

Puppy Love

05 Tea Time

~Tamia~

(Liam's Mother and The Queen)

The news of the incident in Grizlo had profoundly unsettled us. My anxiety grew when Stephanie called, informing me that Liam hadn't returned home. I repeatedly dialled Harper's number, each time hearing that they were still searching for him, which only heightened my fear.

The situation worsened when I discovered that Liam had visited Mike's house, and the man had claimed not to have seen him, as relayed by Jake. Even though our world had been relatively peaceful, I knew all too well that trouble could arise at any moment. Nothing felt within our control. So I anxiously waited, contemplating whether or not to inform Sylvester.

My worry escalated upon learning about Mike's criminal activities. I feared that Liam might have witnessed something and been harmed as a result. It took great courage to keep this information from Sylvester. Finally, hearing his voice brought immense relief. I was grateful that Liam was unharmed and safe from Mike's grasp.

However, it didn't take long before I discovered that Sylvester had learned about the incident and was furious with Jake for not informing him earlier. I empathised with Jake and Stephanie for their silence. Though it was risky, since every second counted, I understood their intention to avoid exaggerating the situation.

Sylvester paced anxiously in the living room of our home, which made our youngest children, Joseph and Keith, slightly nervous.

"You can go and play in the backyard, boys," I assured them, and Keith swiftly gathered his belongings.

"I think I'll head to the mansion," Joseph said, and Keith asked if he could join him. They were due to start at Lucland Academy in a week, so it made sense for them to spend more time there with their siblings.

As Joseph and Keith departed, I turned my attention to Sylvester.

"You need to calm down and hold yourself together. It's not their fault that Liam didn't come home last night," I advised, and he gazed at me, seeking answers.

"You knew?" he questioned, and I affirmed with a nod.

"Stephanie called this morning to let me know that Liam hadn't returned, and they were searching for him," I explained, and he let out a sigh before finding a seat on one of the couches.

"That boy can be so careless at times. If something happened to him, how would we even trace his whereabouts?" he expressed, a mix of annoyance and worry evident in his voice.

"You need to loosen up a bit, my love. He's eighteen now, no longer a child, and we can't control every move he makes," I reassured him, hoping to ease his concerns. He nodded in response.

"Still, I want him to be safe. Everyone knows he's the heir. I don't want anything to happen to him," he admitted.

"And nothing will. Everyone is looking out for him, including his cousins. I highly doubt that Miles, Marvin, and Oliver had no idea where he was. Remember how it was with you, Marcel, and Theo? It's the same for them. You need to relax a little, and I believe an apology to Jake is in order," I suggested, sensing his resistance.

"They shouldn't have to deal with all this. Even though Liam requested to go to Grizlo, it wasn't their responsibility to house and take care of our children. They've been nothing but kind. You shouldn't hold any animosity towards Jake and your mother because of Liam's mistakes. If you feel the need to reprimand someone, it should be Liam himself. If his phone had been reachable, there wouldn't have been a reason to panic," I reasoned, and he eventually agreed. I moved to sit beside him, gently rubbing his back in a soothing manner.

"Our children are growing, Sylvester; you must loosen your grip. They are not troublesome children, and they can take care of themselves. I think it's important to give Liam some leniency. He has always been exemplary, and it's not his fault that Mike Maguire chose to ruin his own future and that of his family.

Sophia isn't to blame, either. We just need to help Liam navigate through this difficult time because he's not handling it well. Even if he hasn't explicitly said it, we know how much he cares for Sophia. Remember how devastated you were when Susan left the North? Liam is at that age, going through something similar now, and he needs our support," I gently explained, and he looked at me, sighing in acknowledgement.

"I was afraid," he confessed, revealing a complex mix of emotions. I nodded understandingly and embraced him.

"He's safe, and they're on their way back home. He will need all the support he can get to overcome this," I assured him, and he wrapped his arms around me, seeking comfort in my presence.

I knew how fiercely protective Sylvester was, and Liam's recent experience reinforced to him that some things were beyond his control. It was time for my husband to start accepting that our twins were growing up.

Sylvester retreated to his office, and I decided to join the ladies in the garden for some tea.

Avery, as usual, was the one organising the tea party, and under normal circumstances, we would have all been present. However, the news from Grizlo had cast a somber mood upon the gathering. As I arrived, I could sense the heaviness in the air, no need to inquire about the cause.

"How did Sylvester handle it?" Avery asked as I settled into one of the cane chairs. Leaning forward, I helped myself to some tea and chocolate fudge cookies.

"He was quite upset and took it out on Jake for not informing him sooner," I replied, and Avery nodded in understanding.

"Marcel and Theo were furious with Jake for not keeping them informed as well. In any case, I heard they are on their way back," Avery informed me, and I nodded in acknowledgement.

"How is Liam coping with all of this?" Linda inquired, and a heavy sigh escaped my lips.

"He didn't seem all right when I spoke to him. He mentioned he would call me back but hasn't yet. I believe he's still processing everything that has happened," I explained, and the ladies expressed their sympathy for him.

"He truly cared for Sophia," Claudia chimed in.

"The triplets would often tease him about his crush when they talked about their trip to Grizlo. They've been friends for so long, Tamia. Liam will need a lot of support to come to terms with the possibility of never seeing her again," she said, and I sighed, fully aware of the emotional turmoil my son must be experiencing.

