

# A Warrior Luna's Awakening

## chapter 201-210

# A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Third Person's POV

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Silas's grip on Lennon Thorne's throat was unyielding, fingers coiled like forged steel. Lennon clawed at him, struggling to wrench free, but it was futile-Silas's strength was a predator's, honed through decades of commanding the Ironclad Coalition. His eyes bulged, face flushing crimson, but Silas didn't relent.

The room seemed to catch its breath. Only then did everyone else seem to return to reality.

"Silas! Let him go! My father can't-he can't breathe!" Jocelyn rushed forward, voice sharp with panic. "Even if you're defending Freya, this is... this is too far!"

Defending? The word barely grazed Silas. He lowered his gaze slowly, deliberately, and the faintest curve of a wolfish smirk tugged at his lips. He didn't need to fight for Freya; he merely wanted to ensure her hands remained clean. If anyone was going to teach Lennon a lesson, it would be him-and not Freya.

Jocelyn turned sharply to Freya, frustration and accusation bleeding from her voice. "Freya! This is too much! You're using Silas to do... this?"

Abel Thorne, ever the mediator, interjected with a calm edge. "Freya, no matter what, tell Silas to release your uncle. This has gone far enough."

Silas finally lifted his piercing gaze and met Freya's eyes. The unspoken question hung between them: Do you want him dead, or alive?

A tense silence gripped the room. Every pair of eyes fixed on Freya, waiting for her decision. Silas, Alpha of the Ironclad Coalition, could easily end Lennon here and now, and the law-human or wolf-would scarcely contain the aftermath. Yet he deferred to her, offering her the reins of judgment.

Freya inhaled, chest rising and falling with measured intensity. Her wolf stirred within, claws of fire and pride raking at restraint, but she steadied herself. Her voice, though soft, carried authority.

“Release him,” she said.

Silas’s grip loosened, steel fingers retracting from Lennon’s windpipe. Lennon stumbled backward, gasping, pointing a trembling finger at Freya. “You... you shameless little she-wolf! You let Silas humiliate me, and now you think you can get away without apologizing to me?!”

Before he could finish, a solid force struck him. Freya’s fist connected with Lennon’s jaw with precision honed by years of training in the Iron Fang Recon Unit. He fell to the ground, sprawling, humiliation etched across his face.

“Freya! How dare you strike my father?!” Jocelyn shrieked, shock and anger warring in her voice.

“Why shouldn’t I?” Freya’s eyes blazed, wolf aura simmering just beneath the surface. Her voice rang like thunder through the stormy hall. “Even if he is my uncle, if anyone dares insult my father or my brother, I will strike them without hesitation. My father did not die prematurely—he gave his life serving the nation. And my brother... he did not die; he is on a mission, defending our pack and country. Until his body is found, he is alive. And anyone who questions that will answer to me.”

Her words reverberated, each syllable carrying the weight of a wolf Alpha’s authority. The room fell silent. Even those who bore grudges against her could not muster the courage to contradict her.

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Abel Thorne’s voice cut through the tension, steady but firm. “Lennon, apologize to Freya,”

“What?” Lennon sputtered, disbelief and indignation flooding his expression. “You want me to apologize?”

“Yes. Apologize,” Abel said, his tone ironclad. “Enough. That attitude is unacceptable. They will not tolerate

it

Lennon’s protest came swift, defensive, venom-laced. “And what did I say wrong? Their parents are gone. I wouldn’t touch the Fifth Branch estate if they were alive! Stormveil’s legacy cannot fall into the hands of a she-wolf. Freya is grasping at shadows, claiming her brother is alive just to seize what rightfully belongs to the Thorne lineage!”

“Enough!” The command came like a thunderclap. From the doorway, the unmistakable sound of a cane striking stone floor echoed, deliberate, demanding attention. Every throat went dry.

Ken Thorne, the family patriarch, appeared, his gait deliberate yet unyielding despite the weight of age. The room instinctively bowed, a wave of respect and fear rolling through them.

“Grandfather!” Abel exclaimed, hurrying forward. “You were supposed to be resting. Why are you here?”

Ken’s gaze swept over the room like a predator evaluating prey. “If I didn’t come, would you even understand what you’ve done?” His voice carried centuries of authority and a lifetime of pack leadership. “The Fifth Branch estate... you dare covet it? You’ve gone too far!”

Abel shifted uncomfortably, realizing the full scope of Lennon’s audacity. He had delegated the estate matters, assuming Lennon would act judiciously-but clearly, Lennon had acted for personal gain.

Ken’s gaze snapped to Lennon. “Explain yourself. You claim the estate is safe in your hands because it ‘belongs to the lineage,’ yet you disregard the daughter of that branch? What nonsense is this?”

Lennon’s arrogance faltered slightly. “The estate... the Fifth Branch has no male heir. Freya has no claim. I

Ken’s cane struck sharply against the floor again, the motion swift and decisive. The resounding smack landed on Lennon’s cheek. Pain flared, and a sharp sting seared his pride.

“What do you mean, no one left in the Fifth Branch?” Ken’s voice boomed, a predator’s wrath echoing through the chamber. “Freya is of the Fifth Branch blood. That estate is hers! Touch it again, and you are out of this family forever!”

Lennon’s face paled. The fire in Ken’s words, the aura of an Alpha elder, silenced him utterly.

Ken then turned his piercing gaze to Freya. “Freya, my child... forgive me. This old patriarch has failed in guiding your uncles, letting them bring such indignity upon you. But know this: what is yours by right, by blood, no one will touch. Should they dare, I will strip them of their name and pack, as if they were never

Thorne”

The tension in the room finally eased, though the echoes of wolfish dominance and familial wrath still lingered like smoke after a fire Freya exhaled, her wolf retreating just enough to allow calm to settle, though her amber eyes still shimmered with unspent fury.

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya's POV

The words weren't only for me.

They were for every wolf seated in the Stormveil Primal Hall.

As Ken Thorne spoke with that gravelly, iron-bound voice, I could feel the weight of his declaration ripple across the hall like a howl across the mountains. His loyalty to me was carved in stone, an oath stronger than blood.

And everyone here needed to hear it.

Every cousin who thought I was an easy target.

Every uncle who whispered that the fifth branch of the Stormveil Pack was nothing but dead weight.

Every rival who looked at me as though I didn't belong in this hall of predators.

They all needed to be reminded:

As long as Ken Thorne drew breath, Freya Thorne would never stand alone.

I bowed my head. "Thank you, Great-Grandfather."

The words were steady, but inside, my chest ached with the burn of both pride and pressure.

Across the circle of firelight, Jocelyn Thorne's eyes glittered with venom. My cousin had always despised me. She leaned close to our aunt, who was better known as Aurora's mother, and hissed loud enough for all to hear.

"Second Aunt," Jocelyn said sweetly, "Aurora is lying in the infirmary today because of Freya. Don't you remember? Aurora only left that mission flight midway because Freya humiliated her on the live broadcast. She walked out early, and that's when she was ambushed and taken. If not for Freya, my cousin wouldn't be disgraced like this."

