

A Warrior Luna's Awakening

chapter 111-120

A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya's POV

Finished

I never believed for a second that Aurora—slender, pampered daughter of Bluemoon's Beta—could have hauled Caelum Grafton from the jaws of the Blackwater.

The thought alone was absurd. The river that night had raged like a beast unleashed. Even I, trained under Iron Fang Recon, nearly drowned dragging him from its grip. My lungs had burned, my muscles screamed, and my wolf had clawed through me with fury and desperation to keep him afloat. Aurora? She wouldn't have lasted a heartbeat.

But Caelum stiffened when I said it aloud, and Aurora's face paled before darkening with offense.

Jocelyn Thorne pounced like a viper on blood. "What's that supposed to mean, Freya? That only you are worthy of saving him? That no one else has the right?" Her voice rose, deliberately pitched to carry across the ballroom. "Courage saves lives, not just strength. Don't think we don't see what this is—you want him back, and so you're spitting poison on Aurora!"

The air shifted; wolves' ears turned, eyes flicked toward us. Jocelyn had achieved what she wanted: attention. Humiliation, served hot and loud, for me alone,

I could feel the weight of dozens of gazes. All the packs who mattered in Ashbourne had their alphas and dignitaries gathered here tonight. Officials from the Capital, industrial barons, commanders from Halston Combat Academy. And Jocelyn was feeding them a story meant to brand me as desperate, petty, pathetic.

Aurora's voice followed swiftly, smooth but sharp. "Freya, if you regret leaving Caelum during the Lunar Severance Phase, you should say it openly. But to use such cheap tricks... it demeans you."

"Cheap tricks?" My lips curled, my wolf's snarl bleeding through my tone. "Tell me, Aurora—between us, who is the real trickster here?"

Her nostrils flared, but she pressed forward, emboldened by Jocelyn's support. "If you saved him, Freya, then why weren't you there afterward? Why did no one see you at the riverbank, or the ambulance, or the clinic? Where were you?"

I bit the inside of my cheek until I tasted copper. Because I had been called away. Because duty doesn't wait. The Iron Fang Recon Unit had deployed me within the hour—another mission, another threat that needed blood and steel.

But before I left, I had dragged him out of the water with every ounce of strength I had left. I had called WolfComm, begged for the medics to hurry, and pressed a stranger—a passerby—to stay by his side until help arrived. That stranger was faceless now, gone to the wind. The medics' records from that night, long erased. I had no proof left to offer.

Not that proof mattered anymore.

I exhaled slowly, keeping my voice flat. "Aurora, a stolen bond will never be yours. You can wrap it in silk, parade it in front of every Alpha here tonight, but it won't make it true. Pray that when Caelum faces death again, you're not the one standing beside him. Because then, the lie will end."

Aurora's **face**

twisted, fury cracking the mask of her composure. "So you just walk away?" she snapped. "You smear me, then think you can leave without a word of apology?"

"Apology?" I let out a bitter laugh. "And what exactly should I apologize for?"

"For calling me a liar," she spat. Her voice rang louder now, each syllable meant to bind Caelum tighter to her side. "For trying to strip me of what's mine."

My wolf surged, hungry for blood. I stepped closer, my voice low but lethal. "Aurora, are you asking to be thrown beneath my boots again?"

Her face blazed crimson. The memory still burned in her—the airport, the crowd, the moment I had ground her pride into dust beneath my heel. She would never forgive it, never forget.

"Enough!" Caelum's voice cut across us, hard and commanding. He stepped forward, Alpha aura pulsing like a whip. "Freya, you slander her, and you owe her an apology."

I didn't even look at him. "And who are you to demand **such a** thing from **me**?"

His scent faltered—hesitation, confusion. For a moment he seemed struck dumb. Of course. He had no claim on me now. We

6.05 AM

were broken, bound no longer. I was not his mate, not his wife, not his anything.

Finished

He swallowed, trying to recover. “I only want you to be honest. Your father, Arthur Thorne, died a hero in the Legion’s Hall of Martyrs. Your mother, Myra, gave her life in Stormveil’s service. Do you think they would want their daughter remembered as a liar-?”

The words hadn’t even left his mouth before rage detonated inside

1. me.

My hand lashed out, faster than thought. The crack of flesh against flesh silenced the entire hall. His head jerked sideways under the force of my strike.

“You do not speak their names.” My voice was ice, sharp enough to freeze bone. My wolf clawed at my throat, snarling. “My parents. My honor. My truth. None of these are yours to touch.”

Caelum’s eyes widened, shock plastered across his face. He had never expected me to strike him. Never thought I’d bare my teeth and claws against him, not after all the years I had bent and yielded.

Aurora’s eyes blazed with outrage. “You hit him? How dare you! I’ll call the enforcers. You won’t escape this time, Freya- you’ll rot in the cells of Ashbourne, with every wolf in the Capital hearing of your shame!”

The words dripped with venom. She hadn’t forgotten the days I’d forced her into custody, the stain of a criminal record that still marred her. Now she sought her revenge.

But before the room could erupt, another voice slid through the tension like a blade of steel.

“Enough,” said Silas Whitmor.

He strode forward, the Ironclad Alpha himself, his presence suffocating, his aura a storm that swallowed the hall. His gaze cut straight through Aurora and Caelum, reducing them to silence.

“So what if she struck you?” Silas’s tone was calm, cold. “Which crime weighs heavier, Caelum? A slap—or spitting on the memory of Legion dead and Stormveil bloodline?”

Aurora’s face drained of color. Even Caelum flinched.

Silas smiled faintly, without warmth. “And as for you, Aurora... I already struck you twice tonight, did I not? Shall I escort you to the enforcers myself? Perhaps they’d like to know how Bluemoon’s shining pilot finds herself at odds with Ironclad’s Alpha.”

The hall stilled, heavy with unspoken truth. No one, not even Silverfang, dared challenge Silas Whitmor openly. To call the enforcers down upon him would be to declare war, and there were few in Ashbourne reckless enough to try.

Caelum’s mouth opened, then closed. His eyes darted between me, Aurora, and Silas. “This... must be a misunderstanding,” he said finally, voice strained. “Let’s not make it bigger than it is.”

But Jocelyn wasn’t done. Her lips curled, and I could feel her triumph burning hotter than wildfire. She had drawn blood tonight, and she wouldn’t let the wound close. She would make sure every Alpha, every dignitary here, walked away believing I was desperate, dishonest, dangerous.

The war in this hall had only just begun.

A Warrior Luna’s Awakening

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Freya’s POV

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Finished

“Silas,” Jocelyn’s voice rang out sweet as venom, her eyes glinting behind her glasses, “did you know Freya was once married? That Alpha Grafton here—yes, this very Caelum—is her ex-husband.”

She must have thought Silas Whitmor ignorant, that this revelation would snap his interest like a twig.

