

# The One He Claimed Chapter 111

Chapter 111: Battle Part I

Hunter

The minute the howls of alarm go up, I'm leaping out of bed. I quickly rush back, grabbing Sophie and kissing her hard.

"Stay alive!" I growl, racing for the door. She knows to call Carter and Kayce, so I can focus on fighting.

"You do the same!" She yells as I leap over the banister of the stairwell, barely missing Lucas as the two of us shift on our way to the ground. Shaw and Dario land side by side as everywhere around us men and women are leaping and shifting. From the guest quarters, I see Ezra's wolf, Thorin, and Margot, still in human form running beside him. I'm guessing he told her to stay close.

"WARRIORS TO THE BORDER! IF YOU'RE NOT FIGHTING, GET TO THE SAFE ROOMS. WE ARE UNDER ATTACK! I REPEAT, WE ARE UNDER ATTACK!" I bellow through the mind link, forcing all the links open to wake everyone that has a wolf and get them moving.

"Safe room leads, get to your safe rooms. Start checking your people. Get the pups safe and those doors closed!" I hear Sophie respond in the mind link after me.

As an Alpha, I want to make sure my people are safe, the ones who can't fight, but I know my mate and Kinsley will handle it, so I turn my attention to the battle in front of me. I keep my mind connected to Sophie's, needing to hear if she's in trouble. I know that Lucas is doing the same with Kinsley. We talked about it and between the two of us, if we hear that they are in trouble, one of us will get to them.

I hear the sounds of battle ahead of us and Lucas and I race into the fray, barreling through the warriors, ripping Joshua's pack members off of ours as we go. Joshua is my target. That's who I want because I know that Sophie is his target. He will be Ezra's target too, because of Margot, but I won't leave a life in another's hands, even another Alpha's.

my mate'

"Safe Room One doors closing!" Kinsley announces in the mind link, and I instantly feel relief from some of my warriors. They know that their loved ones in that safe room are now safe.

I'm ripping another wolf off of one of my warriors, when a large wolf barrels into me, knocking me aside. This must be Joshua's Beta, I don't even know his name, nor do I care. He came for me and my pack, so he will die today.

"Safe Room Two doors are closing!" Sophie announces in the mind link.

I keep the announcements in the back of my mind as Shaw focuses our attention on the Beta in front of us. He leaps at us and Shaw dodges quickly, slicing his claws down the Beta's side. However, another wolf comes up behind us, sinking his teeth into our flank. Shaw spins, snapping his teeth into the cheek of the wolf and ripping a chunk of flesh off his face, forcing him to release us.

I feel the Beta swipe at me again from the other side, and Shaw quickly moves back trying to get the two attackers in front of him instead of on either side of him when I feel a third wolf slashing at our backside, raking his claws down our back and the other flank.

"Safe Room Three doors are closing! Last Call! Last Call!" Kinsley yells in the mind link just as Sophie's voice bellows through the mind link.

**"THE PACKHOUSE IS BREACHED THE PACKHOUSE IS BREACHED! PREPARE TO FIGHT!"**

Fury and frustration rage through me knowing that my mate and pup will now have to fight to stay alive. I use the anger to fuel my fighting, pushing the force of my anger into Shaw as he turns, slicing into the third wolf behind us, ripping his throat out.

He spins around quickly, going for the weaker of the two wolves, dodging a swipe from the Beta. He slashes the weaker wolf from shoulder to flank, feeling our claws scrape his ribs as he does. The wolf howls in pain as Shaw turns to face off with the Beta.

Shaw leaps at him, but instead of landing on the Beta, another wolf jumps out of nowhere, tackling him to the ground. This wolf is bigger and smells like Alpha.

Joshua. Finally.

Now I'm facing off with an Alpha and a Beta and the two of them have obviously been fighting together for a long time because they make sure to keep me between them. While Shaw attacks one, the other comes at me, tearing into Shaw's side, his shoulder, his wounded flank. They don't get any deadly hits on us, but they're slowly weakening Shaw faster than he can heal.

Joshua has just leaped at me when Thorin, Ezra's wolf, leaps from behind me, grabbing him by the neck and ripping him away. I turn, focusing my attention back on the Beta

who now backs up, collecting himself and debating on continuing to fight. me or help his Alpha. In his moment of indecision, I leap ready to kill him, but it's at that exact moment that my mate's panicked voice shouts in my head.

"HUNTER!"

Leah POV

I had helped the women and children assigned to safe rooms find their room, making sure that Safe Room One was full and had everyone before the doors closed. Safe Room One has the most pups. It's set up that way so that if they can't make it to Safe Room One, they still have two more to get to.

I had then turned my focus to the others before spotting Brooklyn standing at her door, calmly shouting for her group to get inside. I rushed to her, hugging her as I heard Luna Sophie say that Safe Room Two doors were closing.

"Be safe!" I say to Brooklyn, just as Beta Kinsley comes up.

"Is everyone inside?" she asks. She's breathing heavily but she's not showing any fear. The packhouse is getting quiet as the safe room doors close and the pups are locked away.

"I'm missing three, two pups."

Kinsley announces that Safe Room Three is closing its doors, a moment before Luna Sophie announces the breach to the packhouse. We all hear the windows shattering and the snarls as the attacking wolves race in.

"We're here!" A young mother says, rushing up with a baby and a young pup in her arms. Kinsley quickly ushers them inside before Brooklyn looks at me once more, a pleading look in her eyes to stay alive, before the door closes and I hear the lock click into place.

"LEAH!" Kathleen, my partner calls. I race to her, and we stand together, ready to fight. I wish we'd have been able to practice. more, but Brutus gave me some pointers last night after he'd marked me.

I take a moment to revel in what might have been my last night on this earth. Brutus had made it the most memorable night of my life. He is a gentle and passionate lover, giving me pleasure that I never experienced with Michael. I can still feel the soreness from him being inside me, his size much larger than what I've experienced before, or maybe it was the three times that I experienced it in one night. Either way, I will die a happy woman.

'You're not dying,' he growls in my head. He's been in my head since the moment that the howls had gone up. Neither of us had been able to sleep, so we'd held each other, and Brutus had given me little pointers on where to punch, where to slice with Millie's claws. She isn't strong enough for me to shift yet, but she can extend her claws and Brutus made sure we both knew how to hit hard and puncture lungs.

"You don't have to kill them. Maiming them like that will kill them slowly, but they can't fight if they can't breathe," he said.

As the wolves rush into the packhouse, spreading out, Kathleen and I turn back-to-back. Millie extends her claws, and we prepare to fight.

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 112**

Chapter 112: Battle Part II

Brooklyn

When the call to battle had gone up, I'd been in Caspian's arms, in his bed. We had both leaped out of bed, but he'd grabbed me, told me to be safe and kissed me with much less reserve than he'd ever kissed me before.

"I love you. I want you to know that, just in case..."

I had put my hand on his mouth.

"Tell me after and then we'll talk about you marking me," I had said and watched his eyes widen. He'd taken precious moments to kiss me again, fiercely and possessively before turning, shifting, and racing off to battle.

I'd thought about it while I laid in his arms. I know I still have a lot to get over after what Owen did to me, but he's dead now, and Cas isn't anything like Owen. I deserve to be happy and so does Caspian. We haven't known each other long, but war makes you realize important things, makes you realize what is important. And there are two people in this world I can't live without, my mother and my mate.

I know Brutus will do everything in his power to keep my mother safe, so I have to hope that giving Caspian something to live for will keep him alive as well. That's my hope anyway, as I rush to the packhouse and begin checking off my roster as the people assigned to my safe room enter.

When my mom rushes up, I hug her tightly, telling her I love her just before Beta Kinsley arrives to check on the status of my room. We get the last three people in just after Luna Sophie tells us that the packhouse has been breached.

I look at my mother one last time, hoping that I can convey with my eyes that I love her, and I need her to be alive when I open these doors again.

After I close the doors, I turn around to make sure that everyone is settled. There is muffled crying in the room with young mothers cooing at their pups, trying to help them calm. We can hear the sounds of fighting outside and periodically, we all jerk when we hear the sound of something banging against our safe room door.

I'm not sure how long it's been when we hear the sound of something battering against our door. Some of the people in the room cry out, some begin crying as the sound is repeated over and over. Someone is breaking into our safe room.

I stand, moving in front of everyone. "Stay calm," I say, taking a deep breath like Caspian taught me to do when there's a trauma. 'You can't help someone else if you're panicked, Brooke,' he'd said to me.

Luna Sophie put her faith in me to be the Lead in this room. There will be wolves who need my help when this war is over. I need to stay alive, and I need to protect those in this room who are with me.

I stare at the door as I pull the gun from where I had tucked it in the back of my pants. I hear the gasps of the women behind me, but I stay focused on the door as it begins to give, the screeching sound of claws cutting through steel makes me want to cover my ears.

I quickly look down, making sure my gun is loaded, and that the safety is off before holding it facing down in front of me. I spread my legs apart, steadying myself and taking another deep breath.

When I see the claws puncture through the steel, I raise the gun, ignoring the screams from behind me. All of my attention is on the door and the person or persons who are trying to get inside and kill these people, my pack, my family.

When the steel rips apart, I wait. I remember a calm falling over me when I shot my father. I knew what I was doing was the right thing, I was protecting my mother. And now, I'm protecting my pack.

So, when the steel of the door is pulled open and I see the wolf's face, I don't hesitate, I shoot the gun, the silver bullet hitting him right between his eyes.

The sound ricochets around the room, making my ears ring, making it impossible for me to hear anything. However, the wolf behind the one I shot shifts, looking down at his friend and then at me. I don't need to hear him to know that he just called me a f\*\*g b\*\*h.

"Come at me. I dare you," I snarl at him.

When he takes a step, I don't hesitate to fire again.