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The firelight snapped in the hearth, but the real heat came from the stares of every elder turning toward me.

Aurora's mother-Emilia glared at me as though she could claw my throat out on the spot. Her daughter had been her pride: Bluemoon's first female pilot, handpicked for their airborne wing. And now Aurora's name was dragged through every den, smeared in every pack council.

"You're Freya, aren't you?" she demanded, her voice sharp as a whip. "Do you even understand what you've done? Aurora is your blood. A cousin. And you tore her down for the amusement of outsiders?"

My lips curled into something between a sneer and a snarl. "I only told the truth. If Aurora was humiliated, it was because she chose cowardice over duty. And if she was kidnapped... perhaps you should ask why your daughter abandoned the wolves she was supposed to rescue."

A stunned silence swept the chamber.

Her face went red with rage, then pale with disbelief. "Even if she walked away, she broke no law. The Council never said a wolf must risk her life to save another." She jabbed a clawed finger toward me. "But you-her kin-you stood in front of the entire network and shredded her reputation. Do you feel no duty to defend your cousin? To shield her from the pack's condemnation?"

"No," I said coldly. "That is not my duty."

Gasps rippled across the room. Even the flames in the iron braziers seemed to gutter at my words.

Aurora's mother's face twisted. "Ken Thorne," she cried, turning on my great-grandfather. "My daughter is half your bloodline! She lies broken because of this girl. And now Freya refuses even the smallest act of reparation? Will you truly let her walk free of all responsibility?"

The truth was clear to everyone: she wanted me to take the fall, to use Stormveil's influence to bury Aurora's scandals.

The Bluemoon Pack had tried to smother the story. Even Silverfang had extended

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its shadow to cover it. But Aurora's betrayal of duty had caught fire in the public eye, and no amount of pack gold or media control could extinguish it.

Her “hero” title was already slipping through her claws. The Airborne Wing whispered about expelling her. Every hour, the shame grew worse.

And now they wanted me-backed by Silas Whitmor’s iron authority-to clean their mess.

Jocelyn seized her chance, her voice dripping false innocence. “Great-Grandfather, Aurora had a brilliant future. A future Freya destroyed. Shouldn’t she bear some consequence? Or...” Her eyes flicked to Silas, lounging at the edge of the hall like a predator biding his time. “...or are we saying that as long as Freya hides behind her Alpha, she can do whatever she pleases?”

The words were poison. She wanted to turn the entire hall against me.

Ken Thorne’s gaze snapped toward her, sharp enough to cut bone. “Jocelyn,” he said, each syllable like the crack of thunder, “I did not know you had grown so... eloquent in your accusations.”

But Jocelyn didn’t flinch. She lifted her chin, eyes gleaming with spite. “I only speak because Aurora’s suffering is real. She bled for her wings. She earned her place. And Freya, with one careless act, destroyed her.”

My blood burned. I could almost feel my wolf pressing against my skin, snarling to be released.

“Destroyed her?” My voice was ice. “No, cousin. Aurora destroyed herself.”

The hall shivered.

Even Ken Thorne said nothing, letting the weight of my words hang. He knew the truth-everyone did. Aurora had abandoned wolves in need, and in doing so, abandoned the very spirit of our kind.

But Jocelyn wasn’t finished. “So Freya carries no blame? She ripped into her cousin in front of the entire broadcast. That act alone drove Aurora to leave her post! Had she not, she would never have fallen into enemy hands!” Jocelyn’s lip curled. “Or is

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the Stormveil Pack a place where the favored can spit on blood ties as long as their backers are strong enough?”

Her eyes flicked again toward Silas.

And that was her mistake.

Because it was not Ken Thorne who answered her.

It was Silas.

His voice was deep, smooth, and cold as steel. “So, by your words, as long as I am her backing, Freya can do as she pleases in this hall?”

Every wolf froze.

The Ironclad Coalition’s Alpha had spoken. His presence filled the hall, shadows bending toward him as though the fire itself obeyed his command.

Jocelyn stiffened, but forced herself to meet his eyes. “Isn’t that what she does? She hides behind you, Silas. She even dared strike my father-her elder. She uses you as nothing more than a weapon. Can’t you see she treats you as a tool to be used?”

Silas tilted his head, the faintest smile curving his lips, though it carried no warmth. “Is that what you think?” His eyes flicked to me, and I felt the unspoken bond of his wolf brush against mine, possessive and unwavering.

“If she truly uses me as a weapon,” Silas said, his voice soft and lethal, “then I am glad to be wielded.”

The hall went utterly silent.

Even Jocelyn faltered, the venom on her tongue drying to ash.

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya’s POV

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The air in the Stormveil Primal Hall was sharp with tension, thick with the scent of old cedar and ancestral ash from the braziers burning along the stone walls. This hall had witnessed centuries of oaths, betrayals, and blood sacrifices from my family. Tonight, it bore witness to something else entirely.

“You... what did you just say?” Jocelyn’s voice cut through the silence, brittle and shrill. Her eyes-wolf-gold, sharp like a blade-fixed on Silas Whitmor as if she could tear his words back into his throat.

Around us, members of the Stormveil Pack shifted uneasily, mutters rising like the growl of an unsettled den. No one could quite believe what had just left Silas’s mouth.

It wasn't just me who froze. Even the oldest wolves, scarred veterans of wars and raids, stared at him in shock. Because what he'd said wasn't the declaration of an Alpha calculating his dominance. It wasn't the cold pragmatism of the Ironclad Coalition's leader.

No. It was something far softer. Far more dangerous.

Something that smelled like devotion.

"I said," Silas repeated, his voice deep, cutting across the hall like a command that demanded silence, "if Freya Thorne wishes to use me, then I welcome it. Gladly. Sweetly."

My chest constricted. His gaze swung to me then, steady and unwavering, and I saw no calculation there, no Alpha's scheme. Just raw certainty. He looked at me as though being my weapon, my shield, my pawn-whatever I needed—was not a humiliation, but a gift.

And gods help me, part of me believed him.

Jocelyn's face twisted. The fury flashing across her wolf aura lashed out like claws against stone, sharp and burning. To her, those words weren't a confession. They

were a strike—an Alpha's rejection delivered in front of half the Stormveil bloodline.

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Her jaw clenched, and I saw the moment she realized what Silas had just done. Not just chosen me, but burned every bridge to her.

"You..." Her voice shook, and she took a step closer, as if sheer presence could drag Silas back into her orbit. "Silas, do you forget what happened to your parents? Do you think Freya can withstand the weight of your family's curse? What happens when she betrays you, when she—"

The shift in Silas was instantaneous. His expression, calm only moments before, darkened like a storm rolling over the horizon. His wolf surged to the surface, power spiking through the hall, pressing against every wolf's skin. I felt it in my chest, my ribs straining to hold against the crush of his aura.

Jocelyn flinched back, but she didn't stop. She never knew when to stop.

Before Silas could move, before his claws could even twitch, I stepped forward and caught his hand in mine. His skin was hot, trembling with restrained fury.

"Enough."