But Silas didn’t even flinch. His tone was as mild as an Alpha lounging on his throne. “And what of it? I was there when their Lunar Severance Phase was made public. I watched their press conference.”

The hall fell into a hush. Jocelyn froze. She had expected gasps, condemnation—at the very least, surprise. Instead, Silas had known all along.

Her jaw stiffened, though the smile on her lips widened into something almost cruel. I could scent the sour tang of her jealousy beneath the perfume she'd doused herself with. It clung to her like rot.

How could a divorced she-wolf still catch the Ironclad Alpha's attention? To Jocelyn, the thought was intolerable.

And then, like every Thorne who ever bore a dagger in the sleeve, she smiled sharper. "Well," she purred, "perhaps you know she still pines for her ex. That she's plotting a return to Caelum's side. That she even pretended to be his savior—stole the title of the one who dragged him back from death—just to wring guilt from him and bind him again."

I felt the room lean in. Hungry wolves, scenting blood.

Silas's voice was low, smooth, but the edge beneath it was steel. "Is that so?"

"Yes, it's true!" Jocelyn pressed on, the glimmer in her eyes gleeful. "Fortunately Caelum already knows Aurora is his true rescuer. That left Freya's little plan to crumble into dust."

The Ironclad Alpha turned his head, his black eyes finding mine. There was something about his stare that pinned me, like talons at my throat. "Do you want him back?"

The words cracked across the hall like thunder.

"I don't," I said, steady as the oath-bonds of my bloodline. "The moment I chose divorce, I buried the thought of reunion. There is no going back."

But Jocelyn wasn't done. She sneered, turning to the crowd as though they were her jury. "She lies. Of course she lies. What woman could release the title of Silverfang Alpha's mate so easily? Caelum is young, wealthy, forged his empire with his own hands. That wealth, that power—she could never earn it in her lifetime, Of course she wants it back. Of course she clings."

The murmurs started then, low whispers among the gathered packs and the Capital officials. They eyed me the way one might eye a wolf crawling for scraps at the edge of campfires.

I could feel Jocelyn's glee. She thought she had me pinned. She thought she had poisoned Silas's view of me. He had no patience for wolves who begged for gold. He'd said so often enough—that greed was a weakness he had no use for.

So she smirked, basking in her imagined victory.

And then Silas's voice came again, cutting the air clean.

“If it were coin she wanted,” he said with a careless shrug, “she could ask it of me. Why would she need Caelum Grafton’s scraps? What I hold in my hand is far greater than what SilverTech Forgeworks can offer.”

The hall stilled.

Jocelyn’s mouth fell open, shock etched across her face. Even Aurora’s sharp composure faltered, and Caelum’s entire frame tensed like a wolf struck between the ribs.

“What... what do you mean by that?” Jocelyn stammered, her usual poise shattered.

“The words you heard,” Silas replied smoothly. “If she sought wealth, if she sought power, I would give it to her. And it would dwarf what Caelum can promise.”

Finished

The ripple that passed through the ballroom was palpable. This was no idle defense. This was the Ironclad Alpha publicly offering me—me, Freya Thorne of Stormveil’s lesser branch—the kind of choice no wolf expected. Choice. Freedom. His hand, turned upward instead of clenched into a fist.

Wolves don’t offer choices. Not Alphas like Silas.

For a breath, even I stood shaken.

Caelum’s face **twisted**, storm after storm ripping through him. Rage. Humiliation. Something far uglier that smelled of fear.

Because in that moment, everyone could see it: that the mate he had discarded, the woman he had thought to leave diminished and desperate, now stood with an Alpha far greater and far darker at her side.

“Freya.” His voice cracked out, too harsh, too desperate. “We only just severed our bond, and now you run to another? To him?”

The tone of his voice, the pitch—like an accusing husband, not an ex. Like he still had claim over me.

I let a cold laugh curl from my lips. “We are divorced, Caelum. You chose the Lunar Severance. Who I

stand with, who I share breath with—why should that matter to you? Shall I file reports of my movements to you, like some tethered she-wolf?”

His mouth opened, then snapped shut. The words cut him, I could see it. But he pressed on anyway, grasping for ground. "It's too soon," he muttered. "Far too soon. And Silas of all people—"

Jealousy clung to him like smoke from a burned-out forge. He hated that I looked anything but broken without him.

Hated more that I stood taller.

"Freya," he tried again, his voice heavy now with false gravity, "Whitmor is only showing you passing pity. Don't mistake it for something more." Then, sharper, he turned to Silas himself. "Alpha Whitmor, she is an orphan. No legacy, no pack holdings. She is not like the women who orbit you—nobles, heiresses, wolves of rank. I ask you to let her be. Do not encourage illusions. Spare her, before she believes in something that cannot be."

There it was.

He thought he'd offered me a lifeline. Thought he'd marked me small before Silas, just another stray wolf grasping beyond her station. He thought Silas would laugh, agree, dismiss me.

He didn't see the insult for what it was—not to me, but to Silas himself.

The Ironclad Alpha's aura shifted, deep and dark as a winter storm. His eyes never left mine, but his voice lashed out to all.

"She requires nothing from me but what she chooses," he said. "And if she wished it, she could have all. She owes no one—least of all you—explanations."

The silence that followed was absolute.

Caelum stiffened, but I saw the truth in his face. He felt it—the power slipping, the humiliation burning into his marrow. For all his empire, for all his titles, here he was—outshone, outmatched, outdone.

And Jocelyn, poor foolish Jocelyn, looked like she had just realized she had set fire to the very pack-hall she hoped to rule.

As for me?

I stood tall, my wolf pacing inside my skin, hungry, triumphant. For once, the choice was mine.

And every wolf in the hall knew it.

Send Gifts

A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya's POV

Finished

Aurora bit her lip. The faint scent of her unease drifted toward me even across the crowded hall. She didn't want to see me stand beside Silas Whitmor. No—she couldn't bear the thought.

But Caelum's words, the way he bristled every time Silas spoke of me, carved deeper lines into her composure. The Alpha of Silverfang might have broken our bond in the Lunar Severance Phase, but now—now, as Silas's eyes lingered on me—I could feel the storm building in him.

And Aurora felt it too.

Why, when our marriage was ashes, did Caelum's attention burn hotter than ever? His jealousy was unmistakable. He was like a wolf unwilling to see prey taken by another pack, even prey he himself had abandoned.

Aurora's scent soured with doubt, though I could almost hear her mind whispering its own consolations: He doesn't love her. He loves me. He only says "friend" because the time is not yet right. Once the storm of his divorce passes, he will claim me in the open.

But Silas's laughter broke across the hall—low, edged, predatory. "Sympathy?" His smile curved like the slash of a blade. "Caelum, it seems you've never understood Freya Thorne at all.

The mocking warmth in his tone made my pulse catch. Sympathy? Who among them had the right to pity me? I was not some whimpering stray.