My entire focus is on Joshua in this fight. I need him out of Margot's life. I know that if anyone else gets to him, they'll kill him and that may very well kill her.

I found her this morning when the howls went up, telling her to stay by my side in the battle. Reyna isn't at full strength yet, and we didn't have a chance to practice in her wolf form, but she's strong and surprisingly, she does as I ask and stays by my side.

However, when I see Joshua's wolf attacking Hunter, I leap, needing to be the one to take him out. I know Hunter will kill him without a second thought.

When Thorin rips Joshua's wolf off Shaw, he stands, snarling, his head lowered facing off against the other Alpha. I watch as the other wolf's nose twitches, probably smelling Margot's scent on me. Good, now he'll focus on trying to kill me. I may be older than Joshua by a couple of years, but that just means I have more experience.

From somewhere behind me, I hear the howls of new wolves, Carter's pack has arrived. I don't let it distract me, but I see that Joshua makes a m\*\*I note but doesn't seem surprised. I'm guessing that means that we were right, Robin's and Dutton's packs will be attacked too. I hope they're ready.

I leap at Joshua, needing to end this quickly so he doesn't get killed. I refuse to allow Margot to die. Thorin grabs him by the scruff of his neck tossing him aside before leaping on him again. He's fast and quickly moves out the way before Thorin can sink his teeth into his leg.

Thorin spins around snarling viciously as Joshua leaps at us his teeth snapping at our throat. Thorin drops to the ground, letting Joshua leap over us, but lifts his head, finally getting hold of the wolf's back leg, snapping it in two.

He howls in pain before yanking his leg out of Thorin's mouth and turning to face us again. One leg down, three to go. I wasn't joking when I told Margot that I'd remove his arms and legs and keep him alive. I'll put him on a f\*\* IV drip for the rest of his life if that's what it takes to keep her safe.

Now that he's wounded, the rest should be easier. However, he surprises me when he pulls the shift, standing up on one leg and glaring down at me.

"You can't have her. She's mine," he snarls at me.

I shift, standing to face him. "She rejected you because you're a s\*\*t mate and a s\*\*t Alpha."

He laughs. "Killing me will only kill her. I never accepted her rejection," he says smugly.

“I have no intention of killing you. I can make sure that you live a long life as a vegetable in my pack hospital,” I snarl and smile at the shock on his face.

“And you’re so arrogant, that it never occurred to you that I would be the one to kill you,” I hear Margot’s soft say. I’d been so focused on Joshua that I hadn’t seen her come up behind him, and there is so much blood and saliva all around that I couldn’t smell her scent over the fighting.

Her arm is wrapped around Joshua from the back, her claws extending into his throat. He growls in frustration that she has him in a vulnerable position where he can’t move, or he risks death.

“You’re such a f\*\*g b\*\*h! You are nothing. You couldn’t even give me a pup,” he says.

She chuckles, leaning in to get close to his ear. “Oh Joshua. I never gave you a pup because I refused to bring a child into a world where you were their father” she says. I see the same shock on his face that I feel. She kept herself from getting pregnant?

“Goodbye,” she says, but this time, she’s looking at me.

“NO!” I scream and as if in slow motion, I see her claws clench, slicing into Joshua’s throat before ripping it out. He falls aside as Margot screams, clutching her chest with her b\*\*dy hand. I race forward, catching her before she hits the ground.

“I’m sorry,” she says to me, and I can feel her life slipping away.

“No. I’m sorry. I told you I refused to lose another mate in this lifetime, and I meant it. This isn’t how I wanted to mark you. We’ ll figure it out. I promise, we’ll figure it out. I’m sorry,” I say watching her eyes go wide before I pull her head to the side and sink my teeth into her marking spot.

She screams, but I don’t let go, holding her in the middle of a b\*\*dy battlefield, pumping my venom into her body, refusing to let her die.

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 113**

### **Chapter 113: The Packhouse**

Kinsley

It’s quickly apparent that Joshua brought both his and Elias’ pack warriors to this war. The packhouse is quickly swarmed with wolves and men fighting to get to our weakest members. This isn’t just a battle to get Sophie, it’s a battle to decimate our pack, my family.

I know Sophie is worried about the women who aren't fighters who are outside the safe rooms, women like Leah, but we don't have long to worry before we're in the middle of our own battle. I don't know who is outside fighting besides Alpha Joshua, but they sent a Beta and two G\*\*\*s inside to get Sophie.

Our young mothers who are warriors are fantastic, holding their own easily, but those three, in particular, set their sights on Sophie and because I'm with her, me as well. If we could shift, this wouldn't even be a fight, but they must sense that I, too, am pregnant since I'm not shifting and they seem to decide that they don't just want Sophie, but me as well. Like hell am I ever going to let someone take me from my mate or kill my pup.

Sophie's a d\*\*\* good fighter, better than I am, probably because she's an Alpha. As a Beta, I'm a good fighter, a strong fighter, but I'm not as good as she is. However, you come into my house, threaten my family and my pup, I'll go f\*\*g

berserker on your a\*\*

'We both will,' Sybil, my wolf, snarls in my head. 'No one hurts our pup.'

So, Sophie and I stay back-to-back, just like Hunter and Lucas taught us. The G\*\*s are the ones who face off with us and the Beta is working to try and get Sophie. Between the two of us, we're holding our own pretty well. I know I've taken some hits; I can feel the blood dripping down my legs and the G\*\*a in front of me has stayed in wolf form, making it harder for me to fight him. We're all stronger in wolf form.

He's just made a fatal error, and exposed himself too much to me, and I swipe, feeling my claws sink into his soft throat when I feel Sophie being jerked away from me.

I turn, seeing that the Beta was able to grab her, the Ga\*\*a still nipping at her to try and overpower her.

"Sophie!" I scream.

Lucas and I had created a word that if I got into trouble, I was to scream so that he'd know that we needed help.

'FIRE!' I scream in the mind link. No one else may think twice about the call, but Lucas will know. It's not something that would alert the pack during a war but it would tell Lucas that I was in trouble and needed help.

I turn, focusing my attention on the Ga\*\*\*a as the Beta begins dragging Sophie toward the back doors. As I begin fighting with this Ga\*\*a, I see that the safe room doors that are closest to us are being breached. My heart sinks. We're losing. We're going to lose and I'm going to lose everything that I've worked so hard to achieve.

I see some of the warriors realize that Sophie is being dragged off even though she's still fighting against the Beta. None of us -can get to her, myself included since I'm still focused on the G\*\*a in front of me, but my moment of distraction, at looking at the safe room door, costs me. The G\*\*a rakes his claws across my stomach, leaving b\*\*y g\*\*es behind.

"NO!" I scream, just as a shot rings out through the packhouse. The G\*\*a turns, seeing his fellow warrior lying dead on the ground. He shifts, snarling at Brooklyn who is standing in the opening of the breached safe room, the gun in her hand still smoking.

"Come at me. I dare you," she says, her voice steady and confident, the gun in her hand unwavering. When the G\*\* takes a step, she doesn't hesitate to kill him too.

I turn, needing to focus on protecting Sophie, but then I turn back to Brooklyn.

"Protect Sophie!" I say to her. She begins looking around trying to find where she is, and I point. Brooklyn aims her gun, and fires again. She doesn't kill the Beta, but the bullet, the silver bullet, lodges into his shoulder.

"What the f\*\*k!" he roars and just like with me, his moment of distraction is all Sophie needs. Her claws slam into his stomach, slicing him open as she grips his internal o\*\*ns.

"How dare you come into my pack, my home, and try to hurt my family," she snarls. I watch his eyes go wide before she rips his insides out, leaving a trail of blood and guts hanging from her hands. The Beta's mouth opens and closes before he falls to the floor.

At least I think he falls to the floor. I feel my own body jolt, pain shooting up from my knees, as I realize that I just collapsed to the floor, my head becoming light. I wrap my arms around my stomach, needing to protect my pup. I can feel that my stomach is soaked with blood.

From somewhere far away, I hear someone calling to me, but I'm too lightheaded to respond before I collapse into unconsciousness.

Brutus POV

I stayed as close as I could to the packhouse, wanting to be near Leah in case she needed me. She's not a fighter, and she's definitely not a killer. It's why I told her how she could maim these warriors without killing them. I'm not sure she would be able to deliver the killing blow, and I wouldn't want her to. I love her sweet innocence, and I don't want her to lose that because some Alpha decided to be p\*\*d because he was a bad mate, and his Luna left him.

So, I stay close, needing to be here for her.

There are many more fighters attacking us than I expected. I know that Alpha Joshua took over his father-in-law's pack, and I'm guessing he's brought every warrior from both packs with him to attack.

I keep my mind link open with Leah as I begin fighting. I'm a big man, and Argus is a big wolf, so we usually have the upper hand in a fight. I'm not surprised when the attacking warriors begin coming at me two at a time, but that's how Alpha Hunter has always trained me, as if I was an Alpha and would have to fight more than one wolf at a time.

I keep killing, but they just keep coming. I know I'm covered in blood and guts when I hear the sound that makes my heart nearly stop beating. Leah's cry of pain.

With renewed energy, Argus begins slashing through the warriors around us, fighting to get to his mate who needs us. When we finally make our way inside the packhouse, I'm shocked to see how many warriors made it through. Every one of the teams of fighters that are in the packhouse are taking on more than two wolves and when look, I can see that Leah has been backed against a wall by two wolves, her partner dead on the floor.

I have a moment of pride to see how many wolves and men are lying on the floor, dying from punctures to their lungs and throats, just like I taught her. Then, Argus sees red, and leaps at wolves who are attacking our mate. He pulls one away, putting himself between Leah and this wolf. Both wolves turn on me as I'd hoped they would and Argus moves back until Leah grabs his tail, letting us know that she's okay.

They come at him and Argus fights hard, protecting his mate. He's willing to die for her, but these two wolves are nothing.