I turned on Jocelyn, my own wolf stirring beneath my skin, white-fire power licking up my spine.

“Whether I can carry his bond is between Silas and me. Not you. His parents, his blood, his choices—they are not yours to weaponize. And Jocelyn...” I bared my teeth, letting my wolf seep into my voice, “say it again, and I’ll show you exactly how much I can bear. You speak once, I strike once. Try me.”

Her mouth fell open, outrage mixing with something sharp and sour: fear. She remembered, as we all did, the way I’d laid her father Lennon flat not long ago. His groan still echoed in these walls. She knew I wasn’t bluffing.

Silas looked down at me, stunned. His hand was still in mine, my grip tight, and though neither of us spoke, I knew what passed between us. A vow. An unspoken tether: no matter what shadows hunted us, I wouldn’t leave him to face them

alone.

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Then I shifted my gaze to Ken Thorne, the patriarch whose word still ruled Stormveil like ancient law. His wolf aura was dimmed with age, but his eyes were bright, sharper than most half our years.

“Grandfather,” I said evenly, though the word was a bitter stone in my throat. “I came here only to reclaim the old Thorne residence. Fifth Branch’s rightful claim. I’ll deliver the papers to the Reconstruction Office myself. I ask only that Lennon doesn’t stand in the way.”

Ken’s hand slammed down on the arm of his carved chair, a sound like bone breaking. “If Lennon dares to block her path, then he can leave Stormveil entirely. My word.”

A ripple passed through the hall—shock, disbelief, then grudging acceptance. Ken Thorne’s decrees were absolute.

Relief unfurled in my chest, though I didn’t let it show. “Thank you,” I said softly. “Silas and I will take our leave then. Rest well, Grandfather. I’ll return soon.”

“See that you do,” the old wolf rumbled. “An old Alpha likes the company of the ones who still have teeth.”

I gave him a small nod and turned, Silas's hand still firmly in mine. But as we passed Jocelyn, he stopped.

His voice cut the air like an executioner's blade. "You accused Freya of hiding behind me, of wielding me as her shield. Then hear me now, Jocelyn Thorne: from this moment, you have no claim to me. Or to the Whitmors. Whatever bond existed between us—whether duty, alliance, or debt—is severed. Forever."

The hall went silent. Wolves stared, the magnitude of his words sinking like claws into flesh.

Jocelyn paled, her lips trembling. "Silas... what are you saying? You can't mean—"

Lennon surged forward, desperation spilling from him like the scent of fear in a cornered animal. "Alpha Whitmor, reconsider! If the Fifth Branch claims the estate, that's one thing. But you and Jocelyn—if you cut ties, then—"

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"Then what?" Silas snarled, eyes glinting like steel catching firelight. His aura slammed into Lennon so hard the man staggered. "Do not mistake my patience for mercy. I nearly blinded your daughter once. Years of reparation followed, years of bending to Thorne expectations I never owed. No more. I owe you nothing. Not you. Not her. Not Stormveil."

The words shook the hall. I felt my pulse thrumming, heat and pride swelling in my chest as he turned his gaze back to me. His eyes, ice and flame both, softened when they met mine.

"All I will ever protect," he said, low and certain, "is her."

Me.

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## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya's POV

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Jocelyn's face drained of all color before she lunged forward and seized Silas's sleeve. Her fingers clung desperately, knuckles white, her voice trembling like brittle glass.

“Silas, you can’t do this to me! I sacrificed an eye for you. I gave everything—how can you cast me aside as if none of it matters?”

Her plea echoed in the Stormveil Primal Hall, heavy with the scents of wolves bristling, the tang of burning resin smoldering in the braziers, and the charged silence of a pack witnessing something ruinous.

Silas looked down at her, his eyes ice-sharp, his aura cutting against hers like a blade. “Your eye was never sacrificed for me,” he said, voice low but edged with Alpha finality. “You were cornered, Jocelyn. You didn’t stand in front of me to save me—you simply failed to escape. If you’d had a chance to run, you would have. And for that injury, I have compensated you for years. Tell me—has that never been enough?”

The tremor in Jocelyn’s body deepened. Her mouth opened, her lips shaking as if she wanted to spit venom back at him. But here, under the scrutiny of the entire Stormveil assembly, what could she say? That she deserved more? That his entire life belonged to her because of one misstep years ago?

Her pride trapped her in silence.

“But... my feelings for you...” she whispered, words so fragile they cracked before they left her mouth.

Silas cut her down before she could finish, his words slamming through the hall like a thunderclap. “Jocelyn Thorne. I have never, from the beginning to this moment, felt even a flicker of affection for you. What you received from me was repayment for your injury—nothing more. And now, that debt is paid. Entirely.”

He tore her grip from his arm as though it were no more than cobweb. I felt the finality in his movement—the brutal, decisive severing of a tether she had clung to

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for years. He turned from her without hesitation, his hand closing around mine instead. Together, we walked away from the hall’s center.

Behind us, Jocelyn staggered backward, nearly collapsing to the stone floor. Gasps rippled through the gathered wolves. I caught the shifting scents in the air: pity, mockery, contempt. Once, those eyes had worshipped her. Once, her scarred eye had been a badge of martyrdom that elevated her above us all, a story whispered in reverence across Stormveil’s branches.

Now, stripped bare, she was just another wolf left bleeding under the weight of truth.

Her fists clenched at her sides, nails digging so deep into her palms I smelled the faint copper tang of her own blood. She wouldn't cry. Not here. Not in front of those who had once envied her. But the collapse of her pride was sharper than any visible wound.

"Jocelyn, don't just stand there," Lennon Thorne's voice snapped, laced with panic. "Go after him! Beg Alpha Whitmor's forgiveness. If you kneel, if you humble yourself, he might take back his words!"

Ken Thorne's staff cracked against the stone floor, the sound reverberating like a gunshot. The old patriarch's voice cut cold through the tension. "Enough! Do you intend to drag Stormveil's name further through the mud? Have you no shame?"

Silence fell instantly.

Ken turned his glare to Emilia, Jocelyn's mother, his eyes sharp as a hawk's. "As for Aurora's case, I know everything. Stormveil has already done what it must. What you should focus on, Emilia, is not forcing Freya to pay for Aurora's sins, but on earning forgiveness from the family whose child was burned alive. That is where your fight lies—not here."

Emilia's face twisted, lips pressed thin, humiliation and rage battling in her aura. Lennon fell silent beside her, his wolf crouching under Ken's authority.

Jocelyn, meanwhile, stood frozen, her eyes hollow, her spirit splintering. She wasn't hearing a word her grandfather spoke. All she saw was the ruin of her carefully constructed world collapsing around her.

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She had lived years in the warm glow of Whitmor protection, raised above her cousins, adored, feared, envied. That eye, her scar, had once been her crown. And now, stripped of Silas's acknowledgment, she was naked, exposed.

Her wolf trembled on the edge of breaking.

But Silas and I were already gone.

When we stepped out of the towering façade of the Whitmor-financed Stormveil business tower, the night air hit my lungs like ice water. I could still taste the storm of tension inside, but Silas walked at my side as if the world itself no longer held weight.

