

# The One He Claimed Chapter 51

## Chapter 51: Kayce

Sophie

As the food is brought in, the omegas look at a loss for what to do with the two plates of food for me and Hunter.

"You can set them both here," I tell them. Now that I'm in Hunter's lap, I'm comfortable and want to stay. "If that's okay with you," I say to him.

"Is it okay if my mate wants to continue touching me? No question. I'll always be okay with that," he says, leaning forward just to the point where our lips would touch, once again giving me the opportunity to close the distance between us. I do, without hesitation. This time, I linger a little longer, knowing that he's letting me drive how long and how deep our kisses get.

"They're always like this?" I hear Robin ask.

"Still mild," Letti says.

"Yeah, you should see them in training," Allison says. "I'm super curious about that wager."

"That wager is between me and my mate," I say, pulling back. but staying close enough that I can still feel Hunter's breath on my lips, our eyes locked on each other.

"Yeah, it is. But it's a good one," he says.

"Yeah, it is," I repeat his words making him chuckle before pecking my lips. "Eat, you're still too thin."

"Are we invited to join your sparring class tomorrow?" Kayce asks, he looks at Hunter, but I notice he's making sure Allison has everything she needs before starting on his food.

"Oh, I need a knife," she says.

"Here, take mine," he says Instantly, handing his to her. I see their fingers touch, watching both of their bodies respond. I look at my mate, smiling a knowing smile. The mate bond is something else.

Hunter gives Kayce his knife and mind link the omegas that we need another one.

"You are absolutely invited, and I hope you will attend. Alpha Carter loaned us some of his warriors until we can fill the void of the ones that left our pack," Hunter says, making Kayce and Robin look at each other.

"Perhaps you'd better continue your story while we eat," Kayce suggests, still making sure that Allison is comfortable. He'd make a good mate, but he'd make a better mate if he marked and mated her privately.

Hunter tells them about our return, his statement that he has no plan to claim me publicly and anyone not in agreement could leave.

"How many left?" Robin asks.

"About 50. My G\*\*a was removed forcibly and then a mix of warriors and omegas."

"So, what's your plan to fortify your borders if you lost warriors and you're anticipating an attack."

"Us," Nikki say's before Hunter can answer. "The three of us and anyone else who comes along. We'll fight to maintain our freedom and no offense, but once my wolf heals me, I'm worth three to four warriors. Allison's a beast in a fight and worth at least three warriors and Letti's right up there too. It won't take too many ranked she-wolves, literally fighting for our lives, to make Alpha Hunter's patrols fortified and safe."

"You're that good, huh?" Kayce asks Allison.

"I can hold my own," she says, her chin lifting slightly.

her

"She battled my Beta this morning and he was singing praises to me afterward," Hunter says, making Allison smile and blush.

"Would you battle with me tomorrow?" Kayce asks her.

"Do you think you can handle losing to a Beta, Alpha?" she asks, taunting him. For the first time since he's arrived, he smiles widely.

"I'll try to keep up," he says, and both turn back to their meals, smiling.

"Anyway, back to Carter's warriors, I have them leading my warriors, training us on their techniques, giving them some new methods for fighting, hoping to give us another edge. If you decide to stay more than one night, which you're welcome to do, perhaps you'd consider running a class and teaching my warriors some of your techniques," Hunter says.

He kisses my arm and looks up at me. I can tell he's pleased with the amount of food I'm eating. I think Kinsley was right. I just needed more activity in my life to get my appetite going and since Hunter and I have that wager, I'm getting lots of exercise at night as well as during training

After dinner, I stand and help the omegas clear the platen before turning back to our guests, "I've set up a social gathering for you to interact with our pack this evening. Nothing formal, just casual. Talk to our pack members, ask them what they're seeing with the Alpha and Luna. I can tell you that Hunter and I both feel their happiness with bond, I can tell you that they see the stark difference between our bond and the bond our Betas have which followed the laws. Talk to our pack members, talk to Allison and Letti, and even Nikki, although she's spent most of her time in the hospital unfortunately. Hear from them what they are seeing. I'd wager most of them will tell you the ones who left were fools, but that remains to be seen," I tell them.