When the shot rings out in the packhouse, the sound hurts my ears, making Argus shake his head, trying to refocus.

"BROOKLYN!" Leah screams and feel her move away from me.

"Protect Sophie!" I hear Beta Kinsley shout as we push Leah back against the wall. Argus nearly rips one of the wolves in half, terrified that he'll get to Leah, before turning our attention to what's happening in the direction that Beta Kinsley shouted.

I can see that Luna Sophie is being dragged by someone and she's struggling hard, but she's injured and weaker than she usually is.

I'm about to go to her when I hear Leah's shout of warning behind me. The second wolf leaps at me, going for my throat. Argus moves to block, shoving his head down to protect his throat.

"NO!" Leah shouts and just before the wolf snaps his teeth on us, the wolf yelps in pain. At the same moment, a third shot rings out through the packhouse, and I hear Beta

Lucas shout to his mate, snarling viciously as he begins tearing through. attacking wolves to get to her.

I look quickly, seeing Alpha Hunter rushing to Sophie who is staring at a dead warrior at her feet and Beta Lucas who just catches his mate before her head hits the floor. Even from here, I can see that her injuries are serious.

I turn and see my mate, panting, blood covering her hands and body, her claws still embedded in the wolf that she attacked to save my life.

I shift quickly, ripping the head off the wolf who is howling in pain before pulling Leah to me and holding her tightly.

“You’re not dying either,” she says ferociously, as she holds me.

I smile, holding her more tightly.

“No, I’m not,” I tell her before taking her hand and leading her over to where the others are.

Luna Sophie and Hunter stand by and watch as Brooklyn rushes to Beta Kinsley’s side, ordering others to get her what she needs as she quickly begins stitching her up, trying to save her life.

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 114**

### **Chapter 114: Hell’s Angel**

Sophie

I’ve never felt rage, anger, and most of all protectiveness, like I feel right now. These people have come into my pack, my home, and are trying to take my family, my life from me. If I could shift, Hedda would have ripped these a\*\*holes to shreds.

Since I can’t, Kinsley and I have been fighting hard. She’s a good, strong fighter, and a great Beta. We’ve both been fighting the G\*\*as that comes after me, but the Beta is the problem. I’ m so thankful for those couple of sessions where Hunter had the other warriors attack us while we were fighting. If he hadn’t, I’m sure the Beta would have gotten to me by now.

I’m doing well until I feel the bond to one of my pack members, one of the women fighting inside the packhouse, snap. She’s gone and that moment of distraction is all the Beta needs to grab me and begin ripping me away from Kinsley. At the same time, I see that one of the safe rooms is about to be breached and I scream for my mate in the mind link.

“HUNTER!”

I hear Kinsley scream my name, but I’m fighting this a\*\*\*hole who thinks he can drag me to his Alpha, take me away from my Alpha, my mate, so I can be forced into a mate bond with a man I would never choose to be mine. There’s no way I’m letting that happen.

A shot rings out through the packhouse, and I turn briefly to see Brooklyn standing in the opening of the safe room, her smoking gun in hand. She looks like a fierce avenging angel standing there, especially when she challenges the G\*\*\*a to come for her. He makes the mistake of doing it.

The Beta growls, yanking me again to get moving. I slash at him, adding to the multiple g\*s I\*\*e already given him, but it’s the bullet to his shoulder that makes him jerk and finally stop.

He looks at his shoulder, then at Brooklyn as if he can’t believe she shot him. But now it’s my turn to take advantage of his distraction.

Hedda snarls, and with all my remaining strength, I pull my arms back and slam my claws into the Beta’s midsection. I have the satisfaction of watching his eyes go wide in shock as he looks down at me.

“No one will ever take me away from my mate,” I snarl before ripping his insides out. Hot blood splatters all over me, mixing with my own. I’ve sustained several injuries, but none were meant to kill me. Hunter was right, Joshua wanted me for himself.

“KINSLEY!” I hear Lucas shout as he races past me to catch her before her head hits the floor. Her stomach has been ripped open and I see Brooklyn push her way out of the safe room opening and begin shouting orders to those around her so she can begin sewing Kinsley up.

“Women in the packhouse! Protect your Beta! Protect Brooklyn! Protect the breached safe room!” I shout into the room. The fighting is starting to die down, but there are still attacking wolves in here.

Chapter 114: Hell’s Angel

288 Vouchers.

I stand guard in front of Kinsley, shutting out Lucas’ pleas for Kinsley to stay alive. I need to focus on protecting her. I hear a scuffle right outside the packhouse and I stand, ready to fight, my claws extended, my feet spread wide, daring whoever enters to come after one of my family.

Instead of an attacking wolf, it's Shaw, still holding the throat of the wolf he just killed in his mouth. When he sees me, he drops it and shifts, watching me closely I'm not sure what he sees on my face, but through the bond I feel shock, pride, love, and desire.

"Sophie."

"Is it done?" I ask him, my voice coming out in a growl.

He looks down at the eviscerated Beta at my feet.

"Joshua is dead. There's still fighting, but I came when you called," he says, snarling and slicking through an attacking wolf that comes too close to me.

I turn, looking around, all that's left inside are the dead and dying bodies of the attacking pack. "We need to finish this, we need to get these people to the pack hospital," I say, seeing the severe injuries of our pack members.

When I turn back, Hunter's eyes are unfocused. When they refocus, he looks over at Lucas.

"Dr. Caspian is on his way," he says. Lucas nods without turning away from Kinsley.

"Who is able to continue fighting?" I ask loudly to the room.

Several people step up, including Leah and Brutus. All of them stare at me.

"Alpha, do you need me outside?" he asks Hunter.

"No, I'll go back out. You help guard the hospital," he says.

Dr. Caspian come rushing in. "Doctor," I say, stopping him. "You do whatever it takes to save my Beta and her pup," I growl.

Again, I'm not sure what he sees on my face, but he looks at me a moment before nodding and rushing forward.

I make sure that the fighters inside the packhouse are either helping the wounded to the hospital, putting themselves in front of the breached safe room, or are too wounded to fight.

"I need to get back out there. I'll send the other doctors. Brutus, you're in charge of organizing the protection team at the pack hospital until I can get there," Hunter says before turning to me and looking over my body. "How much of this blood is yours?"

"I'm not sure," I tell him honestly.

“I need you to get to the pack hospital too then.”

“Not until it’s done. Until then, I’m here, protecting our pack,” I say fiercely. I have no intention of arguing and Hunter needs to get back outside and end this.

We hear a howl of retreat, both of our heads jerking toward the sound.

“GO!” I shout to Hunter. He quickly pulls me to him and kisses me hard.

288 Vouchers

“Take care of my mate and get your a\*\* to the pack hospital,” he says, before leaping away from me and shifting.

“You take care of my mate too!” I shout, before turning back.

Brutus is already taking charge of getting the warriors set up inside and at the pack hospital. Dr. Caspian has Kinsley on a stretcher of sorts and while they are moving her, Brooklyn is somehow still stitching up her stomach. I can’t believe how much she’s already done in the short time that Hunter was here. Lucas is holding Kinsley’s hand and continuing to talk to her while they move her.

I turn, seeing several of my she-wolves, some omegas, some young warriors, standing and looking at me. “You’re all staying?” ask, looking them over quickly. “None of you is too injured to continue?”

“No offense, Luna, but you look worse than all of us put together,” one of the women says, her lips twitching.

I look down and realize that I must be a gruesome sight. There doesn’t seem to be a part of me that isn’t covered in blood. I know it’s on my face and I can feel it coating my hair.

Hunter comes rushing back inside with Penny beside him. “Sophie, I need you outside. Penny can take over in here,” he

says.

Penny rushes in, looking me over as everyone else has. I really must look frightful.

Hunter shifts and Shaw nudges me to get on his back. I do and he quickly begins running out into the pack lands. Blood and dead bodies are littering our pack lands. There are still small pockets of fighting going on, but how our fighters are outnumbering the attackers and mostly, warriors who are able are starting to help those who are seriously injured get to the pack hospital.

Because most of the fighting is done, I realize what the problem is before we get to him. Thorin is standing protectively over an unconscious Margot. There are a group of warriors loosely surrounding him as he snarls and snaps at them.

'Hunter, is she dead?' I ask, worried that Ezra and his wolf will have gone feral.

'I don't know. He won't let anyone near him, not even me. I'm hoping that he'll let you check her, even though you look like something the devil dragged up from hell,' he says.

I carefully slide off of Shaw's back, glancing at Margot, then focusing on Thorin.

I take several slow steps toward him. "Thorin, it's me, Luna Sophie. Let me check Margot. If she's alive, she needs to be treated and monitored in the pack hospital. You've done an excellent job of protecting her, now let us save her."

He lifts his nose in the air and sniffs. He growls again, but it's less ferocious.

I take another couple of steps forward, lifting my hand in a gesture of peace, letting him sniff me.

"I know I smell like war and blood that isn't mine, but underneath, it's me. Let me through Thorin. Your actions may be killing her," I say, gently.

That more than anything seems to impact him. He steps back and I carefully walk to Margot, keeping Thorin in my peripheral vision. I have no doubt that Hunter will attack him if he tries to attack me, but I'd rather not sustain any more injuries today. Hedda is already working hard to heal me and keep our pup safe.

As I get closer, I hear her heartbeat. It's faint, but it's there. I put my fingers to her throat and feel the blood, shallowly flowing through her body.

"She's alive," I announce, turning to Thorin. "Give Ezra control, Thorin. We can't help her if you won't let anyone near her. Give him control," I say, forcefully.

He growls at me, standing his ground and in his eyes, I can see that he's fighting Ezra, his need to protect this mate

overpowering all sense.

Hedda pushes forward, and we put all of our Alpha command into our words. "Give Ezra control, NOW, Thorin."