Silas's gaze flicked over me. For an instant, I saw beneath the Ironclad Alpha's armor—the truth that from the first, he had never intended to "toy" with me. At the beginning, perhaps, he had been intrigued by my refusal to abandon him when danger snapped its jaws. He'd thought to keep me close until the interest faded.

But the longer I stayed, the stronger his focus became. Not fading—tightening, burning, rooting deeper.

His next words confirmed it. “I am serious about her,” Silas said, voice carrying through the vaulted hall. “If she nods her head, I would take her to my side this very moment.”

Gasps rippled like wind over tall grass. Wolves whispered behind their hands, eyes flashing, ears straining.

My cousin Jocelyn’s face drained of color. “Silas.... what do you mean by that? You can’t mean—you would court her?”

“Court?” A flicker passed over his lashes, but I saw the hunger there. For Silas, courtship might not be enough. He wanted more. Needed more.

“Freya.” My name fell from his lips with the force of a command. His gaze speared me, molten black and absolute. “If you’re willing, from this moment forward, you’ll be mine. My partner. My mate in truth.”

The words rooted me to the floor.

He couldn’t mean it. Could he? His voice was cool, but husked at the edges, rougher than usual—like gravel dragged across stone. And the way he watched me... every instinct in me quivered. He was dead serious.

Or was this all a shield, a gesture to lift me above the scorn Jocelyn and Caelum had tried to drape over me?

Jocelyn’s composure finally cracked. She stepped forward, her voice rising. “She can’t be your mate! She has nothing, no holdings, no name worth carrying. How could she ever stand at your side?”

Silas turned, his stare slicing into her. “And you think you can?”

She jolted as though struck, then tilted her chin, clinging to her arrogance like armor. “Yes. I am of the first branch of the Thornes, daughter of the Metropolitan line. I carry titles within the Stormveil holdings. I have rank, power, recognition. I am fit. More fit than her.”

Pride shone off her like ice catching light. In Ashbourne, in the Capital, she strutted as if the world itself bowed. She was the jewel of the Metropolitan pack—line, raised high in boardrooms and halls of steel.

And yet-

6:06 AM P

Finished

Silas's laugh this time was a scythe. "Your ability?" His eyes narrowed. "If not for the Ironclad Coalition's favor propping you up, how much power would you wield, Jocelyn Thorne? Do you think scraps from my hand made you a wolf worthy of me?"

His words struck like claws raking her face. The color drained out of her until she stood pale, stiff, eyes wide.

The truth was a spear through the crowd as well. Every wolf who knew her history—how she had clawed her way from bastard-child obscurity into legitimacy only because of favors, trades, whispered bargains—now recalled it in sharp relief. Even the sacrifice she loved to parade, the "one eye" she had given for her rise, felt smaller in the shadow of Silas's derision.

Around us, wolves traded looks. Speculation. Contempt.

Jocelyn's breath shuddered. "And what of her?" she snapped, pointing at me like venom. "What does Freya Thorne have? Nothing! Her parents dead in the Hall of Martyrs, her line broken, no holdings but ashes. What can she give you, Silas? Don't forget—I gave up my eye for you!"

Her words dripped with intent, trying to drag guilt into his gaze. But Silas didn't so much as blink.

His black eyes burned with the frost of the high peaks. "I require nothing of her. Nothing. And if you ever again dare to belittle her in my presence, I will strip you of every pretension, tear you back down to what you once were—a forgotten stray begging scraps at the Thornes' hall doors."

The temperature seemed to plummet. His aura poured through the hall, pressing down on every wolf like the shadow of a glacier.

Even Jocelyn trembled, her bravado shattering under that weight.

I stood silent, breath held, heart pounding. My wolf prowled beneath my skin, ears flat, tail high, recognizing the dominance in Silas's voice—and the protection.

For the first time in years, I was not the one being diminished, the one being stripped bare under others' words.

I was the one an Alpha had claimed.

Send Gifts

A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya's POV

Finished

Jocelyn Thorne's face turned the color of ash, as though the blood had been ripped from her veins in one brutal moment. I could almost hear her heart stutter. He... how could he treat her so?

Her one eye, gleaming with that unnatural brightness she had paid so dearly for, narrowed with disbelief. She had sacrificed it for Silas Whitmor, or so she told herself, wearing that story like a badge of loyalty. But tonight, for me—for my sake—he had turned that cold edge of his blade against her.

I saw the bitterness swallow her whole, especially when the crowd's stares shifted. Not admiration now. Not envy. Pity. Sympathetic, almost tender. Jocelyn Thorne—raised high on the pride of the Metropolitan branch—was being pitied.

And Jocelyn had never been one to stomach pity.

She sucked in a breath, shoulders stiff, trying to hold on to some last shard of pride. "What does she have, Silas?" she demanded, voice sharp with venom. "What about Freya Thorne makes her worth your protection?"

The wolves closest to us leaned in, hungry for the answer. They'd seen Silas before: cold as iron, ruthless as winter itself. He was not one to extend a shield for free.

Silas's reply was soft, but it carried like thunder. "Because she did not leave me behind."

The words struck harder than any blow. Jocelyn's face crumpled, gray and wasted.

And then his hand found mine. His palm was warm, fingers rough with the strength of a warrior Alpha. The tether between us sparked—dangerous, reckless. "Come," he murmured.

My throat caught. Still, I managed to answer, "Alright." Because I wanted nothing more than to be anywhere but under Jocelyn's glare, anywhere but in the shadow of Caelum's burning stare.

We stepped away from the balcony. I did not look back, though I felt Jocelyn's hatred bite into my skin like icy fangs. So it was because she once left him... and I did not. That single choice had been a gulf she could never cross.

Behind us, Aurora's voice rose in sour mockery. "Silas Whitmor speaks words of convenience. Freya is a fool if she believes them. Look at her—barely freed from her Lunar Severance with Caelum, and already tangled with Silas. Marriage, bond, vows—mere toys

to her. She treats the sanctity of mating as a child's game. Caelum, thank the moon you severed her—now she—”

But Aurora's voice faltered, falling silent.

Because Caelum Grafton wasn't listening.

No. His eyes were still on me.

Not Silas. Not the hand holding mine. On me. As though the Alpha of Silverfang had forgotten the entire room, forgotten Aurora clawing for his arm, forgotten everything but the sight of me walking away.

Aurora's scent spiked bitter and sharp as she clung tighter to him. I felt the possessive edge in her grip even from across the hall. Caelum belongs to me. He will not go back to her. Her resolve was as clear as the storm in her blood.

But his gaze—his gaze belonged to me.

Silas led me out of the great hall and into the garden beyond.

The night was hushed. Lanterns glowed low among climbing ivy. The air was cool, touched with the scent of leaves and blossoms. After the suffocating press of wolves inside—their eyes, their whispers, their judgment—the quiet was like water on parched skin.