We slid into his vehicle, leather and steel infused with his scent-iron, smoke, the undeniable mark of an Alpha who bore his legacy like a chain. I turned toward him, unable to stop my gaze from drinking in the hard lines of his profile.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” he asked, his voice calm, almost amused, though his grip on the steering wheel was taut.

“Because I need to know,” I said softly. “Those words you spoke in front of everyone-are they real? Do you regret them?”

His lips curved, not in mockery but in something achingly close to tenderness. “Which words? That if you wished to use me, I would welcome it?”

Heat pricked the back of my throat. “Not those. I know you said that to shield me. To give me face.”

Silas shook his head, his wolf aura flickering faintly in the enclosed space. “Not for show. For truth. Freya, if you wish to wield me as your weapon, your shield, I would gladly let you. Because it means I have purpose. It means I matter to you.”

The words struck like a blade across my heart. To anyone else, they might sound like poetry. But I saw it-felt it-the jagged fracture behind them.

“No, Silas,” I whispered, shaking my head. “Don’t say that. Don’t be glad to be used.”

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True bond, true love-those things aren’t about usefulness. I like you because I like you. Whether you serve a purpose or not. Whether you’re strong or weak. It has nothing to do with usefulness.”

His hands tightened on the wheel, the leather creaking under the force. For a long moment, he didn’t answer. Then, his voice was rough, raw.

“All my life, I was told I must be useful. That only then could I be tolerated. My mother’s death-because I couldn’t hold her. My father’s hate-because I wasn’t enough. My grandfather’s approval-only because I could be forged into an heir. Everything I am is measured in usefulness.”

His wolf flickered beneath his skin, and I saw the truth of it in his aura-scarred, bruised, chained by expectation.

But I met his gaze, steady, unyielding. “Yes. Being useful has its place. But love isn’t weighed on that scale. And if you base your worth on being used, what happens when

you're not? When someone no longer needs you, will you let them cast you aside like broken steel? That's not love, Silas. That's slavery."

The car was silent save for our breath, two wolves wrestling with ghosts in the dark. His wolf stirred, restless, but in his eyes I saw the first flicker of something else.

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Silas' POV

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The blood drained from my face as I gripped the steering wheel, fingers trembling despite my will to keep them steady.

If one day Freya decided I was no longer useful to her... would she discard me the way others always had?

No.

I couldn't let that happen.

I would never survive being abandoned by her.

A growl rumbled low in my chest before I jerked the wheel and slammed the brake. Tires screeched against the asphalt, the car skidding before stopping along the edge of the street.

"Silas, why are you stopping so suddenly-"

She didn't finish. I had already unbuckled my belt and leaned across the console, closing the space between us.

Her wide eyes lifted to mine. Moonlight from the windshield lit the delicate curve of her face. "What is it?" she asked softly, and though her words were calm, I knew she saw the fear in me.

I clenched my jaw. My voice came out raw. "If I lose my worth one day... would you abandon me?"

The question scraped from my throat like a wound torn open. My wolf's aura quivered, restless, afraid.

Freya blinked, stunned for a heartbeat, then something in her gaze shifted. Understanding. Compassion. "No," she whispered, her voice fierce and steady. "Even if you were stripped of everything, I would never abandon you."

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"Truly?" The word fell from me, desperate. I searched her eyes as though they might betray me, as though she might change her mind in the next breath.

She pressed her lips together, the faintest frown tugging at them. I knew—some scars go too deep to be erased by words. I had lived with mine since birth. But Freya... she looked at me like she had time. Like she would carve away at the rot inside me, piece by piece, until I finally believed her.

Her hands lifted, small and warm, cupping my face. And then-gods-she kissed

Her lips pressed against mine, soft and burning. I froze at first, caught in disbelief, before the warmth seeped through the ice I had carried all my life.

"Silas Whitmor," she murmured against my mouth, "whether you are strong or broken, useful or useless, I love you. I love you."

Her wolf's essence poured into me, warm and unyielding, searing through the fear that had knotted in my chest. My lashes trembled, and slowly, finally, I let my eyes fall shut. I kissed her back, the ache in my chest unraveling beneath her promise.

When she pulled away, the absence of her lips felt like loss, sharp and aching.

"Enough," she whispered. "Drive us home. We can't linger here."

She was right. This wasn't the place-cars moved around us, humans and wolves alike glancing at the sight of two figures entangled in a parked car. But in that moment, I hadn't cared.

I forced myself back behind the wheel, started the engine, and let the car glide back onto the road. My chest was still raw from her words, but lighter too.

Twenty minutes later, the looming walls of the Whitmor estate rose before us. The iron gates creaked open at my signal.

And then I saw him.

A figure stood waiting at the gates.

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Freya stiffened beside me, eyes narrowing as the headlights washed over him. Recognition flashed across her face. “Kade...” she whispered.

My wolf bristled instantly. Kade.

The same wolf who had called her sister, the same wolf whose eyes had lingered on her too long at gatherings in The Capital. He had called her late last night- Freya had told me herself. And now he was here, not a day later, standing at my gates like he had a right.

I parked the car. Freya reached for her belt, but before she could step out, I seized her hand, holding it tight.

Her eyes darted to me. “Silas?”

I swallowed the growl clawing at my throat. “Nothing. I just... wasn’t expecting him.”

“It is unexpected,” she admitted. “But we’ll know why soon enough.” She slipped her hand from mine with a gentle tug, the warmth leaving my palm like a wound, and stepped out of the car.

I sat for a moment longer, staring at my empty hand before lifting my gaze to the wolf outside.

Kade Blackridge. He was no surprise, not really. A wolf like him couldn’t watch from the shadows while I claimed Freya openly. His presence here only proved what I already feared-her place in his heart was greater than he ever admitted.

And that made him dangerous.

I stepped out of the car, moving toward them. Freya’s voice carried to me on the night wind.

“Kade, what are you doing here? You didn’t even call.”

He smiled faintly, the kind of smile that wanted to hide what it truly meant. “I wanted to surprise you. When I heard in The Capital that you’d chosen Silas Whitmor...” His eyes flickered, darkening. “...let’s say I was shaken.”



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His gaze cut past her to me, sharp as a blade.

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Two Alphas, staring each other down. The air between us crackled with the collision of dominance. My wolf surged, pushing against my skin, demanding I make my claim clear.

“You’ve only been in Ashbourne for a short while,” he said to Freya, his voice low. “Are you certain-absolutely certain-that you want to be with him?”

Freya smiled softly, calmly, as though his challenge meant nothing. “I didn’t expect it myself. But yes. I am certain. I want to be with him.”

His expression faltered. The honesty in her tone left him no room to excuse it as coercion or mistake.

I stepped forward, closing the distance, and reached for her hand. My fingers laced with hers deliberately, a silent declaration. My claim.

“Yes,” I said evenly, meeting his stare. “We are together.”

Kade’s eyes darkened, fury flashing like lightning. He looked at our joined hands as though the sight itself burned him.

“Freya,” he bit out, his voice almost a snarl, “why him? What could you possibly see in Silas Whitmor?”

