

Claimed by the Alpha's Love

Love Demands Real Courage

Chapter 61

Tori's POV:

458%

I woke to the sound of hushed voices near my hospital bed.

My eyelids felt heavy, still clinging to the remnants of the deepest sleep.

As consciousness returned, I recognized my grandmother's soft, weathered voice asking a question.

So, young man, what exactly is your relationship with my granddaughter

My eyes snapped open. Grandmother was here? And who was she talking to? I turned my head slightly and froze at the sight before me.

Alpha Lucas Grayson sat on the edge of the visitor's cot, his dark hair tousled from sleep, looking directly at my grandmother.

The morning sunlight streaming through the half-drawn curtains cast a golden glow around him, adding a softness that diminished his usually overwhelming Alpha presence.

He hadn't yet noticed I was awake.

"Grandmother? My voice came out as a croak.

Both heads turned toward me immediately. My grandmother's face lit up with a warm smile that crinkled the corners of her eyes.

"Tori, dear!" Grandmother moved to my bedside.

"I didn't mean to wake you," she continued, patting my hand.

"I was just having a little chat with this gentleman who was keeping watch over you. Her eyes twinkled with curiosity as she glanced back at

Lucas.

I struggled to sit up, wincing as pain shot through my injured leg.

My mind was spinning with questions. How long had my grandmother been here? What had Lucas told her? Why was he still here?

"This is Alpha Lucas Grayson, I explained quickly, afraid that Grandma would misunderstand something "He's Ethan's uncle. Ethan was the one who... who shielded me from the steam yesterday."

Oh! Hello, I'm Toris grandma. You can call me Grandma Eileen Grandher's expression changed to one of deep gratitude

I must thank you, Alpha. Your nephew saved my granddaughter from much worse injuries

Lucas nodded curtly Ethan did what any decent well would do

I caught his eye and tried to communicate silently that he should leave

This situation was already awkward sigh without having to explain to grandma way on ipha had spent the night in hospital

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Lucas raised an eyebrow, clearly catching my meaning. For a brief moment something like amusement flickered across his face

"I should check on Ethan," he said, rising to his feet in one fluid motion Grandma Eileen, it was a pleasure to meet w

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The ease with which he addressed my grandmother so familiarly caught me off guard. Even more surprising was my grandmother's delighted

response

“Oh, you too, Alpha Lucas. Do stop by again if you have time, she replied her eyes twinkling with warmth.

I stared at their exchange, feeling strangely like I was the outsider.

The moment the door closed behind him, my grandmother turned to me with bright, inquisitive eyes.

“How old is he?” she asked without preamble.

I blinked in surprise. “What?”

“That Alpha. He seems quite young.”

“Thirty-one. I think, I mumbled. “Why does it matter?”

“Does he have a mate? A Luna?” She continued as if I hadn’t spoken.

“Grandmother?” I protested, heat flooding my cheeks. “Please don’t try to play matchmaker. It’s embarrassing”

“What?” She blinked innocently. “I’m just making conversation. Why are you getting so flustered?”

I lowered my voice, even though Lucas had already left.

“He’s an Alpha of one of the four founding packs. We’re not even in the same social universe. Besides, I spent four years in Silver Fang No Alpha would ever consider someone with my background.”

My grandmother’s smile dimmed slightly. Her expression softened with understanding and compassion

She smoothly changed the subject, “Didn’t you say you were craving my homemade strawberry jam and toast? I brought some this morning

She reached for the small container on the bedside table and opened it, easing the sweet scent of fresh besties

Try it and tell me if it’s sweet enough.”

I remembered how I’d practically forced her to leave last night. I’d been ried about her spending the night in that wemastertabia that wi

her arthritis. I'd insisted she go home, using the excuse that I was craving homemade jam for breakfast.

I took a bite of the toast she offered, closing my eyes at the familiar taste that brought back memories of safe, simple time

It's perfect just like always

I'm glad you still enjoy it, she said, smiling and gesturing to a glass jar on the windowsill. I ate that whole thing

"Thank you." I said, genuinely touched by her thoughtfulness

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I'll be heading back today, she continued, her expression turning regretful. Janet is alone with Anna, and you know how that child needs

constant supervision."

I nodded, feeling the familiar tug of sadness at her impending departure, but also relief. Having her stay in Moonhaven, especially around

people like Fiona and Mia, would only put her at risk.

The Price family had already proven how far they were willing to go.

"It's better that way, I said quietly. I wouldn't want you caught up in... everything here."

"You should come visit when you can," she said, patting my hand. Janet doesn't blame you, you know. For what happened. She just....." Her voice

trailed off.

"I know," I replied quickly, sparing her from having to explain.

We never spoke directly about it, but I understood. Every time Aunt Janet looked at me, she would think of Ryan. We were once the source of

laughter in this family, but now it was a constant reminder of her loss.

I'd been avoiding that house, those memories, just as much as Janet might have been avoiding me.

"I'll visit during the next school break, I promised, surprising myself with how much I meant it. I should see Anna too. She must have grown so much."

"Oh, that would be wonderful!" Grandmother's face lit up.

"And you know, Mrs. White's grandson-Andrew-will be home then too. Such a nice young male. I could introduce you two while you're visiting."

I pressed my hand to my forehead, unable to hide my exasperation.

"Grandmother, please. I'm still in school,"

She patted my hand. "Of course, dear. But it's good to keep your options open. You need some time to test the waters, find someone suitable."

I knew what she meant. In our world, age was a significant factor for Omegas. The older we got, the less desirable we became as potential mates.

My four years in Silver Fang had already reduced my "value" in the eyes of many.

After seeing Grandmother off, I had an unexpected visitor-the manager from Moonlight Restaurant.

He apologized profusely for the 'unfortunate incident, offering compensation and car service during my recovery.

