

She's Mine: Stay Away From My Luna

CHAPTER 1

Living with my dad and stepmom has been... a whole experience. I moved in a year ago after the Alpha of my pack was killed, and his 19-year-old i****t son took over as the new Alpha. It didn't take long for everyone to realize our pack was in trouble. My mom, wanting to protect me from the fallout, moved me in with my dad, especially since I used to be close friends with the new Alpha. But that was years ago, and now being around him makes my skin crawl. Despite her good intentions, my mom was just trying to keep me safe. But my dad wasn't much help, and his wife was even worse. It's like she has something against me, and I can't figure out why. She just seems to dislike kids in general. When she found out I was moving in, she flipped, thinking I'd mess up their lives—as if I were some helpless toddler instead of a capable 17-year-old who can handle myself. And, of course, she made it clear they wouldn't support me financially. So, I've had to manage on my own. Clothes? Those were a luxury I couldn't afford. Asking her for new clothes? Yeah, not happening. From day one, it's been a constant clash. At first, her attitude just annoyed me, but after a while, I found it amusing to watch her seethe while I kept laughing. Nothing seems to get under her skin like that. I've been living here long enough to know exactly how to push her buttons. Honestly, it doesn't take much—her disdain for me makes it way too easy. Balancing work and finishing high school means keeping my life as simple as possible. I don't waste money and try to save every cent. I'm just counting the days until I can finally leave this place.

"Hey, Madison!" I heard a familiar voice call as I stepped out of the school building, the late afternoon sun casting long shadows on the lawn. "Hey, Dante. What's up?" I asked, glancing over as he jogged to catch up, excitement lighting his face. "Not much, just hanging out. A group of us is heading to the swimming hole. Want to come?" he asked, his eyes gleaming with the promise of fun. "I'd love to, but I have to work," I said, glancing at my watch. I couldn't afford to be late. "You work every single day," he pointed out, a teasing smile creeping onto his lips. "Yeah, well, if I don't work, I don't eat," I replied, trying to sound lighthearted, but the weight of it was still there. "I see your stepmom is still causing trouble," he remarked, concern in his voice. "I can't believe you thought she'd change," I scoffed, shaking my head. "Why don't you just skip work for once? It'll be fun, I promise," he suggested, still enthusiastic. "Sorry, can't do that. You go have fun, though. I'll catch up with you tomorrow," I said, picking up the pace as I walked toward the diner where I worked. The swimming hole was a popular spot—everyone knew about it. A little hidden retreat where teens gathered after school to relax and have some fun. The far end of the spot was always avoided because it was an unwritten rule: couples went there, and they were probably up to more than just swimming. Just thinking about Dante and the others enjoying their freedom, maybe even skinny dipping, made me feel a mix of curiosity and discomfort. I'd done it before, but only with people I really trusted. I wasn't comfortable with anyone I barely knew seeing me in that way. I understood it was a fine line, but it was my line—and I wasn't

about to cross it. No matter how many times they asked, my stance didn't change. I walked a couple of blocks to the diner. After changing in the cramped back bathroom, I put my stuff away in the kitchen. When I stepped out into the dining room, I felt my heart sink at the sight of the table I was assigned to. "How do they always know where I'm working?" I asked, frustrated. "Because they ask the other waitresses," Santi, the cook, replied with a grin. "Are you kidding me?" I muttered, and he just laughed. I walked over to the table of four loud, obnoxious guys and took a deep breath to steady myself. "What can I get you today?" I asked, forcing my tone to sound casual. "How about a little of you?" one of them said, a smug grin spreading across his face. "Really? You're still using that line?" I shot back, raising an eyebrow. "I don't know. Maybe when you finally say yes to my first offer," he countered, still confident. "Well, looks like you'll be waiting forever. Now, what do you actually want to order?" I pressed, losing my patience. "I think my original offer still stands," he said, keeping up the flirtatious attitude. "I'll be back when you're ready to order," I said, turning to walk away. But he quickly blocked my path by putting his hand on the table. "Really?" I asked, surprised by his nerve. "What's the matter? Why won't you go out with me?" he smirked, clearly thinking he was in control. "Believe me, you really don't want to hear my answer," I said sharply, making it clear I wasn't interested. "Why? Think you can hurt my feelings? Go on, try it," he challenged, his bravado still intact. "Alright, here goes. You're a spoiled brat who's living off your dad's money because you're too lazy to get a job. You've got so many pimples, the whole pack's started calling you 'Pizza Face.' And honestly, you've got nothing interesting about you," I said, looking him in the eye to make sure he got the point. His friends went silent for a beat before bursting into laughter, clearly enjoying his discomfort. He stood up, looking like he was about to throw a punch. But I didn't move. I just stood there, staring him down. "You want to get your ass kicked?" he asked, puffing out his chest. "I'd love to see you try," I replied coolly. That's when I saw the manager, Anthony, leaning against the counter, watching the scene unfold. The guy lunged at me, but I sidestepped, grabbing his shoulders and driving my knee into his stomach. He doubled over, gasping for air, and I followed up with another knee before landing an uppercut to his chin. He crashed backward onto the floor. I turned to his friends, raising an eyebrow, as if to ask if they were going to jump in. Instead, they grabbed their friend by the arms and dragged him out of the diner. As soon as they were gone, Anthony started clapping, even giving me a mock bow. "I love it when you do that," he said, grinning as he leaned against the counter. "Aren't you supposed to be mad when I do that?" I asked, amused, as I made my way to the counter, the familiar smell of coffee filling the air. "Not at all. Now I've got the perfect excuse to get rid of the riff-raff. If you're around, they'll behave themselves," he said, his eyes twinkling. "Sure, whatever," I muttered, rolling my eyes as I poured a steaming cup of coffee, secretly amused at how he used me as his personal bodyguard against the chaos.