"I'm going to go to my room to change. Will you be at the gathering, Allison?" Kayce asks.

"I will."

"Good, I'll find you," he says, turning to walk out. "Uh, I don't want to sound possessive, but my wolf won't like it if I find you in another man's arms when I return."

Allison puts her hand on Kayce's arm and her wolf pushes forward. "Rodion, you have nothing to worry about."

Kayce's hand covers hers and he growls low. "Good."

"How about you, little Alpha, and you little G\*\*a. Are the two of you going to join us?"

"You know we have names, right?"

"Sure do, little Alpha. So, will I see you out there?"

Nikki steps up into his face. "You sure will, big Alpha," she says, making Robin laugh. He seems to be the more easy going of the two Alphas, but he also seems to like Nikki's spirit a lot.

"I'll have someone show you to your rooms then," I say and call one of the omegas to lead them off. I'm just about ready to go change myself when I get an alert from the border patrols.

'Luna, we have two more she-wolves here, asking for refuge.'

I look at Hunter, making sure he got the message too.

“I’ll take Nikki. You entertain our guests,” I tell him.

“Where are you taking me?” she asks.

“The border. We have two new she-wolves who are requesting sanctuary and I’d like your support in getting them to agree to come in.”

‘Uh, Luna, I didn’t realize it at first, but these are two she-wolves who used to be part of our pack. They’ve returned asking for sanctuary. One is injured,’ the guard says to me.

“Scratch that, Nikki. These are returning wolves,” I say then turn to Hunter.

“I know, I’m coming with you.”

We race to the border, finding Leah and her daughter, Brooklyn.

I could smell the blood before I could see her.

“What happened?” I ask as Hunter scoops the nearly unconscious Brooklyn into his arms.

I told Michael we shouldn’t leave I told him,” Leah s\*\*\*bs. “He claimed her publicly, then said she wasn’t strong enough and threw her aside.”

“Who?” Hunter growls, but I’m pretty sure I already know the answer.

“Alpha Owen.”

Allison POV

I feel like a horde of butterflies have just taken up residence in my stomach. While Alpha Kayce is changing, I run to the bathroom in my room and check my hair, making sure I look okay. I don’t have many clothes, so I may as well wear what I have on already. At least I wore a dress.

When I step out, Nikki and Letti are there. “I wasn’t sure you were going to go to the party,” Letti says.

“I just…” I blow out a huff of air. “I had no idea how strong the pull of the mate bond is. It’s so powerful. I wouldn’t have believed it if I hadn’t felt it for myself,” I stop and look at them. “It makes what’s happening so much worse. I think I understand now why Luna Sophie wants to touch Alpha Hunter so much. It’s so hard not to, like your skin is uncomfortable until you feel their touch then everything feels right. It’s so strange.”

“What are you going to do?” Nikki asks me.

"I honestly don't know. Take it one step at a time. He listened, over dinner. They both did, so I have hope that maybe...I don't know, maybe he'll agree, and I can have something like what Alpha Hunter and Luna Sophie have."

"That would be wonderful, but you need to be careful. Follow your heart, but don't let it rule your mind. Don't let him put you in a situation you aren't prepared for or don't want, okay?" Nikkil says.

"And we're here for you, no matter what," Letti says.

"Thank you both, so much," I say.

We walk downstairs together, and I look around, not seeing Alpha Kayce. I lift my nose in the air and just catch his scent of mulled wine, the warm scent of red wine, oranges, c\*on, a\*\*nd cloves making my mouth water, just as I feel heat at my back.

"Looking for someone?" he asks in my ear. His hands are on my hips, not holding me, but very clearly letting me know he's here and most likely staking a claim on me.

