

Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 4

Chapter 4

Tori's POV:

24%

Alexander's eyes swept over my dust-covered clothes with clear dissatisfaction.

Before I could answer, Lydia appeared with fresh linens.

She froze when she saw the gathering.

"Lydia, Alexander immediately addressed her. "Why does Tori look like shes been crawling through the attic?"

"Sir, I..." Lydia hesitated, clearly uncomfortable being caught between family members.

"Miss Mia suggested accommodating Miss Sullivan in the old quarters of the abandoned west wing. She's currently preparing the room.

Before the conversation could continue, Hannah appeared from around the corner.

Her eyes lit up instantly at the sight of Lucas Grayson, and she quickly approached with an eager smile, seemingly oblivious to the tension in the hallway.

"Alpha Lucas! What a delightful surprise," she gushed, smoothing down her already immaculate silk blouse."I had no idea you were visiting today."

Lucas nodded politely, his expression polite but reserved. "Mrs. Price."

I froze at the name. Lucas. As in Lucas Grayson, Alpha of the Grayson Pack The most powerful werewolf in Moonhaven?

Lucas met my gaze and asked Hanna, "Who's this? I thought you only had two daughters."

Hannah blinked, finally noticing my dust-covered presence. Her smile faltered, a flicker of displeasure crossing her features before she composed herself.

"Oh," she said, her tone cooling noticeably. "This is Tori, my daughter from my previous relationship."

She emphasized 'previous' as if it were a disease. "She's recently returned to us after... some time away."

Hannah's eyes narrowed as she glanced between Lucas and me.

I hope she hasn't offended you in some way, Alpha? *

"Not at all, Lucas replied smoothly, though his gaze lingered on me with an intensity.

"However, it seems you have some household matters to address."

Something dangerous flashed in his eyes-a primal response quickly suppressed.

He maintained his Alpha composure, only the slight flare of his nostrils betraying his agitation

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Alexander's face flushed with embarrassment as he glanced at the imposing figure beside him.

His jaw tightened. "Find Mia and bring her here. Immediately."

The familiar click of Mia's heels announced her arrival, soon.

24%

"You are back, Daddy?" Her voice was honey-sweet until she noticed me. Her eyes widened in theatrical surprise. "Tori! What happened to you?"

The performance was so convincing I almost applauded.

"Would you care to explain why Tori is living in the abandoned west wing Alexander asked, his tone carefully controlled.

Mia's expression shifted to innocent confusion.

"The west wing? I never said she should stay there."

Lydia's face paled. "But Miss Mia, you specifically said-"

"I would never put anyone in those awful old rooms," Mia interrupted, her eyes wide with false sincerity. "Honestly, Lydia, how could you think I'd be so cruel?"

"Miss Mia, please," Lydia's voice trembled with urgency. "I would never make such decisions on my own."

Mia turned to her father, eyes wide with manufactured innocence.

"Daddy, you know I would never do something like that!"

Before Alexander could even react, Hannah instantly assessed the situation and stepped forward, her eyes flashing with protective maternal instinct-not for me, of course, but for Mia.

"That's enough," Hannah said, her voice sharp as she pointed at Lydia. "Pack your things and leave immediately. We don't tolerate liars in this house."

Lydia's face crumpled.

She bent her head and tilted it slightly to expose her neck-a submissive gesture among our kind, especially when a higher-ranking wolf issues a command.

"Please, Mrs. Price," Lydia whispered, her voice trembling. "I have three pups at home. I need this job."

"You should have thought about that before lying about my daughter," Hanah replied coldly.

I hadn't planned to get involved.

But watching Lydia-who'd shown me nothing but kindness since my return-about to lose her livelihood over Mia's lies ignited something inside me

"She's not lying." I said, my voice quiet but firm.

All eyes turned to me. I was lete when Mia gave the instruction."

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Hannah's eyes narrowed dangerously. "Tori, I don't appreciate you making things worse."

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"I'm not trying to make things worse," I continued, summoning courage. And honestly, I don't mind the room. I've already cleaned most of it, and it's perfectly fine for my needs."

Lydia gave me a grateful look, her eyes shining with unshed tears.

"Of course they're backing each other up," Mia interjected, her voice dripping with false innocence. "They're obviously in this together. She's just an Omega servant, and Tori's-

"The security cameras, Lydia interrupted, her voice still respectful but steadier now.

"The hallway outside Miss Mia's room has a security camera. It would have recorded our conversation."

The color drained from Mia's face.

Her mouth opened and closed without sound, like a fish suddenly finding itself on dry land.

"I... that's ridiculous," she finally managed, but the confidence had evaporated from her voice. "Daddy, you can't possibly believe-

Alexander cleared his throat, his eyes narrowing as he looked at Mia.