Her hand tightened in mine. I felt my pulse hammer in my veins, the question digging under my skin. My grip on her fingers clenched tighter, betraying the fear I refused to voice.

Because the truth was, I needed her answer too,

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Silas’ POV

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+10 Free Coins

The moment her words slipped past her lips—"Because I like him, that's why I'm with him. As for what's good about him... he treats me well"-something inside me burned and yet eased all at once.

Freya's voice had been steady, almost teasing, but I heard the truth thrumming underneath. She'd chosen me. Chosen me, not Kade Blackridge, not Caelum Grafton, not anyone else.

And yet the pup had to open his mouth.

"I can treat you well too—"

I cut him off before he could poison the air further. "Why stand here at the gates like rogues who've lost their den? If you have something to say, come inside and say it properly." My tone was calm, but my wolf prowled beneath my skin, hackles raised. I let a thin smirk pull at my lips. "And since you've always called her 'sister,' perhaps, if you're willing, you should start calling me 'brother-in-law.'"

Freya choked on her own breath, coughing twice, her cheeks blooming crimson. Her glare shot at me like a thrown dagger. Brother-in-law? Yes. Let him chew on that word until it splintered his teeth.

Kade's eyes flashed, wolf-gold bleeding into his irises. "Whitmor, aren't you a little too eager? You and Freya aren't mated yet. The future is never certain. What's desired today may be discarded tomorrow."

My grip tightened around Freya's hand, our fingers still laced. I lifted our hands, pressing my lips to the back of hers, slow, deliberate, possessive. "But I know her," I said, gaze never breaking from his. "She doesn't want fleeting sparks. She wants bonfire-ever-burning, never-abandoning. If I never leave, she never will either. Isn't that right, Freya?"

Her blush deepened, and she pulled her hand back, flustered. "Enough. Let's just go inside."

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+10 Free Coins

Her words cooled the edge of the growl vibrating in my throat. I released her hand with reluctance, savoring the lingering heat of her touch. Together, the three of us stepped into the villa.

Freya busied herself, clearly intending to serve our guest. But before she could rise, I caught her wrist gently. "I'll make the tea," I said smoothly. "You should rest?"

She hesitated, then nodded, trusting me. That trust twisted in my chest—it was heavy, dangerous, something I couldn't afford to lose.

I moved with purpose, preparing the tea, my movements controlled, precise. Steam curled in the air between us, fragrant but sharp. “Kade Blackridge, your arrival was unexpected,” I said as I poured. “Freya and I weren't prepared to host. Tell me, when do you plan to return to the Capital?”

I made sure to lace her name into every sentence, every syllable an anchor, every repetition another blade driving between his ribs. Freya, Freya, Freya.

Kade's jaw tightened. The vein in his temple throbbed. He ignored my question and instead turned to her. “Sister Freya, when will you return to the Capital?”

Freya blinked, startled. “Me? Once the last of the old estate paperwork is settled in my name. The demolition is almost complete. Once it's done, I'll go back.”

Her voice faltered just slightly on the words “estate” and “parents.” The losses were still fresh, but she masked the pain with grace. I swallowed hard, knowing I couldn't erase her grief-only stand guard against anything that might add to it.

Kade smiled faintly, too faintly. “Then I'll return with you.”

The words struck like a challenge. My brow creased before I could stop it.

Freya tilted her head. “Then why did you come to Ashbourne now?”

“To see you,” he said simply, as though that justified everything. “Things in the Capital are mostly settled, and I remembered your promise—that if I ever came to your home territory, you'd show me around. Now that you're here too... surely you won't refuse?”

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+10 Free Coins

The air thickened. My wolf bristled. His “request” was a blade wrapped in velvet.

“Of course,” Freya answered, soft, kind, unaware—or perhaps deliberately ignoring -the sparks snapping between us. “I did say that. I'll show you around.”

Kade's grin spread, smug and youthful. “Then I'll look forward to it.”

She nodded, then seemed to remember something. “Right—your umbrella. You lent it to me last time. I'll fetch it from upstairs.” She hurried off, her steps light, leaving only the faint scent of her perfume drifting on the air.

The silence that followed was thick as storm clouds.

I placed the cup of tea before him with a sharp clink. “Here. Drink.”

Kade didn’t touch it. His eyes, sharp as a hawk’s, locked onto me. “Silas Whitmor,” he said, voice low, venomous. “I don’t know what spell you cast to make her agree to be with you, but you don’t deserve her. You never have. You and she are worlds apart.”

I leaned back, a slow, dangerous smile spreading across my face. My wolf rose in my chest, pressing against the surface, my aura spilling across the room like shadows thick with iron. “Deserve her?” My voice dripped with mockery. “I don’t need your blessing, Blackridge. She chose me. And one day, when she’s mated, marked, and standing at my side until our last breath, it will still be me.”

His snarl tore through the air. “Dream on!” He lunged forward, seizing my collar, yanking me half across the table. His breath hit my face, hot with fury.

“Going to bare your fangs, pup?” I taunted, not flinching. “Because you’re jealous? Because to her, you’ll always just be the little brother? From the moment you called her ‘sister,’ you chained yourself.”

His eyes flared brighter, fury twisting his features. He actually laughed, sharp and bitter. “You think you’re clever? You sent your people to sabotage my mother’s law firm in the Capital, didn’t you? Forced me to rush back to put out fires-so you could slither into her life unchallenged? What do you think she’ll say when she learns how you play your games?”

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Silas’ POV

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61

+10 Free Coins

The moment my eyes caught Freya standing at the staircase, my blood ran cold.

Her silhouette was sharp against the dim glow of the landing lights, every line of her figure etched in my vision like a scar. She’d heard. The words Kade had spit in venom—about the law firm, about my interference—those words had reached her

ears.

My gut twisted. My wolf snarled inside me, ready to lash out, but another instinct -deeper, more terrifying-rose up: fear. Not fear of Kade, not of exposure, not of what the packs might say. But of her. Of that steady, storm-grey gaze turning on me with disappointment.

The world could call me a conniving Alpha, a Whitmor with dirty hands, and I wouldn't flinch. But if she looked at me with disgust, with loss... it would break something inside me that no fight, no victory, no blood could ever mend.

Yet Freya's face betrayed nothing. No fury, no shock. She walked toward us with the same composure she'd worn into battles. That unreadable calm made my chest ache more than open anger ever could.

"Release him, Kade," she said evenly.

Her voice cut through the tension like Alpha command. Kade's grip on my collar faltered, then fell away. His lips twitched in defiance, but he stepped back. "I listen to my sister," he muttered, as though he'd scored some victory.

Freya's eyes flicked to him, cool but polite. "How's the situation with your mother's law firm?"

The words struck me like claws across the chest. She had heard. Every muscle in me went taut.

Kade straightened, voice clipped. "Already handled. No major problem now. But, Sister, some people are good at setting traps. You should be careful." His gaze cut toward me, sharp with accusation.

