

A Warrior Luna's Awakening

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A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya's POV

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I had barely ended the call when my hand went limp at my side, the WolfComm heavy in my palm.

"It's his fingers," Wren's voice still echoed in my ears. "Alpha Silas refused to allow his wolf to heal themselves. If Alpha Silas refuses treatment any longer, even if the bones are set, the damage will cripple him. He could lose his hand entirely."

My chest tightened, the words cutting deeper than I wanted to admit. His fingers—his hand—broken because of me.

I had only wanted to leave that night, to make him let go. I hadn't thought beyond the desperate snap of bone beneath my strength. I hadn't thought what it meant to break the hand of a warrior Alpha who lived by his command, by his grip.

When I finally spoke, my voice was hoarse.

"Where is he?"

"At the apartment," Wren said quickly, relief pouring through his words. "The one you both shared."

I didn't answer, just ended the call.

The silence that followed was deafening.

I drove there without memory of the streets, only the pounding in my chest guiding me. When the familiar high-rise finally rose before me, every step toward it felt wrong—too many memories pressed into the walls, into the air itself. What had once been safe and warm now stank of something alien.

Wren waited outside the door like a sentinel. The moment he saw me, he hurried forward.

“Alpha is inside. Freya, I’ve never seen him like this before. Whatever passed between you-”

“Wren.” My voice was sharp, enough to cut his words in half. “What lies between Silas and me isn’t yours to carry.”

He dipped his head, chastened, and stepped aside.

I opened the door.

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The smell hit me first—sharp, bitter whiskey tangled with the iron tang of blood and the faint, fading echo of his cedar-ash scent. Empty bottles littered the table, their glass throats reflecting the dim light like shards.

And there he was.

Silas Whitmor, Alpha of the Ironclad Coalition, sprawled on the leather sofa like a fallen god. His clothes were the same from yesterday, creased and stinking of smoke and liquor. His chest rose and fell unevenly, as if every breath clawed through pain.

My eyes dropped to his right hand.

Three fingers bent at impossible angles, swollen and bruised, twisted in the way only broken bones could twist. My stomach lurched. I had done that.

The wolf inside me keened, low and agonized, even as I forced my jaw tight. This was what I had chosen. I was the one who had walked away, who had torn the bond before it could bind me forever.

Yet seeing him like this-

Moon above, it was killing me.

I moved closer, breath shallow. His face, even in the fog of drunken sleep, was locked in a grimace of torment. The mighty Alpha still dreaming in pain.

My gaze snagged on his wrist.

A bracelet.

The one I had chosen, beads of darkwood strung with jade-green flecks, meant to rest against his pulse. I had imagined giving it to him on his birthday, placing it there myself, his lips brushing my hair in thanks.

But I hadn't. And now here it sat, already claimed by him in silence, as if he had taken the gift before I could revoke it.

My throat burned.

"Silas," I whispered. My voice cracked against the quiet.

No answer.

"Silas!" Louder now, desperate.

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Still nothing.

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I exhaled, long and shaking. He needed to go to the medics. If he would not walk, then I would drag him. Whether he wanted it or not.

I bent, slipping an arm beneath his shoulder. But when I tried to lift him, something caught my eye—his left hand, clutching something tight to his chest.

A card.

My card.

The one I had written the blessing on: May you live each year in peace. May we walk together until the end of days.

I froze. My nose stung, a hot ache pushing tears to the edge. I reached for it.

But his body reacted before his mind could. His fingers, even drunk and trembling, clamped down, iron-strong, protecting the card. His lips parted, and in a hoarse, broken murmur, he whispered,

“Don’t... don’t go, Freya... don’t go...”

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The sound cleaved through me like a blade.

He curled in on himself, clutching the paper to his chest as though it were me, as though he could hold me there and never let me slip away.

For a moment, I simply stood there, staring at the wolf I had loved–still loved–telling myself over and over that I had only come here to take him to the hospital. Nothing else.

I tightened my grip and hauled him upright. His weight was crushing, his frame tall and broad, heavy with liquor. My arms trembled as I forced him up, dragging his limp body against mine. He reeked of whiskey and broken dreams, yet my wolf pressed closer anyway, desperate for his heat.

Wren rushed forward at the sight, eyes wide.

“Here, let me-”

Together, we half-carried, half-dragged Silas out into the night.

“Freya...” His voice, low and ragged, breathed against my ear. Again and again, he said my name, slurred and needy, his body leaning harder into me.

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Every time his lips brushed my throat by accident, every broken whisper, my heart threatened to splinter.

By the time we got him into the car, I was shaking. I climbed into the backseat beside him while Wren started the engine.

“Sit still,” I muttered, fumbling with the belt across his chest. But when I leaned close, his eyes snapped open.

Those crimson wolf-eyes, glazed with drunken fire, locked onto me.

I froze.

He wasn’t fully awake, but he was aware enough. His stare pinned me where I sat, molten and unblinking.

When I tried to pull back, his broken right hand lashed out, fingers mangled yet fierce, wrapping around my wrist.

I stilled, afraid to hurt him further. With three fingers shattered, he should not have been able to hold me at all. Yet his grip burned, desperate.

“Silas, let go,” I whispered, trembling. “If you keep this up, you’ll ruin your hand beyond repair.”

His lips parted, voice nothing but a rasp.

“Is this... a dream?”

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Freya’s POV

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His hand clamped around my wrist with a desperation that sent a shiver down my spine. **Even** with three fingers broken and bound in swelling, Silas held me as if the mere act of letting go would erase me from existence. His crimson-tinged eyes burned into mine, fevered and wild, like a wolf cornered and terrified of abandonment.

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“Not a dream,” I told him quietly, forcing my voice steady. “Wren called me. He said refused to go to the healers. That’s why I came—to take you to the hospital and make sure your hand gets treated.”

For a moment he only stared, pupils dilating, breath ragged. Then he whispered, almost to himself, “I don’t need treatment. Let it stay broken. Let it rot if it must. Consider it punishment. If these fingers never heal, it doesn’t matter. Freya, I told you before—whatever punishment you give me, I’ll accept it.”

My heart twisted at his words, but I pressed my lips together, forcing myself to stand my ground. “I never meant to punish you,” I said at last, my voice low. “I lost control. I was desperate to leave, and I snapped your fingers in the struggle. That’s on me. That’s why I have to take responsibility and get you treated.”

From the front seat, Wren stiffened. Out of the corner of my eye I saw his shoulders lock, his head snapping slightly as if he couldn’t believe what he had heard.

So now he knew. Silas’s shattered hand was my doing.