I drew in a breath. “Why here?” I asked.

His hand loosened, though he didn't step back. “It's quieter.”

6:06 AM P

Finished

That was all. A simple answer, clipped and direct. Yet I felt as though he had carved this stillness out for me alone. That he had led me here not because he needed it, but because he knew I did.

Warmth crept through my chest, confusing, dangerous.

“Thank you,” I said softly.

He turned his head, one brow raised. “Thank me?”

“Yes,” I insisted. “For speaking for me. For—shielding me back there. I know you did it for my sake. Don’t worry. I won’t take your words to heart. I know you didn’t mean them as they sounded.”

His lips curved in something that was not a smile. “Which words, Freya? The promise of wealth? Or the vow that I would take you as mine, if only you gave me leave?”

Heat surged to my face. “Both,” I admitted. “Whether it was sympathy or simple chivalry... I understand. I’m grateful. If one day you ever need me, Silas, I’ll return the favor.”

He studied me then, gaze unyielding, dark as steel. “You think me chivalrous? You think me sympathetic?”

His voice dropped lower. “Freya Thorne, the Whitmors have never been a family of knights and rescuers. Ironclad blood runs cold—selfish, obsessive, merciless. Never... chivalrous.”

His words cut, but not at me. They cut at himself.

“I have never pitied you,” he murmured. His eyes glowed faint in the lantern light. “I have envied you.”

I blinked. “Envied... me?”

“Yes.” His tone softened, but it was raw. “Envied your parents. That you had them. That they fought and fell with honor, and left you not with scars but with warmth in your memories. You carry them still. You can look back and feel loved.”

He exhaled, slow and bitter. “I look back at mine, and feel nothing but hatred.”

The steel in his voice cracked, just a little, and for the first time I glimpsed not the Ironclad Alpha, but the boy who had grown in a house of venom.

“I envy you, Freya. And I respect them—the ones who raised you. They made you who you

His eyes stayed locked on mine.

And my heart, traitor that it was, faltered.

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are.”

How strange to hear him, Silas Whitmor, who had always stood untouchable, who could bend boardrooms and battlegrounds alike to his will—confess envy of me.

I thought of my father, Arthur Thorne, and my mother Myra Brown. Of their laughter, their gentle chiding, the fleeting moments we'd stolen between their duties to the Iron Fang Recon Unit. I thought of my brother Eric, who had shielded me in ways he never spoke of.

Even when loss struck, even when I had stood before the Ashbourne Legion's Hall of Martyrs, my memories had never been cold. They had been light.

And I realized—Silas had never known such light.

For a heartbeat, I wanted *to* reach for him. To tell him that envy was misplaced. That he was not bound by his father's cruelty.

That I-

But the words caught in my throat. Because what comfort could I give to a man forged in iron and shadow? What could I say that would not sound like pity—the one thing he claimed never to give, and likely would never accept?

So I stood there, fingers trembling where they brushed his hand, lost between silence and the thunder of my racing heart.

6.06

A Warrior Luna's Awakening

A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya's POV

Finished

For a moment, silence clung to us like frost. I weighed my words carefully before I spoke. "If you choose to, then one day when you wed and sire children, you could give them what you were denied—a true home, filled with warmth."

The words had barely left me when I saw Silas Whitmor's eyes flicker.

Marriage. Children.

He had never looked like a male who entertained such thoughts. The very mention of it seemed to gnaw at him, as though it scraped against old scars. I knew well enough why. He had spoken before of his father, of the venomous household that had birthed him. The Whitmore bond had been nothing but a farce of dominance and cruelty. To him, marriage

was little more than a prison. And children? He had once snarled that he would never perpetuate such a cycle.

But now—now he looked at me, and his voice came out rougher, startlingly raw.

“Then will you marry me, Freya? Bear my children?”

I froze, breath catching in my throat. My wolf surged inside me, startled, as though she hadn’t expected to be dragged into such terrain. “What—what did you just say?” I coughed, nearly choking on the word itself.

He repeated it without hesitation, without shame. “Marriage. Children. Will you try it with me?” His face was unreadable, his /tone almost maddeningly calm, as if he were asking me whether I’d spar him at dawn.

I dragged a hand over my brow, trying to steady the rush in my veins. Moon above, Silas’s mind leapt like lightning over ridges, and half the time, it left me stumbling to keep pace. “I only just came through my Lunar Severance Phase,” I said sharply. “I have no intention of running headlong into another bond. And more than that—” My voice dropped lower. “I don’t believe marriage and children are things one tries. Especially children. If you bring a life into this world, that life is your blood and your vow. It is not something you discard because you regret it. Wolves don’t return pups to the womb.”

His gaze dipped, lashes lowering, as though he were thinking through every syllable I had spoken. For a breath, he seemed carved of stone.

“Enough,” I muttered, straightening. “We should head back to the hall.” I turned before the strange weight of his stare could press me further, my boots crunching on the gravel path.

But behind me, his voice rang out, low and sure.

“Freya.”

I halted.

“I meant what I said before Caelum Grafton.”

The name sent a sting through my gut, though I smothered it quickly.

Silas’s voice grew steadier. “All of it. If you want me, I am here. If you want anything—wealth, protection, power—I will lay it at your feet. If you want me in truth, I will give you that too.”

The words pulled me back. I turned, meeting him where the moonlight fractured across his shoulders.

The garden was hushed save for the restless whisper of vines and the heady perfume of flowers. Silver moonlight draped across his frame like frost. His features, cut with a cold beauty that most wolves feared to linger on, seemed softened by that glow. Yet his eyes—gods, his eyes—burned with something fierce, unyielding, and utterly foreign to the aloof Alpha I had known.

The coldness of his stance only sharpened the fire of that gaze. It was like staring at a glacier that concealed molten stone deep within.

I realized, with a jolt, that he was utterly serious. That if I nodded—just a tilt of my head—I would belong to Silas Whitmor. His mate in all but the Moon’s formal decree. His lover, his equal, his chosen.

It was absurd. Reckless. Dangerous. And yet the thought struck me with a visceral power, as though my wolf strained against the leash to see what such a bond would feel like.

6.06 AM P P

His lips parted, and his voice was hoarse, almost reverent. “Do you want this, Freya? Do you want me?”

Finished

I let the silence linger between us, let his question hang heavy as the moon. His eyes, sharp as a hawk’s, locked with mine. In their depths, I saw not only hunger but hope—raw and naked.

My chest tightened. For one dangerous breath, I wondered if I should surrender, just to see where fate might drag me.

But no. My wolf stilled, steadied, and my answer rose like **steel**

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“I don’t.”

His brows pinched, almost imperceptibly. “Why?” The word was brittle. “Is it Caelum? Do you still love him?”