⌘(61)

+10 Free Coins

Freya smiled faintly, but her tone was mild, almost dismissive. "Let's change the subject. The umbrella you lent me-today's a good day to return it."

She placed it in his hands. A simple gesture, but the weight of it pressed heavily on the air. "Umbrella"-the word carried meanings I doubted she missed. Shelter. Farewell. Separation.

Kade stared at it as if it were a blade buried in his chest. I could read it on his face: regret, longing, fury. He finally managed a bitter smile, took the umbrella, and bowed his head slightly. "Then I'll head back to my hotel. I'll come see you again tomorrow."

"Travel safely," she replied softly.

I stayed silent, watching as he left, my wolf still pacing beneath my skin. Every instinct screamed to drive him from our territory, to rip his throat out for speaking her name with such familiarity. But Freya's presence bound me tighter than any chain.

When the door closed behind him, she turned.

Her gaze locked on me.

"Silas Whitmor," she said, and my name on her tongue made my stomach knot,

'was it you who orchestrated what happened to Kade's mother's firm?"

My lashes trembled. For the first time in years, I couldn't meet someone's eyes. My head dipped, not out of guilt-Alphas don't confess to guilt-but because the bond, the fragile thread she and I were weaving, threatened to snap if I faced her

now.

"You promised me," she continued, her voice low but steady, "that if I ever asked, you would never lie to me."

Her words were iron, chains I had forged myself. That vow had been mine. I had bound myself to it freely.

And now it was a blade pressed against my throat.

12.05 Tue, Sep 9

My hands curled into fists at my sides, nails biting into my palms. My wolf whimpered inside me. "Yes," I whispered. "It was me."

+10 Free Coins

Her eyes narrowed, but her expression didn't shatter into anger as I feared. "Why?"

The question cut deeper than claws.

"Because..." My voice cracked before I forced it steady. "Because I feared him. Not as a rival Alpha, but as your comrade. Your bond with him was forged in blood and war. He is someone you trusted with your life. And I... I feared that trust would eclipse me."

Her silence pressed harder than a physical blow.

"So?" she prompted.

“So I thought...” My chest heaved. I lifted my gaze at last, and her eyes were a mirror of light, clear, relentless, unshadowed. Next to her, I was filth-schemes and darkness stitched into flesh. “So I thought you would always prefer him to me.”

The admission ripped out of me like entrails in a fight.

Freya studied me, unblinking. “I do like Kade,” she said finally.

My heart stopped.

“But only as a brother. As a comrade-in-arms. If I ever intended more than that, his presence or absence in Ashbourne would never have mattered. Do you truly think my heart is so fickle? That if he left, I would so easily turn to love another?”

Her words thundered through me, shame and awe colliding in my chest.

“If I choose someone,” she continued, her voice ironclad, “then distance, time, or obstacles don’t matter. Silas, if you think my feelings can be replaced so easily, then what happens if one day you leave me for a while? Should I assume you’ll give your heart to someone else?”

“No!” The roar tore from my throat before I could stop it. I stepped forward, seizing her hands as though anchoring her to me. “Never, Freya! Don’t-don’t even

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speak of loving another. I couldn’t bear it.”

61

+10 Free Coins

Her lips pressed into a line, crimson against pale skin. “I chose you, Silas. And once chosen, I don’t change easily. But I can’t accept you dragging down those close to me with schemes and sabotage. Don’t touch my friends. Don’t harm those who’ve stood by me.”

For the first time in years, the word clawed its way out of me, raw and unfamiliar. “I’m sorry.”

An Alpha of the Ironclad Coalition doesn’t apologize. My pack would never believe it if they saw me like this-head bowed, shoulders hunched like a boy afraid of losing his place at the fire. But for her, for one tremor of disapproval in her gaze, I would crawl.

Freya looked at me, and I could see the conflict in her eyes-the sternness of a warrior and the ache of a woman who cared too much. My shame twisted into something worse: that even when I wronged her, she still hurt for me.

She sighed softly, and her hand rose, fingers cool and gentle against my cheek. My wolf leaned into her touch despite myself.

“Never again, Silas,” she murmured. “Not Kade, not anyone else close to me. If you use such tricks again, I truly will-”

I silenced her the only way I knew how.

My hand caught hers, pressing her fingers to my lips before the final words could escape. I couldn’t let her say them-couldn’t let her threaten to leave, even if she meant it only in warning. My wolf thrashed at the thought, and so did I.

“Don’t,” I whispered against her skin. My voice was rough, desperate. “Don’t finish that sentence. Please.”

Her eyes softened, just slightly. But I felt the weight of her warning settle between us like a scar.

And I knew: if I crossed that line again, even my wolf wouldn’t be able to drag her back to me.

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Third Person’s POV

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Silass voice was hoarse, almost breaking with the weight of his confession.

61

+10 Free Coins

“I won’t do it again,” he whispered, pressing his larger hand over Freya’s where it rested against his cheek. His skin was fever-warm, his face brushing tenderly into her palm as though her touch alone tethered him. “Freya, I’ll listen. I’ll be good. I swear it.”

The murmur was low, raw, and yet it rang like a lover’s vow.

Freya’s breath caught. For all his reputation as the Ironclad Alpha of the Coalition, Silas now looked nothing like a predator. He seemed more like a massive hound begging for mercy, amber eyes fixed on her with such intensity it almost burned.



Her body stiffened. Saints, those eyes were dangerous-wolf-bright, shamelessly devoted, and brimming with something that clawed straight at her defenses. He was a man who could level armies, and yet here he was, clinging to her like a desperate pup.

“That... that’s good then,” she managed, throat tight, trying to pull her hand back before her heartbeat betrayed her.

But his grip remained iron around her wrist, his dominance strong yet trembling at the edges, as if he feared letting her go meant losing her forever.

“I’m thirsty,” she said quickly, searching for a way to break the moment. “Let go of me-I’ll get tea.”

“I’ll get it,” Silas countered, his voice husky. His free hand reached without hesitation, snaring the porcelain cup of herbal tea from the low table. He tilted it back, taking a mouthful, then lowered it again with deliberate slowness.

Her brows knit. “You-”

Before she could finish, he leaned in. The realization hit her a breath too late. Freya’s lips parted on instinct, and heat surged up her neck as his mouth met hers

-hot tea, steam, and all.

+10 Free Coing

The kiss was not soft. It was claiming, insistent, fire laced with the faint taste of herbs. The warmth of the liquid spread between them, mingling with the molten press of his lips, until she was half convinced his intent was to brand her with proof of his devotion.

Freya should have resisted. She should have pushed him back. But when she met his gaze-pleading, reverent, so terribly afraid she’d turn him away—her willpower faltered. With a quiet sigh, she slid her free hand up, fingers curling around the back of his neck, letting him draw her deeper into the kiss.

After all... he was her mate, her chosen one. And if this was how Silas needed to prove his heart, then for once, she could indulge him.

The tea burned away, leaving only the heat of his mouth and the fierce thrum of his wolf against hers. It was fervent, consuming, a kiss that spoke of love and desperation and a bond he would fight the world to keep.

