

# A Warrior Luna's Awakening

## chapter 211-220

# A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya's POV

Some days later.

s

The metal door of the detention chamber groaned open, and the sterile scent of silver-tinged disinfectant hit my nose. I stepped inside with Lawyer beside me, the air heavy with the weight of what I was about to do.

At last, I was face to face with him-the boy who had abducted Aurora.

But the sight before me jarred me to my core.

The youth seated on the other side of the reinforced glass looked nothing like the masked figure whose cold eyes had stared into the camera during the hostage broadcast. That wolf had radiated menace, raw hunger for vengeance.

This one looked...frail.

Thin shoulders sloped beneath the drab gray of prison garb. His face was fine-boned, delicate almost, like someone carved from porcelain. It was hard-almost impossible-to reconcile him with the image of the ruthless captor who had threatened a Bluemoon Beta's daughter before half the packs of the realm.

He raised his head as I stepped into view. His gaze snapped to me instantly, sharp as a blade.

"You asked to see me?" I said, letting my voice carry the calm authority of my bloodline. My Stormveil wolf stirred under my skin, alert.

"Yes." His voice was quiet, but it cut straight through the silence. His eyes fixed on me with the intensity of someone who had rehearsed this moment in his mind a thousand times. "I need to know why you're helping me. I know lawyer Hawthorne is here because of you. Without you, no one would have fought to defend me."

I tilted my head, studying him. Luca. That was his name. He had seen me once before-on the isles, and again at the orphanage. He would know that Silas's pack lawyers rarely moved without his explicit interest.

He wasn't wrong to suspect.

But what he didn't know was that I had pushed Silas, demanded he allow Lawyer Hawthorne to intervene on Luca's behalf.

"Because you need help," I answered evenly.

His lips pressed into a line. Suspicion flickered in his eyes. "What do you want from me?"

The words were bitter, laced with the wary distrust of someone who had grown up watching adults barter kindness for favors. His scent reeked faintly of fear and iron-fear not of me, but of being tricked.

I folded my arms, suppressing a low hull from my wolf. "Nothing. I don't want you to lose your future just because you went digging for the truth in the wrong way."

His laugh was harsh, humorless. "You expect me to believe that? No one helps without wanting something

1:16 pm P P P s

s

in return." His tone dripped with the cynicism of a boy who had seen charity twisted into spectacle. "Donations to orphans, rescue campaigns, all of it-it's about reputation. About proving how benevolent they are in front of the packs. What makes you different?"

I almost smiled. His words carried the sting of raw truth, but I wasn't here to debate politics.

"Then don't believe me," I said lightly. "Pretend I'm not kindhearted. Pretend one day I might call in a favor from you. Either way-it doesn't matter until you're free."

I made to turn, but his voice rang out sharply.

"Wait!"

I stopped.

"If you're really acting out of good will... then help me clear my father's name."

The words struck like a blade.

And then-before I could react-he dropped to his knees.

The metallic clang of bone on stone echoed in the visitation chamber, and my heart clenched.

“Stop,” I barked, sharper than I intended. The guards rushed forward, hauling him up. I lifted a hand, halting them with a flick of my wrist. My wolf bristled; my instincts hated the sight of a young wolf forced into submission this way.

“Don’t ever do that again,” I told him, my voice low. “You don’t need to kneel to me to be heard.”

He gave a hollow laugh. “Direct words mean nothing. I begged once before, and no one listened. Not when I shouted. Not when I begged on my knees. They only drove me out, called me mad.”

His hands curled into fists, knuckles white. His eyes burned with something I knew all too well-the fire of a soul that refused to let go of the truth.

“My father was innocent,” he rasped. “The fire wasn’t his fault.”

The chamber chilled around me. Memories I had buried deep flickered in my mind-the reports I had read, the whispers that circulated the packs.

Five years ago.

The fire that consumed lives and tore my family apart.

The fire that stole Eric from me.

I clenched my jaw. “Everyone knows the blaze was caused by a cigarette that wasn’t put out. The first casualty was your father, Vice-Captain James, found near the ignition point. All the evidence pointed-”

“No!” His voice cracked, and his wolf aura flared for a fleeting second before shackles of silver suppressed it. His desperation stung my senses. “He promised me. He had nodules in his lungs. The healers told him he wouldn’t survive long if he kept smoking. He swore to me he would quit. He wanted to live long enough to see me grow. He would never have broken that promise.”

1:16 pm P P P

s

His words carried the iron weight of truth. His scent-sharp with grief, raw with sincerity-hit me like at

blow.

“Please,” he whispered, eyes glistening. “Don’t let him die branded a criminal. Don’t let his ghost rot under lies.”

My chest tightened. His plea tore through me, dredging up the wound I carried from that same fire-the one that had swallowed my brother whole.

Eric.

His face flashed before me, his laughter, his promise to always come back. But he hadn’t. He’d vanished into smoke and silence.

And maybe, just maybe, Luca was right. Maybe the fire hadn’t been born of negligence. Maybe it had been something else. Something darker.

If Vice-Captain James wasn’t guilty, then who had set the blaze?

And where did that leave my brother?

My wolf shifted uneasily, claws raking the inside of my chest. She hungered for the truth.

“Fine,” I said at last, my voice steadier than I felt. “I’ll dig. I’ll search. But you need to understand-after five years, evidence is ash. Even if there was a cover-up, those who orchestrated it may have buried every trail. I cannot promise you the justice you want.”

Luca’s eyes shimmered, a spark of hope breaking through his despair.

“That’s enough,” he breathed. “That someone as strong as you is willing to try... that’s enough.”

I exhaled slowly, my gaze drifting to the faint scars marring his wrists where silver shackles had rubbed skin raw.

Five years ago, the fire had stolen everything from both of us. His father. My brother.

Maybe fate had crossed our paths here for a reason.

And maybe the truth we unearthed would either set us free... or burn us alive all over again.

1:16 pm P pp.

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya's POV

s

Tears streaked down Luca's face, raw and unguarded. His voice broke as he whispered, "Thank you... thank you..."

It was the first time anyone had stood by him. The gratitude in his eyes cut through me like claws. My wolf stirred uneasily inside me, knowing too well the desperation of being left alone, unheard, unwanted.

When I finally stepped out of the visitation chamber, Silas was waiting in the corridor. His broad frame leaned against the wall, his aura restrained but humming faintly, enough to make the guards keep their distance.

"Did you get what you came for?" he asked.

I nodded. "He insists the fire wasn't caused by his father. Vice-Captain James had nodules in his lungs-he promised Luca he would quit smoking. He believes with everything in him that his father didn't die with a cigarette in his hand, and he doesn't want him remembered as the one who started that blaze."