I shook my head, sharp. “No. Caelum is ash in my heart. There is nothing left for him there. I refuse you, Silas, because I do not love you. Not now. And because the things I want—power, freedom, my own future—I will seize with my own claws. I will not take them because a male lays them in my lap.”

For a long moment, silence clawed the air between us. His jaw worked, tight, his lips pressed into a thin line. And yet when my words sank in—I do not love you—I saw it. The flicker of something fragile in his gaze.

A wound.

Silas Whitmor, who had boasted that he needed no one's love—not even his parents', after their bond turned to venom—looked, in that instant, like a wolf robbed of something he hadn't realized he craved.

"Then later," he said suddenly, his voice low and strained.

I blinked. "Later?"

"Yes." His eyes burned into mine. "If not now... what about later?"

The weight of his question struck deeper than the first.

My lips parted, words forming, but before I could speak, he stepped closer, his scent curling around me—iron, smoke, the bite of winter steel. His hand rose, calloused fingertip pressing gently against my lips.

"You don't need to answer." His voice was husky, almost desperate beneath the veneer of calm. "I don't want to hear the words unless they are the ones I crave. So keep them. Until you're ready. Or until I make you ready."

I froze.

The press of his finger was cool, but my lips burned beneath it, heat rushing like wildfire into my blood. My wolf stirred uneasily, claws scraping inside my chest, caught between recoil and longing.

I had not expected this from him—not Silas, not the Ironclad Alpha who had always been the embodiment of restraint and ice. Yet here he was, breaking his own rules, demanding something more than respect, more than alliance.

Something dangerously close to love.

And as his touch lingered, I feared that one day, I might not be strong enough to say no.

Send Gifts

A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Caelum's POV

Aurora and I returned to the hotel suite.

Finished

Since leaving the banquet hall, I hadn't said a word. Silence clung to me like a second skin, and with every step I took, my chest grew heavier.

Aurora noticed. Of course she did. Her voice broke the air, sharp with a note of frustration.

"Caelum, Freya Thorne is outrageous. Barely divorced, and already flaunting herself beside Silas Whitmor. Jocelyn told me she's been clinging to him ever since she set foot in Ashbourne. And these past few days—they've been inseparable, as if she's desperate for the entire realm to know she has ties with the Ironclad Coalition."

Her words hit me, though not in the way she expected.

I bowed my head, staring at the floor, letting her tirade wash over me. My chest burned, but I kept my tongue still.

"Caelum?" Aurora's voice rose, impatient now.

I startled. "Ah? What... what did you say?"

She bit her lip. Her pale blue eyes narrowed on me. "What's wrong with you? You've been distant ever since the banquet /ended. You're not even listening."

"Nothing," I said quickly. "I'm just... tired."

But even as I spoke, the words rang hollow. The truth pressed against the back of my throat, threatening to claw its way out.

Her next question landed like a blade.

"You're thinking about Freya, aren't you?"

I didn't answer. Couldn't.

Aurora pressed on, relentless. "Of course you are. You shared three years of a bond with her, even if it ended in the Lunar Severance Phase. I just never thought she'd fall into another Alpha's arms so quickly. I honestly believed she cared about you -at least a little. When I returned, I didn't want to intrude on your marriage. But clearly, I was wrong about her. She's shameless."

As she spoke, Aurora lifted her hands, cupping my face gently, forcing me to look into her eyes. “Caelum, if it were me... if I truly loved someone, I would never stray. My heart would belong to him alone. For life.”

Her gaze softened, and her eyelids fluttered closed. Slowly, deliberately, she leaned closer, her lips parting, drifting toward

mine.

My body tensed. A wolf’s instinct surged inside me, warning and urging in equal measure. I knew what she was offering. If I accepted—if I let the kiss happen—our fates would be sealed. It would be the unspoken promise that we belonged to one another, that I was finally ready to let Freya go.

And once, before the bond... before Freya became my Luna, perhaps I would have kissed Aurora without hesitation. She had been a figure from my youth, a dream I never dared to claim. Back then, her attention would have felt like a gift from the Moon Goddess herself.

But now...

Now her face blurred, and all I could see in my mind was Freya. Her eyes—

storm-gray, unflinching even when the world turned its back on her. Her voice, low and steady when she challenged me in the council chamber. Her scent, the one my wolf still recognized as home, even after the bond was severed.

My chest ached.

I turned away. “It’s late, Aurora. You should rest.”

Her eyes flew open, shock flashing like lightning. “What?”

6.06 AM P

Finished

“I” My throat tightened. I forced the words out. “You’re important to me. More than you know. But tonight—we’re both exhausted. Go, get some sleep.”

Aurora froze. For a heartbeat, the mask slipped, and I saw the hurt in her expression. Then, just as quickly, she gathered herself. A brittle smile curved her lips.

“You’re right,” she whispered. “It is late. We’re both tired.”

She left with measured steps, her gown swishing against the carpet. But the faint tremor in her voice betrayed her.

The door shut softly behind her.

Alone, I let out a ragged breath and pressed a hand over my face. My heart hammered like a war drum in my chest. What was wrong with me?

Aurora had opened her heart, given me a chance to take what she'd long wanted to offer. She was the daughter of the Bluemoon Beta, a skilled pilot of their Airborne Wing, respected and fearless. Any Alpha in the realm would have considered it an honor to stand at her side.

And yet... I had refused her.

Because of Freya

Because even now—after our bond was dissolved, after she chose Silas Whitmor, after she looked at me as though I were nothing—I still couldn't forget her.

I remembered how she had walked beside me during our three years as mates, silent but steadfast, never demanding, never complaining. And tonight, when I saw her with Silas, something inside me snapped. For the first time, I felt the pang of true regret.

If I hadn't let her go...

If I hadn't agreed to the severance...

If I had fought harder....

Would it be me standing at her side tonight? Would it be me she leaned on instead of Silas Whitmor?

The thought burned. I shook my head violently, as if I could scatter it into ashes.

"No," I muttered under my breath. "I can't think like that. I can't regret."

Aurora had saved my life once. I owed her more than gratitude. She deserved loyalty, devotion, recompense for what she had risked. She was the one I should give my heart to now, not Freya—the woman who had left me.

Yes. That was what I needed *to* remember.

Still, even as I whispered the words, a hollow ache lingered in my chest.

The truth I didn't want to admit whispered back to me, a voice I couldn't silence:

Caelum, you are lying to yourself.

I clenched my fists.

“Freya, I don’t regret,” I said aloud, the words spilling into the quiet of the room, meant for no ears but my own.

But even as I spoke them, my wolf stirred uneasily within me.

Because deep down, I knew it wasn’t true.

A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya’s POV

Finished

I was dragged out of sleep by the sharp trill of my WolfComm. The glowing screen nearly blinded me in the early dawn haze.

I groaned and fumbled for it, only to hear Lana’s voice explode through the receiver.

“Freya, are you kidding me? You’re with Alpha Silas, and you didn’t tell me?”