I could only imagine what conclusions were racing through his mind—yesterday’s argument, Jocelyn’s schemes, my missing brother Eric, all tangled in blood and betrayal. But none of that mattered right now. What mattered was that the Alpha I once loved sat broken beside me, hand a ruin because of me.

Silas’s voice dropped, deep and hollow. “So you won’t punish me, not even a little?”

I swallowed, my gaze falling away. “I don’t have the right to punish you, Silas.”

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His grip tightened fractionally. “But what if I wanted you to? What if I begged you to punish me?”

Something sharp pierced my chest, a mixture of sorrow and exhaustion. “For what? For failing to save Eric? I told you before—you weren’t bound to him, you had no duty to risk yourself for my brother. And as for the lies, for the betrayal... we’re done. We ended it. There’s nothing left to punish.”

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“You say we’re done, and yet-” His voice cracked suddenly. His gaze flicked downward, to the crumpled card still caught between his fingers. With a ragged movement, he lifted it. The card I had written on, the words etched in my own

hand: May you live each year in peace. May we walk together until the end of days.

“You wished me peace. You promised me forever. And now you tell me to accept an end?” His voice was raw, frayed with anguish.

My chest seized. Just looking at those words again, at my handwriting, made my heart split open all over. I wanted to reach for the card, to tear it away, to save myself from the pain of those promises—but I couldn’t.

“I don’t know how to face you anymore,” I admitted, the words dragging out like claws over

stone.

It was like watching the light vanish from his eyes. His wolf-fire dimmed, leaving them hollow, shadowed. For the first time since I’d known him, Silas Whitmor looked beaten.

And then... he let go.

The sudden absence of his hand around my wrist was like ice water down my spine.

Wren’s knuckles were white against the wheel as he steered us toward the hospital. I could feel his tension like static in the air. No one spoke. The silence was suffocating, pressing down on the three of us until the sound of Silas’s uneven breaths was the only thing filling the space.

I kept my gaze fixed out the window, watching Deepmoor’s city lights blur against the glass. Yet every nerve in me was aware of his eyes, heavy on my profile, refusing to let me go even in silence.

I said nothing. Neither did he.

word.

And Wren—poor, loyal Wren—drove as if his Alpha’s heart might detonate at the wrong I could almost feel his thoughts turning. He had served Silas long enough to know the Whitmor blood ran dangerous when love soured. The stories of Silas’s father, Cassian—how madness had swallowed him whole after his mate’s death, how his mind had cracked like ice under strain. Would Silas, too, spiral into that same abyss if I walked away?

I couldn't think about that.

The car rolled to a stop beneath the hospital's lights. Silas was soberer now, the liquor burned away by adrenaline and loss. His eyes were clear enough when I climbed out.

"Come on," I said, forcing my voice flat. "We need to check you in."

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But he didn't move. He only looked at me, gaze steady, voice quiet enough to carve into me like a knife. "Are you only doing this out of duty, Freya? Only because you broke me?"

I clenched my fists. "Yes. I hurt you. That makes me responsible for fixing it."

His throat worked. "Then... does it hurt you? Seeing me like this? Do you ache for me at all?"

My chest screamed yes. My wolf screamed yes. But I forced my lips to form the lie.

"No."

His face faltered, but he pushed, almost childlike. "Not even a little?"

I closed my eyes, then opened them. "Not even a little."

The words tasted like blood. They weren't only for him. They were for me, too. A chant, a mantra. Not even a little. Not even a little.

Because if I admitted otherwise, I'd never leave him. NEW NOVEL CHAPTERS ARE
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"Enough," I said sharply, tugging at his uninjured arm. "Stop wasting time. I have other matters to handle tonight."

At last, he moved, letting me lead him through the sterile halls. Wren trailed behind, silent as a shadow.

Registration. X-rays. The slow clinical rhythm of healers resetting what I had broken. Each snap of a splint into place echoed inside me like a chain tightening around my throat.

At last, his hand was secured, wrapped, bound. The healer's words were merciful—no major complications, no need for a cast. Just time, rest, and patience.

I stood, my throat dry. "It's done. I'm leaving?"

I turned, forcing my steps away from the room, away from him. But I didn't make it far.

Warmth slammed into my back—his arms, strong despite the injury, wrapping around me from behind.

"Don't go," Silas whispered against my hair, his voice hoarse and breaking. "Please, Freya. Don't go."

My body froze. My wolf howled, clawing at my insides, desperate to turn, to answer.

But I stood rigid, eyes burning. Because if I gave in now, if I let myself melt against him, I

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knew I would never leave again.

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Silas's POV

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Her scent was still clinging to me, wild storm—petals and fire, when her voice cut through my chest like a blade.

"Silas, I took you, but I gave myself in return. Between us, no one owes anything."

And then—she tore herself free of my arms.

I stood frozen, watching Freya Thorne walk away. Her figure grew smaller, swallowed by the sterile glow of the hospital corridor until it vanished altogether.

A moment ago, I'd held the world in my arms. A moment later, I'd lost it all.

Cold. A frost deeper than the grave sank into my bones. My chest felt hollow, but the pain radiated sharp and endless, like claws ripping me apart from the inside.

This was what it meant to be abandoned. Again.

My fingers, still splinted from what she had done to them, curled helplessly. I almost laughed. She had broken me with her own hands, and still I wanted her to bind me tighter, to never let

me go.

But she walked. She never even looked back.

Later.

Jocelyn Thorne was dragged into the Whitmor estate, bound and trembling. The old hall of my bloodline stank of iron and shadow. Wolves whispered of my family's curse—that when love was denied, madness bloomed. I could feel it growing inside me now, a black seed splitting open.

"Release me!" Jocelyn's voice shook as she stumbled forward. "I am the daughter of the Metropolitan Pack's first branch! If anything happens to me, the Thorne family will never forgive you."

Her arrogance was gone,

her eyes wide with terror.

And then she saw me.

The terror doubled.

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I sat waiting, cigarette burning low between my fingers, the smoke curling like a noose. My gaze locked on her, cold, unblinking.

“Silas-” Her voice cracked. “Please. Spare me. I swear, I’ll never appear in front of you or Freya again.”

“Spare you?” My tone was flat, a blade wrapped in silk. The weight of the Ironclad Coalition pressed behind every word, cold and merciless.

The wolf in me stirred, claws scratching against my skin. I had always been the detached one, the Alpha who looked down at the world with indifference. But that indifference was gone.

What replaced it was rage.

“Spare you?” I repeated, rising from the chair. My boots echoed against the stone floor, each step sharp as the tick of a clock counting down to her death. “Do you know what you’ve done, Jocelyn?”