Silas's gaze sharpened, storm-grey eyes catching the fluorescent light. "So you want to chase the truth for him."

"Yes," I admitted. "But not only for him. I've always felt that fire is tied to Eric's disappearance. I've been meaning to dig deeper for years. If I help Luca, maybe I'll find the answers I've been searching for too."

"I'll help you." Silas said without hesitation. His tone was iron, the kind that didn't bend to refusal.

I studied him, then gave a small nod. "All right. The more eyes, the better. Evidence that old doesn't surface easily."

Before I could say more, another voice cut in from across the hall.

"Or maybe I should be the one to help, sister."

I stiffened. Turning, I found Kade standing at the threshold, his dark hair shadowing sharp features. His wolf aura filled the room before his body even did, laced with challenge.

"Kade," I said, surprised. "Why are you here? I thought we weren't meeting until tomorrow. I promised to take you around the city."

He shrugged. “Had nothing better to do. When I heard you were at the detention center, I decided to drop by. Whatever you’re chasing, I’ll help you.”

He hadn’t overheard everything, so I repeated what Luca told me. Kade listened in silence, his jaw tightening

“Five years is a long time,” he said finally. “The ashes are cold. Still... there might be traces left to follow. And if Aurora was beside Vice-Captain James when he collapsed, watching him burn without lifting a hand, then she might know something. Maybe something she’s not willing to say.”

My thoughts flickered. I had already considered that possibility. Aurora had been forced, live on the PackNet broadcast, to admit she had stood by, watching. Even if she knew more, the shame binding her

1:16 pm P pp.

tongue would keep her silent.

le

s

“She won’t talk,” I murmured. “Not after being humiliated in front of the packs. She’d never admit to anything that might vindicate Luca’s father now.”

“Then we investigate her too,” Kade said flatly. “Every angle. If she holds even a fragment of the truth, we’ll tear it out.”

I nodded slowly. “That may be the only way.”

“Looks like you’re intent on protecting that boy.” Kade’s tone softened slightly. “I could find him a defense. lawyer. One better than what the Whitmors are offering.”

“Silas already assigned him one,” I replied.

Kade smirked. “Have you forgotten my grandfather’s lineage? I can bring him the best legal wolves in the Capital, the kind that leave Whitmor attorneys in the dust.”

Silas’s eyes narrowed, his aura flaring just enough to prickle against my skin. “The Whitmor legal corps are the best in the Capital.” His voice was smooth but carried a razor’s edge.

And just like that, the tension spiked. Two Alphas, circling, their dominance pressing heavy on the air. I rubbed my temples. Moon above, why could these two never breathe the same air without trying to claw at each other?

Later that day, I returned to Stormveil Pack's Fifth Branch estate-the place I still called home. The old house was slated for demolition under city expansion laws, but every brick of it carried my family's scent. Every corner was a memory.

The deed was in my name now. I knew I couldn't stop the demolition, but I could at least salvage what remained. I wanted to gather my parents' belongings, the pieces of Eric's life, and hold onto them before the wrecking crews erased everything.

To my dismay, Silas and Kade insisted on coming along.

And so I found myself flanked by two Alphas-both stripped of their usual airs, sleeves rolled, hands dusty -as they packed boxes beside me like common movers. The image would have been amusing if not for the ache tightening my chest,

One by one, relics of my family disappeared into cardboard. The air grew thick with dust, the silence broken only by the creak of wood and the rustle of paper.

Then my eyes fell upon the photograph.

A family portrait. My father, Arthur Thorne, stern but proud; my mother, Myra, with her quiet strength; Eric beside me, grinning with reckless joy. And me-smaller, smiling, naïve.

The sight hollowed me. My throat burned. For a heartbeat, I was that girl again, before fire and lies shattered everything.

"Freya." Silas's voice brushed my ear, low and concerned.

1:16 pm P pp.

le

s

I blinked, hastily tucking the frame into a box. "It's nothing." I lied, forcing my lips into a curve. "You've both been working hard. I'll grab us some water from the shop down the road."

Before either of them could argue, I slipped out. Better to leave than let them see the weakness clawing at

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Silas's POV

s

When Freya stepped out of the old Thorne estate's packing room, Kade and I were left alone amidst the scattered boxes and the smell of aged wood. I could feel the tension crackle between us, as sharp as the scent of blood on the wind. Our eyes locked, wolf to wolf, instinctively assessing dominance and threat.

"She's still the same," Kade finally muttered, voice low but taunting. "Even when she's hurting, she won't let anyone see it. Didn't you notice? She was staring at that family photo. Can't you sense it?"

I pressed my lips together, saying nothing. He wasn't wrong, but his familiarity with her-years of shared battles and mornings in the Iron Fang Recon Unit-gave him insight I could never claim. I had only met Freya months ago. My connection with her was strong, yes, but surface-deep compared to Kade's history.

Kade's smirk was lazy, mocking. "You've barely scratched the surface of her. You don't know what she likes, what she tolerates, what she despises. I've known her long enough to see through all that. And soon... you might find yourself cast aside, Silas. She'll tire of you if you don't understand her."

The words burned through me. My wolf growled low in my chest, the animal side recognizing the challenge. I hated that he had the history I didn't. Hated that he had seen her vulnerabilities, walked beside her while I was still learning to read her auras, her moods, the subtle shifts in her scent when she was uneasy. Jealousy coiled around me like a steel trap.

I let the silence stretch, feeling the pulse of Kade's wolf in the room, daring me to respond. And I did, sharp, cold, cutting:

"Then tell me, do you know how much she enjoys my body?"

Kade froze mid-breath. His eyes narrowed, a snarl threatening at the edges of his calm facade. "What did you just say?"

I leaned back slightly, letting the words hang in the air like the scent of blood on a fresh kill. "She likes me. And she likes my body. Our bond isn't superficial-it's primal, deep. She trusts me, and I trust her. When the time is right, I'll ask her to be mine in every sense. Not just as a mate, but as my partner, my packmate for life."

Kade's jaw clenched. His wolf's aura flared in response, hot, wild, furious. He stepped forward and grabbed my collar with an iron grip, pushing me back just enough to assert dominance. "What did you do to her?" His voice was a growl, human words barely containing his wolf's anger.

I met his eyes evenly. "She chooses what she wants, Kade. Any closeness, any intimacy-we share it because she wants it. Not because I demand it, not because you or anyone else



could dictate it. My body, my bond, my care... they're hers as much as mine. And you... you'll never understand what it's like to be loved by her like this."

His eyes burned into me, raw fire, and I felt the surge of his wolf, the heat, the untamed instincts ready to strike. But even as his anger flared, I stood firm. I wasn't intimidated. Not by him, not by anyone.