When he not so subtly asked me to mention their excellent response topha Grayson, I immediately understood this was heading

After he left, I sat staring at my phone for several minutes before finally then the courage to dial to ask him

He picked up on the second ring

“Ton?” His voice carried surprise but also immediate concern t

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Tori's POV:

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Yes, everything's fine, I replied, clutching my phone tighter.

Lucas's voice on the other end sounded concerned, making something flutter in my chest that I quickly suppressed.

I just wanted to let you know the restaurant manager visited me.”

“Did he?” Lucas's tone shifted to something cooler, more controlled.

“Yes. He apologized for the unfortunate incident and offered compensation. I paused, gathering my courage. “Was that your doing?”

“Are you happy with the arrangement?” he asked, neatly sidestepping my question.

I hesitated, uncertain how to respond.

The money would help with Grandmother's medicine, but accepting it felt like acknowledging a debt to an Alpha I barely knew.

“Thank you,” I finally said, my voice soft.

“I need to get back to some business matters,” Lucas replied, his tone professional yet somehow still warm. “Call me if you need anything. Anytime.”

After we hung up, I stared at my phone for a long moment.

This connection between us was becoming increasingly complicated. Despite all my efforts to maintain independence, I was beginning to rely on him in ways I hadn't anticipated or wanted.

I set my phone down with a sigh.

The next time we met face to face, I needed to have a serious conversation with him about... whatever this was. Clear boundaries had to be established before I found myself in too deep with an Alpha whose true intentions remained a mystery.

The next morning, my leg throbbing dully beneath its bandages, I made my way to Ethan's room.

The nurse had told me he'd been asking about me, and despite my reluctance, I felt I owed him a visit. He had, after all, shielded me with his own body.

When I knocked and entered, Ethan was propped up in bed, his torso and arms heavily bandaged

The sharp, antiseptic smell in the room couldn't mask the underlying stench of burnt flesh and silver poisoning, knowing each other that felt.

His face lit up when he saw me, his expression momentarily vanishing behind a

"Tori! You came?"

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Movement in the corner drew my attention.

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Fiona sat in a visitor's chair, a fashion magazine open in her lap. Her smile didn't reach her eyes, which glittered with something dangerous.

"I wanted to thank you," I said to Ethan, keeping a respectful distance from his bed. "The doctor said you took the worst of the burns."

"It was nothing," he replied, though the tightness around his mouth told a different story. Silver burns were excruciating.

"How are you feeling?" Fiona asked, her voice dripping with artificial sweetness.

"That nasty burn on your leg must be painful."

"It's healing," I replied simply.

“I was so worried,” Ethan said, trying to sit up straighter and wincing. When I saw that steam coming toward you-

“You did more than enough, I interrupted gently but firmly. I appreciate t, but please don’t feel obligated to worry about me anymore.”

His face fell, understanding my meaning perfectly. Whatever had existed between us belonged to the past.

Fiona’s eyes narrowed fractionally, her fingers tightening on her magazine

“I should let you rest,” I said, backing toward the door. “I hope you recover quickly.”

“Tori, wait- Ethan started, but I was already slipping out the door.

I made it halfway down the corridor before Fiona caught up to me, her heels clicking rapidly against the polished floor.

“Tori, dear!” she called, as if we were still best friends. A moment?”

I turned reluctantly. “What is it, Fiona?”

“I just wanted to check on you,” she said, smoothing her perfectly styled air. “With everything happening, I haven’t had a chance to discuss Hannah’s condition with you.”

My body tensed. “What about it?”

“Well, the doctors say it’s a high-risk pregnancy at her age,” she sighed dramatically. I thought perhaps you, as her daughter, might want to visit her. Show some concern.”

Her emphasis on ‘daughter’.

“How thoughtful of you,’ I replied, keeping my expression blank. ‘Especially considering you tried to slip me an abortifacient herb at the party to use on my own mother.’”

Fiona’s smile froze, her eyes widening fractionally. ‘I don’t know what-

I’ve spent four years gathering herbs in Silver Fang, I cut her off. Did think I wouldnt recognize woltshang and most mixed with tea? Did you think I’d be stupid enough to give it to Hannah without knowing what it was?

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Her mask slipped, revealing the cold calculation beneath.

“You can’t prove anything.”

‘I don’t need to. We both know the truth. I stepped closer, lowering my ice.

‘I’m not the same girl you manipulated four years ago, Fiona. I see you now. Every move, every lie.”

Without waiting for her response, I turned and walked away, my steps stely despite the pain in my leg.

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Four weeks later, the lunar cycle had completed a full turn.

The scabs on my leg had fallen away, leaving a pinkish scar that would face with time.

Principal Wilson had called me to his office three times in the past two weeks, making it clear the school expected me to represent them in the

upcoming provincial lunar calculation competition.

“Your preliminary scores are the highest we’ve seen in decades,” he d emphasized during our last meeting.

I understood the subtext. A successful student would bring prestige to Moonridge High.

I was heading to my dormitory when my phone vibrated with a message from Lucas:

South gate, 4:30.

Brief and commanding, typical Alpha communication.

I realized this would be our first time seeing each other since that awkward morning at the hospital with my grandmother. Lucas had left for a business trip after that, and we hadn t been in the same room for weeks.

Something fluttered in my stomach-nervousness? Anticipation? I quickly pushed the feeling aside, telling myself it was merely the natural response to encountering a powerful Alpha after an absence.

I took a deep breath, forcing my heartbeat to slow.

This had to stop. Whatever this thing was between Lucas and me, I needed to end it before I found myself trapped in emotions I couldn't

control.

Better to cut ties now, while I could still walk away with my heart intact.

Comments

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Tori's POV:

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I tugged my new down coat tighter around me as the winter air bit at my exposed skin.

The jacket had been my one indulgence with part of the restaurant compensation money-a long, insulated parka that actually kept me warm...

The rest of the funds went straight to Grandmother's account.

As I approached the gate, I spotted Lucas himself leaning against his sleek black car.

My wolf, Tracy, stirred with interest inside me.