Her lips trembled. She stammered, “Yes... yes, I spoke out of turn yesterday. I didn’t think-”

“You didn’t think,” I cut her off, my voice a snarl. “You revealed what was mine to the winds, and now you want forgiveness?”

I closed the distance. She tried to step back, but my enforcers held her fast.

“You want me to remember the eye you gave up for me?” I hissed, leaning close. “Fine. I’ll remember it while I carve out the second one.”

Her scream caught in her throat as I drew the pistol from my belt. The weight of the iron was steady in my hand. I pressed the barrel against her temple.

Her entire body shook, wolf whimpering beneath her skin.

“You can’t kill me,” she gasped. “I’m still a Thorne. If Freya learns you murdered me, do you think she’ll ever forgive you? Do you think she’ll still choose you?” UPDATE FROM find-novel.net

Freya.

Her name cracked through me like thunder. My vision flared crimson.

She was light, and I was filth. If I killed Jocelyn here, the blood on my hands would never wash away. Not in her eyes.

Even now, after she'd cut me off, after she had said our bond meant nothing, I was still begging for a future. Still clutching the memory of her handwriting on that birthday card—to grow old

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with you.

But she'd left me.

So clean. So final.

Not even a glance back.

A growl ripped from my chest, wolf and man tangled in torment.

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“You know how much you deserve death?” I pressed the barrel harder against Jocelyn’s skull. Her whimper rose, high and broken. “You are the first person I’ve ever hated. And hate... is the one thing I do not let go.”

The chamber clicked as I slid a round into place.

Her eyes went wide. She shook like prey cornered in the jaws of a predator.

“You want to test me?” My voice was rough, burning. “You want to see if the Thorne family will truly avenge you? Let’s find out.”

Her lips formed the word no, but it was drowned by the roar of my pistol.

The sound split the night, a crack of final judgment that echoed through the Whitmor estate.

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A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Third Person's POV

Bang! Bang! Bang! THIS CHAPTER IS UPDATE BY FindNovel.net

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The gunshots tore through the silence of the Whitmore estate's hall, echoing like thunder trapped within stone walls. Each bullet grazed past Jocelyn Thorne's flesh—scraping her cheek, tearing into her arm, carving across her thigh.

Her screams split the air, raw and jagged. She collapsed, trembling, sprawling helplessly on the cold floor. Her skin drained of color, eyes rolling with terror.

Silas stood over her, expression carved from ice. He only lowered his weapon when the last round clicked empty, the acrid scent of spent gunpowder hanging in the air like death itself.

“Take her to the city watch,” Silas ordered, his voice flat, deadly calm. “Let her rot in a cell for the rest of her life. And while she's there, make sure she never forgets what hell tastes like.”

“Yes, Alpha,” his enforcers responded, moving to drag Jocelyn away.

“You... you're insane!” Jocelyn screamed, her voice breaking into a high, desperate pitch. Her eyes were wide with hatred and fear as she was hauled upright. “Silas, you're a madman!”

Her words cracked into hysterical laughter, echoing sharp against the walls. “Do you truly think Freya will ever love you again? No—no one will! The only wolf who could ever accept you as you are is me. Only me! Hahaha-

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Her rant was cut short when a guard shoved a cloth roughly into her mouth, muffling the madness. She kicked and writhed, but her protests were dragged into silence as they hauled her into the shadows beyond the hall.

Silas didn't move. His eyes dropped, unblinking, to the jade-and-ironwood prayer beads strung tightly around his wrist.

Insane. That was what Jocelyn had called him.

But wasn't he already walking in hell?

Across the city, in the quiet sanctuary of an apartment lit only by a single desk lamp, Freya sat opposite Lana.

"You're leaving for D-Country?" Lana's voice faltered with surprise.

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Freya nodded. Her amber eyes, so like her father Arthur's, were steady though shadowed **with** determination. "Yes. I was waiting for the Iron Fang Recon Unit to verify the reports. We needed confirmation about what happened during the border inferno. But now that surveillance footage has surfaced from D-Country, showing Eric after the fire... I have no choice. He might be alive."

Her voice cracked faintly on that last word, but she pressed on.

"If he survived the fire, he must have been injured, maybe disoriented. That's the only reason he hasn't made contact. Otherwise-" She broke off, her hand curling tight around the edge of the table. The silence left the unspoken truth dangling in the air.

Otherwise, Eric Thorne could already be dead.

Her wolf snarled in denial deep in her chest. No. He's alive. He has to be.

"I have to find him," Freya finished.

Lana frowned, biting her lip. "But D-Country is chaos right now. If you go alone, you could walk straight into danger."

Freya exhaled a steadying breath. "This isn't my first time. During my years with the Iron Fang Recon Unit, I was deployed to D-Country more than once. I know how to survive there. And I won't go unprepared. I might be retired now, but I haven't forgotten who I am. If trouble comes, I can still protect myself."

Lana shook her head, unease flickering in her eyes. "Even the strongest wolf can be outnumbered. You've been out for years, Freya. And this time you won't have a unit backing you. Let me come with you."

Freya gave a small, grim smile. “No. I don’t know how long this mission will take. You have your company here, your life. I won’t drag you into danger just to ease my conscience.”

Lana’s protest faltered. She knew Freya was right. Her wolf bristled with guilt at the thought of becoming a liability.

Freya softened her tone. “Don’t worry. I’ll contact the embassy once I arrive. And the Iron Fang Recon Unit still has ties in the region. If I need backup, they’ll make sure I get it.”

Lana let out a long breath. “Fine. But promise me one thing—call me every single day. Just once, so I know you’re alive.”

“I promise,” Freya said firmly.

“When do you leave?”

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“Two weeks,” Freya replied. “I need to settle things here first—get my visa, arrange travel, **wrap** up work,”

Lana hesitated, then asked quietly, “Does Kade know?”

“No.” Freya admitted.

“Then tomorrow night—” Lana’s voice warmed a fraction. “Let’s bring him out for a drink. He’ll want to see you before you go. And you deserve one last night of peace before diving into the storm again.”

Tomorrow.

The word struck a chord in Freya’s chest. Her eyes flickered with a strange light. Tomorrow was Silas’s birthday.

For weeks she had considered asking for leave, had even pictured spending the day with him— maybe one last fragile attempt at normalcy between them. But now... now there was no reason.

She forced a bitter smile, trying to laugh at the ache twisting in her chest. “Fine. Tomorrow we’ll drink.”

It was time.

Time to put Silas Whitmor behind her, to sever the bond that had chained her heart too long. If she didn't, she would never be free to find her brother—or herself.