I'm not sure Hedda is strong enough to have pushed the shift, but between her and Ezra fighting to regain control, Thorin falls to the ground, and I hear the bones begin

snapping as Ezra shifts back. I turn, quickly looking down at Margot as Ezra rushes over, picking her up in his arms.

“Thank you, Luna.”

“Get to the hospital, quickly,” I tell him.

He turns and begins running off, just as Hunter scoops me up into his arms.

“Well done, Luna. Time for you to get to the pack hospital too. I need to wash you off and see how much of this is yours and I want Dr. Caspian to listen to our pup and make sure he’s safe as well.

“He is,” I say, knowing Hedda is taking care of our pup. I lay my head against Hunter’s shoulder. The adrenaline of the fight and the day is catching up to me and feel exhausted.

“I’ve got you my love,” he says softly. I know he’s still talking to and listening in to multiple conversations around the pack, making sure that everyone is okay and that the fighting is over, but he makes sure that I know that he’s here to watch over me. I snuggle into his chest. I know there is so much work that still needs to be done, and I should be helping, but I’m exhausted and I can’t keep my eyes open.

I’m asleep before he gets me to the pack hospital.

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 115**

Chapter 115: Pride

Hunter

When I had rushed to the packhouse, ripping wolves to shreds to get to my mate, I hadn’t been expecting the sight in front of me when I walked in. Even Shaw had been shocked.

Sophie had looked like a hell’s angel. She had been staring at what was left of the door that I rushed through, covered in blood from head to toe, she had been panting heavily, her chest moving exaggeratedly with her breaths and her claws had been out, ready for battle. But that wasn’t what had stopped me in my tracks, or Shaw in his. It was the look in her eye. It was the look of an Alpha willing to do whatever it took to protect their pack. I had never been prouder and more turned on by my mate than I was at that moment. I knew she had to be afraid, I could feel it in her, but she pushed it aside to be the \*F\*king phenomenal woman that she is.

I was worried because I could smell her blood, but with all the blood on her, I couldn’t tell how much was hers, and obviously, neither could she. However, once I pulled her to

help me with Thorin and Margot, I knew she was still bleeding, and I could feel her energy seeping out of her quickly.

When I get to the pack hospital, my warriors are pouring in with various levels of injuries. They all stop when I come in with an unconscious Sophie, worried about their Luna. In truth, she Nooks dead because she has so much blood on her.

Brooklyn rushes over as the nurses continue to triage my pack members, watching me as they do.

“Alpha?” she asks, careful about approaching me in case Sophie is dead. They should know, but in the chaos of the post war pain, checking in with their mates, and the overwhelming scent of blood and war, I realize they aren’t sure if she’s alive.

“Brooklyn, I need to get Sophie washed off. Not all of this blood is hers, but Shaw can smell that she’s still bleeding. I think it’s from the wound on her thigh.”

“Follow me,” she says, and turns, walking quickly into another hallway and taking me a room lined with showers. She turns one on and I don’t wait for it to get warm. I walk under the cold spray, letting it jolt my fatigued mind awake, and I hold Sophie while Brooklyn grabs washcloths, towels, and soap.

“How’s Kinsley?” I ask when she returns and begins washing the blood and guts off of Sophie.

“She’s in surgery. She lost a lot of blood, but her pup is alive. The g\*\*es didn’t rupture her uterus.”

“Thank the goddess. How’s Lucas?”

“Worried, but he’s holding it together,” she says, deciding to just rip Sophie’s clothes off of her so we can see her injuries.

Getting the clothes off helps and we can see that Sophie did a great job of protecting her stomach or Hedda has already healed the injures. When she’s finally clean, we see that it’s her thigh that is still bleeding and she has another wound on her arm that isn’t healing either.

“Hedda must be as exhausted as Sophie if she’s not healing her,” I say.

“Shaw is as well, Alpha. You have your own wound that isn’t healing,” she says, pointing at my thigh and butt cheek where one of my attackers had raked their claws down Shaw’s back and flank. He’d been busy healing the wounds from Joshua and his Beta, but this wolf’s wounds hadn’t been as severe at the time.

“I can stitch you both up and you can leave our Luna here. We’ll look after her,” Brooklyn says.

“Stitch her up first,” I say, connecting with my wolf.

‘Shaw, are you with me buddy?’

‘I’m here, but I am weak. We took a lot of hits today.’

‘I’ll have Brooklyn stitch me up, you rest buddy. You did great today.’

‘Our mate is one f\*\*g s\*y Alpha wolf, isn’t she?’ he purrs proudly.

‘That she is,’ I say, looking down at my mate proudly as I follow Brooklyn to a room. A nurse joins us in the room.

Brooklyn quickly begins stitching Sophie’s wound, giving me something to put pressure on my own wound, while the other nurse begins h\*\*ng Sophie up to an IV, and a heart monitor for her and the baby. When she turns it on, I can hear both hearts beating loud and strong.

“Your pup seems to be doing just fine, Alpha, but we’ll have one of the doctors look her over as soon as they’re out of surgery.”

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“Thank you,” I say. When Brooklyn’s done with Sophie, she turns to me, but I stop her.

“Can you stitch me up out there? need to check on the pack.”

“Sure thing, Alpha,” she says. I kiss Sophie, leaning over to put my lips to her ear. “You rest, I’ll be back. I’m so proud of you my strong Luna, so f\*\*king proud to be your mate.”

Then I turn and follow Brooklyn back out to the main waiting room area. The first person I see is Lucas pacing back and forth.

“Lucas!” I say, getting his attention. The others in the room look up at my sharp tone, then look at their Beta.

He strides over to me, and I can see the torment in his eyes.

“Brooklyn says that Kinsley is doing okay, and your pup is safe,” I say, making sure he heard them!

He nods, running his fingers through his hair. "She's still in surgery. Why is she still in surgery?"

"She lost a lot of blood Beta. Sybil may have gone quiet, and Dr. Caspian was ordered by our Luna to make sure that both she and your pup survive. I know he's just making sure that he follows that command," Brooklyn says calmly before looking up at me. "All done, Alpha."

I frown, looking down. "Geez, Brooklyn. I can see why my warriors adore you. I didn't even feel that."

I turn back to Lucas "Stay as long as you need to. Let me know if anything changes. Do me a favor, start taking inventory of our injured while you're waiting. It will give you something to do and make the time go by faster," I tell him.

He nods. "How is our Luna?"

"Resting. She lost a lot of blood too, but hers and our pup's heartbeats are strong."

"Good, that's good," he says.

"They were amazing," one of my female warriors says. She's one of the young mothers who was in the packhouse, and I realize that my warriors pushed her to the front of the line to get stitched up. "It was truly inspirational to see how they fought and protected each other. They had a Beta and two G\*\*as after them, but they still kept tabs on the safe rooms and on us. It made me even prouder to be a part of this pack," she says.

Around the waiting room, several other women echo this woman's sentiments, making me smile. Da\*\*n I love my mate.

"Those of you who are healthy enough to continue, get stitched up and get pack to the packhouse. We have a lot of pups who will need to be comforted and a lot of individuals from the other pack that will need reassurance that all is well. Your Luna and Beta females are both out of commission, so I'm asking you, as my warriors and my pack to help support our frightened pack members and our pups. I'll have Penny begin working with the omegas to get some food going so we can all eat as I'm sure everyone is as hungry as I am," I say to the room before heading back to the packhouse.

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 116**

Chapter 116: Aftermath

Hunter

When I get back to the packhouse, I see that Penny has done a great job of taking control and starting to get things cleaned up. Warriors are dragging the dead out of the

packhouse, and all three safe rooms are open. Pups are crying, asking for their parents, but she's put them in a relatively quiet, war free area.

"Penny, what do you need from me?" I ask her walking up.

"Alpha," she says, looking around "I think I'm good here. How are our Luna and Beta Kinsley doing?"

"Sophie is fine, she's just exhausted but she's resting in the pack hospital. Kinsley is still in surgery, but Brooklyn said that The baby is safe, and she's just lost a lot of blood. Lucas is taking an inventory at the hospital of our warriors who are too severely injured to work and those that will be back more quickly. He'll be staying in the hospital until Kinsley is out of surgery, maybe longer

"Understood. Several warriors have come in asking me what to do with the dead outside," she says, still looking around and silently answering questions that others are asking, pointing in the direction someone needs to go or where to put something. "I'll told them to make a pile of the other pack's dead. I didn't think you'd care about being respectful of them since they attacked us. For our, dead, what few I've heard that we have, I've asked them to lay beside the packhouse for now. Warriors have already taken the mates of our dead to the pack hospital."

"How many?" I ask, looking around. I don't hear any keening sounds of someone who has lost their mate.

"Five that I'm aware of," she says, turning to look at me. "Which is extraordinary considering how many attacked us and how much time we fought alone until Alpha Carter's and Alpha Kayce's packs arrived to help. It's a testament to you and our Luna and what a strong pack we have, Alpha."

I nod. She's right and I'm proud of our pack and what they accomplished today.

"Do know how many pups lost both parents?" I ask.

"To my knowledge, none. However, we do have some pups whose parents are either dead and the other, or in some instances, both parents are in serious condition at the pack hospital."

"Direct the warriors who are working outside to me. I'll go talk to the pups, then head outside. I see you set them up away from all of this," I say.

"Yes, they became even more terrified when we opened the doors and they saw the main room, especially those whose parents aren't here to console them."

"I'll go talk to the pups first. Oh, and Penny?"

“Yes, Alpha?”

“How long before you turn eighteen?”

“A couple of months, Alpha.”

“Let’s talk soon, then.”

She smiles, looking excited. “Yes, Alpha.”

I turn and head to where I can hear pups crying and asking for their parents. There are several men and women here, consoling their own or others’ pups. When I walk up to them, they all get quiet, sniffing softly as they look at me.