Two days later, Aurora was discharged from Medical Hall. Her injuries from the abduction had been superficial-scrapes, bruises, nothing more. She emerged from the ward with her father, Duke, her mother Emilia, and her fiancé, Caelum Grafton.

Aurora's expression was stormy, her voice sharp enough to cut glass. "That bastard who dared lay hands on me-I'll see him rot. He humiliated me. I'll repay him double. Caelum, I want the best trial, the harshest sentence. Find me a lawyer who'll make sure he never breathes free air again!"

Caelum hesitated. "Aurora, that man..."

"You're not suggesting mercy, are you?" Emilia snapped, glaring. "Caelum, she's your betrothed! If you don't protect her, how can I ever entrust my daughter to you?"

He opened his mouth, torn between truth and duty, when the hospital entrance erupted in chaos. A surge of reporters barreled toward them, cameras flashing, microphones shoved forward like weapons.

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+10 Free Coins

"Aurora!" one shouted. "During the abduction, you admitted you once abandoned a senior comrade who had shown you kindness. Was that true? What were you thinking?"

Aurora froze, color draining from her face.

"Is it true the man who abducted you was the son of that fallen soldier?" another pressed. "Do you believe his actions were justified revenge?"

"Rumors say the Ashbourne Legion are reviewing your past conduct. If your 'hero pilot' commendation is revoked, will you protest? Or resign?"

Questions exploded like grenades, every lens and flash targeting her like wolves circling fresh prey. Aurora flinched beneath the barrage, her composure fracturing.

"I have no comment! Move aside!" she barked, raising her arm to shield her face. But the mob only pressed harder, the scent of their eagerness acrid in the air.

Caelum tried to throw his weight forward, his Alpha aura flaring, but the sheer press of bodies shoved him back. Duke and Emilia were crushed against the tide, faces twisted with indignation and fear.

"My earrings! My bag!" Emilia shrieked. "That's a luxury import, you vultures! You've ruined it-do you think you can afford to pay?"

Her shrill voice was drowned beneath the reporters' demands, their frenzy cresting until hospital guards finally forced their way through, shoving the mob back.

Aurora, hair wild and eyes wide with panic, stumbled toward the car. Emilia's cosmetics were smeared, her prized bag crushed into ruin, one of her golden earrings bent beyond repair.

Breathless, she rounded on Caelum the moment the doors slammed shut. "And you call yourself a man? You didn't protect me-and you didn't even protect Aurora! She's your fiancée!"

"I-" Caelum began, but Vaughn cut him off with a scowl.

61

+10 Free Coins

"This was negligence, Caelum. You should've anticipated the press. You should've had them blocked before we even left the ward."

"Exactly," Emilia chimed in bitterly, holding up her ruined bag. "And what of this? And my earring? If you expect to be my son-in-law, you'll replace them. Do you know what they cost me?"

Aurora sat in silence, shoulders trembling, rage and humiliation twisting inside her chest. She had sworn she would make the world fear her again, but in this moment, she looked less like a decorated pilot and more like a wolf cornered, teeth bared but powerless.

And Caelum, for all his power as Alpha of Silverfang, could only sit in strained silence, his gaze slipping once toward Freya Thorne's name echoing through his thoughts-wondering, perhaps, what she would have done in his place.

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Third Person's POV

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Caelum sat in strained silence as the words of Aurora's parents-the proud elders of the Bluemoon Pack- washed over him. Every sentence that left their mouths seemed to demand more: new clothes, new luxuries, new provisions. And in the spaces between demands, came barbed criticisms aimed at him, as though he were failing their daughter simply by existing.

His chest tightened with irritation. What gnawed at him more, however, was Aurora's silence. She sat right beside him, listening, nodding faintly, yet not offering a single word in his defense.

Once, when he had been with Freya, it had been different-or at least, so he thought. The Freya had not crowded him with accusations or suffocating expectations. Instead, it had been his own mother, Eleanor, and his younger sister, Giselle, who had taken every opportunity to disparage Freya, assigning her endless, humiliating tasks as though testing her worth.

Caelum's heart gave a sudden, heavy throb. Had he ever defended Freya back then? Or had he, much like Aurora now, simply remained silent?

Memory stabbed him with clarity: he had stood mute, and worse, when Freya had resisted unreasonable demands, he had accused her of being cold, ungrateful. "She's already my mate," he had once thought, "why not show devotion to my family?"

The recollection pressed against his chest like a boulder, making his breath shallow, painful.

By the time they arrived at the hotel, Caelum's head was pounding. He dismissed Aurora's parents to their chamber, then escorted Aurora herself into their private quarters. The moment the door shut, she hurled herself at him, clutching his arms with trembling hands.

"Caelum! What are we going to do?" Her voice was shrill, trembling with panic. "I'm ruined. Those reporters-they'll twist everything. They'll drag my name through mud again! This is all the fault of that rogue kidnapper... and Freya. They must have conspired together, planned this to destroy me!"

"There's no proof," Caelum answered flatly. His tone was calm, but his jaw was tight. "The rogue was acting alone. In time, the storm will pass. Scandals fade, and eyes turn elsewhere."

Aurora's nails bit into his sleeves as she shook her head violently. "And what about my position, Caelum? If the Capital's Council strips me of my 'Savior of the Flames' commendation, Wing will sever my contract. Years of service, my whole career in the Bluemoon Airborne Wing-gone, all because of this!" Her words dripped with fury, her lips curling back like a wolf cornered.

Caelum hesitated. "If you had spoken the truth back then... about what happened to your wingmate in that fire... perhaps things wouldn't have reached this point. People could have understood the danger, even if

Aurora shoved him hard, eyes blazing. "So now you're defending him? That charred corpse of a comrade? You think I should've admitted weakness, shown I abandoned someone? Is that what you want to say?"

Caelum lifted his hands quickly, shaking his head. “No. That’s not what I meant. I only thought... if you had told the truth, perhaps you wouldn’t be celebrated as a hero, but neither would you be dragged through the mud like this.”

1:16 pm

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“I did nothing wrong!” Aurora’s voice rose to a near-hysterical pitch. “I saved myself, I survived. That makes me worthy of the title! As for him-he was weak, unlucky. The flames consumed him, and I couldn’t waste my life for his. That is not a crime! I am not guilty!”

Her words echoed in the chamber like the growl of a wolf that refused to submit.

Caelum’s gaze darkened. Somewhere deep inside, disappointment sank its claws into him. The image of the noble, fearless she-wolf he once admired was crumbling. She was no hero carved of iron and flame. She was fragile, selfish-something far different from the woman he had wanted to believe in.

“Caelum!” Aurora lunged forward again, clutching his wrists so tightly it felt as though iron manacles bound him. “Promise me. Promise you’ll stand by me, always. No matter what.”

His eyes lowered. Her grip was suffocating, like shackles biting into flesh. At last, he murmured, “Yes. I will stand by you. You tore me from death’s jaws once. For that, I owe you my loyalty. How could I not stand beside you?”

Aurora froze for a heartbeat, then her lips curved into a trembling smile. “Yes... yes, that’s right. I saved you. You’re not the kind of wolf who forgets debts. That’s why I love you, Caelum.”