Silas, in his silent hall, stared at the prayer beads glinting on his wrist. His wolf whispered of darkness and ruin. He told himself he didn't fear hell. But the truth was harsher—

Hell was already here.

And without Freya, there would be no escape from it.

A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Third Person's POV

The next day. [READ LATEST CHAPTERS AT findnovel.net](#)

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A sleek black car rolled to a stop before the wrought-iron gates of the cemetery. The **vast** cemetery stretched upward along a cold ridge, granite steps leading into the mist.

From the rear seat stepped Silas. He adjusted the cuff of his coat, his face carved in the same hard lines as the winter sky.

“Alpha Silas,” Wren moved forward quickly.

“No need to follow. Stay here with the others.” Silas's tone was low, but absolute.

“Yes.” Wren bowed his head, signaling the guards to hold position by the car.

Silas ascended the stone stairs alone, his boots echoing softly in the silence. Today marked his own birthday. But more than that—it was also the death anniversary of his mother.

Every year without fail, he came. And every year, he was never the only one.

He was not surprised when another figure emerged from the veil of fog among the tombs. Cassian Whitmor stood there, tall and composed, a faint smile playing at his lips as though this were an ordinary meeting of father and son.

“You came,” Cassian said, his voice smooth. “To visit your mother.”

Silas’s expression did not shift. He strode past Cassian without acknowledgment and stopped before the tombstone. A woman’s black-and-white photograph gazed out from the polished granite. Her smile was bright, too bright—at odds with the truth of her life, the truth of her death.

Silas bowed three times, lowering his head to the woman who had never shown him love, but had still given him life.

Behind him, Cassian’s voice broke the silence. “I heard you’ve separated from Freya Thorne.”

Silas’s lips pressed into a thin line. He had men watching Cassian, of course. And Cassian, equally cunning, had eyes and ears shadowing his son.

“This is none of your concern,” Silas answered flatly.

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“How can it not be?” Cassian’s tone was almost amused. “You’re still my son. That girl once raised a hand to me. Now that she’s no longer under your protection, cutting off her hands as payment would hardly be unjust, don’t you think?”

Silas turned then, his gaze like the bite of an Arctic wind. The lethal aura of an Alpha rolled off him in waves, the cemetery itself seeming to bow beneath it.

“You dare touch her,” Silas said, each word honed to a blade, “and I will kill you.”

Cassian arched a brow. “So, for a woman who walked away from you, you’d raise your claws against your own father?”

Silas did not hesitate. “If she dies, nothing remains to hold me back. You will not live to regret it.”

Cassian barked a sudden laugh, his voice echoing among the gravestones. “For a woman who left you so easily? Worth it?”

Silas's reply was swift, brutal: "And you—was it worth it? To lose your sanity for a woman who never once loved you?"

The two Alphas stood in the cold silence, locked in a gaze of ice and fury. Father and son, mirrored in ruthlessness, divided by a wound neither could heal.

At last, Silas turned away. As he stepped forward, his voice dropped to a lethal calm. "If you so much as scratch her, your ashes will never rest beside hers."

Cassian's eyes narrowed. "A threat?"

"A truth," Silas replied without pause. "*Lay* a hand on her, and I will grind you to dust."

He descended the steps without looking back. The conversation, like the bond between them, ended there.

Cassian remained, turning back toward the grave. His fingers brushed the carved name of the woman who had once been his everything.

"Our son," he murmured. "He will end as we did." His lips curved in a bitter smirk. "Grind me to dust, will he? Boy, the day you died, my heart had already turned to ashes."

While Silas faced the shadows of blood and memory, Freya Thorne's world was shifting in a different way.

With her departure for D-country drawing closer, her days were consumed with preparation. She finished reports for the Bloodmoon Pack liaison, arranged contingencies for Stormveil's

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fifth branch, and filled her WolfComm with contacts of embassies and military allies. **Supplies** for travel were stacked neatly in her apartment—field gear, encrypted devices, medical **kits**. Every piece spoke to the soldier she had once been in the Iron Fang Recon Unit.

As the sun dipped, Lana hooked an arm around Freya's shoulders with her usual easy warmth. "Come on. Bar time. Tonight, we drink until you forget you're the responsible **one**."

The bar Lana chose was upscale, the kind that offered food alongside its liquor. She had even reserved a private booth.

But when the two women stepped inside, Freya halted. Kade was already seated at the table- and beside him, to Lana's visible dismay, sat Victor Ashford.

"You brought him?" Lana's brows drew tight as she shot a look at Kade.

"I'd like to know that myself," Kade muttered, rubbing his temple. "I didn't invite him."

He explained in a low voice: when Lana had called him, Victor had overheard and insisted on coming along.

Lana's face twisted in frustration. She turned on Victor. "Why are you here? Tonight was supposed to be just the three of us-me, Freya, and Kade."

Victor leaned back casually, eyes gleaming with mischief. "I'm here to make sure you don't get drunk and try something inappropriate with my nephew. It wouldn't be the first time."

Lana flushed scarlet, mortified. "That was a misunderstanding!"

Freya tilted her head, curiosity sparking. "What misunderstanding?"

"Nothing. Just nothing," Kade cut in sharply, glaring at his uncle. "Victor, if you want to see Lana, fine. But don't drag me into your excuses."

Victor merely shrugged, his lips curving into a smile that said enough. He wasn't here for Freya. He was here because of Lana.

Lana scowled. She had rejected him once. Why was he still lingering like a wolf refusing to leave the edge of her territory?

To break the tension, she clapped her hands. "Food first, then drinks. No arguing at the table."

A waiter appeared, and Lana ordered plates of spiced meat, fried roots, and enough ale **to** loosen even a wolf's tongue.

They ate, they drank. Slowly, laughter and conversation softened the **edges** of discomfort. **But**

...

when Freya mentioned her departure, the mood shifted again.

“You’re going to D-country?” Kade asked sharply, his glass halfway to his lips.

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Third Person’s POV

“Yes,” Freya replied evenly, her hand curled around the rim of her glass. “My brother **appeared** in D-country after the border fire five years ago. I have to go there, to see if I can find any **trace** of him.”

Though so much time had passed, though the odds of finding Eric still there were small, the fire in her voice betrayed her resolve. She would go, no matter the risk.

“D-country is dangerous right now,” Victor spoke, his tone calm but edged with warning. “If you’re determined to search, I can reach out to some contacts there, ask questions quietly.”

Freya shook her head. “Thank you, but I need to go myself.”

Kade frowned. “So, are you going with Silas Whitmor?”

“No. Alone.”

