3

Chapter 3

Tori's POV:

25%.

With nowhere else to go after my release, I had returned to the Price household despite knowing I wasn't welcome.

The cold shoulders, dismissive glances, and whispered insults had become so routine that I barely registered them anymore-just another part

of daily life as the unwanted Omega in the family.

"Listen carefully, my mother Hannah had said yesterday, stirring her coffer with deliberate precision.

"If you're going to live under this roof and attend Moonridge High, you need to follow our rules." Her eyes had finally lifted to meet mine, cold

and unyielding.

"Alexander is willing to sponsor your education. The least you could do is show some gratitude by behaving properly and not embarrassing this

family further."

I simply nodded, unsurprised by her cold shoulder anymore.

Today, Hannah had instructed Lydia, our housekeeper, to "find somewhere appropriate" for me to stay.

"Come along, Miss Sullivan," Lydia said quietly as we climbed the grand staircase.

As an older shewolf with graying hair and kind eyes, Lydia had never been openly hostile toward me, which practically qualified as friendship

in this house.

We had just reached the second floor landing when a familiar scent hit me-citrus perfume layered over natural musk, with undertones of expensive fabric softener.

“What is she doing here?”

The voice sliced through the air like a razor.

Mia Price stood at the end of the hallway, arms crossed over her designer sweater, her blonde hair perfectly styled as always. She was Fiona's

sister.

“Miss Mia,” Lydia acknowledged with practiced deference. “Mrs. Price asked me to arrange accommodations for Miss Tori.”

Mia's eyes narrowed as she looked me over, her lips curling into a sneer.

“The killer actually has the nerve to come back.” Her words were aimed at Lydia, but her gaze remained fixed on me, deliberately ignoring my presence as a person while acknowledging me as a threat.

I kept my expression neutral, eyes lowered.

Mrs. Price requested- Lydia began.

“Fine,” Mia interrupted, waving her hand dismissively “Put her in the west wing corner 100m.”

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“The old groundskeeper's quarters? But Miss Mia, that hasn't been properly maintained in years. Even the staff quarters are in better-*

“This is still the Price house, isn't it?” Mia's tone sharpened. “My father pays your salary, not Hannah, and certainly not her Omega reject.”

She looked directly at me for the first time. “Just because I've accepted my father's new wife doesn't mean I have to accept you.”

“The west wing is fine,” I said quietly, more to spare Lydia the awkwardness than anything else.

Mia narrowed her eyes slightly, a look of satisfaction crossing her face at my compliance. At least you know your place.”

She turned and walked away, deliberately releasing a burst of her scent as she passed, an instinctual dominance behavior that made my wolf uncomfortable.

Lydia sighed once Mia was out of earshot.

“I’m sorry, Miss Sullivan. Perhaps we could speak to Mrs. Price about more suitable-”

“No,” I said firmly. “The west wing is fine. Really.”

I knew better than to expect Hannah to take my side in anything.

Lydia’s kind eyes filled with concern, but she nodded and led me through a series of increasingly neglected hallways.

The plush carpeting of the main house gradually gave way to worn hardwood, the elegant wallpaper replaced by chipped paint.

When we finally reached the door at the end of the servants’ corridor, Lydia produced an old brass key that looked like it belonged in a museum rather than a modern home.

The door creaked open to reveal a small, dusty room with a single window. The musty scent of abandonment flooded my sensitive nostrils, along with traces of rodents and mold.

A narrow bed with a sagging mattress stood against one wall, beside a wooden chair that had seen better decades. A small dresser with one missing drawer completed the furnishings. The attached bathroom was little more than a closet with ancient fixtures.

Lydia’s face flushed with embarrassment as she surveyed the dismal space.

“Miss Sullivan, this simply won’t do,” she said, wringing her hands. “Please let me speak with someone about finding you a more appropriate room. Even the staff quarters would be-”

“It’s fine,” I repeated, stepping inside and setting down my single duffel bag. I’ve lived in worse places.”

The detention facility cells had been smaller, colder, and shared with other prisoners who saw an Omega as fair game. This room, despite its state, offered something I hadn’t had in four years: privacy.

Lydia lingered in the doorway, conflicted. At least let me bring you some cleaning supplies and fresh linens.

I nodded, offering her a small smile that felt foreign on my face. "Thank you."

When she left, I sat on the edge of the bed, listening to the springs creak beneath me. Through the grimy window, I could see the edge of the woods that bordered the Price property-wild, untamed, inviting

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My wolf stirred beneath my skin, longing for a run we couldn't risk. Not yet. As part of my release conditions, I was prohibited from shifting for the first two months.

As if being locked away for four years wasn't punishment enough.

I looked around at what would be my home for the foreseeable future.

It wasn't much, but it was a starting point. And starting points were all I'd ever had.

After several hours of scrubbing, sweeping, and dusting, I'd managed to transform the space from uninhabitable to merely depressing.

My clothes were filthy, hair pulled back in a messy ponytail, and every inch of exposed skin covered in grime. My growling stomach reminded me I hadn't eaten since the meager breakfast I'd managed to grab before Hannah's morning lecture.

I checked the ancient clock on the wall-almost noon.

The main house would be busy with lunch preparations. Maybe I could slip into the kitchen, grab something quick, and retreat back to my sanctuary before anyone noticed.

No such luck.

As I made my way through the main hallway, voices drifted from the grand entrance.

Alexander Price's distinct baritone carried through the house-he was home early from work. I froze, debating whether to retreat, when I caught another scent that made my wolf snap to attention.

Alpha. Powerful. Unfamiliar.

Before I could slip away, Alexander and his guest rounded the corner. There was no escape now.

The next second, my breath caught in my throat as I found myself staring directly into the most striking blue-gray eyes.

These were the same eyes that had locked with mine at the bus station yesterday.

Deep as winter skies before a storm, they seemed to pull me in like a gravitational force. For a moment, I forgot everything-where I was, who I was, the dust covering my clothes.

I forced myself to look away, heart hammering against my ribs.

Alexander stopped abruptly when he saw me, his eyebrows drawing together at my appearance.

"Tori? What happened to you?"

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