My eyes cracked open. “What?” My voice rasped, still half-asleep. “Since when am I with Silas?”

“Don’t play dumb!” she shrieked. “Last night, at the banquet—he confessed to you in front of the entire Ashboon delegation It’s all over the feeds. You’re trending!”

That jolted me awake. I sat up, tangled in the hotel sheets, and swiped across my WolfComm to check. Sure enough, the top headline blazed red:

SHOCKING: Alpha of Ironclad Coalition Linked to Divorced Woman of the Stormveil Pack

And beneath it—pictures. Me and Silas, frozen in a thousand camera flashes. One shot caught the exact moment his cold, steel-gray eyes softened as he looked at me. A tenderness there that no one had ever seen before, not from the infamous Ironclad Alpha.

I cursed under my breath. No wonder the comments were feral.

“That’s Whitmor? The coldest Alpha in The Capital? No way he actually cares about her.”

“She’s just a divorced she-wolf, what could he possibly see in her?”

“If he looked at me like that, I’d throw myself into his arms this second.”

“Moon above, those eyes.... one flicker of warmth from a man like him is enough to destroy you.”

I scrolled, heat creeping up my neck. Silas Whitmor, the Ironclad’s stone-hearted Alpha, was being dissected like some forbidden fruit—and I was standing in the middle of the storm.

Lana’s voice bellowed again from the phone, snapping me out of my thoughts. “Well? Are you together or not?”

“No,” I said flatly. “Of course not. Do you think I’m the kind of wolf who leaps into another’s arms the moment a bond is severed?”

Lana scoffed. “You’re not seriously still hung up on Caelum Grafton, are you? That bastard—”

“I’m not,” I cut her off quickly. “But that doesn’t mean I’m going to start... dating Silas.”

“You’re insane.” She huffed. “Silas Whitmor just confessed to you in front of half the realm. He’s been voted the most desirable Alpha in The Capital—women literally dream of conquering him. And you’re telling me you didn’t even feel a spark?”

Her words echoed too loudly through the speaker. I cringed and glanced at the walls. Damn it—I’d left it on loudspeaker. The entire room was echoing with her ridiculous claim. Most desirable Alpha to conquer? What kind of ridiculous magazine put that on print?

And yet... my lips tingled faintly, unbidden. As if they remembered the heat of his hand when he’d brushed against me last night. My skin still carried the ghost of his touch.

“No,” I muttered, a little too quickly. “Definitely not.”

But even to myself, it didn’t sound convincing.

When Lana finally let me go, I tossed the WolfComm aside and stumbled into the shower, trying to wash away the lingering warmth I refused to name.

By the time I made it downstairs, Silas was already waiting in the dining room. Of course he was. Impeccably dressed, posture rigid, eyes cool as winter steel. The Alpha of the Ironclad never looked anything less than carved from iron.

6o6 AM P P

Finished

1 sat, poured myself a bowl of congee, and tried to ignore the weight of his gaze. But then—his voice cut through the silence.

Tell me,” he said, tone calm but deadly direct, “do I not stir in you... the desire to conquer me?”

I nearly choked. The spoon froze halfway to my lips. The porridge suddenly tasted like sand.

“What did you just say?”

He repeated it without shame. “Do I not make you want to conquer me?”

My jaw dropped. My gaze shot to Wren, his ever-stoic secretary, who stood nearby holding a data pad. The poor man’s eyes bulged like a startled pup.

Silas Whitmor. The Ironclad Alpha. Asking if I wanted to conquer him.

Moon above, had the world gone mad?

“You I sputtered. “You overheard my call this morning, didn’t you?”

His answer was matter-of-fact. “Your friend’s voice carries. I was in the next suite. It was impossible not to hear.”

Lana’s thunderous voice. I cursed her again silently.

“And?” he pressed. “Am I so unappealing that I fail to stir even a flicker of desire in you?”

I stared at him. Silas Whitmor was... infuriating. Objectively, he was beautiful—every line of his face, every taut line of his body radiated dominance. His presence alone could make lesser wolves drop to their knees. But I wasn’t going to feed his

ego.

“You’re attractive,” I admitted carefully, “but I prefer... lighthearted men. Warm, humorous. The playful type.”

The complete opposite of him.

He lowered his lashes, expression unreadable. “I see.”

I thought that was the end of it. But his silence carried weight, and behind his eyes something unreadable flickered.

“Today,” I said quickly, changing the subject, “I need to go to my family’s hall. Ken Thorne hasn’t been well. I want to visit him. I’ll be gone most of the day.”

“I’ll drive you,” he offered immediately.

“No need. I’ll take a cab.”

“Very well,” he said smoothly.

I finished my meal faster than usual, eager to escape the heavy atmosphere. As I left, I felt his eyes on me, burning holes into my back until I disappeared through the lobby doors.

Behind me, I could almost hear him speak—low, frustrated, but laced with a longing he’d never admit openly.

How do I get closer to her?

Wren murmured something in reply, but I didn’t catch it.

The Stormveil Pack’s ancestral estate loomed before me by midday. Ken Thorne sat in his armchair, his once-mighty frame diminished with age, though his spirit still clung stubbornly to life.

“Grandfather,” I said softly, kneeling beside him. “How are you feeling?”

He smiled faintly, eyes glinting. “Don’t you worry about me, child. The bones of an old wolf don’t break so easily. But I hear whispers you’ve no intention of joining the Thorne enterprises?”

His voice carried both curiosity and disappointment, and my heart clenched. The weight of family, of legacy, pressed against

J

697 AM P P

me

Finished

I bowed my head. The truth lay heavy on my tongue, but I wasn’t sure I could give him the answer he wanted to hear.

Send **Gifts**

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A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya’s POV

Finished

I didn't plan to linger in Ashbourne. The city was too small to hold a wolf like me, and its streets felt more like cages than paths.

"I won't stay in Ashbourne for long," I told Grandfather Ken as I looked out across the estate's manicured grounds.

He sighed softly, a wistful sound that carried decades of pride and worry. Small towns, small cities—they could never contain a Thorne, not me, not my brother.

"So where will you go next?" Grandfather asked, his voice calm but probing, like a predator testing the wind.

"I'll return to The Capital," I said. "My friend Lana has a company there. I'll join her team. And... I need to keep searching for Eric. The borders are vast, but I won't stop until I find him."

Ken's sharp eyes softened, but his concern lingered. "That's wise, Freya. But remember to come back and see your old Grandfather every now and then."

"Of course," I promised.

Then, after a pause, his gaze sharpened with curiosity. "And... what about Alpha Silas? Is this.... serious?"

I froze, blinking at him. Even now, he had the instincts of a wolf Alpha. He could sense the undercurrents, the unspoken

tension that humans would dismiss as trivial.

"I saw the headlines this morning, Freya," he said softly. "I want to know the truth. That WolfComm frenzy—is it real?"