Kade’s brow shot up, disbelief flashing in his dark eyes. “Alone? Silas will never allow that.”

Freya exhaled slowly, her lips tightening before she spoke. “We’re no longer together. I’m going to D-country by myself.”

The words fell like a stone in the room.

“Separated?” Kade blurted, startled.

Even Victor’s gaze sharpened, surprise flickering in his usually composed face. He remembered well the way Silas had once treated Freya—how he’d stopped an entire male- dancer performance in The Capital, ordering the show to halt and compensating every guest, simply because he couldn’t bear Freya looking at other men,

The Whitmor bloodline was infamous for its madness when it came to love. Once they claimed a mate, they claimed them wholly. That a man like Silas had let Freya go? It was almost unthinkable.

“Yes. It’s over.” Freya forced a steadiness into her words, though beneath them lingered the bitter tang of pain.

Lana leaned in quickly, sensing the darkness rising over her friend’s **face**. “Enough brooding. Tonight is for drinking, for forgetting. Come on—one shot down the hatch!”

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She cracked open a fresh bottle and filled their glasses, determination flashing in her tipsy

eyes. Find the newest release on findnovel.net

The four of them drank and ate, the sharp edges of tension softening beneath the burn of liquor. Laughter returned, if faintly. After a few rounds, Lana looped her arm around Freya’s shoulders, her own cheeks flushed with heat.

“Silas isn’t worth it,” Lana slurred with fierce loyalty. “Kick him aside. Hell, three-legged toads are rare, but two-legged men? They’re everywhere. We’ll find you a better one!”

“Lana.” Kade’s voice hardened. “Is this really the time?”

“Of course!” Lana declared without shame. She cupped Freya’s face between her palms, staring into her eyes with drunken conviction. “I promise you, Freya. I’ll find one hotter than Silas, sweeter than Silas, someone who’ll worship the ground you walk on—and it’ll burn him alive with jealousy!”

Freya gave a small, weary smile. “I’m not planning on—”

Her words cut off abruptly.

A voice rang from the doorway, low and edged like a blade: “So, Miss Rook wants to parade men before her, for Freya’s choosing?”

Every head snapped toward the door.

No one had seen when it opened, but Silas Whitmor now stood there, filling the frame with the cold weight of his presence.

Freya shot to her feet instantly, stepping in front of Lana like a shield. Her pulse hammered, but her voice was steady. “Why are you here?”

“If I hadn’t come,” Silas replied, his eyes sweeping over the room before landing on Lana with a predator’s chill, “would Miss Rook be lining up candidates for you already?”

The words dripped with contempt. Lana’s drunken haze evaporated in an instant. Sweat prickled down her spine.

Freya’s jaw tightened. “We’ve separated. Even if Lana brings ten men to me, it has nothing to do with you.”

Kade surged forward, placing himself between Freya and Silas. His voice was sharp with challenge. “Silas. You’re not welcome here. You walk out now, or I’ll make you.”

But Silas didn’t so much as glance at him. His eyes remained locked on Freya, obsidian-dark, a

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storm swirling deep within. “Today is my birthday. You promised you’d spend it with me.”

Freya froze, her breath catching.

“Don’t twist her words,” Kade snapped. “You’ve broken apart. She owes you nothing”

“Will you?” Silas asked again, ignoring him, his gaze fastening to Freya’s as though no one else existed. His tone was quiet, deceptively calm—but beneath it ran the fevered edge of madness.

Kade swore under his breath. He raised a fist, ready to strike. “Do you think I’m joking?”

Before his blow could fall, Freya caught his wrist, her grip iron despite her trembling heart. “Enough. I’ll go.”

“Freya-” Kade’s eyes widened.

“I’m not forcing myself.” She released him gently, but her voice was firm. “I promised him. I’ll honor it—just this once.”

The tension in the room stretched thin as a drawn bow.

Lana shivered and edged toward Victor, whispering fiercely, “Why are you just standing there? If those two clash, they’ll bring the whole bar down. Do something!”

Victor’s lips twitched in something like amusement. “And what exactly do you expect me to do? Step between them? I’m more scholar than brawler, Lana.”

She glared at him. He looked every bit the refined wolf, glasses and all—yet the thought of him thrown into that maelstrom was laughable.

Freya stood, lifting her bag in one hand. She turned to Silas, her chin raised though her chest was tight. “Let’s go.”

Without a word, Silas turned and strode from the booth. Freya followed, her steps steady despite the pounding in her veins.

Out in the corridor, away from the others, she halted abruptly. She spun on her heel, facing him head-on, the air between them sharp with tension.

“If I hadn’t agreed,” she asked, her eyes locked on his, “what would you have done?”

A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya’s POV

I stared at him, my chest tightening when he said it so calmly, so matter-of-factly-

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“Then I’ll stay by your side. And if anyone tries to stand in the way, I’ll deal with them.”

His voice was smooth, unhurried. But his eyes burned with that quiet madness I had almost managed to forget.

Silas Whitmor. Alpha of the Ironclad Coalition. The man the Capital whispered about in low voices—the wolf you did not provoke, because once he marked you as his, there was no undoing it.

For a moment, I pressed my lips together, tasting iron from where I had bitten down too hard. The years I had spent with him had nearly made me forget the truth: beneath the polished restraint, he was lethal, untouchable. 1

“Change the place,” I said softly.

A flicker of satisfaction lit his eyes. “Then we’ll go back to the apartment. I’ve already prepared everything. All that’s missing is you.”

My brows furrowed. “Apartment?”

He tilted his head, almost mockingly. “What, unwilling? Just moments ago you promised to spend the night with me.”

“...No,” I breathed. “Let’s go.”

I walked out of the bar first, the low thrum of music and the scent of alcohol clinging to my clothes. I didn’t look back, but I could hear his footsteps behind me—steady, confident, inevitable.

We drove in silence, the tension between us coiled tight enough to snap. When the car stopped in front of the familiar building, my heart gave a strange lurch.

The apartment.

The place we had once shared a life.

The door opened with a soft click, and when I stepped inside, my breath caught in my throat.

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He had decorated it.

Colorful balloons floated against the ceiling, ribbons draped across the walls. Birthday banners and bright streamers wound through the room like some cruel parody of celebration. And hanging from those ribbons...

Photos.

Dozens of them.

Me and him. Smiling. Laughing. Frozen moments from a life I no longer wanted. In those pictures, my eyes were bright, my smile unguarded. I had once believed in us. I had once believed he could give me forever.

A sharp ache carved its way into my chest. That girl in the photographs hadn't imagined this ending.

Before I could school my expression, strong arms slipped around me from behind, his chest pressing into my back.