Down, girl, I mentally chided her.

Lucas straightened when he saw me, his blue eyes appraising me with that unsettling intensity.

“Your wrists,” he said without preamble, taking my hand before I could react.

His warm fingers encircled my wrist, which did indeed look thinner than it had a month ago. “You’ve lost weight. Haven’t you been eating properly?”

I pulled my hand back, uncomfortable with how my skin tingled where he touched me. “I eat fine,” I said, though my voice lacked conviction.

His jaw tightened. “We’ll discuss that later. The appointment with Elena is in twenty minutes.”

I blinked in surprise. “Appointment? What appointment?”

“Your follow-up check-up,” Lucas said matter-of-factly, opening the passenger door for me. “Elena messaged that your last batch of herbs should be finished by now. She needs to reassess your condition.”

I stood frozen for a moment.

Lucas had just returned from a “super important business trip, and the first thing he’d done was arrange a medical appointment for me?”

As we pulled away from the school, I snuck glances at his profile.

He looked tired, with faint shadows under his eyes suggesting he hadn’t slept well during his trip. Yet here he was, personally driving me to see Elena instead of sending Jack,

I didn’t know what to make of this-of him.

Elena, the silver-haired healer with piercing silver eyes, received us in her Consultation room

She checked my energy pathways, examined the color of my eyes in different lighting, and asked detailed questions about my symptoms,

“Your spirit and wolf connection has improved since your last visit, she ally declared I will prepare a stronger rensely this time

I nodded, grateful for her expertise.

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Elena glanced toward Lucas, who stood silently against the far wall.

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“Alpha,” she said with a polite smile, would you mind giving us a few minutes of privacy? There are some female-specific aspects I need to

discuss with Tori.”

Lucas’s eyes narrowed slightly, but he nodded. “I’ll wait in the reception area.”

As soon as the door closed behind him, Elena turned to me with a knowing look that made me uncomfortable.

“Your energy is stronger when he’s near you,” she said quietly. “Did you notice that?”

I frowned. “What do you mean?”

“The pathways between your human and wolf sides flow more naturally in his presence.” Elena moved closer, her voice dropping. “Your healing would progress much faster if you spent more time with Alpha Grayson.”

Heat rushed to my face. “You misunderstand. We’re not...” I trailed off, suddenly unsure how to define what we actually were.

Acquaintances seemed too distant. Friends didn’t quite fit either. Benefactor and charity case? The thought made me wince.

“We don’t have that kind of relationship,” I finally said, though the words sounded hollow even to my own ears.

Elena raised a silver eyebrow. “And what kind of relationship do you have?”

“He’s just... I gestured vaguely, “helping me. Temporarily.”

Elena shrugged, seemingly unbothered by my denial. “The body doesn’t lie Tori. And neither does the wolf. But you’ll understand in your own time.”

She turned away to prepare a small pouch of herbs.

“It’s not my place to interfere,” Elena continued, handing me the pouch. But as your healer, I recommend more time stay with him.”

A smile played at her lips as she added in a whisper, “It’s just a matter of time anyway.”

I took the herbs with a nod and stopped arguing. Elena called Lucas back in, gave him a few instructions about the dosage, and we said our goodbyes.

As we walked back to the car, Lucas glanced at me.

“What did Elena want to discuss in private?”

I hesitated, debating whether to share Elena’s strange advice.

Part of me wanted to keep it to myself, but another part—the part that was tired of secrets and half truths—pushed me toward honesty.

“She said my energy pathways flow better when you’re nearby, I finally admitted, watching his reaction carefully. She recommended I spend more time with you. For healing purposes.

I expected surprise, confusion, maybe even discomfort. Instead, Lucas’s curved into a subtle smile, satisfaction gleaming in his eyes.

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“Elena is very perceptive,” he said, opening the car door for me. I agree with her assessment.

I stared at him, puzzled by his calm acceptance.

“Why would you agree? Don’t you find it strange that she’s basically prescribing your company as medicine?”

Lucas's expression remained unreadable as he walked around to the driver's side and slid in beside me.

He didn't start the car immediately. Instead, he turned to face me, his silver eyes studying my face with an intensity that made my head

faster.

Several seconds passed in silence before he finally sighed, a sound so soft almost missed it.

"One day, you'll understand," he said, his voice low and controlled.

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Frustration bubbled up inside me at his cryptic non-answer. Always these vague statements, these hints at something I wasn't privy to. I was tired of feeling like I was stumbling blindly through a game whose rules everyone but me understood.

I took a deep breath, gathering my resolve.

This needed to be said. We weren't even from the same world—he was an Alpha from one of the most powerful packs, and I was an Omega with a criminal record and no pack protection. Whatever this was between us, couldn't lead anywhere good.

Alpha, I think we should—

I made the mistake of looking up and meeting his gaze directly.

The intensity in those eyes stole the words from my throat. There was something there—something powerful and unguarded—that made my

carefully prepared speech evaporate.

"You should what?" he prompted when I fell silent.

I swallowed hard, my courage deserting me. "Nothing. It's fine."

He studied me for another moment before turning away to start the car.

Tracy whined inside me, sensing my unease.

I'll text him later, I told myself as we pulled away from the clinic. It'll be easier to maintain my resolve when I'm not sitting next to him, drowning

in his scent and presence.

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Chapter 64

Lucas's POV:

I watched Tori from the corner of my eye as we drove away from Elena's nic.

Her hands were folded tightly in her lap, her gaze fixed somewhere outside the window.

The silence between us was heavy with unspoken thoughts. She'd tried to say something earlier, but then she'd looked at me directly whatever courage she'd mustered had evaporated.

"We should get dinner," I said, checking the time on the dashboard. "It's getting late."

Tori's mouth opened slightly, likely to refuse, but I cut her off before she could.

"You still have to tutor Leo tonight. You'll need your strength."