I shook my head firmly. "Grandfather, Silas and I... we only have a professional relationship. Nothing more. That's all."

Ken's expression softened, yet remained layered with wisdom and a hint of amusement. "Good. And just so you know... even if you were to pursue a mate in the future, choose carefully. Our Freya may have divorced, but she deserves the finest Alpha

-or any wolf who dares to court her."

I smiled faintly. "These things... are left to fate for now. I'm not seeking a mate."

Ken nodded, approving. “Good. No rush. And if one day you do develop feelings for Silas... it won’t matter. No need to concern yourself with Jocelyn or the pack gossip. That’s only the wishful thinking of some, nothing more.”

I let out a small breath, diverting the conversation to other family matters. We spoke at length, until I sensed his energy waning and realized it was time to leave.

Stepping outside the gates of the Thorne estate, the morning sun glinting off the stone walls, I froze.

Caelum and Aurora were stepping out of a sleek SilverTech vehicle, and my nostrils flared instinctively. The scent of their pack dominance mingled sharply with the morning air.

Aurora’s amber eyes snapped toward me, her expression hard as iron. “Freya, what are you doing here?” she demanded, her voice trembling with the threat of territorial challenge.

I smirked, letting a faint growl escape my throat. “I’m a Thorne, Aurora. I think I have as much right to be here as anyone.”

Her face hardened, lips curling into a sneer. “So now that you have Silas Whitmor as your... anchor, you feel you can act without respect? Just divorced, and already wrapped up in another Alpha’s arms. You’re reckless with your affections.”

I tilted my head, letting the sun catch the edge of my fangs in a subtle glint. “Reckless? Hah. At least I’m not trying to seduce another wolf while he’s still married.”

Aurora’s snarl turned into fury. “Who are you calling-”

“Caelum gave you five million in jewelry during your marriage,” I interrupted coldly, letting each word strike like claws. “If that doesn’t make you a secondary, then what? The necklace on your neck now... it’s one of them. When I return to The Capital, I’ll call my lawyer. Let’s see if you still get to keep them.”

Caelum’s eyes flickered uneasily, and Aurora’s chest heaved, but she didn’t move.

Finished

“You’re overstepping,” Caelum said finally, his deep voice steady but threaded with tension. “The divorce is between us. Freya. I’ve already explained–Aurora saved my life. If you think there’s compensation due, I’ll make it right someday.”

I laughed, low and sharp, letting the wolf in me flare. “Compensation, *is* it

Fine. Start by removing the necklace from her

neck.”

Aurora’s eyes widened, anger flaring hotter than any flame. “Freya, don’t be absurd! Do you really think Caelum would—”

Before she could finish, a new presence made itself known.

“Kade.” I said quietly, and my heart thrummed with relief and the familiar thrill of my packmate’s unwavering support.

He moved with predatory grace, and in one swift motion, the diamond necklace was in his hands, torn from Aurora’s neck. She shrieked, utterly stunned, her dominance shattered in an instant.

I blinked, momentarily stunned myself. “You... came here?” I asked, incredulous.

“I called you earlier,” Kade said simply, his gray eyes sharp. “You said you were coming to the Thorne estate. I wanted to make sure you were safe.”

Ah. That explained it. I had been so focused on Caelum and Aurora that I had almost forgotten Kade had been tracking me from the moment I left The Capital.

Caelum’s jaw tightened, and his voice rumbled low, like distant thunder. “This is too much. You can’t just—steal from me—”

Kade’s gaze didn’t waver. “If she’s displeased with what she sees, it’s as simple as taking it back. Consider it... enforcing balance.”

Aurora hissed, rage snapping like a whip. But I simply smiled, wolf’s instinct humming in my chest. Today, territory had been claimed. Dominance had been marked. And the world, for once, would bend to those who knew the law of the pack.

Send Gifts

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A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya’s POV

“Steal?” Kade scoffed, the corner of his mouth curling in that lazy, infuriating smirk of his as he weighed the diamond necklace in his hand. “I’m just helping Freya reclaim what’s rightfully hers. You really think you could take me to wolf court for this?”

The words hit Caelum like a cold gust of wind. He had almost forgotten that Kade Blackridge came from one of The Capital's most formidable legal dynasties. The Blackridge family's influence was absolute; their protégés dominated the top law firms. A single word from Kade's father could make or break a case, and the very thought made Caelum stiffen.

Aurora's glare burned into Kade, her jealousy sizzling in the morning air. "When did you become a sidekick like this, Kade? I didn't **see** it coming. Freya, capable as she **is**, first flirts with Silas Whitmor, and now even you? You're conspiring with her?"

I narrowed my eyes at her, the wolf inside me bristling at the venom in her tone. Before I could even respond, Kade moved- a fluid, predatory step forward and delivered a sharp, precise slap across Aurora's cheek.

She yelped, the sting of the strike cutting deeper than any words could. Only yesterday, she'd endured Silas's reprimand at the gala. She had spent hours masking the swelling with makeup, and now-today-it was Kade's hand that reminded her who truly held power in this game.

"Kade, you can't-" Caelum stepped in, his growl low and cautious, placing himself between Kade and Aurora.

Kade's gaze, cold and unwavering, locked on Aurora. "This is a warning," he said smoothly. "Say anything more against Freya, and a single slap won't be enough to silence you."

Aurora's eyes narrowed to slits, hatred and shock mingling as she shot daggers at me. "You just hide behind men, Freya, that's all you do!"

I tilted my head, the wolf's predator instinct kicking in, and gave her a look sharp enough to pierce through steel. "Are you sure you want me to show you what happens when I act?" I said, voice icy. "Because if I strike, it won't just be a minor sting like at the airport."

Her body stiffened instantly. The airport incident-humiliating and permanent in her memory-flashed vividly in her eyes.

"What did I do wrong?" she spat, teeth bared. "At the airport, I acted for the safety of everyone on that plane. And you, Freya... you had the nerve to incite the authorities!"

Kade's smirk deepened, his tone dripping with contempt. "Aurora, you dare lecture someone about morality? Haven't you reflected enough on your little stint at the station?"

I folded my arms, letting the wolf in me radiate dominance. "If you still don't realize your errors, then perhaps your career as a first officer is at an end," I said, deliberately slow and cold.

Aurora's eyes burned, rage twisting her features. "I know what you're jealous of, Freya! Jealous that Caelum noticed me, jealous that I became first officer, jealous of what you can never reach!"

I felt Kade snicker beside me before I could even speak. His gaze on Aurora was full of disdain, wolfish and piercing. "Jealousy? Aurora, do you really think anyone envies the concern of a fool like Caelum for you?"

Caelum's face darkened. "Kade, even if you support Freya, you shouldn't humiliate her like that!"

Kade yawned lazily, as if offended by the notion. "I'm not humiliating him. I'm stating facts. You took credit for a company going public. Three years of marriage, spent lavishly on your paramour, while neglecting the woman who built it with you. Tell me, what does that make you if not a fool?"