The situation was undeniably awful, and it was an unfortunate way for him to start this new chapter of his life. Liam had just graduated, for goodness' sake. Why couldn't Mike think about his family and their future and do the right thing? Whatever the issue might have been, he should have known better. I didn't want to rush to judge the man because he and Margret had always been wonderful people, and we hadn't picked up any negative vibes during the few times we had met. Mike seemed stern, as he should be, but not malicious. Nevertheless, our limited knowledge of them prevented us from drawing any conclusions. The only constant in life was change, and people were susceptible to it. Mike might have taken a wrong turn at some point.

"Why would Mike do something so horrendous?" Nicole exclaimed, her anger palpable in her voice.

"We understand that it's not our concern, but why would he destroy his own life and that of his family? Now they're being hunted by everyone, and Alpha Christain is sparing no expense," Nicole continued, her frustration evident, and a heavy silence fell upon us.

Living would become incredibly difficult for the Maguire family with the massive manhunt initiated by Alpha Christain. What made it even more agonising was the fact that this incident

resulted in the obliteration of an entire family. Why would Mike kill the Luna and her daughter as well? What could possibly drive him to commit an act that would ultimately lead to the forfeiture of his own life?

"We haven't even considered the fact that Margret and Sophia will also face execution for this... mess," Katya interjected, and another solemn silence enveloped us. It was an unspoken truth that none of us wanted to voice aloud.

Mike had committed familicide, wiping out an entire family, and by law, his own would be eradicated as well. It was a law established to prevent such heinous acts. It mainly protected those in the line of succession. Therefore, Dimitri had to accuse Adrik of treason to carry out the annihilation of Adrik's family without facing consequences. This was an utterly grim situation, and I could only hope for the best for Margret and her daughter.

"Well, since our children are on their way back, and Mike's issue doesn't directly involve us, I suppose we can find some solace," Linda attempted to alleviate the tension in the room, but her words did little to ease the heavy weight on our hearts.

Sophia was dear to us. We had known her since she was eight, and Margret had never caused any trouble or emitted negative vibes. The fact that we were familiar with them, and my son had formed an attachment to their daughter, made this situation a personal concern. I knew Liam would not find peace in his heart amidst all of this.

"Once our children are back, we can put Mike's issue behind us," Linda added, desperately trying to move on from the uncomfortable feeling the topic had brought. I knew she was trying to ease our hearts, but it couldn't work. We were all affected.

"Tell that to Liam. He practically relocated to Grizlo for her. I highly doubt he would have chosen to live with his grandma under normal circumstances. We all knew he moved there to be closer to Sophia. We were silently waiting for the romance to blossom. Charlotte kept me updated with all the juicy gossip about those two. I don't think he'll easily recover from this," Claudia voiced my concerns, and I nodded in agreement. She had spoken the unvarnished truth.

"Perhaps when we visit Amelia in the East, it might help him loosen up a bit," Linda suggested optimistically, but I hesitated.

The thought of going to the East after everything that had happened didn't sit well with me. It felt wrong to engage in the usual family gatherings and merriment, knowing the emotional and mental turmoil my son was currently enduring.

"I don't think I'll be making that trip, Linda," I confessed, disappointment registering on her face.

"But why, Tamia? It's Amelia's turn to host, and you know how much effort she puts into our get-togethers. It wouldn't be fair to cancel last minute," Linda protested, and I understood her perspective.

"I mean, I spoke to her just yesterday and confirmed our attendance. I can't just say, 'sorry, we can't come because some fool in Grizlo committed familicide and is now on the run.' How does that relate to us, Tamia? I know Liam had feelings for Sophia, but he'll move on. They weren't even dating. Lily mentioned they were just friends. And it's not like they were destined for each other or anything. I don't want to sound insensitive, but I believe going to the East might help Liam recover from the shock more quickly," she reasoned, making a valid point.

"We'll see. Once they return today, we can assess the atmosphere and decide," I suggested, and Linda shook her head.

"I'm heading to Mountain next week to spend time with Amelia. This mess with Mike doesn't concern us, and there's not much we can do to help unless it becomes a widespread issue, which I highly doubt. Whatever happened between the beta and the alpha was localised. Don't you think cancelling our plans would be overly dramatic?" she questioned, and Nicole chimed in, agreeing with her.

"Honestly, I'm looking forward to going to the East, and Justin mentioned he would be joining us this time. Hopefully, he'll find someone special there. He's too old to be single," Nicole added, and I could understand their eagerness to visit Mountain. I was eager to see Amelia and Leo as well. Perhaps I was being overly dramatic about the entire situation. I simply nodded and continued to sip my tea, contemplating our upcoming decisions.

06 A Unseen Request

~Tamia~

We remained in the garden, engrossed in conversation about various topics until evening when we received word that our children had returned from Grizlo. I quickly rose from my seat, followed by Claudia, Linda, and the rest. Nicole, whose children were grown and residing in Lucland City, didn't share the same sense of anticipation as we did.

With haste, I made my way towards the driveway in front of the mansion. The vans had arrived, and our children were disembarking. Keith and Joseph immediately embraced Harper as she emerged from the vehicle, and she reciprocated their affection with a radiant smile.

One by one, the others showered our returning children with hugs and warm greetings.