I crouch down, speaking more to the pups than the adults. “I know all of you are scared and many of you don’t know where your parents are. I want you all to know that, as your Alpha, I’m telling you that you are okay, and you are safe. We have a lot of work to do and some of your parents are in the pack hospital being seen for their injuries. Just because they aren’t here, it doesn’t mean that they gone. You are not alone. The pack will make sure you have food, a place to sleep, and someone to look out for you until your parents are able to come for you. That’s what packs do. We look out for each other, and this pack is a very strong, very loving family who takes care of each other.”

I push my Alpha aura out, letting them feel their safety through my strength, pushing love and comfort out to all of them.

“What can we do, Alpha. Some of us have wolves, we’re just still young,” one of my warrior’s sons asks. He’s probably in his early

teens.

“And I can help too,” a daughter of a warrior says, standing next to the first pup.

‘Penny, can you come here a moment?’ I ask in the mind link before answering the pups.

“We need all the help we can get right now. Many of our pack members are injured and waiting to be seen or stitched up by Brooklyn or another nurse, so there is a lot of work that needs to

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## Chapter 116 Aftermath

be done.”

“Alpha?” Penny says, coming to stand behind me. Her voice is soft and when I turn, she’s smiling at the pups, helping to calm them.

“Penny, we have some older pups here that would like to help. Do we have something they can do to help you?” I ask her, seeing the pups looking at her, their eyes entreating her to give them a job.

“Are you willing to help make food? To pass out water to those who are helping to clean up and can’t stop right now?” she asks them.

They nod and several others stand, saying they can help too.

“Then, you report to Penny for now. You do what she says, and you don’t complain.”

“Yes, Alpha!”

When they walk off with Penny, I turn back to the adults. Most of them came from Owen’s old pack. “Do you need anything? I’ m asking you to stay and look after the pups while the warriors and I get this packhouse cleaned out and dead outside buried.”

“We’ll stay, Alpha. We’ll protect the pups and make sure they get fed,” one woman says, and the others nod.

“Thank you. If you need anything, let Penny know. She’s in charge of the packhouse for the moment.”

“Are your Luna and Beta female alright?” another woman asks.

“Beta Kinsley is still in surgery. My mate is weak from blood

loss, but she and my pup are do

we

i stand, looking around again and seeing that Penny has

everything well in hand before i step outside to take care of the next problem.

“Alphat How is our Luna?” the warriors begin asking as soon as they see me.

After letting them know about Sophie and Kinsley, we begin the job of burying the dead who aren’t ours off of our parklands and creating pyres for those who are

I find Kayce and thank him for coming

“No problem. I’ve spoken to Robin. He was attacked, just as we expected,”

“NIKKI?”

“Safe. Although she forgot to mention to Robin that she was pregnant and when the battle came, she was too far along to shift. I wouldn’t want to be on the receiving end of that anger.”

“Who attacked them? Alaric?” I ask.

“No, his Beta, Camden, the one who wants her as his mate, led that attack,” he says, sighing and gesturing for Carter’s Lead Warrior to come over. “But, we have a problem.”

The warrior comes over, looking haggard, “What happened. Are you injured?” I ask him, reaching out to put my hand on his shoulder. He looks like he’s about to fall to his knees.

“H\*\*, Alpha, Well, not terribly injured. It’s just...” he stops, looking up at Kayce,

I look at Kayce, trying to figure out what’s going on

“We were right about Aiden attacking Dutton to get to the twins. What we didn’t take into consideration is that Alaric would use that opportunity to try and take over Carter’s pack.”

I snarl, ready to go and fight to regain Carter’s pack now.

Kayce holds up his hands for me to wait. “Dutton and his pack pushed him back after defeating Aiden’s pack. The coward retreated quickly from what I understand. But Hunter, Alaric got to Alpha Carter. We all know he should have retired by now and he can’t without an heir...”

He cuts off as his phone begins to vibrate, and a moment later, multiple wolves around me lift their heads to the sky and begin a mournful cry.

He looks at the caller ID and turns the phone. Dutton’s name is on the screen. He answers putting the phone on speaker, but I already know what he’s going to say.

“Dutton, I’m here with Hunter,” Kayce answers.

“From the howls I hear in the background, I’m guessing you already know. Alpha Carter is dead.”

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 117**

## Chapter 117: Grief

Sophie

I come awake slowly, unsure of where I am or why I'm stiff and sore. I frown, where's my mate. He always wakes me up in the morning, rubbing his hands on me, sliding inside me. Where is he? And I why am I sore.

My hands move to my stomach. Our baby is safe, but the motion has my stiff arms twitching.

'The war,' Hedda says in my head, the fatigue in her voice matching the fatigue I feel in my body.

The war! I shoot up in bed, looking around.

"Easy, baby. I was going to get in the bed with you, but I didn't want to hurt your stitches," Hunter says from beside me.

"I'll take a little discomfort to wake up in your arms. I don't like waking up without you," I say, carefully scooting over and tapping the bed beside me.

He crawls onto the bed, kicking off his shoes and lays on his side facing me. I do the same, careful of the tubes and monitors connected to me. I lay facing him before I curl up against him, breathing in his pine scent. His strong arms wrap around me, and I feel safe again.

I open my mind to my mate, and I feel the turmoil in his.

"Talk to me, my love. How bad is it?" I ask him, kissing his chest and wrapping an arm around him.

Instead of answering, he leans down and kisses the top of my head.

"That bad, huh?" I ask, fear slowly working its way into my body. It's not like Hunter to keep things from me. If he is, it's because he's afraid of how I'll respond.

I begin to rub my hands over Hunter's body, realizing that he, too, is still healing. That makes me realize that I haven't been out too long, so whatever he's feeling is still raw for him too.

"Kinsley?" I ask, starting with what I think could be the reason he's so upset.

"She's safe. She and her pup are alive and getting healthy. Dr. Caspian said that it will take her body a while to recover. We think that Sybil has gone silent, using all her strength to protect the pup when Kinsley was slashed in the stomach."

“How is Lucas handling it?” I ask, still stroking my mate’s side and back. He keeps kissing me, holding me more tightly against him, as if he feels like I’m precious and fragile and that he’s lucky I’m alive. Maybe that’s what I’m feeling from him, the aftermath of the fear of losing me and our pup.

“Lucas is doing okay, but like me, he’s here tonight and I expect he’ll remain here until Kinsley wakes up.”

I think about who else might be causing these feelings inside

Hunter.

“What about Margot?” I ask, and he sighs.

“Margot...well, let’s just say that’s going to become a problem, but not for us. She and Ezra will have to figure that out.”

“Figure what out?” I ask him.

He leans in and kisses the top of my head. I think I feel a soft chuckle from his body.

“You know how Margot insisted that she was going to die on the battlefield? How if me or someone else didn’t kill Joshua, that she would?” he asks.

“Yes.”

“And Ezra was having none of it. I understand that, because no matter what you said, there was no way I would have ever let you die on a battlefield if I could help it.”

“So, what happened?” I ask, pulling my head back to look at him.

“Margot killed Joshua and then, when their mate bond began to kill her, Ezra marked her.”

“That’s why Thorin was so crazy when we went out there?”

“Yep, Ezra had marked her and I don’t know if it’s because of the bond or because of his own willpower and stubbornness, but Margot is still alive. Like Kinsley though, she’s still unconscious.”

I curl up against my mate, feeling the heaviness of whatever is bothering him weighing on him again.

“How many did we lose?” I ask.

“Five on the battlefield. Two mates so far.”

“Seven? That’s incredible, Hunter I mean, I don’t ever want to lose a pack member, but...”

“I know. We’re not out of the woods yet. We still have multiple warriors who are injured in the hospital, but it’s a testament to how strong our pack is and how well we work together.”

“It’s a testament to you as their Alpha,” I say to him. “You are their leader. You have made them stronger.”

“WE have done that, Soph. You and me together. The pack wasn’t this strong before I found you.”

I hold my mate for a few more minutes, feeling the sadness in him. I know whatever it is that he needs to tell me, it won’t be good.

“Just tell me,” I whisper.

His arms wrap around me more tightly, and on the monitor, I can hear my heart rate increasing as I brace myself.

“Alpha Alaric attacked your father’s pack while Alpha Aiden was attacking Dutton’s. He got to your father, Sophie. Dutton came and fought him off, but the injuries were too severe. He didn’t make it.”

My hands fist into Hunter’s shirt, holding him to me. I feel like I can’t breathe, my heart feels like it’s breaking. Hard, wracking sobs take my body as tears stream down my face. Hunter holds me tightly against him and it feels like the only thing holding me together at this moment is him.

I think about my father and my life, what a good man, a good mate, a good Alpha, and most of all to me, a good father he

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was.

“Why?” I cry. We weren’t friendly with Alaric or his father, but we’d never attacked each other’s packs.

“Kayce and I think that it was an opportunistic move that Alaric made to try and increase the size of his pack. If Aiden hadn’t turned tail and run giving Dutton a chance to intervene, he might have succeeded.”

I’m afraid to ask, terrified to know, but I have to.

“My mother?”

Hunter doesn't answer me immediately, so I know the answer before he does. I begin keening and sobbing even harder.

“She loved your father. She didn't last two hours before she followed him to the Moon Goddess' realm,” he says, and I hear his own voice choked up with tears.

He holds me while I cry, murmuring soft, soothing words into my ear.

When I finally calm down enough to talk, I look up at him briefly before tucking my face against his chest again.

“What about the pack members?” I ask, my voice scratchy with my tears.

“Right now, Dutton has his Beta in your parents' pack while your father's Beta grieves to help guard it from another attack by Alaric. However, Dutton ripped Alaric up pretty good, but rather than chase after him, he tried to save your father. So, we're not expecting Alaric to try and take over the pack again, at least not any time soon. I'm so sorry, Soph

I nod, glad that the pack is safe. “Amelia?”