I kept my tone matter-of-fact, giving her no room to argue as I pulled into the parking lot of Silvermoon.

“Be good,” I added, allowing the slightest hint of Alpha command to color my words.

Her eyes flashed with brief hesitation before she nodded silently

Dinner was a quiet affair.

I ordered for both of us, choosing dishes rich in protein and nutrients that would help her recovery. She ate methodically, taking small,

measured bites.

When we finished, I drove us back to the Grayson estate.

The grounds were quiet in the evening light, the security gates opening automatically as my car approached. We drove up the long driveway

toward the main house.

Arabella lives in the east wing. I parked near a smaller but elegant building connected to the main residence.

As we walked toward the entrance, the door flew open and Leo bounded out, stopping short when he saw us.

His small face lit up with recognition.

“Uncle Lucas!” he exclaimed.

I felt my expression soften as I approached him.

Leo was only six, but already carried himself with the careful dignity of a rayson. I reached down and swept him up into my arms, feeling his small body relax at the contact.

Have you been good for your mother? I asked, my voice gentler than mos

Leo nodded solemnly. “Yes, I finished all my reading assignments.

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“That’s my boy.” I ruffled his hair, noticing how his eyes darted curiously toward Tori, who was watching our interaction with surprise evident on her face.

Leo’s eyes widened slightly when he spotted Tori standing behind me.

He straightened his posture and offered a small, polite bow. “Ms Sullivan,

Before Tori could answer, Arabella appeared in the doorway, her expression shifting from casual welcome to surprise when she saw us together

“Lucas? Tori? I wasn’t expecting you both to arrive together,” she said, glancing between us with undisguised curiosity.

Tori quickly shook her head.

“We just happened to run into each other.”

I kept my expression neutral, though I noticed the slight flush on Tori’s cheeks as she emphasized the coincidental nature of our arrival.

Arabella’s lips curved into a knowing smile as she nodded, clearly seeing right through the explanation.

“Of course, Arabella said, her tone suggesting she didn’t believe it was mere coincidence but was willing to play along. “How... fortunate.”

Tori shifted uncomfortably under my sister’s perceptive gaze.

“I should probably get started with Leo’s lesson,” she said, turning to the boy with forced brightness in her voice. ‘Ready to learn some math,

Leo?

Leo nodded, and Tori quickly ushered him toward the stairs, clearly eager to escape further questioning about our arrival together.

As Tori led Leo inside, Arabella turned to me with a knowing look. "Let's chat?"

"Fine," I answered, following her through the house to a tastefully decorated office that reflected her artistic sensibilities.

Once the door closed behind us, Arabella wasted no time. "So, when are you planning to tell her?"

I raised an eyebrow. "Tell her what?"

"Don't play dumb, Lucas. She rolled her eyes.

Comments

T Tammy H

Ha its so obvious to everyone

5 days ago

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The fated mate thing. I've helped bring her right into our territory, into our home. What's your next move?"

I sank into one of the leather armchairs, choosing my words carefully. She not ready and she is still in school."

"And you're not getting any younger, Arabella countered, pouring two glasses of bourbon.

I never thought I'd see the day when my Alpha brother would become smitten with a high school girl. Quite the cradle robber, aren't we?

I accepted the drink but fixed her with a cold stare. 'She's twenty-one.'

That gave Arabella pause. "Twenty-one? But she's in high school."

"She had taken some time away from school. I explained.

Arabella raised an eyebrow, clearly curious but did not press further.

"Well," Arabella sighed, settling into the chair opposite mine, "but you need to be gentle with her, Lucas. No more of your usual cold, commanding Alpha routine. Nobody likes your icy face."

I didn't respond.

"How are Ethan and Fiona?" Arabella asked, changing the subject. "Has he gotten over that prison girlfriend yet?"

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The image of Fiona sitting soundly asleep by Ethan's hospital bed flashed through my mind. "They seem fine. She was quite attentive when he was injured.

Arabella made a noncommittal sound.

"I suppose that's good. Though by my calculation, that girl should be out by now."

She took a sip of her drink, studying me over the rim of her glass. "Let's hope they don't cross paths again. Ethan was absolutely destroyed when she went away."

I felt my jaw tighten as an unwelcome memory surfaced-Ethan standing in my office with desperation etched across his face.

"Uncle Lucas Ethan had looked up at me, his eyes red-rimmed from sleepless nights. "Why won't you help her?"

"The question had hung between us, heavy with accusation. Lisa Morris had been using her connections to ensure no reputable pack advocate would defend Tori,

"If you would just intervene... she wouldn't get such a harsh sentence. She didn't do anything wrong-she was only defending herself, he had plentes,

I'd looked at my nephew coldly, unmoved by his distress. "She's just an irrelevant person," Ed replied indifferently. Not worth our concern

A soft knock on the door interrupted our conversation.

I looked up to see Tori standing in the doorway, with Leo hovering just behind her

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"We've finished today's lesson,' she said, her voice quiet and professional

After saying our goodbyes to Leo and arranging the next tutoring session walked with Tori toward the front door.

Arabella followed, her eyes dancing with amusement.

I should get you home," I said to Tori, reaching for my car keys.

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Arabella leaned close to me as Tori stepped outside, whispering with undisguised mirth, "It's like watching a romance between a loli and an

man

I shot her a warning glare, but she only grinned wider.

"You've practically become her personal chauffeur," she continued, clearly enjoying my discomfort.

"Good night, Arabella," I said coldly, closing the door on her knowing smile.

The drive to the dormitory was quiet, with Tori staring out the window for most of the journey.

When we arrived, I pulled up directly in front of the entrance and put the car in park.

“Thank you for the ride,” Tori said politely, already reaching for the door handle before I’d fully stopped the car.

I watched her disappear through the doors with a mixture of amusement and frustration.

Apparently, being someone’s chauffeur doesn’t earn much gratitude, I thought helplessly.

Duke huffed within me. She’s scared.