Caelum's jaw tightened, the blush of anger creeping into his neck.

And you-" Kade turned his sharp gaze to Aurora, "don't get too proud of being first officer. Freya has flown combat aircraft you couldn't even identify half of."

Aurora's face flamed crimson, yet Kade wasn't finished. His voice dropped, edged with lethal calm. "And don't assume the airport incident is behind you. Time will come, and you may not remain first officer. You think a few days of detention covers your mistakes?"

Finished

Her expression shifted from red to pale, lips pressing thin. Her eyes were cold, calculating, but I could smell the fear-the primal recognition that her dominance was slipping. "You have no right to decide my career," she spat, venom barely masking desperation.

"Then we'll see." Kade said, voice low and certain. He turned to me, eyes softening in contrast. "Freya, shall we go?"

I nodded, feeling the pack instinct relax only slightly now that Kade was beside me. "Yes."

As we moved, Caelum blocked our path, voice strained. "Kade... return the necklace."

Kade's hand was steady as he handed it to me. "This belongs with Freya," he said firmly.

The necklace glimmered in my hand, the diamonds catching the sunlight like captured stars. Years of my labor, years of building alongside Caelum, and yet he had lavished all of that on Aurora. The necklace was both beautiful and mocking-a symbol of misplaced loyalty and squandered effort.

Caelum's voice was low, tense. "Freya, I know I owe you... but that necklace is hers. Please, just give it back. I'll repay you later

I raised a brow, feeling the wolf in me growl softly. "Caelum," I said slowly, letting the weight of my presence fill the space, "you owe me? How exactly do you intend to repay that debt? Do you think you could ever?"

Silence followed. The tension in the morning air was thick and palpable, a storm before the lightning strike. I felt the pack instincts within me pulse, a reminder: loyalty, dominance, and pride weren't just words. They were survival.

And today, I would not let anyone forget it.

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A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya's POV

Finished

The glint of the diamond necklace in my hand caught the morning sunlight, and I could feel the cold fire in my veins flare up. Caelum's sharp intake of breath barely registered—I knew exactly what he was thinking. My gaze had been utterly indifferent when I looked at him earlier, **as** if the man who had once been the center of my life now meant nothing. And that, apparently, shook him more than anything I could have said.

"What do you mean it 'belongs' to Aurora?" I said, my voice steady, each word slicing the air like claws. "You used our marital **assets** to buy her these gifts. I never agreed to it. This necklace has never been hers, and it will never be hers. When I return to The Capital, I will file a lawsuit and reclaim it. Mark my words."

They gaped at me, and I could almost see the wheels turning in their heads. How dare I fight back? How dare I refuse to be subservient? I let my restraint show for so long that they had come to believe my compliance was natural. Pathetic.

"Freya," Aurora hissed, red rising to her cheeks, "you're only after money. During the Lunar Severance Phase, you said you only wanted 1.53 million, and now—you're trying to seize all these jewels!"

let a soft snarl escape me. "And you? Are you after money too? You take these jewels, yet claim you don't want to be a mistress. Why not buy your own, Aurora? Why force a married man to buy them for you?" My words were sharp as wolf's teeth.

Her face burned crimson, her breath quickening. Around us, the Stormveil estate's security team had gathered discreetly, their eyes flicking between the confrontation and the two of us. Every word I spoke, they heard, and every insult I threw cut deeper than Aurora could imagine.

I turned to Kade, my companion in all this chaos, and nodded. "Let's go."

"Yes," he said, his tone suddenly deferential, calm—a stark contrast to the cold, commanding wolf he had been moments ago toward Caelum and Aurora.

Aurora hissed indignantly at Caelum. "Freya has gone too far! If she'd just asked for the jewelry politely, I might have—might have given it to her. But she's manipulative, treacherous. I will not let her have her way."

Caelum didn't answer. His eyes remained locked on me as we walked toward the car, and I felt his wolf instinct waver somewhere between longing and regret. That indifferent look I'd given him... he'd never seen it from me before, and it cut deeper than Aurora's petty anger ever could.

Was it true, then? Did he not matter to me anymore? My wolf growled inside me, amused and vindictive all at once, sensing the sting of realization in his chest.

Aurora's voice rose, trying to grab his attention, but it fell flat. He barely turned, still caught in the echo of my gaze. Kade's smirk grew wider. I could feel the pack within him resonating with mine, the predator sense thrumming in tandem.

"I'll find a way to resolve this," Caelum finally said, though his voice had lost some of its alpha certainty. "The jewelry... it was given to you, technically. But I owe you—"

I raised a hand to stop him, letting the power of my presence thrum in the air. "Caelum," I said slowly, deliberately, "how do you intend to repay what you owe? Do you truly believe you could ever pay back what you took from me?"

He flinched, though he tried to hide it. The wound in his pride, the recognition of his failings—it was there, sharp as broken glass in his chest.

I slid into the passenger seat of the car Kade had opened, still holding the necklace. "Take us to the Ashbourne Charitable Association," I told him, voice cool, wolfish, uncompromising.

"Why?" Kade asked, though his eyes betrayed his understanding.

"This necklace... it's no longer mine, nor should it be hers," I said. "It will be donated."

An hour later, the transaction was complete. The necklace would be auctioned, and all proceeds donated to a network of Hope Schools across Ashbourne, giving lost and

orphaned children a chance to learn. I felt the wolf within me relax slightly, knowing that this token of betrayal had been transformed into something meaningful.

Kade reached over and rested his hand briefly on mine. “If ever you fancy a jewel, I’ll get it for you,” he said casually.

Finished

“I have no interest in jewelry,” I said, letting my voice carry the weight of my history. The only ornament that had ever mattered to me was my mother’s ruby necklace, the one she had bartered for peace. That memory pulsed like a heartbeat in my chest. This necklace—this tainted symbol of wasted years with Caelum—would never hold such value.

I looked up at him, curiosity piqued. “You came all this way to find me... why? Was there something on your mind?”

Kade hesitated, lips pressing together briefly before he admitted, “Are you... involved with Silas Whitmor?”

I blinked, momentarily taken aback. “You... saw the WolfComm buzz online?” I said, shaking my head. “No, we are not involved. Silas only... happened to assist me yesterday at the gala. Caelum and Aurora were there; Silas was simply helping.”

Kade’s eyes narrowed, wolfish and perceptive. “Helping? That doesn’t sound like him.”

I let out a dry laugh, wolfish instinct flaring. “Perhaps, for one night, I was his companion. Nothing more.”

Kade didn’t press further. I could feel the intelligence in his gaze, the instinct to protect, to anticipate, to dominate the space around us. With him, there was no pretense—only loyalty, unspoken but absolute, like the pulse of a pack in sync.

And that was all that mattered right now.

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