“I called Calvin to make sure he knew what had happened. That was before we got the news of your mother. That's when I came here to be with you. I'm not sure if Calvin told Amelia yet or how she's doing with the news. I told him we'd call after you woke up and recovered,”

We lay in silence for a long time, Hunter just holding me, stroking my back, arms, and hair, kissing me periodically or tightening his arms around me, just to let me know he's here.

When I finally feel calm, I pull back and look up at my mate, His eyes are red-rimmed, and I know that he's struggling with the loss of a good Alpha and Luna as much as I'm struggling with the loss of my parents,

“I want him dead, Hunter, Promise me that we will kill him for what he did to my parents,” I snarl, the raspiness of my voice only making my request sound more threatening,

“We?” he asks, looking at me thoughtfully.

“Yes, we, I want to be the one who strikes the killing blow,” I say, meaning every word,

“I promise you, Sophie. We will kill Alaric for what he did, and you will deliver the killing blow,”

Two days after Sophie woke up, we went to her parents' pack. It took a lot of planning on my part, since I still have a lot of warriors out of commission and Kinsley, while awake, is still in the hospital. We were right that her wolf, Sybil, had gone silent. But we expect her back once Kinsley regains her strength. The most important thing is that both Kinsley and her pup are alive and well.

Once she was awake, I knew I could count on Lucas to manage the pack when Sophie and I left. Ezra is still here, waiting for Margot to wake. At first, I thought he'd remain in the pack and could assist Lucas if something happened, but he let me know that he wanted to pay his respects to an Alpha that he admired. I was a bit surprised when Kayce, Robin, and Dutton all said the same.

So, today, Sophie and I are heading to her parents' pack to lay them to rest. I know the pack is in mourning. I've been in contact with Dutton multiple times a day to make sure they are safe during this time. I feel a sense of responsibility for the pack since these pack members were Sophie's family for most of her life.

I've also been in contact with Alpha Calvin and while he wanted to keep Amelia at home in their pack, she had insisted on being at her parents' funeral. I'm not sure if Amelia is more delicate than Sophie, or if Calvin doesn't recognize the strength of his

Que me buteven with everything that has happened, it would

Per ve xxxred to me to try and keep Sophie from being there when they lay her parents to rest.

Tod have Dr. Caspian look over Sophie and our pup before she let the hospital. Hedda did a great job of protecting our pup, as and Sophie. My mate never ceases to amaze me. She's 80 strong in so many ways. So often she gives me credit for things, such as our pack being stronger and able to fight together in the war, but really; it's her. She's the one that has brought everyone together like they are now. I'm just the lucky man who gets to bask in her love.

And hold her together when she's at risk of falling apart, like now,' Shaw says quietly in my mind. He hates seeing Sophie like this as much as I do. I know Hedda is also grieving and both Shaw and I feel that too. The last couple of nights, we've woken to Sophie crying softly in our arms. I've held her and calmed her, soothing her back to sleep, but the overwhelming grief that I feel though the bond is non-stop. That, more than anything, is what makes me determined to keep my promise to her. We will kill Alaric for what he did. I thought he was smart enough to know he shouldn't attack Carter's pack, but obviously, he's not.

We drove today, since Sophie can't shift and when we arrive at the gates of Carter's pack, we can see, feel, and hear the grief of the pack. Around the pack lands, wolves are crying, howling their pain at the loss of their Alpha and Luna. The guards at the gate all have red-rimmed eyes and look like they haven't slept in days. They probably haven't.

Rather than letting me drive through, Sophie gets out of the car and walks to the guard who stopped us. Without a word, she wraps her arms around the big man, and he breaks down into tears, holding on to her as if she's a lifeline.

I step out of the car with Ezra, who rode with us, and we put our hands on the shoulders of other guards who come over to hug Sophie, helping to ground them in their grief.

"We loved your parents, Luna. They were good people. They deserved better than this," the first guard says, wiping his eyes.

Sophie has tears in her eyes, but she doesn't let them fall. Instead, she lets her anger at Alaric burn them off as she responds.

"And Alpha Alaric will die for what he did. You have my word and the word of my mate. This act of aggression will not go unpunished," she says fiercely.

They look from her to me. I nod, agreeing with what she said, and I see them settle.

"Thank you, Luna. But you're pregnant. You should be careful," the guard says to her. He's old enough to be her father, and I'm guessing she's grown up with him around the pack.

"My mate will do the fighting, and I will do the killing," she says, her voice broaching no argument.

I wrap my arm around my mate's waist and kiss the top of her head. "We should go, Soph. There are going to be others here who need to see you."

"If you need anything at all, Luna, or you, Alpha, please let us know."

"How is Beta Miles doing" I ask about Dutton's Beta.

"He's been great," the guard says, and the others nod in agreement.

"Good. If you need anything, please don't hesitate to ask either myself or my mate," I say to them.

"Thank you, Alpha."

We drive to the packhouse and as soon as we step out, Beta Miles and Beta Matthews, Carter's Beta, step out to greet us.

Once again, Sophie walks right up to her father's Beta and wraps her arms around him. I watch his body jerk as he tries to hold his grief in. Miles and I stand by, letting the two grieve together. A few moments later, Beta Caroline, Matthew's mate walks out and almost as one, Sophie and Matthew pull her into their hug.

"We have a room for you, Alpha. We weren't sure if they would want it or not, but Luna's old room is available. We were planning the same for Luna Amelia and Alpha Calvin," Beta Miles says to me quietly.

"I'm sure it will be fine," I say.

"I'll help you with your bags," he says and by the time we've returned, the three have pulled away from each other, tears running down the Betas' cheeks.

It continues this way from the moment we walk into the packhouse. Every few steps, Sophie stops to hold someone, listening to how much they loved her parents, and murmuring words of encouragement and of her plans for revenge.

When Calvin and Amelia arrive, she and Sophie hug for a very long time, then the two of them begin going around the pack and giving love and support to their parents' pack members.

As Calvin, Ezra, and I help the pack prepare the pyres for their Alpha and Luna, I watch the sisters consoling the pack members and I realize that these two, for all their similarities, are very different. Amelia is gentle and caring, soothing the pack members with warm, kind words, whereas Sophie is strong and loving, soothing the pack members with words of revenge and retribution. I'm not sure Amelia would have ever asked to give the killing blow, it's not her style. But my mate? Oh yeah, my mate is fierce. No one hurts those she loves and gets away with it.

When the other Alphas arrive, Calvin, Ezra, and I greet them, letting the pack continue to prepare for this evening. I'm surprised when every one of their Lunas arrives with them, but I probably shouldn't be. Sophie has made an impact on all of their lives and each one of them considers her their friend.

Dinner is a quiet, muted affair and even the pack's pups seem to realize the impact of what is happening tonight. When it's time, we walk outside as one. I take Sophie's hand and together, Calvin and I walk the sisters up to the stage that has been set up between the two pyres. It's Sophie who steps up to the podium, addressing the pack.

"My friends and family, today is a terrible day, maybe the worst day of my life and based on the conversations that Amelia and I have had with all of you today, one of the worst of yours as well. Our parents were good people, and I feel the love that you have for

them in your words, in your tears, and in our shared grief. My father loved all of you as if you were his family, his pups. And my mother, who was always so strong, would not have wanted to live without him. They started their relationship in much the same way as every other ranked member from their generation and even the beginning of this one. However, over time, they found love, compassion, and respect for each other. I don't know what I'm going to do..."

When Sophie's voice breaks, I step up behind her, wrapping my arms around her waist and pushing my strength into her, holding her while she regains herself.

"I don't know what I'm going to do now when I have a question for my mother about being a Luna or a question for my father about how to be a good Alpha to my pack. I don't know how to tell my son how amazing his grandparents were because no words will ever be enough for him to understand what great people they were. I guess now, I will strive to use everything that they've taught me, to live in a way that would make them proud, and to become an even better person because they raised me to be the best that I could be. That is the legacy that they leave behind. Amelia and I will always strive to be the best that we can be for our packs, letting their legacy live through us," she says, reaching out a hand to Amelia who steps up to hold on tightly. She nods but doesn't say anything as tears streak down her face.

Sophie asks anyone who would like to say a few words to come up. Nearly every person in the pack, and all of the Alphas in attendance, come up to give their respects to Alpha Carter and Luna Amy.

It's close to midnight when the last person says their final goodbye and Calvin and I light the torches handing them to Sophie and Amelia. They separate, each going to a separate pyre, Sophie to Alpha Carter's and Amelia to Luna Amy's. They turn and look at each other, before laying the torches on the pyres and lighting them up.

I stand with Sophie, my arms wrapped tightly around her as one by one, the pack members return to their rooms to grieve, as Calvin and Amelia leave the stage and walk inside, and then finally, as the other Alphas and Lunas make their way inside.

When it's just the two of us, she turns in my arms, pressing her face against my chest. "I can't believe they're gone," she whispers tearfully.

Since there are no words, I hold my mate until the fire burns down to embers and when she says she's ready, I pick her up in my arms and I carry her to her old room, laying her down in her old bed before curling up around her and holding her tightly while she cries.

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 118**

The One He Betrayed Chapter 2: Luna June

Ezra

Tonight has been a somber event, more heartbreaking than I had expected. Maybe it's because I'm not sure that my pack would grieve this much for me if I were to pass, or maybe it's because my mate is lying unconscious in Hunter's pack hospital that I'm feeling so wrung out emotionally.

After the pyres are lit, everyone stands quietly for a long time, lost in their own thoughts, possibly their own prayers to the Moon Goddess to watch over their Alpha and Luna who they adored.

When I see Luna June turn to go inside, I follow her. Now may not be the best time to speak to my mate's mother, but I need to talk to her before I leave.

"Luna June," I call out softly to her.

She turns and I can see that she, too, has tears running down her face.

"Hello, Alpha Ezra. I was hoping I could speak to you. I wanted to find out how my daughter is doing, and I didn't want to bother Luna Sophie."