Not scared, I corrected silently. Cautious. There’s a difference.

Still, I remained parked until I saw a light come on in what I knew was her window, then finally drove away.

Comments

T Tammy H

Ha its so obvious to everyone

5 days ago

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Chapter 66

Tori’s POV:

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I closed my dorm room door behind me, leaning against it with a deep exhale.

The scent of Lucas still clung to my clothes from the car ride.

It was becoming harder to ignore how my wolf Tracy perked up whenever he was near, a reaction I couldn't understand or control.

I couldn't keep putting this off.

I grabbed my phone and opened a new message to Lucas. I needed to set clear boundaries between us. My fingers hovered over the keyboard, struggling to find the right words that wouldn't sound ungrateful after all his help.

Before I could type anything, my phone screen lit up with Morgan's incoming call."

"Hey, I answered.

"Tori! I've been thinking," Morgan's voice bubbled with excitement. "Finals are next week, and then we have winter break. What are your plans?"

I sat on my bed, considering the question. "I promised my grandmother I'd visit her."

"What? Does that mean I won't see you for the entire break?" Her disappointment was palpable even through the phone.

"I haven't been back for a long time, Morgan. She's not well."

"I understand," she sighed dramatically.

"But before you go, we should celebrate surviving finals! There's this new club called Enchanted that everyone's talking about-

"No," I cut her off firmly. "Absolutely not."

"Come on, Tori! Live a little!"

"Morgan, clubs are dangerous for young wolves, especially female like you. There are males who prey on-

"Not every male is a predator, she protested.

One bad encounter is all it takes,' I said quietly, memories of Noah Morris and that night four years ago flashing through my mind. Promise me you won't go alone."

'Fine,' she groaned. "You're missing out on all the fun."

We talked about finals for a while before hanging up.

I tried to focus on studying, but my mind kept drifting between Lucas's stnge behavior and Morgan's recklessness

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The harsh ring of my phone jolted me awake.

The digital clock read 1:42 AM.

"Hello?" I answered groggily.

"Is this Tori?" a male voice I didn't recognize asked.

"Yes. Who's this?"

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'Look, your friend Morgan is drunk at Enchanted Club. She keeps saying our name, and I found your number in her phone. You should come get her before she gets into trouble."

My blood ran cold. I'll be right there."

I threw on jeans and a hoodie, grabbed my wallet, and rushed out.

Twenty minutes later, I stood outside the club.

Bass-heavy music pulsed from within, and the mingled scents of alcohol, perfume, and pheromones assaulted my sensitive nose.

I steeled myself and pushed through the entrance.

Inside was chaos—flashing lights, dancing bodies, and the overwhelming cacophony of heartbeats, conversations, and music.

I forced myself to focus, filtering through the sensory overload to search for Morgan’s familiar scent of honeysuckle and sunshine.

I found her at the bar, giggling as she tried to order another drink.

Her movements were uncoordinated, her eyes unfocused.

“Morgan, I gripped her arm. “We’re leaving.”

She turned to me with a wide, sloppy grin. “Tori! You came to party!”

“No, I came to take you home. You’re drunk.”

“I’m not drunk,” she slurred, then hiccupped. “Okay, maybe a little. But it fun!”

“It’s dangerous, I hissed, tugging her arm. “Let’s go.”

“Nooo,” she whined, pulling away. “I’m having fun. Just one more drink!”

As I tried reasoning with her, a faint cry for help reached my ears, barely audible over the music.

But my hearing caught it clearly.

I hesitated, glancing at Morgan’s unsteady form. Getting involved might bog trouble, especially for someone with my biatry. But the desperation in that voice tugged at something inside me.

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“Stay here,” I told Morgan firmly, guiding her to sit on a barstool. Don’t ove

I followed the sound to a hallway leading to private rooms.

The scent of fear grew stronger-acrid and sharp-mixing with the unmistakable aggressive musk of males,”

Another plea for help, followed by cruel laughter.

I peered around the corner and saw a young woman surrounded by three men outside one of the VIP rooms.

Comments

Chapter 67

With a jolt, I recognized her-Sophia Morris, Noah’s younger sister.

And I recognized the men too-they were friends of Noah, privileged young males who had been with him that night four years ago.

I retreated around the corner, heart pounding.

58%

This wasn’t my problem. Getting involved with anything connected to the Morris family had already cost me four years of my life. I should walk

away, get Morgan, and leave.

“Follow your heart, Tracy sighed within me. You’ve never been one to walk away when someone needs help.

I closed my eyes briefly, knowing Tracy was right.

I couldn’t leave Sophia to face those predators alone, not when I knew exactly what they were capable of.

But confronting three aggressive males directly would be suicide for an Omega like me. I needed to be smarter than that..

My gaze landed on the fire alarm mounted on the wall nearby, a small smoke detector positioned just above it.

A plan began forming in my mind.”

I made my way back to Morgan, who was now resting her head on the bar.

“Morgan, I need you to stay right here. Don’t move, okay? I’ll be back in five minutes.”

She mumbled something incoherent but didn’t try to get up.

I moved quickly to the hallway again, assessing the situation.

Sophia was now backed against the wall, her blouse partially torn.

The tallest Alpha-1 recognized him as Noah’s friend Trent-had his hand on the wall beside her head.

“Come on, sweetheart, he was saying, “your brother and I were tight. Consider this... honoring his memory.”

“Please, Sophia whispered, ‘I just want to go home.’”

“We’re just getting started,” another male sneered, reaching for her arm.

I struck a match and held it under the smoke detector, just out of sight and the corner.

The alarm blared immediately, and sprinklers activated throughout the club. Screams and chaos erupted as patrons rushed toward the exits.

“Fire!” someone shouted nearby. Everyone out!”

Fuck this,’ Trent growled, wiping water from his face.

‘Let’s get out of here. You got lucky tonight, sweetheart, he sneered at her. We’ll finish our conversation another time.’