"You-" he spat, voice cracking. I could hear the restraint in him, the effort it took not to lash out further. Just the thought of what Freya and I had shared-it ignited something uncontrollable in him. Even though I knew our bond was mine, that he had no claim, his instincts, his wolf, reacted the same way any wolf would to a rival staking claim to a mate.

1:16 pm P P P s

s

"Let me make one thing clear," I said, cutting through the tension. "Freya and I will not be separated. Not by circumstance, not by your anger, not by anything. So don't waste your strength thinking you can come

between us."

Without warning, Kade's fist shot forward. Reflexes honed from decades of hunting and fighting had me ready-but in that moment, Freya appeared in the doorway.

Her voice rang like a bell through the tension, sharp and commanding: "Stop!"

Kade froze, instinctively loosening his grip and stepping back. My cheek throbbed where his fist had grazed it, but I let it slide. Freya's wolf aura surged around her, protective, bounding, and somehow both comforting and scolding. Her eyes, steel-blue and unyielding, met mine.

"What happened?" she demanded. She glanced between us, reading the heat, the aggression, the primal challenge that had just unfolded.

Kade hesitated. He couldn't bring himself to admit the truth-that he had been stirred by jealousy, by the words I had spoken, by the recognition that Freya had chosen me. It was humiliating, and yet... inevitable.

I raised a hand, brushing off the pain from my cheek. "Nothing. Just... Kade had a moment. Let's leave it at that." My wolf sniffed him cautiously, noting his simmering frustration. He was sharp, quick, intelligent, dangerous—but he would learn, eventually, that Freya's choice wasn't negotiable.

She knelt beside me, pressing a cold bottle of water against my cheek. The relief was instant, the sting of heat and swelling softened by the chill. I allowed myself a small, wolfish exhale of gratitude.

Kade's eyes didn't leave me. His wolf simmered, restrained but barely. "You're really going to be with him?" he said, voice quieter now, almost defeated, almost human.

"Yes," Freya answered plainly, unwavering. "I like him. That's enough."

I could see it in Kade's posture-his jealousy, his anger, his longing-all coiling into something that would take time to unwind. But Freya's voice, her aura, her certainty... it had calmed the storm, at least for now.

She handed him a bottle of water too, her attempt to smooth over the tension tangible in the air. He took it silently, his jaw tight, wolf simmering beneath restraint.

Together, the three of us-Freya, Kade, and I-continued the work of packing her ancestral estate. Hours passed with wood scraping, papers rustling, memories packed and stacked carefully. The air held the faint musk of old wood, of dust, of the lingering scent of her family, and my wolf was constantly alert, protective.

Finally, when the last box was sealed, the arrangements made with the moving company, Freya led us out. The city beyond the estate awaited, but for a few hours, the remnants of her past had been respected, contained, and prepared for the future.

And I, Silas Whitmor, Alpha of Silverfang Pack, felt the steady pulse of my wolf's satisfaction-not only for protecting her, but for claiming my place at her side, recognized and chosen, against any rival, against any

stormmm

1:16 pm P pp.

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya's POV

s

I had excused myself to the restroom. The chill of the air-conditioning brushed against my skin, and I was only halfway through when a familiar scent made me freeze. Jocelyn Thorne.

I turned, and our eyes met. Her expression was a mixture of surprise and thinly veiled resentment. She hadn't expected to see me here, not at this upscale restaurant. But the

surprise quickly morphed into something darker-hatred simmering just beneath the surface.

Her face hardened as her wolf recognized the truth before her human mind could fully process it: I had risen while she had faltered. In the blink of a season, she had gone from the darling of the Stormveil Pack's Metropolitan branch to someone scorned, her influence waning visibly within the family and the business.

The Whispering Hall of the Thorne family-our ancestral seat-might have kept its ancient prestige, but in the corporate corridors of the Ironhold Consortium, her authority was evaporating. Important meetings no longer included her, and even those who had once fawned over her now looked at her with thinly disguised contempt. Some had even said outright, their words dripping venom:

"Jocelyn Thorne, you really think you're still the family's princess? It was Silas Whitmor behind you all along. Without him, what are you worth?"

I had seen the subtle way her pack members' auras withdrew from her, the way their support had become lukewarm. But Jocelyn had refused to accept it. She had tried, desperately, to leverage her connections with the other young heirs of Ashbourne, the moneyed second-generation wolves, hoping to consolidate influence and salvage her projects. She wanted everyone to see that she still had power-even without Silas, she could still dominate, or so she thought.

Yet here we were, intersecting paths at a restaurant in the Capital, and the roles had inverted entirely. Her scent was sharp, strained with envy and defensiveness, while I moved calmly, wolf and human aligned, grounded in the strength of my own pack, my own choices, and my bond with Silas.

"You think that because Silas stands behind you, you can be reckless?" she hissed, stepping closer, her words cutting. "You really think you deserve him? You can fly a plane, you can handle yourself in combat -but so what? The Whitmore Pack doesn't lack capable pilots or bodyguards."

I leveled my gaze at her, cold, the scent of my wolf rising subtly to reinforce my presence. "So, you've turned Silas' support for you into a weapon, a way to feel secure? Why do you need someone else to back you, Jocelyn? I am me. I have never relied on anyone to validate my worth. And as for deserving anyone.... if one must measure love or attachment by 'deserve,' then life itself is too sad a game to play."

I could see her wolf bristle, claws of fury unsheathed. Her nostrils flared, and her chest rose and fell with a mix of indignation and panic. "You're fooling yourself if you think it will last! One day, he'll abandon you just like he would anyone else!"

I didn't have time to respond, because Silas' presence shifted the air like a pack alpha asserting dominance. His voice, deep and dangerous, cut across the corridor. "That day

will never come, Jocelyn. And if you continue speaking to Freya like this, I promise you, you will have no place in Ashbourne, nowhere to hide.”

I could see her flinch, startled by the sudden appearance of Silas at my side, his aura coiling and protective. Kade lingered just behind him, his wolf simmering, tense, but controlled. Jocelyn’s fear was

s

palpable now, though it quickly mutated into something darker-jealousy, sharp as the edge of a fang.

Why would Silas protect me so fiercely? She hadn’t given him anything-hadn’t sacrificed, hadn’t bled, hadn’t risked herself for him the way she claimed to have. And yet here he was, alpha and packmate, defending me against her venom. Her nostrils flared, teeth lightly bared in frustration.

“Silas,” she spat, stepping closer, defiance masking the underlying panic, “what good is Freya to you? She’s a divorced woman! What can she sacrifice for you? An eye? A limb? Nothing. She wouldn’t dare!”