I yip, jumping as I turn and inadvertently falling into him. My hands instinctively go to his chest to catch myself and he takes advantage by sliding his hands around my waist.

"I was looking for you," I say, mesmerized by his amber eyes. They shine brighter when his wolf is at the surface like he is now, almost changing to a light citrine color, yet they still have flecks of green and brown in them.

"Good answer," he says, leaning in and running his nose over mine. "I can already tell that tonight is going to be difficult."

"Why is that?"

"Because I want to mark you, and I know I can't."

I feel disappointment flow through me, and I push away from him.

"Because you can't publicly claim me in Alpha Hunter's pack?" I ask and even I can hear the hurt in my voice.

He grabs my hips, pulling my body against his again. "No. Because I can't go into the Committee of Alphas with your mark. on my neck. If I do, I'll be as much on trial as Hunter is and therefore, I'll be unable to vote and support him and therefore, you."

"You're going to support us?" I ask, shocked that he's agreeing so quickly.

He looks around and seeing that we're in a very public area, he takes my hand and leads us to the edge of the party.

“Let me ask you something. If I told you I was willing to claim you privately, would you accept me as your mate?”

“I...I don't really know anything about you, other than Alpha Hunter and Luna Sophie trust you.”

“But let's say we met today, and there was no risk of me claiming you publicly, would you come to my room tonight? Would you let me mark and mate you and make you mine forever?”

I want to say no. I want to say that I should know more about him, but the mate bond is so strong, the pull to him is almost overwhelming.

I would trust the Moon Goddess I say, making him smile.

Then trust the Moon Goddess and trust me. I'd like to spend tonight with you. If you agree, I'll ask Hunter if I can stay until the Committee meeting. I'd like to spend that time with you. But I don't want to mark you, because I can't accept your mark until the Committee meeting is done. Do you understand? It would put all the risk of this bond on you. I don't want to do that to you,” he says, his knuckles stroking my cheek.

His touch is the most incredible feeling I've ever had, like my skin is waking up and for the first time my nerve endings are coming to life so they can feel more of his touch.

“F\*\*k, you smell good,” he says, leaning in and kissing the side of my mouth. “I want to kiss you. Please tell me I can kiss you.

I nod, feeling intoxicated and unable to speak. His warm lips cover mine, soft and gentle, teasing me into my first kiss. His tongue slides over my lips and I gasp, allowing him the entrance he was asking for. He tilts his head to the side, taking the kiss deeper and I wrap my arms around him, clinging to his shirt as my body awakens with a need and desire I've never felt before.

“Will you spend the night with me?” he asks. “I swear, we can talk, or we can do whatever you want. I won't do anything you don't agree to. Please, I just want to get to know you, learn about your life, explore your body, if you'll let me, and while I can't leave a true mark on your neck, if you'll allow it, I'll leave a temporary one here, so everyone knows you're mine,” he says, stroking my marking spot and making my entire body shiver.

“Will you give me tonight?” he asks me.

“Yes,” I breathe softly and that's all the acceptance he needs to lead me back to his room.

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 52**

## Chapter 52: Brooklyn

Hunter

It takes all my training as an Alpha to hold my s\*\*t together while I race Brooklyn to the pack hospital. All I really want to do is run to Alpha Owen's pack and tear him to shreds.

'Incoming emergency to the pack hospital,' I mind link to my pack members.

I hear several pack members respond and I know they'll be there waiting for me when I arrive.

I turn, seeing that Leah is struggling to keep up. "Sophie, can you carry her?" I ask, not wanting to leave her behind, but knowing that Brooklyn has lost too much blood in the time it's taken Leah to get here. I can't slow down to let her keep up.

"I've got her, go!" Sophie says.

I begin running faster, feeling Brooklyn's blood soaking my arms. and the clothes I'm wearing.