1/3

18:42 Fri, Feb 6 BBA

Chapter 67

“Move!” the second male shouted, pushing toward the exit. I’m not dying in this shithole.”

The third one glanced back at Sophia with a predatory smile. This isnter, Morris

They pushed past me without a second glance, joining the exodus. I rushed to Sophia, who was shaking and soaked from the sprinklers

“Sophia,” I said softly, it’s me, Tori. Let me help you.”

She looked up, recognition slowly dawning in her tear-filled eyes. “Tori? Sullivan?”

I nodded, slipping off my jacket and draping it around her shoulders. We need to go. Can you walk?”

She nodded mutely.

I guided her through the chaos to Morgan, who was now wide-eyed and more alert from the cold sprinkler water.

“What’s happening?” Morgan asked, wobbling as she stood.

“Fire alarm,” I explained, taking her arm. “We’re leaving. Now.”

Together, we made our way outside and away from the club. I ordered a car, and we huddled together on the sidewalk, waiting

“I can’t go home like this,” Sophia whispered, clutching my jacket around herself. “My mother will kill me.”

“You can stay in my dorm tonight, I offered. “Both of you.”

Back at my dorm, I gave Sophia some clean clothes and helped Morgan in dry ones.

Morgan promptly collapsed onto my bed, falling asleep instantly. Sophia sat on my desk chair, still trembling slightly.

“Should I call someone for you?” I asked. “Your family?”

She shook her head.

58%

“My mom only cares about my brother, even now that he’s gone. And my ther...” her voice broke. He’s been in a coma since a accident last week.

‘I’m sorry,’ I said quietly.

“Everyone says I look like him,’ she whispered. ‘Noah, I mean. That’s why my mother cant stand to look at me.”

She glanced up at me. You remind me of someone too.”

“Who?

Ryan. He used to look out for me before... she trailed off, tears welling her eyes

TH

23

Editorial board

Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 68

Chapter 68

Tori’s POV:

58%

“You know Ryan?” I asked Sophia doubtfully, watching her reaction carefully

There was a momentary pause. Something flickered across her tear-stained face. But it vanished so quickly I couldn’t be sure.

Sophia sniffled once more before straightening her shoulders.

With practiced movements, she wiped away her tears and smoothed her disheveled hair, composing herself with remarkable speed.

The vulnerable girl from moments ago disappeared behind a carefully constructed mask.

“Thank you for helping me,” she said evenly, her voice betraying no hint of her earlier breakdown. “I appreciate your kindness, Tori, but I should go now.”

Before I could press further about Ryan, she was already heading for the door, her steps measured and dignified.

I stared at the ceiling that night, unable to sleep.

My mind toggled between Sophia’s strange reaction and the chaos I’d caused at the Enchanted club.

Pulling that fire alarm had been my only option to save Sophia, but the consequences could be severe.

The panicked crowd, the management’s fury... What if they tracked me down? An Omega causing such disruption in a respectable establishment could mean serious trouble, especially with my history.

Despite my racing thoughts, exhaustion eventually claimed me.

I must have fallen asleep at some point, because the next thing I knew, I was being pulled from darkness by the sound of groaning.

“Tori?” Morgan mumbled from her bed, her voice pulling me into consciousness.

Her eyes were barely open as she squinted at me. “You stayed with me all night?”

“Someone had to make sure you didn’t choke on your own vomit,” I replied tossing her a towel. “Go shower. You stink like a distillery.”

She sniffed her shirt and grimaced. “Did you... tell my brother about last night?”

“No,” I shook my head. “But you need to be more careful. An intoxicated female in a club full of strange males? Do you have any idea what could have happened?”

“I’m just curious,” Morgan said quietly, uncharacteristically subdued. “Thanks for looking out for me. I knew you wouldn’t leave me hanging.”

I watched her shuffle to the bathroom before packing the last of my things

The winter break had arrived, and I’d be heading back to my hometown ey

“You’re really leaving? Morgan asked when she returned, hair dripping we

18 42 Fri, Feb 6 BBR

Chapter 68

“Just for the break. Try not to get into trouble while I’m gone.”

After a quick lunch in the cafeteria, we said our goodbyes.

58%

I climbed into the bus that would take me back to the outskirts of Moonhaven, where my aunt had rented a small apartment.

As the landscape changed from the manicured grounds of Moonridge High to the more modest neighborhoods, my thoughts drifted to Lucas.

His intense silver eyes, the low rumble of his voice, the overwhelming presence that made my inner wolf both cower and yearn.

Before I could second-guess myself, I typed out a message:

I think it’s best if we keep some distance between us. Thank you for everything

I hit send before I could change my mind.

Maybe this winter break was exactly what I needed. Lucas wouldn’t be able to find me, and perhaps after the holidays, he’d forget I ever existed.

After all, there was nothing special about me. Lucas and I belonged to different worlds. His interest in me would probably fade as quickly as it had appeared.

My phone rang, interrupting my thoughts. Morgan’s name flashed on the screen.

“My brother knows!” she wailed without preamble. “Someone told him I was at the Enchanted Club. He’s furious!”

“The club owner must have contacted him,” I reasoned, though something felt off. “Strange that nobody has contacted me about the.... incident.”

“What incident?”

Of course she wouldn’t remember-she’d been completely intoxicated when I pulled the fire alarm. The entire chaos had probably been erased from her alcohol-soaked memory.

“Nothing, I said quickly. “I’ve got to go. I’m arriving.”

I hung up the phone as the bus pulled into the terminal.

Stepping off with my bag slung over my shoulder, I spotted Anna immediately. My five-year-old cousin was bouncing on her toes, waving frantically.

“Big sister Tori!” she squealed, launching herself into my arms.

Behind her stood my aunt Janet. Her posture was stiff, her smile uncertain

Four years of bitterness and misunderstanding stretched between us like invisible wall

“Hello, Aunt Janet,” I said quietly, setting Anna down.