Silas didn’t flinch. He leaned slightly forward, his wolf in his chest bristling, every line of his body radiating authority. “I don’t need her to sacrifice anything for me. And her being divorced? That’s nothing but a fortunate circumstance-it gave me the chance to be at her side. As for you...” His voice sharpened, cutting like a blade. “Your so-called sacrifice—the eye you flaunt-was never for me. It was because you had no other choice, no strength to resist, no wolf of your own to protect you.”

Her mouth opened, a protest forming, but I could hear the cracks in her confidence, her wolf’s fear and frustration mingling with her human arrogance. “That’s not true! Even if I could, I wouldn’t leave you behind!”

Silas’ amber eyes glinted with memory, wolf instinct coiling tightly around each word. “Would you have stayed? At the time, I begged you not to go. And yet you fled anyway, scrambling to escape. You abandoned me. Jocelyn. That is the difference between her and you.”

I watched silently, my own wolf rising in protective pride, sensing the pulse of tension, the history, the dominance and submission dynamics playing out. Jocelyn’s posture faltered, human pride wrestling with the truth her wolf could sense but her ego refused to admit.

“I was too young to understand, but my feelings were real!” she cried. “I loved you, Silas! I’ve loved you for years-how can Freya compare?”

Silas let out a low, resonant snort, wolf and human in perfect sync. “Love? You never understood what love means. When challenged, you abandoned. Freya never would. That is the difference.”

The subtle shift in the air was palpable as he turned his attention to me, amber eyes softening, the raw wolf energy behind them tempered by loyalty, by trust, by bond. I felt it wash over me like a tide- protective, possessive, unshakable.

He glanced at me once more, voice calmer but firm: “Let’s return to the table. The food is getting cold.”

1:16 pm P PPS.

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Third Person’s POV

s

Freya cast a brief glance at Jocelyn, whose face was pale and drawn, and then nodded slightly. She shifted her gaze toward Kade, who was leaning casually against the wall nearby. “And you?” she asked.

“I’ll be back to the private room after a quick stop,” Kade replied lazily, his tone smooth but carrying an underlying edge of danger.

Freya didn’t press further. She and Silas moved toward the private dining area, the air between them calm, taut with the silent confidence of two wolves aware of their shared territory.

Meanwhile, Kade approached Jocelyn, whose posture stiffened instantly, her wolf bristling against the pressure radiating from him. Her instinct screamed at her to retreat, and she took a cautious step back.

Kade smiled, a slow, predatory curl of his lips, and then reached forward to grasp Jocelyn’s face. His fingers pressed dangerously close to the scarred eye she had lost years ago, remnants of a reckless confrontation at the Stormveil Primal Hall. The venom in his voice slithered like a serpent’s tongue.

“You... you. This is the woman who once tripped my sister at the gates of the Stormveil Primal Hall, kept her from entering, wasn’t it? Because of Silas Whitmor, you sacrificed an eye, right?” Kade’s tone was teasing, but beneath it lurked a lethal promise.

Jocelyn's breath hitched. Every nerve in her body screamed at the touch of his fingers near her remaining eye. Her wolf trembled, snarling silently, warning of the predator's proximity.

"Do you believe me?" Kade continued, tightening his grip just slightly. "If you ever dare speak another word against Freya Thorne, your other eye might not survive either."

Fear flooded Jocelyn's amber eyes. She stammered, "Y-you can't... if you do that, you'll go to prison!"

Kade chuckled softly, the sound dark, wolfish, carrying the weight of controlled violence. "Try me. Let's see whether I end up behind bars first, or your eye disappears."

Jocelyn's teeth chattered. Even Silas, at his most audacious, had never felt like this-a slow, creeping terror of absolute power, the kind that Kade radiated effortlessly. Her pride, her arrogance, melted into a cold

sweat.

"P-please... I won't say another word about Freya..." Her voice was weak, pleading. She could sense the truth in Kade's threat-this was no idle bluff.

Finally, he released her, stepping back toward the sink to casually wash his hands, as if the previous exchange had been nothing more than a minor inconvenience. "I hope you remember what was said here today," he muttered,

Jocelyn retreated to the private room where her friends were seated. She pushed open the door, but the reception was far from warm. Their smiles were absent, replaced with mockery and thinly veiled scorn.

"Looks like you've lost your anchor, Jocelyn," one of them sneered.

"I was wondering why you've been so desperate to gather us lately," another added, "Turns out it's because you're out of power in the Thorne family."

1:16 pm

s

A third chimed in, voice laced with mockery, "So that's why you're rushing to start some project, huh? Planning to use us as stepping stones? That's ambitious, isn't it?"

The laughter and jabs hit Jocelyn like icy water, a visceral reminder of how fragile her social standing had become. She had always commanded attention, wielded influence with a subtle glance or a whispered word-but now, stripped of Silas' backing, she was exposed, vulnerable, a wolf without a pack.

One of her supposed friends, Martong, stepped forward, her expression one of thinly veiled triumph. “Sorry, Jocelyn, I overheard your conversation with Silas in the corridor,” she said, her voice mock-sweet. “We all heard it. And honestly... why didn’t you tell us sooner?”

Jocelyn’s mouth opened, ready to protest. “I—”

Before she could finish, Martong grabbed a bottle of wine from the table and emptied it over her. Jocelyn froze, the warm liquid soaking her hair and clothes, a humiliating, public act.

“You should have told us earlier!” Martong snapped, stepping back with a smirk.

Jocelyn stared at her, disbelief flooding her senses. “Y-you... what are you saying?”

Martong’s scorn was blatant, wolfish in its intensity. “Jocelyn, you really thought we stayed close to you because of you? Don’t be ridiculous. You were just a private daughter once, trying to claim a spot here among us. The only reason we humored you was because of your connection to Silas Whitmor. But now that he’s clearly no longer invested in you, what are you worth? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.”

The laughter that followed was cruel, echoing off the walls of the private room like the howl of mocking wolves. Jocelyn stood there, drenched, humiliated, and utterly alone. In that moment, she was a spectacle, a fallen wolf exposed to the pack she had once believed she led.

Freya watched from the corridor’s edge, her wolf instinct throbbing in tune with her human awareness. Silas had been beside her moments ago, unyielding, protective, a presence that could crush threats and enforce boundaries with nothing more than posture and scent. Jocelyn, by contrast, was revealed for what she had always been: human frailty cloaked in the illusion of dominance, now stripped away.

And yet, in this crucible of social and pack dynamics, one thing remained absolute-Freya and Silas were aligned, their wolves intertwined, their territory, their influence, and their bond unchallenged. Anyone who dared to test them would find that crossing them was far more dangerous than Jocelyn or her so- called friends could imagine.