"Margot is what I wanted to speak with you about," I tell her. "Is there someplace we can speak privately?"

"Yes," she says and leads me to what I would call a tearoom. I've never seen one before, but this space was definitely created by Luna Amy and most likely a place where the she-wolves could congregate to talk and be together.

"Luna Amy and I would sit in here every day. She was so kind to me," she says, grabbing some tissues and taking a seat. "I know it's not the same for her as it was for me, but I had hoped that she would survive the loss of her mate. I think I feel lonelier now that I did with Elias died."

I give her a few moments to collect herself. When she looks at me, her gaze is direct and full of intelligence. I'm guessing she has an idea of why I wanted to speak to her.

"Luna, I'm assuming you've heard what happened to Alpha Joshua?"

"Yes. Luna Amy told me that Margot killed her mate."

"Ex-mate," I say instinctively and her eyes narrow on me.

"Well, yes, he's dead now, so I guess he is her ex-mate."

"She rejected him and even though he didn't accept the rejection..."

“My daughter told me about you, Alpha. I am aware that the two of you recognized each other as mates. I have to say, I’m surprised, for several reasons. First, she’d barely rejected her mate a week before she found you. But also, to have been mated to another Alpha. I wouldn’t have thought that would be possible, especially if she was weakened by her rejection.”

I huff a laugh. “Your daughter is anything but weak, Luna. She’s probably the most stubborn woman I’ve ever met.”

“You don’t say that as if it bothers you.”

“Well, I’d be lying if I said it didn’t aggravate the crap out of me sometimes, but for the most part, I like her tenacity, her perseverance, and her focus. I just wish those things aligned with the things I want for her as well.”

“And what do you want for my daughter, Alpha Ezra?”

“I want her to give me a chance, Luna. I want her to see that we can have something better than either of us had before. I just want the opportunity to prove to her that I can be the mate she deserves, and she can have the life she dreamed of when she was younger.”

“And what do you know of her dreams, Alpha?”

“Not enough, I’ll give you that. But I can’t help her achieve those dreams if she won’t give me a chance.”

“And you want me to convince her to give you that chance?” she asks.

“Yes and no. As her only surviving parent, I feel the need to tell you something, something that I did and that your daughter will not like. But I also want to ask you to come see her. She’s still unconscious and I think that having you there would help her.”

“What did you do?” she asks, her tears have dried up and rather than a woman grieving for her friend sitting in front of me, I now have a mother ready to defend her pup.

“I wasn’t willing to lose another mate in this lifetime, Luna. I told her that, but she didn’t listen. She was so insistent that she was going to die, but I couldn’t allow it. I was going to maim Joshua, make it so that he could spend the rest of his miserable life in my cells but keep her alive. But as I said your daughter is stubborn, and she had set her mind to killing him I was there! saw her heard her say goodbye to me, and I couldn’t allow it

I look down, remembering the moment, my hands moving as if holding her again. I held her in my arms, and I watched the light in her eyes start to dim and I knew I couldn’t let her go. So... I marked her without her consent and most likely against her will I’m willing to work through that, but I couldn’t let her die I couldn’t I say looking back

up and pleading with Luna June to understand that I did what I had to do to save her daughter's life

It would seem that my daughter isn't the only stubborn one, Abha" she says, sighing. She tucks her hair behind her ear in a way I've seen Margot do hundreds of times. When she looks back at me she looks resigned.

"You've made a mess of things, Alona, I'm not going to lie. But you did save my daughter's life and in this one thing, I agree with you. She shouldn't die because that asshole of a mate died. He never treated her well, not that I expected him to. What do you plan to do when Margot wakes up?"

"I want to bring her to my pack, let her see what her life could be like, give her time to get to know me, and learn to trust me and hopefully, one day, mark me too."

"And what if that day never comes, Alpha?"

I shrug. Then I'm no worse off than I am now. But I'll know that this time, I did everything I could to protect and love my mate. If she doesn't want me after seeing what our life could be like, then I have to accept that. Somehow."

Luna June reaches out and touches my arm. "You still struggle with losing Diana, don't you?" she asks me gently.

It's so unexpected and I'm so raw already from everything going on, that my throat closes, and unshed tears burn my eyes. "I regret not being a better mate to her every day. Every. Single. Day. The Moon Goddess has seen fit to give me a second chance to prove that I can be a good mate, better than I was before, and I intend to take that opportunity. But only if your daughter will let me."

She gives me a soft smile and sits back. "I won't try to sway my daughter one way or the other, Alpha Ezra. That is for the two of you to decide together. But I will return with you and if Margot agrees to go to your pack, I will join you, if I'm invited as well."

"I would love that, and it would give Margot someone that she trusts and knows in the pack. I think that might help her."

Now, Luna June does smile. "You're right about one thing, Alpha. My daughter is stubborn. You have your work cut out for you."

"I'm an Alpha, Luna June, and I love nothing more than a challenge. But this isn't a game to me. I'm here to win, to win my mate, win my life back, and win the future that I also used to dream about. I hope that one day, your daughter will give herself to me and I will be able to revel in the sweet taste of her willing submission."

"We shall see, Alpha. We shall see."

# The One He Claimed Chapter 119

## The One He Betrayed Chapter 3: Calvin's Proposition

Hunter

Over breakfast the morning after laying Alpha Carter and Luna Amy to rest, I watch the Lunas embrace and circle Sophie with their love and friendship. They include Amelia in the circle, but you can see that it's not the same. Sophie has built strong, lasting relationships with these women and Amelia has not.

"We need to talk about this pack, Hunter," Calvin begins as we and the other Alphas keep watch over our mates.

"It's not just this pack," I sigh, turning my attention to the men. "We have Owen's pack now which is leaderless. I don't know about you two, but I can't continue to house that number of people without significantly growing the size of my packhouse or adding houses on my pack lands," I say to Robin and Kayce.

"Same, and while I'm willing to do that, most of the displaced pack members want to return to the pack that has been their home their entire life," Robin says.

"And based on your conversation with your mate and what she's been telling everyone here, I'm guessing we'll have another leaderless pack once you take Alaric out as well," Ezra says.

"What about Camden?" I ask, looking at Robin.

"He'll be eliminated as soon as I hunt down the coward," he growls.

The One He Betrayed Chapter 3: Calvin's Proposition

"I'm pretty sure he's running Alaric's pack right now. I could be wrong, but I know Alaric isn't in any shape to be running his pack," Dutton says.

"And Koden is still out there, somewhere. He's also going to be a problem," I say.

"As is Aiden," Dutton agrees.

"Owen's pack is the easiest to take over, but none of us live right next to his pack. Who do we get to take that on?" Calvin asks.

I look at the others before sighing. "I think we have to open it up."

"What do you mean?" Kayce asks.

“Give anyone who wants an opportunity to become the leader of that pack the option to fight for it. It’s how it used to be done. Alphas would fight for their position in the packs. All of us have strong Betas and most of you have strong Gammas. We could give them the chance to earn their right to become an Alpha,” I say.

“You’re suggesting that we give up our Betas?” Calvin asks, appalled.

“Give up’ isn’t the term I would use, Calvin. Why wouldn’t you want to give your Beta a chance to rise up. Opportunities like this rarely come along and while I would hate to lose my Beta, I’d be thrilled to have another Alpha in our alliance, making it even stronger than it already is,” Robin says.

Calvin looks at me. “Do you really think that Sophie and Amelia are going to agree to this? Amelia is technically the heir to this pack as the oldest child of Alpha Carter and Luna Amy.”

“Are YOU going to run this pack?” Ezra asks him. “Are you planning to leave your mate here to run this pack while you go back to yours? Of all of us, your pack is the farthest away. How would that even work?”

I’ll admit, I’m a bit disappointed in Calvin’s thought process. He’s thinking like the other Alphas, about gaining power, but not thinking through the ramifications. I’m much closer than he is, and I have no intention of trying to figure out how to manage my pack and this one.

Calvin scrubs his hands over his face. “I’m just saying, they should first right of refusal.”

I turn and look at my mate. ‘Soph, can you come here please? I have a question for you,’ I say in the mind link.

Her head snaps up and she looks at her friends before walking over. I tap my thigh and she curls up in my lap. I wrap my arms around her, kissing her forehead. I hate the sadness I still feel inside her and I know it will be there for a long time to come.

“We’re talking about what to do with your parents’ pack. Would you or Amelia want to take the Alpha role for this pack?” I ask her. I’m not sure what Amelia would say, but I know my mate.

She sits up and looks at me. “How would that work? Our pack is too far away for us to effectively run this pack. Until Alaric is destroyed and even after that, this pack needs on-site leadership, as does our pack. We can’t split our time between two packs, Hunter. We would be doing a disservice to both of them. Even if we had strong Betas and Gammas in both packs, it would put a strain on us and we’re going to have a pup in a few months. I have no intention of staying in one pack while you go manage the other. No, we need to come up with a better idea, something that will work for the pack members here as well,” she says, turning to the other Alphas. “Don’t you agree?”

“Some do, not all,” I say, pulling her back against me.

“Who doesn’t agree?” she asks, sitting up again. My mate is about to go all Alpha on Calvin. I hope he’s ready for it.

“Your sister is in line to take over this pack now that your parents are gone, Luna Sophie.”

“Amelia? She never wanted to be an Alpha. Why would you even think that?” Sophie asks, as if he should know his mate better than she does, which he should.

“It’s not a matter of what she wants, it’s about duty,” he says.

“Duty to whom, Alpha? To you? Because it certainly wouldn’t be dutiful to this pack. Are you planning to leave her here to run things while you go home? Are you going to send her to your pack while you stay here and manage this one? To keep them safe from Alaric? That makes no sense and if you don’t know it, I can tell you that Amelia wouldn’t want that.”