His silence in reply felt heavier than words. Deep in his chest, something shifted, as though the ground beneath him was slowly crumbling,

Far across the city, within the fortified Whitmor estate, Silas sat in the solitude of his study. The Ironclad Alpha leaned back as his bodyguard placed a thick folder of documents before him.

“Alpha Silas,” the guard said with a bow. “The information you requested.”

“Leave me,” Silas ordered, his tone quiet but edged with steel.

When the door clicked shut, he spread the files across his desk. Paper crackled beneath his long, scarred fingers. Interspersed among the dossiers were photographs. If Freya had been present, she would have recognized them at once-for every image captured the face of her lost brother, Eric Thorne.

Silas studied them in silence, his expression unreadable. But then his gaze caught on one particular photograph. His hand trembled as he lifted it.

The image showed Eric bare-shouldered, his back turned slightly. Across his skin stretched a jagged scar, ugly and deep. Silas's breath hitched sharply. The mark was unmistakable.

That scar... It was the same scar he had seen once before, years ago, in a place where no one should have survived.

If the one he had met then-the ghost of that battlefield-was truly Eric Thorne, Freya's long-lost brother...

The thought coiled through his chest like a serpent, suffocating him. If Freya discovered the truth, what

would she do?

Would she hate him? Blame him for silence? Would she abandon him entirely?

No. He couldn't bear the thought. He would not allow it. The mere idea of Freya leaving him was unthinkable.

1:16 pm P p p

The soft rap of knuckles startled him. "Who's there?" His voice snapped like a whip.

"It's me," came the gentle reply.

The door creaked open, and Freya stepped into the study.

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Color drained from Silas's face. Instinctively, he tried to sweep the photographs and files into a drawer. But his fingers, betraying him, fumbled. The pile slipped and scattered.

Papers fluttered across the carpet. Photographs spilled like fallen leaves, spreading in every direction.

1:16 pm P p p 5

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Silas' POV

Her voice cuts into me before I can find the words.

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Freya stands there, her golden eyes-Stormveil-born, blood of the Thornes-fixed not on the documents strewn across the floor, but on me. My face, my faltering breath, the blood draining from my skin.

“What’s wrong with you?” she asks, stepping closer, concern outweighing suspicion. “You look pale. Are you unwell?”

The irony sears me. The evidence of my betrayal lies at her feet, yet she doesn’t look at it. She looks at me. Worrying for me.

My lips tremble as I try to answer. The words I want to speak claw at my throat, but none escape.

She raises her hand, her palm brushing my forehead as though I am the one in need of care. “No fever,” she murmurs, half to herself. “Maybe you’ve been pushing yourself too hard. You don’t rest enough.”

“Perhaps,” I whisper, my voice barely audible. “Perhaps I’m just... tired.”

Her gaze drops, and then the ground betrays me.

“See? You’ve dropped everything,” she says lightly, bending without hesitation to gather the scattered pages.

Panic surges through me. “No-leave it. I’ll handle it.” My voice is too sharp, too urgent, but it’s already too late.

She has already picked up the top photograph. I hear her soft intake of breath, that small startled sound that cleaves me in two.

“This picture...”

My heart stops. Every vein in my body feels like ice, as though my blood has frozen mid-pulse. My fingers twitch, desperate to snatch the photo back. I imagine spinning a lie, weaving some clever excuse-but she despises lies. She told me so once, her voice unyielding, her eyes burning with truth. I had sworn never to deceive her.

And yet... if she knows, if she truly knows what I’ve kept from her, there will be no going back.

Her gaze sharpens, and then she says it-words I dreaded, words that twist the knife. “Why do you have pictures of my brother?”

Eric Thorne. The ghost that haunts me every night.

I choke on silence. My tongue lies heavy, useless in my mouth.

Her hands flip through the rest of the photos, and there he is again and again-Eric's face in different years, different shadows. His scarred shoulder, his sharp jaw, his eyes that resemble hers. Among the files are reports, dossiers, proof I have tracked him far longer than I have admitted.

1:16 pm P pp.

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"Is it... is this because you've been helping me search for him?" she asks suddenly, her voice softening. Her eyes glimmer as she clutches the papers tighter. "Silas... thank you."

Her gratitude strikes me harder than any blade. If only she knew the truth. Yes, I searched for him. Yes, I gathered everything. But it was not merely to help her. My motives were darker, heavier, soaked in blood.

"Could you... make me a copy of these?" she asks, almost timidly, as if afraid of overstepping. "Some of these photos-I've never even seen before."

"Of course," I force out. My voice sounds strange in my own ears.

She lifts one photo closer to her face. Eric's bare shoulder is visible, the scar across his flesh a cruel brand of memory. "I wonder when I'll see him again," she whispers. "I miss him so much. Do you know... this scar, here on his shoulder-it's because of me. He was protecting me."

My stomach knots. My fingers curl into fists so tight my knuckles whiten.

Her voice softens into memory, into sorrow. "We were abroad with our parents when the attack came. Explosions everywhere. Flames and smoke. Eric shielded me with his body, pinned me against him so the shrapnel wouldn't tear me apart. He nearly died that day. If not for him, I wouldn't be standing here."

Her eyes glisten, the scent of salt and grief touching the air.

"You love him deeply," I murmur, though the words taste like ash on my tongue.

"Of course I do," she answers without hesitation. "He's my brother. I will find him, no matter how many years it takes. I will never stop searching until I do."

The conviction in her tone slices me open. For a long moment, I can only stare at her, the weight of my silence pressing me down.



“What if...” The words slip out before I can stop them. “What if someone had wronged your brother? Would you forgive them?”

Her head tilts, her brows furrowing at the strangeness of my question. “That wouldn’t be my choice, Silas. Forgiveness-if it came-would belong to Eric alone.”

“But you?” I press, my voice hoarse, ragged with fear. “Would you forgive?”

She frowns, studying me as if sensing the storm beneath my skin. “Depends on what they did. If it put his life at risk... if it endangered him... then no. Never. That’s something I couldn’t forgive.”

Her words hit like a death sentence. My throat closes around the confession I will never speak.

I lower my eyes as she sets the photos down, her face still clouded with worry. “You really don’t look well. You should rest.”

“Yes,” I mutter, though my voice barely carries.

And then her hand slides into mine. Her fingers lace with mine, warm, alive.

“Your hand is freezing!” she exclaims softly, clasping both her hands around mine. “How can it be so cold? It’s autumn, not winter, and the room’s warm enough.”

1:16 pm

I can’t meet her eyes.

“Are you cold?” she asks again.

“A little,” I whisper.

s

She bends her head, rubbing my hands with her palms, breathing warm air over my skin. “Here. I’ll warm them for you.”

The sensation shatters me. My body stiffens, but slowly, under her touch, warmth seeps back into my hands. Into my veins. Into the parts of me I thought had gone numb forever.

And yet, beneath the heat, I tremble. Because I know this warmth is a lie. One day, when she learns the truth, her hands will never hold mine again.

1:16 pm PP