At the sound of my voice, something broke in her expression.

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18 42 Fri, Feb 6 BGA

Chapter 68

The careful composure she'd maintained crumbled instantly, and tears spilled down her cheeks.

“Tori,” she choked out, walking forward.

I owe you an apology,” I replied.

“I'm sorry about Ryan, I said, my voice barely above a whisper. I never meant for him to die because of me

Janet took my hands in hers, shaking her head firmly.

“It wasn't your fault, Tori. You were a victim too.” She squeezed my hands. I was overcome with grief back then and said some terrible didn't mean. I hope you can forgive me for that.”

“Of course,” I replied, feeling a weight lifting from my shoulders.

She pulled me into embrace, and I felt the tension between us dissolving.

Some wounds were beginning to heal.

The next few days fell into a comfortable routine.

58%

I studied in the mornings, cooked lunch, and spent afternoons playing with Anna.

Mrs. White from next door visited frequently, bringing small gifts and unsubtly mentioning her grandson Andrew at every opportunity.

My grandmother nodded appreciatively while I silently fumed.

After she left, I turned to my grandmother. "Please don't accept anything else from the Whites. I'm not marrying Andrew."

"Tori, Grandmother sighed, "with your circumstances, Andrew is a good match, who's willing to take an Omega with your... history."

I felt a familiar ache in my chest. My history. Always my history.

Her words stung because I knew they were true.

What would Lucas Grayson think if he knew everything about me? The mighty Alpha would certainly recoil from the disgraced Omega with a criminal past

I shook my head vigorously, trying to force Lucas out of my thoughts.

After sending that message to him, I'd immediately powered off my phone a desperate attempt to sever any connection that might keep him in my mind.

Needing fresh air to clear my head, I decided to go for a walk.

As I opened the door to the hallway, I overheard Mrs. White speaking to other neighbor.

"Yes, I went to see my future daughter-in-law, she said with a forced laugh

Pretty thing, I'll give her that, but damaged goods, you know. Spent four bars in exile for attacking a male. My Audies is so generous to

|||

3/4

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Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 69

Chapter 69

Tori's POV:

@.57%8

I stared at the ceiling that night, unable to sleep.

Perhaps scrolling through some articles would distract me.

I reached for my phone, which I'd turned off after sending that message to Lucas hours ago.

The moment the screen lit up with the startup logo, it began to ring.

Lucas Grayson's name flashed across it, as if he'd been waiting for me to power on my device.

I froze, staring at his name, my finger hovering over the screen. Should I answer? What would I even say?

Before I could decide, the ringing stopped, only to be immediately replaced by a text message: "Pick up. Now."

My heart leaped into my throat. With trembling fingers, I answered when he called again.

"Explain your text, his voice came through immediately, cold and clearly displeased.

My heart leaped into my throat.

I sat up, pulling my knees to my chest. "I-I just think it's better if we keep some distance between us."

"Why?" The single word carried the weight of his authority, making Tracy gurl up anxiously inside me.

"Alpha Lucas, I said quietly, gripping my phone tighter, "whether your interest in me is genuine or not, I don't want to continue this.... entanglement. We belong to different worlds. You're the Alpha of the most powerful pack in Moonhaven, and I'm just- I swallowed hard, – a n Omega. This relationship, whatever it is, won't benefit either of us in the long run."

I took a deep breath before continuing, "I appreciate everything you've done for me, truly. And I promise I'll find a way to repay your kindness eventually.

The silence that followed was so long I wondered if he'd hung up.

'Is that all you have to say?' His voice was unnervingly calm. "Nothing else you want to add?"

I closed my eyes, feeling Tracy's protest beneath my skin.

"Yes, that's all," I whispered, even as something in my chest ached.

Another long pause. 'It's late, he finally said. "Sleep, Tori.

Then the line went dead.

I stared at my phone, an unexpected emptiness spreading through me.

I had asked for this distance, insisted on it even, so why did the sudden y feel so wrong?

1/3

18 42 Fri, Feb 6 BBA

Chapter 69

You're lying to yourself, Tracy whimpered inside me. You know you want more.

"Some things aren't meant for us to have," I whispered to the darkness. This is better for everyone."

I closed my eyes and forced myself to breathe evenly, willing sleep to come and take away the hollow feeling in my chest.

This was the right choice. It had to be.

The next morning, I decided to take Anna to the park.

My five-year-old cousin bounced ahead of me on the path, her boundless energy a stark contrast to my own weariness

"Look, Tori! Ducks!" She pointed excitedly at a small pond where several birds floated peacefully.

I smiled despite myself. Anna's innocence was refreshing-untainted by the complexities of pack politics and social hierarchies.

To her, the world was still full of wonder rather than danger.

"Well, what a delightful coincidence!"

The voice made me stiffen.

完57%

I turned to see Mrs. White approaching with a young man in tow. He was all and lean, with neatly combed hair and a pressed button-up shirt

that screamed trying too hard.

"Sullivan! Mrs. White continued, her smile too wide to be natural.

"How wonderful to see you here. This is my grandson, Andrew. He's just moved back from the city!"

Andrew shifted uncomfortably, extending his hand. "Nice to meet you."

I shook it briefly, feeling Tracy bristle beneath my skin. She didn't appreciate this obvious setup any more than I did.

"Andrew works at the regional bank," Mrs. White continued proudly. "He just bought a lovely townhouse near the center of Moonhaven."

"That's... nice," I replied, my eyes drifting to Anna, who was now crouching by the pond's edge. "Anna, don't get too close to the water!"

"Sullivan is so good with children," Mrs. White interjected, nodding toward Anna. "I keep telling my Andrew he should settle down soon. Start a family. You two could make such beautiful cubs together!"

I nearly choked. Tracy growled indignantly inside me, deeply offended by Mrs. White's blatant matchmaking and the suggestion. Her anger mixing with my own embarrassment.

Just then, my phone vibrated in my pocket.

A single text message: Look up.