He seemed to understand exactly what had happened, seeing through his daughter's performance with paternal clarity.

"Mia," he said, his tone measured but firm, "you will apologize to Tori right now."

Mia's mouth fell open. "What? Daddy, you can't be serious! I'm not apologizing to an Omega!" She spat the last word like it was poison on her tongue.

"I am completely serious," Alexander replied, his tone brooking no argument.

Mia's eyes widened with indignation. "I will never apologize to her."

"Mia." Alexander's voice cut through her protest like a knife. "Now. You're grounded for a month. No moon stones."

Moon stones-the currency that fueled our society and gave young wolves the ability to purchase luxuries. For someone like Mia, who thrived on shopping sprees and social outings, this was a devastating punishment.

“This is so unfair!” Mia shouted, tears welling in her eyes. “Who is your real daughter, Dad? HER or ME?”

She pointed an accusing finger at me before storming up the stairs.

Hannah turned to Alexander, her expression hardened.

“You’re being too harsh on Mia. If anyone’s to blame, it’s this ungrateful Omega. She gestured toward me without even looking in my direction. “She should know her place and not cause trouble.”

I felt a flicker of irony at my mother’s words. Even when my stepfather to my side, she still managed to oppose me. Hannah Sullivan would never stand with her daughter.

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She gave me a sharp glance and whispered, “Know your place.”

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Throughout the entire exchange, I was acutely aware of Lucas Grayson watching with those penetrating blue-gray eyes, taking in every word. every reaction, every power dynamic at play in the Price household.

His ice-blue eyes were fixed on Hannah, and I could feel waves of disapproval emanating from him.

His wolf-whose name I didn’t know-was clearly agitated, a low rumble seemingly filling the space between us though he made no sound.

Hannah must have sensed it too, because she suddenly straightened, her expression shifting to one of forced politeness.

Alpha Lucas," she said with an artificial smile, please accept my apologies for this unfortunate family display."

She gestured toward the formal sitting room. "Let us move somewhere more comfortable to discuss Ethan and Fiona's mating ceremony arrangements. I've prepared refreshments."

Sensing my opportunity to escape, I quickly gathered my remaining belongings.

"I should go to school," I said, eager to escape the tension. Without waiting for a response, I quickly walked out the door.

Thirty minutes later.

I stood in front of Moonridge High School's administration office. Mrs. Sarah Blake, my assigned homeroom teacher, greeted me with

unexpected warmth.

"Tori Sullivan," she said, smiling as she reviewed my file. "Your academic records from before are quite impressive. Especially in moon cycle

studies.

I nodded, unsure how to respond to praise after so long without it.

Moon cycle calculation was a highly valued skill in werewolf society-the ability to precisely predict how the lunar phases affected our strength and abilities could mean the difference between victory and defeat in challenges or optimal timing for important ceremonies.

"Let me show you around," she offered, guiding me through the hallways of Moonridge High. Other students stared as we passed.

When we reached the cafeteria, Mrs. Blake explained the lunch system. "You'll need to load moon stones onto your student card.

I hesitated. "... don't have any moon stones right now."

Understanding flickered across her face. She reached into her pocket and pressed ten small, luminescent stones into my palm.

"This should get you through the first week," she said quietly. "The school has assistance programs for students in your situation."

"Thank you," I whispered, clutching the stones.

Hannah hadn't given me a single moon stone for living expenses-not that had expected her to.

Unlike Mia, who received a generous weekly allowance, I would need to fend for myself. The ten stones Mis. Blake had given me wouldn't last

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long, and I couldn't keep accepting charity. I needed to find work, and quickly.

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After submitting applications at over a dozen places, I quickly discovered How few establishments were willing to hire an Omega, especially one

with my history.

Just when I was about to give up, I finally landed a position at "Moonlight Shadow," a café in Howling Plaza that catered to mixed-rank

clientele.

The manager, an older wolf named Greg, had initially seemed hesitant until I demonstrated my calculation abilities by rapidly totaling complex orders with percentage discounts.

He'd raised his eyebrows, clearly impressed.

"An Omega with calculation skills like yours is rare," he'd said, offering me the job on the spot. "You'll be useful during rush hours when the register gets backed up. Come to work after school."

I nodded gratefully. It was perfect-I could attend school during the day and work evening shifts until closing.

The less time I spent at the Price household, the better.

No one there wanted me around anyway, so my absence would benefit everyone. I could slip in late at night, sleep a few hours, and leave before anyone woke up.

What I didn't realize then was how dangerous nighttime could be for a lone Omega.

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How did Tori go from being dusty and dirty to being ready to go to school?

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