1:16 pm P

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya’s POV

s

I studied Silas carefully, taking in the fading redness along his cheek, the split at the corner of his lips, and, almost instinctively, I checked his teeth. Kade's punch had not been gentle. The Iron Fang Recon Unit operative wasn't someone who held back, and Silas had taken that full force.

"From now on," I said, my voice soft but firm, "no matter who tries to hit you, don't just stand there and take it. Dodge at least."

Silas gave a small nod, a grin tugging at the corner of his bruised mouth. "Alright. But if it's you who hits me..." He hesitated, then added, "I won't dodge. I'll let you hit me all you want."

I laughed lightly, shaking my head. "And why would I hit you?"

He looked down, his dark lashes trembling as he tried to figure out how to say what he meant. "Maybe... because I've done something wrong?"

I arched an eyebrow. "Like what?"

His words faltered. How could he tell me this "like what" without sounding foolish? Without revealing all the things he carried in the shadows of his past?

Then, without warning, he leaned forward, his arms wrapping around my waist. I was standing while he was sitting, so his face naturally pressed against my abdomen. His voice was low, urgent, and tinged with vulnerability.

"If... if I ever do something wrong again, and you're angry with me, you can hit me, scold me... do whatever you need. But please... please don't ever leave me. Can you promise that?"

The desperation in his whisper tugged at my chest. His wolf, I knew, mirrored the intensity of his plea- every instinct, every sinew radiating a need for connection.

"If you know something is wrong, then don't do it," I said gently.

"But... what if it's already done? Or... maybe I didn't even realize it was wrong at the time?" His hands tightened around me slightly. "Before I met you, Freya, I wasn't a good man. I didn't care about anything -didn't care if people lived or died... but..." He paused, his voice softer now. "I will be a better man, from now on. So... no matter what I did before, will you forgive me?"

I studied him, seeing the anxiety, the uncertainty, the rare flash of urgency in his gaze. It was like my answer was the axis on which his world turned.

And yet, why was he so concerned with whether I could forgive him for the past?



I pressed my lips together, considering. “As long as what you did didn’t betray the Pack, didn’t go against justice, didn’t harm innocents then yes. Even if you truly made mistakes, I can forgive you.”

I could see it then-the relief washing over him, subtle but palpable. Silas exhaled sharply and pulled me closer. “Thank you Freya Thank you for forgiving me.”

In the days that followed, I moved the belongings from our old estate to my apartment in the Capital.

1:16 pm P PPS.

s

When I left the apartment for the last time, I cast a glance back at the empty space, hoping that the next time I returned, it would be with Eric.

Later. I took Kade and Silas around some of Ashbourne’s renowned landmarks. Silas insisted on coming along, and I couldn’t argue with him. Kade, naturally, couldn’t resist teasing.

“Really, Silas Whitmor, Alpha of the Ironclad Coalition, just strolling around the city like a tourist? No urgent company matters?” Kade’s voice was sharp with mockery.

Silas shot back, cool and calm, “Better than letting the law firm’s messes sit unsolved, as you were suggesting, Kade.”

“You still have the nerve to talk about the firm?” Kade growled, eyes narrowing. “Those disasters weren’t my fault-they were yours!”

“If you can’t manage even minor issues, maybe it’s better to close the firm early.” Silas replied evenly.

I sat at the wheel, the two of them in the backseat, arguing like two wolves tussling over territory. Silas and Kade had initially wanted to drive, but both insisted I ride shotgun. Preferring quiet, I simply drove, placing them behind me.

We arrived at Ashbourne’s ancient city walls. The massive stones rose like silent sentinels, scars of centuries etched into their surface. I led them out of the car, toward a sprawling old oak beside the walls.

“There’s a wishing tree here,” I said. “People come and pray under it. They say it’s... effective.”

Both Silas and Kade’s expressions shifted subtly, a faint weight settling over them, as if they each contemplated their own unspoken desires.

“Come on,” I said, moving toward the tree.

Silas and Kade exchanged a glance, then followed.

I stood beneath the sprawling branches, fingertips interlaced, eyes closed. My wolf stirred with the age-old rhythm of ritual and hope, beating in time with my human heart. If wishes could truly be realized. I prayed to find Eric soon.

Kade tilted his head toward the tree, a ghost of a smirk on his lips, though his eyes betrayed fleeting doubt. He shook his head, amused at his own thoughts-he had never believed in such things.

Silas, on the other hand, mirrored my gesture, fingers entwined, eyes tightly shut. For the briefest moment, I glimpsed a different side of him: a man not defined by power or fear, but by hope and longing.

I opened my eyes and turned, catching Silas’s gaze meeting mine.

“You’re making a wish too?” I asked. After all, someone like him-Alpha of the Ironclad Coalition- should have everything he could ever want. Why would he need a wish?

Silas’s eyes softened, the steel tempered with warmth. “I wish... that we grow old together.”

I blinked, taken aback, and Kade frowned, voice sharp with disbelief. “You two have only been together for a short time.. and you’re already talking about growing old together?”

I felt a gentle warmth in my chest, watching him-the man who had weathered darkness and violence,

1:17 pm

s

now showing me this rare, fragile vulnerability. My wolf stirred, not with doubt, but with the steady rhythm of trust, of belonging.

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Third Person’s POV

Silas ignored Kade’s sharp-edged taunts, his gaze fixed solely on Freya. His voice was low, but it carried the weight of iron-clad resolve.

“This life.” Silas said, eyes never wavering from her face, “the only one I want to grow old with is Freya. There has never been another, and there never will be.”

Kade gave a derisive snort, wolf aura flickering around him with contempt. “Bold words. Hearts change. You’ve only known my sister for a handful of months, yet you claim that for the rest of your life there will be no one else? What happens if the two of you split? Are you saying you’ll never take another woman into your bed?”

The air between them bristled with challenge, dominance sparking like flint striking steel. But Silas remained unshaken. His expression stayed calm, voice steady, yet there was a flinty sharpness in it that spoke of oath more than boast.

“There will never be another,” he said. Then, with sudden finality, he added, “And Freya and I will never split.”

The last words rang with the force of a vow, hard and irrevocable. To Silas, the thought of separation wasn’t just painful—it was annihilation. If he lost her, he knew he would become nothing more than a walking husk, a shadow stripped of purpose.

Kade opened his mouth to retort, but Freya cut him off before the sparks could become fire. “That’s enough. We’ve seen enough for one day. Let’s go back.” Her tone softened as she glanced at her younger pack-brother. “Kade, I’ll be returning to the Capital in a few days. If you want to stay in Ashbourne, that’s up to you, but-”

“You’re going back to the Capital?” Kade’s wolf aura faltered for a moment, the words striking him harder than Silas’s declaration.