“I’m pretty sure I know my mate better than you do,” he says, condescendingly.

“It doesn’t appear so,” my mate says angrily.

“This all seems very tense,” Nikki says, walking over and curling up in Robin’s lap.

“Very tense,” Allison agrees, sitting on Kayce’s lap.

Dutton somehow manages to have both twins sit in his lap, one arm around each of them. Amelia, however, is still the odd one out. Rather than sitting on Calvin’s lap like the others have done, she sits beside him. He takes her hand, but it’s a stark contrast between them and the rest of us.

“What’s all this about, Calvin?” Amelia asks, seeing my mate and hers squaring off.

“If nothing else, our son should be heir to this pack,” Calvin says, still focused on Sophie.

“Luna Amelia,” I say, interrupting whatever Sophie was about to spit out to Calvin. I can feel her anger at Calvin, and I don’t blame her. “We’re discussing what should happen with your parents’ pack.”

Amelia looks at Calvin and frowns. “You want me to take over as Alpha?” she asks him, catching up quickly.

Sophie sits back and I wrap my arms around her, placing my hands on her growing stomach. She puts her hands over mine, intertwining them.

“It’s your right. Alpha Hunter suggested opening up the packs to allow others to come in and take them over. For a pack like Owen’s, I would agree, but you are the rightful heir to this pack, Amelia. You should take your place here, as Alpha.”

She looks at him like he’s lost his mind. “How would that even work?”

“We’d have to figure that out, Ame, but it’s your right. Our son’s right.”

“What son? Your first-born son? Your second? Because right now, all you have is a future daughter,” Sophie says snarkily.

‘Easy, baby. Let Amelia take on her mate. I think both of them have forgotten that she’s an Alpha,’ I say in the mind link.

“Sophie’s right, Calvin. They’re closer to having an heir for this pack than we are. And what are you even suggesting? That I live here, and you come for conjugal visits from time to time? That I stay here with our pups, and when we someday have a son, I send him to live with you and keep the others here with me to raise? Is that what you want? To live separate lives?”

“Amelia, you’re getting yourself worked up…”

“You’re damn right I am, Calvin,” she says, standing up. “I’ve never wanted to be an Alpha. I certainly never wanted to be mated to a man that didn’t even want to live in the same pack as me,” she says, tears filling her eyes. My mate sits up, wanting to comfort her sister.

Amelia turns to look at Sophie, holding up her hand. “I think I need to be alone right now. My mate has given me much to think about,” she says, saying mate as if it’s distasteful.

“Amelia, we can talk about this,” Calvin says, standing.

“It sounds like you’ve already made the decision, Calvin, just like always. What more is there to discuss?” she asks, spinning on her heels and walking away before he can answer.

Calvin watches her walk away, looking stunned. When he finally looks around, it’s as if he remembers that he has an audience.

“Please excuse me,” he says, walking away, and not in the direction that his mate went.

“You’d think after how hard he’s worked to gain her trust, that he wouldn’t do something this stupid to betray it again,” Nikki says thoughtfully.

"I don't think he's looking at it from her perspective, my mate. He's looking at the situation as an Alpha, not as Amelia's mate. He knew he hadn't put everything together yet, but I can't think of a way that this would work, Sophie and Hunter came to the same conclusion almost immediately and they aren't fighting to keep this pack for one of their pups either."

Nikki turns to look at Robin. "It's a good thing you listen to me," she says.

"WHEN you tell me something," he clarifies, putting his hands on her still-flat stomach, "I listen. You wouldn't let me get away with not listening to you."

"True and I already apologized about not telling you I was pregnant."

"I'd be more inclined to accept your apology if I thought you meant it," he growls, leaning forward and nipping at her lip.

"So, what do we do now? About this pack? I'm assuming Dutton would like his Beta back," Ezra says.

"I would, especially considering that Aiden is still out there and may come for my mates again," Dutton says, as the twins snuggle closer to him. He purrs helping to settle them.

"Ic.

send Lucas. I don't have a Gamma yet and most of my wa he he hard whalent antian"  
dogie Set

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 120**

Tonight has been a somber event, more heartbreaking than I had expected. Maybe it's because I'm not sure that my pack would grieve this much for me if I were to pass, or maybe it's because my mate is lying unconscious in Hunter's pack hospital that I'm feeling so wrung out emotionally.

After the pyres are lit, everyone stands quietly for a long time, lost in their own thoughts, possibly their own prayers to the Moon Goddess to watch over their Alpha and Luna who they adored.

When I see Luna June turn to go inside, I follow her. Now may not be the best time to speak to my mate's mother, but I need to talk to her before I leave.

"Luna June," I call out softly to her.

She turns and I can see that she, too, has tears running down her face.

“Hello, Alpha Ezra. I was hoping I could speak to you. I wanted to find out how my daughter is doing, and I didn’t want to bother Luna Sophie.”

“Margot is what I wanted to speak with you about,” I tell her. “Is there someplace we can speak privately?”

“Yes,” she says and leads me to what I would call a tearoom. I’ve never seen one before, but this space was definitely created by Luna Amy and most likely a place where the she-wolves could congregate to talk and be together.

“Luna Amy and I would sit in here every day. She was so kind to me,” she says, grabbing some tissues and taking a seat. “I know it’s not the same for her as it was for me, but I had hoped that she would survive the loss of her mate. I think I feel lonelier now that I did with Elias died.”

I give her a few moments to collect herself. When she looks at me, her gaze is direct and full of intelligence. I’m guessing she has an idea of why I wanted to speak to her.

“Luna, I’m assuming you’ve heard what happened to Alpha Joshua?”

“Yes. Luna Amy told me that Margot killed her mate.”

“Ex-mate,” I say instinctively and her eyes narrow on me.

“Well, yes, he’s dead now, so I guess he is her ex-mate.”

“She rejected him and even though he didn’t accept the rejection…”

“My daughter told me about you, Alpha. I am aware that the two of you recognized each other as mates. I have to say, I’m surprised, for several reasons. First, she’d barely rejected her mate a week before she found you. But also, to have been mated to another Alpha. I wouldn’t have thought that would be possible, especially if she was weakened by her rejection.”

I huff a laugh. “Your daughter is anything but weak, Luna. She’s probably the most stubborn woman I’ve ever met.”

“You don’t say that as if it bothers you.”

“Well, I’d be lying if I said it didn’t aggravate the crap out of me sometimes, but for the most part, I like her tenacity, her perseverance, and her focus. I just wish those things aligned with the things I want for her as well.”

“And what do you want for my daughter, Alpha Ezra?”

"I want her to give me a chance, Luna. I want her to see that we can have something better than either of us had before. I just want the opportunity to prove to her that I can be the mate she deserves, and she can have the life she dreamed of when she was younger."

"And what do you know of her dreams, Alpha?"

"Not enough, I'll give you that. But I can't help her achieve those dreams if she won't give me a chance."

"And you want me to convince her to give you that chance?" she asks.

"Yes and no. As her only surviving parent, I feel the need to tell you something, something that I did and that your daughter will not like. But I also want to ask you to come see her. She's still unconscious and I think that having you there would help her."

"What did you do?" she asks, her tears have dried up and rather than a woman grieving for her friend sitting in front of me, I now have a mother ready to defend her pup.

"I wasn't willing to lose another mate in this lifetime, Luna. I told her that, but she didn't listen. She was so insistent that she was going to die, but I couldn't allow it. I was going to maim Joshua, make it so that he could spend the rest of his miserable life in my cells but keep her alive. But as I said your daughter is stubborn, and she had set her mind to killing him I was there! saw her heard her say goodbye to me, and I couldn't allow it

I look down, remembering the moment, my hands moving as if holding her again. I held her in my arms, and I watched the light in her eyes start to dim and I knew I couldn't let her go. So... I marked her without her consent and most likely against her will I'm willing to work through that, but I couldn't let her die I couldn't I say looking back up and pleading with Luna June to understand that I did what I had to do to save her daughter's life

It would seem that my daughter isn't the only stubborn one, Abha" she says, sighing. She tucks her hair behind her ear in a way I've seen Margot do hundreds of times. When she looks back at me she looks resigned.

"You've made a mess of things, Alona, I'm not going to lie. But you did save my daughter's life and in this one thing, I agree with you. She shouldn't die because that asshole of a mate died. He never treated her well, not that I expected him to. What do you plan to do when Margot wakes up?"

"I want to bring her to my pack, let her see what her life could be like, give her time to get to know me, and learn to trust me and hopefully, one day, mark me too."

"And what if that day never comes, Alpha?"

I shrug. Then I'm no worse off than I am now. But I'll know that this time, I did everything I could to protect and love my mate. If she doesn't want me after seeing what our life could be like, then I have to accept that. Somehow."

Luna June reaches out and touches my arm. "You still struggle with losing Diana, don't you?" she asks me gently.

It's so unexpected and I'm so raw already from everything going on, that my throat closes, and unshed tears burn my eyes. "I regret not being a better mate to her every day. Every. Single. Day. The Moon Goddess has seen fit to give me a second chance to prove that I can be a good mate, better than I was before, and I intend to take that opportunity. But only if your daughter will let me."

She gives me a soft smile and sits back. "I won't try to sway my daughter one way or the other, Alpha Ezra. That is for the two of you to decide together. But I will return with you and if Margot agrees to go to your pack, I will join you, if I'm invited as well."

"I would love that, and it would give Margot someone that she trusts and knows in the pack. I think that might help her."

Now, Luna June does smile. "You're right about one thing, Alpha. My daughter is stubborn. You have your work cut out for you."

"I'm an Alpha, Luna June, and I love nothing more than a challenge. But this isn't a game to me. I'm here to win, to win my mate, win my life back, and win the future that I also used to dream about. I hope that one day, your daughter will give herself to me and I will be able to revel in the sweet taste of her willing submission."

"We shall see, Alpha. We shall see."