"Look," Silas murmured, his voice low, almost tender. "We were happy. You can't deny that. Freya, no one will ever love you the way I do. Come back to me." The source of this content is Find[N]ovel.net

The scent of him—dark musk and storm-ash—wrapped around me, intoxicating and suffocating all at once.

I forced myself to breathe evenly. "We've already broken up. If you don't let go right now, I'll leave. The promise I made—to spend your birthday with you—will be over before it begins."

Silas stilled, and for the first time that night, something dimmed in his eyes. Slowly, reluctantly, he loosened his hold.

His lips curved, but the smile was bitter. "I always thought I was ruthless. Turns out you're the crueler one."

I stepped away from him, putting distance between us as my heart pounded. Meeting his gaze, I made my voice steady. "What we had is finished. I came tonight only because I once promised you I'd celebrate your birthday with you. That's all."

Just that. A final act of closure.

Once, I had pitied him. He had confessed he never celebrated birthdays, not even once. And I... I couldn't imagine such loneliness. Every year, even if my family couldn't all be together, there had been gifts, messages, warmth. Love.

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But Silas Whitmor, for all his power, for all his dominance, had grown up with none of it. So I'd promised myself I would change that.

And now... now I was here to give him one last memory before walking away for good.

"Then at least light the candles with me," he said, moving to the table.

A cake sat waiting there, dark chocolate with pale frosting. He pulled out slender candles, placing them carefully, almost reverently, before striking a lighter.

Flame flickered to life, golden light dancing against his sharp features. For a moment, his eyes softened.

He closed them, clasped his hands, and bowed his head in silence. A wish. A prayer.

When he opened his eyes again, he blew out the flames, smoke curling in the air. His snapped back to me.

"Don't you want to know what I wished for?"

"No matter what you wished, it has nothing to do with me," I said firmly.

gaze

His laugh was low, bitter. He picked up the knife, cut a slice of cake, and slid it onto a plate. "Nothing to do with you? My wish was about you, Freya. I wished for you and me to live safely, year after year. I wished you'd take my hand and stay with me until the end. Do you remember, when you once bought me a birthday gift, wasn't that your wish too?"

My throat tightened, but I shook my head. "That was then. Now, it's impossible—"

"There's nothing impossible!" His voice cut across mine, sharp as a whip. He strode toward me, the plate trembling in his hands, his eyes glowing with a storm-mad intensity. "You said you couldn't trust me because I kept secrets. Then let's start again. I'll earn your trust back, piece by *piece*."

"Silas—"

"I know Eric's disappearance still haunts you," he continued, his voice dropping to a dangerous softness. "Because of my coldness then, your brother is still missing. But I can help you find him. I will help you."

I froze.

His words sank like claws into the hollow place in my chest where Eric's name lived.

"My family's network stretches beyond the Coalition," he pressed on, eyes never leaving mine.

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"The Whitmors have spics in every corner of the world—yes, even in D-country. You can use your pack's ties to the Iron Fang Recon Unit, and I can use mine. Together, we'll find him faster."

He stopped in front of me, close enough that his breath brushed my skin. His hand lifted, holding out the plate, the small piece of cake a fragile peace offering.

"Freya," he whispered, "as long as you stop talking about breaking up, you can have all of me. All my resources. All my strength. Every drop of the Whitmor power. Just don't walk away. Please. Let's not end this."

The room was silent except for the faint hiss of the candles' smoke.

His eyes locked on mine, unblinking, burning with the desperate devotion of a wolf who would rather break the world than lose his mate.

And in that moment, I realized the truth that made my blood run cold—

He wasn't asking me to stay.

He was daring me to try and leave.

A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya's POV

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I shook my head firmly. “Impossible.” My voice sounded steadier than I felt. “Silas, whatever was between us is over. Trust doesn’t come back just because you say it will. I don’t want to spend the rest of my life wondering which words from you are true and which are lies. And every time I see you...” My throat tightened, the sting in my nose sharp enough to make my eyes burn. “Every time I see you, I can’t stop thinking about what I saw in Eric’s video. I keep telling myself it wasn’t your fault, that you had no obligation to save him. But-”

My voice broke.

“But I can’t do it. I can’t stop seeing it.”

His eyes darkened, his tone harsh and desperate. “Then blame me. Hate me if you must, Freya. Tear me apart with every word, but don’t leave me!”

A bitter laugh scraped my throat. “If that’s all we have left, what’s the point of being together? You’re just clinging to me because you can’t handle the idea of losing. Give it time–this bond will wither. And you’ll see it was never as unbreakable as you thought.”

His gaze locked onto mine, sharp as a predator circling prey. “So you’ve already let go, then? You’ve already cast me aside?”

I clenched my fists tight to stop them from trembling, forced my voice into icy calm. “Yes. I’ve let go.”

A shadow passed over his features, thick with storm clouds. “So you’ll meet other men? You’ll let Lana play matchmaker for you, as if anyone she drags into your life could ever stand beside me? If she dares to introduce you to someone, then I’ll make sure he’s destroyed. I’ll destroy every single one–hell, I could even-”

“Silas Whitmor!” My voice cracked like a whip, cutting through his madness. I glared at him, fury shaking through me. “Don’t you dare lay a hand on my friend. Lana was drunk, she didn’t mean it. And I have no interest in meeting anyone new. But if you so much as breathe wrong in her direction-” My voice dropped into a growl, wolf’s edge sharpening every word. “–I will never forgive you.”

He smirked, cruel and unhinged. “Haven’t you already condemned me, Freya? One more crime on my soul, one less chance for forgiveness–what difference does it make?”

My blood chilled. “So you will hurt her?” My voice was cold enough to freeze marrow.

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Instead of answering, he picked up the plate from the table, his hand pushing it toward me. "Eat the cake. It's my birthday cake."

I stared at him, then forced a deep breath and snatched the plate. I shoved a piece into my mouth, swallowed, then shoved the dish back into his hands. "Satisfied?"

"You think that was enough?" His voice dipped low, dangerous. He lowered his head, scooping a smear of cream from the cake with his lips before I could move. Then, like lightning, his hand clamped around my jaw. His mouth crashed down on mine, sealing me in his madness.

I tried to wrench free, fists pounding his chest, but he only crushed me tighter against him, **as** if my blows fueled him. Sweetness turned rancid on my tongue as he forced the cream from his mouth into mine. Chapters first released on

I struck harder, each punch landing with enough force to bruise any man. And yet, he bore it all without a sound.

Until I remembered—the fingers I had already broken, the damage I had already inflicted. Even half-shattered, he clung to me as though pain was nothing compared to losing me.