"Hang on, Brooklyn. You're safe now. I won't let anyone hurt you ever again. You're back in Alpha Hunter's pack. You're safe," I say to her, not knowing if she can hear me or if it will help, but hopefully if it comes down to her living or dying based on her own will power, she'll know that she's safe and she'll choose to live.

As I rush up to the pack hospital, the doors are opened, and a gurney is waiting.

"What happened?" Dr. Felicity asks.

"I don't have all the details, but from what I understand she was claimed publicly and then cast aside," I say to the doctor, who looks up at me in horror before turning back to Brooklyn. She pulls the shirt away from her neck and there is the mark, she's been claimed.

"But she's not a ranked she-wolf!" Dr. Felicity says.

I feel my claws come out and I have to step back as the nurses in the room yelp with the strength of my anger.

"Hunter!" Sophie says, pushing into the room and past the nurses. "Go talk to Leah, find out what happened. I'll stay with -Brooklyn."

"Our guests..."

"I've already told Kinsley and Lucas what's happening. They'll take care of it."

I can't seem to tear my eyes away from this young girl, covered in blood, with a f\*\*ki\*\*g mark on her neck.

"Hunter!" Sophie says, putting her hands on my face and pulling

attention to her. "Breathe with me, Hunter. I need you to calm down. Our staff can't help her if they're trying to work around your aura, baby. Breathe," she says taking two deep breaths. I follow her lead until I can pull my aura back.

"Come with me," she says, taking my hand like I'm a child and leading me from the room. "I'll be right back" she tells the doctor.

When I get out of the room, I pull Sophie to me, holding her against me and breathing in her orchid scent. She holds me until I finally feel calm and when pull away, I'm ready.

"Leah's over there. I'll be back as soon as I know something," she says, lifting up on her toes and kissing me deeply.

"You can do this, Alpha, I have faith in you."

She starts to step away, but I grab her wrist gently. "Thank you."

"That's what mates do. We help each other, right?"

I smile at my mate. "Yeah, that's right."

I release her arm and turn to see Leah, her arms wrapped around herself as she sits in a chair, rocking herself and sobbing. I take one more deep breath to make sure I'm calm, and I head over to her, sitting beside her and putting my arm around her.

She turns her head and begins sobbing on my shoulder. I hold her until she starts to calm down and when she pulls away, I get up and find some tissues for her. I squat down in front of her and hand her the tissues, waiting until she wipes her face and blows her nose.

"Tell me what happened," I say gently.

She continues to cry and hiccup as she talks, but I get the story.

"I didn't want to leave. I knew it could be dangerous for Brooklyn because she was so close to turning 18. Michael insisted that we had to leave because you kicked G\*\*a Koden out of the pack, and they were friends."

She begins rocking again as she talks. "Almost as soon as we got there, Alpha Owen took a liking to Brooklyn. He asked her how old she was and if she'd ever considered being a Luna. I tried to keep her away from him, but after we accepted him as our



Alpha, he knew where she was all the time. I'm guessing that Koden knew her birthday because how else would Alpha Owen have known?" she asks, looking at me as if I have the answers. Since I have none, I stay quiet.

"He called an all-pack meeting and then he announced that today was Brook's birthday, and he was going to claim her. Michael seemed pleased, but I've never liked Alpha Owen. I didn't want him to claim Brook, but he pulled her up on the stage with him and introduced her as his new Luna. Then...."

She stops, beginning to s\*\*b again.

"Then he ripped her dress, saying that if she was going to be mated to an Alpha that we had to follow the rules for a ranked claiming. Brook started crying, trying to hold her dress to her. My girl is sweet, kind, we've never raised a hand to her, but that man....that monster, tore my baby apart on that stage for the entire pack to witness. Those sick pack members were cheering and howling while my baby was crying for her mother, crying for ME!"

Her eyes meet mine and there is fire in them. "And do you know why I couldn't get to her?" she asks through gritted teeth.