Freya nodded. “Yes. The affairs here are finished. Tomorrow I’ll stop by Stormveil Primal Hall to pay respects to Grandfather Ken, and then I’ll make preparations to leave.”

“Then I’ll go with you,” Kade said at once, determination sparking in his tone.

Later that evening, when they were alone, Silas spoke with the same fierce determination. “I’ll go with

you as well.”

Freya frowned slightly. “But your work-”

“Ashbourne’s coastal development has been negotiated. What remains can be managed by the Ironclad branch leaders,” Silas said. His jaw tightened. “I won’t risk being separated from you, not now. Distance invites danger. And besides...” He hesitated, then allowed his voice to soften, “...you only like me now, Freya. That’s not enough. I want you to love me. The longer I’m with you, the sooner that will happen.”

Freya's lips curved faintly, but she didn't argue. Instead, she mentioned quietly, "Tomorrow I'll see Grandfather Ken. He wanted to glimpse Eric's face at least once more. I'll bring the photos you gave me of my brother."

Silas inclined his head. "I'll make sure they're ready."

The following morning, Silas accompanied Freya back to the Thorne estate on the outskirts of Ashbourne. The ancestral manor, once the Stormveil Pack's proudest seat, bore the weight of centuries and countless scars.

Because Ken Thorne's health was failing, Silas remained in the reception hall, allowing Freya to visit her grandfather's chamber alone.

When Freya entered, she found Jocelyn already at the old Alpha's bedside, fussing with a tray of medicine and water. Jocelyn's eyes narrowed the instant she saw Freya, irritation flashing across her face.

"Freya, you're here," Ken rasped from the bed. Though his frame had grown frail and his skin pallid, his eyes held the same sharpness that had once commanded Stormveil's armies.

"Grandfather, how are you feeling today?" Freya asked, her voice gentle.

Ken chuckled softly. "The same as any old wolf near his last winter. Time weighs heavy, child. But come, let me look at you."

Then he turned to Jocelyn. "Jocelyn, leave us. I want a moment alone with Freya."

For a flicker, Jocelyn's eyes burned with naked resentment. She had been at Ken's side for years, but no matter how dutiful she was, the old Alpha still favored Freya—the daughter of fallen warriors Arthur and Myra Thorne. That bloodline, that sacrifice, it would always outshine her.

Suppressing her bitterness, Jocelyn forced a smile. "Yes, Grandfather." She gathered the tray and departed.

But as she stepped into the corridor, she overheard a servant whispering that Alpha Silas was waiting in the reception hall. Jocelyn's pulse quickened.

Her life had grown unbearable since losing the Whitmore backing. The same friends who once

fawned over her now mocked and shunned her. The only way to restore her place, her luxury, was to make Silas turn back to her.

Desperation spurred her forward. She smoothed her dress, inhaled, and entered the hall.

Silas stood near the hearth, broad shoulders tense, his aura restrained but still unmistakably Alpha.

“Alpha Silas,” Jocelyn called softly, her voice trembling with practiced remorse. “I’ve wanted to see you. About that night at the restaurant... I was wrong. I shouldn’t have said those things. Please, forgive me.”

His gaze shifted to her, cold and distant as winter steel. “There’s nothing left between us, Jocelyn. Nothing to forgive.”

The words were flat, final.

Jocelyn’s throat tightened. No—she couldn’t let it end there.

“Is it because of that night long ago?” she pressed, her tone almost frantic. “Because I ran? I was just a child, Silas. Afraid. My instincts made me flee, that’s all! I didn’t mean to abandon you.”

But his eyes remained as cold as a frozen lake. Whatever she said, it bounced off armor that would never yield.

“Freya,” Jocelyn spat suddenly, venom seeping into her tone. “You think she wouldn’t abandon you if danger came? Do you think she’s any different from me?”

For the first time, a flicker of warmth entered Silas’s gaze. “Yes,” he said, voice steady as stone. “She wouldn’t.”

The tenderness in his eyes as he spoke Freya’s name made Jocelyn’s stomach twist with rage.

“You trust her that much?” she demanded, almost a scream.

“I do.” His voice turned to ice again, sharp enough to cut. “And hear me, Jocelyn—unless absolutely necessary, do not show yourself before me again. Your debt has been paid in blood. The Whitmores covered for your cowardice for nearly twenty years. That is more than enough.”

His words struck like claws to her chest. Jocelyn staggered, eyes burning with unshed tears and venomous fury. Yet even through her hatred, she could see the truth: Silas’s loyalty, his bond, his heart—were already bound elsewhere.

Bound to Freya Thorne.

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya's POV

I turned my focus back to Grandfather Ken, who sat propped against his pillows, frail yet steady. I pulled out the old photographs of my brother Eric and placed them into his trembling hands.

One by one, he studied them, his cloudy eyes sharpening with recognition and longing. I told him stories as he looked, memories of Eric's laughter, his stubborn streak, the way his wolf had always carried itself with quiet strength.

"When I find him," I whispered, hope hardening into a vow, "I'll bring him here myself. You'll see him with your own eyes."

Grandfather's breath shuddered. He looked at Eric's face in the photo as though willing it into flesh and blood. "I don't know if I'll last long enough."

"You will," I said quickly, gripping his hand. "It won't be long. I'll bring him back soon. You'll meet him again—I swear it."

A faint smile curved his lips, his voice low but firm. "Then I'll hold on until that day."

For a few quiet moments, there was peace in his aura. But then his gaze flicked to me, sharper, older than the body it inhabited.

"Freya," he rasped, "you're with Alpha Silas now, aren't you?"

I hesitated, then nodded. "Yes."

"Be cautious." His tone was grave. "Men like him think in depths you cannot always see. He carries the blood of Whitmore. His father... I remember him well. A man who clawed at what he wanted with ruthless hands. He tore apart a rival, destroyed a lover, to win his mate."

My wolf bristled. I cut him off sharply. "Grandfather! Silas is not his father. Don't compare them."

Ken's eyes softened, regret flickering there. "Perhaps I judge too harshly. The boy does look at you differently than his father ever looked at anyone. Maybe this time, history won't repeat itself."

I clung to that thought. Because I wanted to believe it.

By the time I left his chamber, nearly an hour had passed. My thoughts churned, heavy with

+10 Free **Coins**

both hope and unease. Would Silas be growing impatient in the great hall, waiting? I hurried

my steps-

And froze.

The manor corridors pulsed with alarm. Servants rushed past, their voices a frantic buzz.