My strength faltered. My fists slowed. And then... stopped.

The kiss deepened, rough and consuming. His mouth devoured mine, his teeth grazing, his tongue demanding. He drank me in, as though my resistance only proved the tether between us still held.

His voice, hushed and fevered, broke against my ear. "Freya... you stopped fighting. You still love me. You wouldn't hold back if you didn't."

Something inside me snapped. I shoved him off, my voice raw. "Enough! Do you think this is love? Do you think this is what I want?"

His breath came ragged, his chest heaving. His eyes burned with wildfire, wild and unsteady. "Then don't seek another man. If you do—if you let anyone near you—I'll take one for myself. For every man you touch, I'll claim someone else."

The madness in his tone clawed at me. The rumors about the Whitmor bloodline—the whispers of their lunacy—suddenly felt too close to truth. His face was all shadow and fury, like a wolf who had lost his mind.

I wiped my mouth with the back of my hand, lips throbbing with pain, glaring at him. “Your birthday’s over. I ate your damn cake. I’m leaving.”

He wouldn’t accept it. I knew he wouldn’t. But time would dull even Silas Whitmor’s obsession. Someday, he would realize what I already knew—some bonds are meant to break.

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I turned, my boots striking hard against the floor as I stormed to the door.

Behind me, his voice rang, dark as a vow carved in blood.

“Freya—remember my words. I don’t make promises I won’t keep.”

The slam of the door was my only answer.

But it didn’t silence him.

The next morning at the Silverfang Tower offices, Lana leaned close to me, whispering like a conspirator. “So... how did it go last night? Did Silas pull anything? He looked completely unhinged when he showed up at the lounge.”

I forced a small shrug, keeping my voice as neutral as possible. “We went back to his apartment. Shared some cake.”

But the ghost of his kiss clawed at my memory—the iron grip of his arms, the fire of his obsession.

And he had been right about one thing. If I had truly let him go, I would never have stopped striking him. I would have fought until he broke.

The truth was bitter and sharp in

I still loved him.

my chest.

Love was never something you could shed like a cloak. Not when the mate-bond's shadow still lingered in your veins. Not when your wolf still howled for the one you tried to escape.

But knowing I loved him didn't change the truth.

I couldn't be with Silas Whitmor. Not now. Not with the blood between us.

Not with Eric's memory burned into my soul.

A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Freya's POV

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Lana leaned across my desk, her voice low but teasing. "You know, Freya, from the way Silas looked last night, I don't think he has any intention of letting you go. When I joked about introducing you to someone new, the way he stared at me... spirits, I thought he was going to rip my throat out right there."

I sighed, shutting the folder in front of me. "He'll accept it in time. And don't bother with your matchmaking schemes—I have neither the time nor the heart for it."

Lana muttered under her breath, "I doubt I'll get the chance anyway. Kade already warned me this morning—said if I so much as tried to set you up, he'd make me regret it."

Her words caught me off guard. Kade—always protective, always circling. I pushed the thought aside.

"Freya," Lana said softly, "are you really sure you can let this go? Silas isn't Caelum. He's... different. Caelum was a faithless bastard, yes, but that made it easier to burn the bridge. Silas..." She hesitated, then added, "The way he loves you—it's savage. Last night, when you agreed to share that cake, I swear I saw the man crack in half at the thought of you refusing. If you had walked away, he would have shattered."

Her words dug deep. My chest tightened, but I forced myself to keep steady. “When trust is broken, Lana, how can there be any reconciliation? And Silas and I...” I stopped, the name on my tongue sour. “There’s Eric between us. That wound doesn’t heal.”

The realization dawned in her eyes, sharp as a blade. She must have pieced together that something Silas did—or failed to do—had splintered me beyond repair.

I didn’t give her the chance to push further. “Enough about me. What’s going on with Victor Ashford?”

Lana nearly choked on her own breath. “Nothing! Absolutely nothing.”

I arched a brow. “Nothing? Then why was he trailing after you with Kade at the bar?”

you and

Her cheeks flared crimson. “He wanted me to consider giving him another chance. But you know me—I don’t go backward. Once it’s over, it’s over.”

Her words carried conviction, but her scent betrayed a flicker of unease. I knew there was

more.

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And she spilled it soon enough. “Kade left early, but there were still drinks on the table. I wasn’t about to waste good liquor, so Victor and I... we finished them.” She buried her face in her hands. “When I woke up this morning, I was in his bed. His bed, Freya! Saints above, I thought lightning had struck me.”

I bit down on a laugh. “And?”

“And nothing! Our clothes were intact. Nothing happened.” She dropped her hands, looking horrified. “But still—never again. Never will I drink like that again. Especially not with Victor.”

I couldn’t help it—I laughed outright. “Lana, your face is bright red.”

She snapped back to attention, glaring at me. “Mind your own business!”

Before I could tease her further, my WolfComm buzzed. The caller ID flashed across the screen.

Kade.

I answered. “Kade?”

“Freya,” his voice rumbled low, familiar and steady. “Are you free tonight? Last night I barely had a word with you before you left. Join me for dinner. Just the two of us.”

A thousand excuses rose on my tongue, but I swallowed them. I needed to speak with him anyway, about Eric’s case, about the legal routes I hadn’t yet explored. “Fine,” I said. “Tonight.”

“Good. Any place you’d prefer?”

“Somewhere close. I don’t care where.”

“I’ll send you the address,” he promised, and the call ended.

The message came through moments later. The restaurant was near Lana’s company, an easy drive from the Stormveil district.

When evening fell, I slid into my car and drove across the city, the skyline of The Capital blazing against the twilight. The restaurant was quiet, elegant, tucked away from the usual noise. Kade had already arrived, seated with his back to the wall, eyes sharp as a hawk’s.

“Freya,” he greeted, standing as I approached. Always a soldier, always precise.

We sat. He didn’t waste time. “You spent last night with Silas. He didn’t hurt you?”

I gave a small laugh. “You sound exactly like Lana. No, Kade, he didn’t.”

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He hesitated, jaw tight. “Then... you’re truly done with him? With Silas Whitmor?”

“Yes,” I said, the word clipped and final.

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Relief washed over his face, loosening something in his stance. I hadn't realized how tense he'd been until that moment. The thought struck me—had he been waiting for this? Hoping for it?

"Then there's hope," he murmured, almost too softly. His gaze lingered on me, heat burning behind his calm mask. "The past is dead, Freya. What's broken can be replaced. The next man

you down." in your life will be better. He'll never betray you. Never let

I stared down at the menu, his eyes too heavy on me. "Maybe. But if there's one thing I've learned, it's that my luck in love is cursed. Caelum, Silas... both disasters. I'm done chasing bonds. All I want now is to find Eric."