I raised my head, scanning the area. Near a tall pine tree about fifty yards away stood a black Staybach, and leaning against it-Luces Grayson

||

23

18.42 Fri, Feb 6 GGQ

Chapter 69

His blue eyes were fixed on me with predatory intensity, his posture deceptively casual.

Anna followed my gaze. "Who's that?" she asked loudly. He looks cool!

57%

Lucas was walking toward us, each step measured and graceful yet somehow threatening. Even in casual clothes-dark jeans and a charcoal sweater that hugged his broad shoulders-he exuded power.

"I need to take Anna home," I said quickly, standing up from the park bench.

"Mrs. White, Andrew, it was nice seeing you, but we really must go."

Mrs. White's lips curled into a knowing smile, completely misinterpreting my rush to leave.

"Oh, don't be so shy, dear! Andrew, why don't you drop by her grandmother's house tomorrow evening? A proper visit would be lovely."

"That sounds... nice," Andrew replied uncertainly, clearly noticing my discomfort.

"Perfect! It's settled then," Mrs. White beamed, patting my arm. We'll see you tomorrow, Sullivan. Come along, Andrew."

She pulled her grandson away, throwing one last satisfied smile over her shoulder.

I turned to follow Anna, only to find my path blocked by Lucas.

He stood directly before me, his tall frame impossible to ignore or sidestep. His blue eyes held mine with an intensity that made my breath catch.

"How did you find me?" I asked, trying to keep my voice steady despite the rapid beating of my heart.

I immediately regretted asking such an obvious thing. Of course he could find me-he was Alpha Lucas. What information couldn't he access if he wanted to?

I shifted uncomfortably, remembering Mrs. White's words to her neighbor that I'd overheard: "damaged goods and how generous' Andrew was to consider someone with my history.

Would Lucas eventually see me the same way if he learned everything about my past? But I quickly reminded myself that it didn't matter

anymore.

I'd made my decision to keep my distance from him, and his opinion of mwas irrelevant now.

Lucas didn't answer my question about finding me. Instead, his gaze followed Mrs. White and Andrew as they retreated down the path.

"So this is why you're so eager to distance yourself from me?" he asked, his voice deceptively calm.

Comments

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Write Comments

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Claimed by the Alpha's Love - Love Demands Real Courage Author: Michael Anderson 70

Claimed by the Alpha's Love

Chapter 70

Tori's POV:

57

I stared at Lucas, trying to determine how long he'd been standing there.

With his Alpha hearing, had he caught any of the conversation with Mrs. White? The thought made my stomach clench with embarrassment.

"That was nothing. I said, seeing toward where Mrs. White and Andrew had disappeared.

"Just neighbor stuff. It doesn't matter. I paused, meeting his eyes directly My decision to keep distance was my own."

Lucas held my gaze for a long moment, his expression unreadable.

Then, unexpectedly, "I'm hungry."

The abrupt change of subject caught me off guard.

"Hungry?" I blinked, studying him more carefully. His clothes were immaculate as always, but there was a subtle tightness around his eyes that suggested fatigue.

"Did you... drive all night to get here?"

He didn't answer, which was answer enough.

"There's a decent restaurant in town," I suggested, still trying to process the fact that Lucas Grayson had driven all night to find me. "Moon Blossom. It's only about fifteen minutes away."

"I've been driving for hours, Lucas said, his voice carrying a hint of weariness I'd never heard before.

I glanced nervously at the neighboring houses. The last thing I needed was to be seen with an Alpha male and become the subject of even more town gossip.

Then I remembered-my grandmother and Aunt Janet had gone to the farmer's market in the next town over. They wouldn't be back for hours.

"My family's out," I said decisively. "I have a small cabin in the backyard where I'm staying. I can make you something to eat there."

Lucas nodded once, the slight movement somehow carrying the weight of an Alpha command. "Lead the way."

I led Lucas and Anna around the side of Aunt Janet's modest house, my heart hammering against my ribcage with each step.

The small wooden cabin at the back of the yard had been my refuge since arriving here—a place where I could escape, think, and simply exist without judgment. Now, I was bringing an Alpha—the Alpha—into my personal sanctuary.

“It’s not much,” I said, fumbling with the key. “Just a guest house my aunt converted into a quiet space.”

Tracy, my wolf, prowled restlessly beneath my skin.

Look at you, practically trembling in front of him, she teased. Where’s the fearless Omega who survived Silver Fung?

1/2

57%

18:42 Fri, Feb 6 GBA

Chapter 70

Shut up, I shot back silently. Just stop with the schadenfreude, okay?

The lock finally clicked, and I pushed the door open, hyperaware of Lucas towering presence behind me.

Lucas surveyed the small cabin with unreadable eyes.

The space was simple but clean—a small kitchenette, a dining table for two, a worn couch, and a narrow bed tucked in the corner.

Books were stacked neatly on a makeshift shelf, and a single potted plant sat on the windowsill—my feeble attempt at making the place feel

more alive.

I swallowed hard. ‘I... I can make something. I don’t have much, but-

“Whatever you have is fine,” he said, his voice softening slightly as he took a seat at my small table.

“Anna, sweetie, can you sit quietly and color for a bit while I make some lunch?” I asked, gesturing to the small stack of coloring books I kept

on the shelf for her visits.

Anna nodded eagerly, grabbing her favorite book about wolf cubs and setting on the floor with her crayons.

I moved to the kitchenette, grateful for something to do with my hands. The familiar motions of cooking might calm my racing heart.

Opening the refrigerator, I assessed what I had available-some fresh venison I'd bought at the local market, vegetables, and herbs.

"Do you like venison?" I asked, reaching for the meat.

"Yes."

His one-word response hung in the air.

I started preparing the meal, washing my hands and carefully seasoning the meat. As I reached for a knife, Lucas suddenly appeared beside me, his movement so quiet I hadn't heard him approach.

Comments

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III

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2/2

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