“Something’s happened in the great hall!”

“Alpha Silas—he’s with Lady Jocelyn-”

My stomach plunged. Silas? With Jocelyn?

Fear spiked, sharp as silver through my chest. I broke into a run, my boots hammering against the stone floor.

When I burst into the hall, the air stank of chaos. Servants sprawled across the floor, groaning, clutching at bruises. Their scents were sharp with fear.

And at the center of it-

Silas.

My mate stood wild-eyed, chest heaving, his aura a storm gone feral. His hand was wrapped around Jocelyn’s throat, lifting her clear off the ground, slamming her against the wall. Her legs kicked helplessly, her face bleaching to ash as her lips mouthed soundless pleas.

“Silas!” My voice cracked the air like a whip.

But he didn’t hear me. His eyes—those dark, steady eyes—were unfocused, pupils blown wide. Jocelyn’s struggles weakened, her wolf’s aura sputtering. She was seconds from collapse.

I lunged forward. “Silas, let go! Now!”

No response. His wolf was in control, and it wasn’t recognizing friend from foe.

My pulse roared in my ears as I grabbed his arm, trying to wrench his hand free. For one terrible second, it worked—Jocelyn dropped like a rag doll, gasping for breath.

But then his wolf snapped to me.

And attacked.

“Silas!” I stumbled back, blocking his blow with my forearm. His strength crashed into me, jarring bone. He came at me again, like a beast driven mad, each strike aimed to tear, not to

210

spar.

“Silas, look at me!” I shouted, ducking, dodging, my wolf flaring beneath my skin. “It’s Freya! Stop!”

But he didn’t stop. His wolf only snarled and pressed harder.

Gritting my teeth, I shifted my stance. At the last second, I spun, seized his momentum, and slammed him against the wall. The impact shuddered through us both. I pinned him there, my breath ragged, my muscles screaming.

And then—finally—something flickered.

His

eyes wavered, the madness thinning. “Freya...?”

“Yes!” Relief burst through me. “It’s me. I’m here.”

He blinked, his pupils narrowing back to normal. His chest heaved, his aura spasming between fury and control. “The... scent...” His voice rasped, desperate. “Bind me. Bind my hands. Before I hurt you-”

His body trembled violently, fighting to keep himself from lunging again.

That was when I noticed it. The cloying, unnatural perfume that clung to the air. Not mine. Not Silas’s. Jocelyn’s.

A bitter, sweetened scent—an aphrodisiac oil twisted for wolves, designed to unbalance even an Alpha.

Snarling, I ripped Silas’s tie from his neck and bound his wrists tight. He didn’t resist, only sagged into me, still trembling, but yielding.

Once I was sure he couldn’t lash out, I rounded on Jocelyn. She was on the floor, coughing violently, her face mottled red and white.

I stalked toward her, fury snapping in my aura, my wolf’s growl rumbling beneath my skin.



“What did you do to him?” My voice cut like fangs. “That stench—you reek of it. What did you use on Silas?”.

Her eyes darted away, panic flashing before she smothered it. “I... I didn’t do anything! Freya, don’t blame me without proof!”

“Liar!” I snarled, my wolf rising, claws itching beneath my skin. “You doused yourself in poison and thought you could bind him with it. You almost killed him!”

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Third Person’s POV

Silas lay slumped against the high-backed chair, his broad chest heaving, sweat dripping down his temples. His face was contorted in anguish, and the veins along his temple pulsed as though something monstrous pressed from within. His eyes remained closed, but the tension rolling off him was undeniable—his wolf fought for control.

Freya’s fury burned in her chest as she knelt by his side, her gaze sweeping the room until it fixed on Jocelyn. Barely an hour ago she had left Silas, and now she returned to find him reduced to this—a powerful Alpha writhing, consumed by torment.

The sight ignited something feral inside her.

Jocelyn scrambled weakly across the floor, but before she could rise, Freya stepped forward, her boot pressing down hard against her cousin’s back. The weight of a wolf blessed by the Bloodmoon Pack pressed her flat, grinding her ribs against the marble floor. Jocelyn’s breath hitched, and a strangled cry broke from her lips.

“Jocelyn,” Freya’s voice was low, a growl vibrating beneath every word, “I will ask you one more time—what did you do to him? And what is that scent on you?”

The sharp command reverberated through the chamber, making even the air feel heavier. Jocelyn writhed beneath Freya’s heel, but the pressure was relentless, as if the entire Iron Fang Recon Unit bore down upon her spine.

“Don’t just stand there!” Jocelyn screeched toward the servants clustered at the edges of the hall. “Pull her off me—now!”

But the servants only shifted uneasily, eyes darting toward Silas’s trembling frame. None dared move closer. They all knew Jocelyn’s standing had plummeted within the Thorne family, while Freya—last scion of the Stormveil Pack’s fifth branch, whose bloodline had given its all in sacrifice—was favored by the elders. Even the lowest servants whispered in admiration of her resilience, her defiance, her wolf.

Their hesitation only fed Jocelyn's rage. Her cheeks flushed scarlet, eyes burning with humiliation. "You think you can shame me like this? Freya Thorne, if you dare humiliate me again, I swear-"

Her words cut off with a gasp as Freya leaned harder, driving her boot between Jocelyn's shoulder blades.

"Listen to me, Jocelyn," Freya's tone dropped to a cold snarl, eyes blazing like winter flame. "If

you don't tell me exactly what you did, and Silas suffers because of it, I will see to it that every day of your life becomes a nightmare. You will beg me for mercy that will never come."

The weight increased; Jocelyn felt her spine strain, fear prickling down her limbs like ice. Freya's wolf was in her gaze now, wild and merciless, and Jocelyn knew—if she refused, Freya truly would crush her into the floor.

"Fine!" Jocelyn's voice cracked, trembling under the pressure. "I-I only sprayed perfume! Nothing else! I swear it!"

Freya's lip curled in contempt. "Perfume? Then why is he like this?" Her voice cracked like a whip. "Why does an Alpha of his strength writhe as if his very soul is being torn apart?"

Jocelyn's face drained of color, her mind flitting to the memory that haunted her as much as it haunted him. "It's... it's just the same fragrance his mother used. The one she wore... the night she died. I didn't know-"

Freya froze, shock breaking through her fury for the briefest instant. Silas's mother. She knew of the tragedy that had scarred him, the bloodstains upon the Whitmor legacy. The memory of her suicide had never healed, and the scent tied to that night was his deepest wound.

And Jocelyn had deliberately cloaked herself in it.