"Do you have a lead?"

"Yes. A fragment, but enough to follow. I need to go to Drenovia. There's someone there who might know where he is."

His brows knit. "Dangerous ground."

"I don't care."

Before he could reply, a voice carried across the dining hall.

"Whitmor Alpha, this way, please!"

The words hit like a blade. My entire body went rigid. Whitmor Alpha.

There was only one man in The Capital who bore that title.

I looked up, heart pounding.

A Warrior Luna's Awakening

Third Person's POV

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Silas strode forward, his presence sharp as a blade slicing through the restaurant's polished calm. The wolves trailing behind him faltered, uncertain, then followed quickly, unwilling to be left behind.

"Well, isn't this a coincidence?" Silas's voice carried across the table, cold and mocking. His gaze pinned Freya like a hawk spotting prey. "You spent last night with me on my birthday, and tonight you're dining with someone else?"

Kade rose at once, stepping between them, shoulders broad, blocking Silas's advance. "Silas, she can be with whoever she wants. That's not for you to decide."

"No right?" Silas's eyes narrowed, his irises flashing with a dangerous gleam that betrayed his wolf simmering beneath the surface.

"You two have already broken up," Kade shot back, his voice taut with restrained fury.

Silas's lips curled into something close to a snarl as his gaze slid past Kade and landed directly on Freya. "Broken up? I never agreed to that."

Behind him, the wolves who had followed stiffened. Their expressions shifted uneasily. His words weren't something they should be hearing—not from the Alpha of the Ironclad Coalition.

There had been rumors, of course—gossip from Ashbourne and whispers carried by couriers—that Silas Whitmor had taken a lover. But few in the Capital truly believed it. After all, Silas was infamous for his coldness, for keeping women and weakness at arm's length.

Kade's jaw tightened. "Whether you agreed or not doesn't matter. Freya wants it ended. That means it's ended."

The tension rippled through the room, thick as smoke.

The wolves at Silas's back shifted uneasily. Sweat beaded on some foreheads. Silas Whitmor was dangerous on his own. But Kade Blackridge—the infamous young wolf of the Capital, known for his rebellious streak and iron fists—was no less formidable. And now the two stood

nose to nose.

Worse still, Silas's supposed mate, the woman at the center of this storm, was the very one Kade openly called his "sister."

7

But Kade was an only son. Where had this sister come from?

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Silas's laughter came sharp, humorless. "So what's your plan? She leaves me, and then she runs into your arms?" His words dripped contempt. "Kade, don't delude yourself."

Kade froze. The barb struck deep. His fists clenched at his sides. He had never confessed. Never dared. Time and circumstance had stolen every chance. And now, with Freya finally freed from Silas, he had thought—perhaps—he could wait for the right moment.

But Silas had ripped that secret from his chest, exposing it raw.

"Silas, don't push this too far!" Kade's fury snapped loose. He swung, his fist aimed straight for Silas's face.

But Silas Whitmor was not a wolf to be caught unaware. He met the strike with his own, bone meeting bone in a thunderclap. In an instant, the two wolves collided—violence spilling into the restaurant.

No one dared interfere. The staff froze. Other diners shrank back. Everyone knew: to step between these two would be suicide.

The clash was brutal. Tables shook. Plates clattered. Their wolves snarled beneath their skin, itching to break free, to tear and rend.

And then—

"Stop!"

Freya surged forward. Her hand struck Kade's arm, knocking his blow off course. In the same motion she spun, placing her back to Kade, her front to Silas. Her palm pressed against Silas's fist, halting him.

"This isn't the place for a fight," she said firmly, voice steady despite the storm swirling around her.

Silas's gaze burned into hers, shadowed by a dangerous flicker of jealousy. "You'd shield him? When he's the one who struck first?"

"He's my friend," Freya replied, unflinching. "Of course I'll protect him. Silas, whatever happens between us, don't drag Kade into it."

"Friend," Silas echoed, lips curling into a cold, mocking smile. He leaned down, closing the space until his breath stirred her hair, his voice pitched so only she could hear. "Then he's only a friend. Remember what I told you last night, Freya. Don't forget it."

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He straightened abruptly, lowering his fist. "If you don't like me fighting, then I won't fight. If you don't want to see me, we'll take some space. But breaking up-" his Alpha's vow carrying a weight like chains-"I will never allow it."

Turning, he barked to his entourage, "We're leaving."

eyes darkened, his

"Yes, Alpha!" They rushed to obey, relief flashing in their eyes as they followed him into the shadows of the hallway.

Freya watched his broad back vanish. Her chest tightened, not with longing but with a heavy, weary resolve. He wouldn't accept it. A clean break was impossible. Perhaps, then, only silence and time could wear him down, cooling the fire until nothing remained.

"Don't worry, Freya." Kade's voice came rough with suppressed emotion. "If Silas dares use force on you, I'll tear him apart myself."

"He won't go that far," she answered quietly. Her gaze hardened. "And even if he tried, I'm not the kind of woman who submits without a fight."

Still, the stares from nearby diners burned like fire. Every ear in the restaurant had caught some fragment of their confrontation. Too many eyes, too many whispers.

"We should leave," she said.

Kade nodded.

They slipped out, the cold night air biting sharper than the tension they had left behind. This time, instead of another glittering restaurant, Kade steered her to a roadside stall, where steam rose from skewers and the smell of roasted meat cut through the chill.

“It reminds me of when we were in the Iron Fang Recon Unit,” Kade said with a half-smile, his tone softer. “On leave days, we’d sneak out for food just like this.”

Freya chuckled, shoulders loosening for the first time that evening. “I never expected you, a pampered heir, to survive the Iron Fang’s training. Let alone enjoy roadside meals.”

“The truth is,” Kade murmured, watching her profile in the glow of the stall’s lantern, “I never expected it either.”

He hadn’t expected to survive. He hadn’t expected to change. And above all, he hadn’t expected to fall for her.

But every chance to tell her slipped through his fingers. Every time he was a step too late.

One step late... always one step late.

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And now, with Silas Whitmor still looming like a shadow, he wondered if he had already lost. for good.

“Don’t take his words to heart,” Freya said suddenly, her tone gentler now.

Kade’s eyes

flicked to hers. “Which words? That I should stop dreaming about being with you?” His lips quirked, bitter. “What if I do take them to heart? What if I care?”

His voice carried a raw honesty, more wolf than man, stripped of every wall he had built around his heart.

The night seemed to still around them, heavy with everything unsaid.