Freya's blood turned to steel. She couldn't waste another heartbeat here. Silas needed her. She hauled him to his feet with surprising strength, guiding his trembling body toward the door. He leaned heavily against her, every staggered breath cutting into her chest. Without another word, she swept from the room, leaving chaos in her wake.

The grand hall fell silent but for Jocelyn's ragged breathing. She pushed herself upright, hair wild, eyes burning with hate as she turned her glare on the servants.

"Staring at me like that?" she spat, shaking with fury and fear. "Do your jobs or be gone!"

The servants quickly lowered their gazes, but one knelt to gather papers scattered across the polished floor. Among them lay a handful of photographs.

“Wait,” Jocelyn snapped, eyes narrowing. “What’s that?”

The servant stammered, holding the glossy prints aloft. “These... they fell from Lady Freya’s pocket when she carried Alpha Silas away.”

Jocelyn snatched them greedily, her breath quickening as her eyes flicked over the images. Photos, clutched close to Freya’s heart, secreted so near to her even in moments of chaos.

Her lips curved into a bitter smile. “So, she carries these with her everywhere...”

There were only three photos that fell.

All three showed the same man.

In two of the photos, he was wearing a military uniform, and in one, he was shirtless, training.

Jocelyn’s eyes narrowed suddenly, staring at the hideous scar on the man’s shoulder.

This scar looked familiar to her, as if she had seen it somewhere before!

## A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya’s POV

I drove as fast as the tires could bite into the asphalt, my hands clenched white on the wheel. Silas’s body shook in the passenger seat, sweat slicking his temple, his breath ragged like a wolf cornered and ready to break. By the

time I pulled us into the Ironclad Coalition’s private hospital wing, my heart was pounding so hard I thought it might tear through my ribs.

Doctors swarmed him the moment I dragged him inside. They struggled against his thrashing until the sedative took hold. Only when the needle emptied into his vein did his body finally surrender, falling heavy and still against the white sheets.

I didn’t even realize my hands were trembling until I saw them stained with the sheen of his

sweat.

The door burst open. Wren hurried inside, still pale from his own injuries. He had been caught in the crossfire weeks ago when assassins came for Silas. He should have been in bed, but here he was, half-healed and wild-eyed.

“Wren, you shouldn’t be here,” I told him, rising from Silas’s bedside. “Your wounds-“

99

“I’m fine,” he cut me off, though I could see the stiffness in his movements. His gaze darted immediately to the unconscious Alpha. “What happened? Why is Alpha Silas here?”

“He... lost control,” I said, the words sticking in my throat. “Because of a scent. A perfume. The doctors say he’ll stabilize when the sedative wears off.”

Wren’s eyes widened. His jaw tightened like a steel trap. “Perfume? Don’t tell me... it was that scent?”

I stilled. “You mean the one tied to his mother’s death?”

His stare snapped to me, sharp with disbelief. “You know about it?”

“I forced it out of Jocelyn.” My voice dropped lower, almost a growl. The memory of pressing my boot into her back still lingered in my muscles. “She sprayed herself with it on purpose.”

The color drained from Wren’s face. “That woman dared...” He shook his head, anger warring with dread. “Only a handful of people know how badly that scent affects him. Jocelyn must’ve stumbled on it by chance—because the formula should have been destroyed when the Whitmores bought out the company. Silas ordered it erased from existence.”

“Destroyed or not, she had it.” My gaze flicked back to the bed, where Silas lay trapped in the

have to. I want to know who sold it to her.”

Wren nodded grimly. “I’ll see to it.”

## Supply Chains 1

But I couldn’t stop myself from asking the question clawing at me. “Tell me the truth. Back then—when he was younger. What happened when he caught the scent?”

Wren hesitated, his voice rough when he finally answered. “No. He wasn’t violent, not then. When the memories struck, he... collapsed. Terrified. He’d cling to whoever was

near, trembling like a child. Sometimes he'd even turn the fear inward, hurt himself. But it was never like this. Never murderous rage."

I frowned, unease gnawing at me. The Silas I faced tonight had been nothing like the boy Wren described. His wolf hadn't sought comfort—it had lashed out, savage and brutal, fingers crushing Jocelyn's throat.

Why? Because he was older now? Because his wolf had grown stronger, more feral with the years? Or was there something else—something darker—feeding this new reaction?

I pressed for details, and Wren told me the story I had only pieced together in fragments: Silas's mother's death, the broken glass vial of perfume, the way that scent embedded itself into his nightmares. How, three years later, he'd collapsed when he smelled it again. How it happened more than once until the Whitmores finally stamped out the formula itself.

And now Jocelyn had weaponized it.

I clenched my fists. She thought she could trap him, trick him into clinging to her in desperation. She hadn't expected his wolf to bare its fangs instead. If I had been a minute later, I might have found her lifeless under his hands.

Hours passed in sterile silence. The scent of antiseptic burned my nose, but beneath it I caught the faintest trace of his—iron and cedar, buried deep beneath the drugs. Silas hadn't stirred in over six hours. The doctors said two more, maybe three, and he would wake.

I meant to step out, to splash water on my face, to wash away the tension clawing at my skin. But then his voice broke the stillness.

"No..." His lips moved, low and broken. "Don't leave me... please... don't abandon me."

I froze mid-step, every hair on my body prickling.

I turned back. He was still asleep, eyes closed, but his brow was furrowed, his head twitching against the pillow. Sweat glistened fresh across his forehead.

A nightmare.

I moved to him, standing at the edge of the bed, my chest aching. For all his power, all his command as Alpha of the Ironclad Coalition, right now he looked unbearably human—stripped raw by whatever darkness haunted him.

I lifted my hand to wipe the sweat from his temple.

But before I could touch him, his eyes snapped open.

Golden fire blazed in his gaze, but it was unfocused, wild. His hand shot out, seizing my wrist in a bruising grip.

“Silas-”

I didn’t finish. In a single surge of motion, he pulled me down, twisting me beneath him. The world tilted, and suddenly I was pinned against the mattress.

His knees pressed into either side of my hips, caging me in. His hands shackled my wrists to the bed, his breath hot and uneven above me. His fingers trembled, yet his grip was unyielding.

I stared up into his eyes. He was looking at me, but not truly seeing me. The focus wasn’t there -only the raw, animal edge of panic.

His chest heaved. His aura crashed over me, thick and suffocating, but threaded with something I hadn’t expected. Not violence. Not lust.

Fear.

“Don’t... leave me...” His voice cracked, broken as a child’s. “It’s so dark. I’m... afraid. Blood. Too much blood...”

My throat tightened, the sound cutting me like claws.

The strongest Alpha I had ever known—terrifying, relentless Silas Whitmor—shaking above me like a boy lost in his own nightmare.