"No," I say quietly.

"Michael was holding me back. Her own father just stood by and allowed it to happen."

She stops, covering her mouth as if she's going to vomit. I quickly look around, grabbing a garbage can just in case, but she pulls herself together.

"Then he stood up there and marked her, sank his teeth into her neck while she sobbed. When he pulled himself out of her body, he let her drop to the ground and turned to look at the pack. 'She's too weak. She's not worthy of being your Luna' he said, and he walked off the stage, leaving her there to bleed out."

"How did the pack respond?" I ask, wondering if they felt this was wrong.

"I don't know. I just know that Michael finally let go of me and I raced to the stage, to her, telling her I was so sorry I couldn't protect her," she says and begins sobbing again.

"Do you know what's it's like to feel helpless? Knowing you can't help the one you love?"

I think about my sister, about how I would have done anything for her, but I didn't protect her, not like I should have.

"Yes," I say quietly.

She nods, looking down and shredding the tissue in her hands. "I grabbed some banner or flag and covered Brook before picking her up and carrying her off that stage. When I got to the bottom, Michael was standing there. He told me to give Brook to him."

She lifts her head, and her eyes are blazing again. "I rejected him, and I watched as he fell to the ground in pain. He is supposed to be some warrior, a fighter and while he lay writhing on the ground, me, a simple omega, carried my daughter all the way here, hoping you'd help us." She begins crying again.

Thank you. Thank you for helping us."

"You'll be safe here now," I say, and she nods.

"I know, I know you're a good Alpha. I know you care about your pack, and I know that you will protect us with your life. I know that you will do that for us."

"Yes, I will. Now, let's get you looked at," I say, standing and gesturing for a nurse to come over.

"No, I'm fine..." she begins.

I bend over so my eyes are level with hers. "Brooklyn is going to need you when she wakes up. You rejected your mate, that means your body will look like you've gone ten rounds with an Alpha. Let them look you over and help you to heal so that you can be here for your daughter when she needs you."

When I stand, I get a mind link from the border patrols. 'Michael is at our borders, requesting entrance to our pack.'

'Entrance or sanctuary? I ask.

'He said entrance to our territory, Alpha.'

I look at Leah, being led away by a nurse.

"What do you want me to do if Michael shows up?" I ask her.

She turns and looks at me. "I can't tell you not to let him into your pack, Alpha. But I don't want that man anywhere near me or my daughter," she growls.

I nod and turn away before returning the mind link.

'Denied.'

'Yes, Alpha.'

When I turn back, Sophie is walking towards me. I open my arms and when she walks into them, I wrap her into my embrace, feeling her arms go around me.

"I'm going to have to take a rain check on you winning the wager today," I tell her, pressing my lips to the top of her head.

"I know," she says, looking up at me. "I would be disappointed in you if you didn't."

"Are you exhausted? I feel exhausted."

"I'm exhausted. How's Leah?"

"They're probably going to keep her overnight. She rejected her mate who is at our borders requesting entrance to our pack."

"Entrance?" she asks, catching the same word I did.

"Yes, and his entrance was denied."

"Good."

"How's Brooklyn?" I ask.

"Not good. Dr. Felicity said she'll be in surgery for hours stitching her up, but she'll mind link us when she's out of surgery and let us know how it went."

"Do we need to take care of our guests?"

"Nope, it's all handled," she says, putting her arm through mine and leading me out the door. "Want to hear something interesting?"

"Yes," I say, smiling down at my mate who is somehow pushing my black cloud of anger away.

"Allison agreed to go to Kayce's room with him. They been there for hours," she says, smirking up at me.

"That sounds promising," I say.

"Do you think she'll be wearing his mark tomorrow?" she asks.

"No."

Her face falls. "Why not?"

“Because if Alpha Kayce plans to mark her privately, he can’t show up to the Committee meeting with a mark on his neck and unlike that f\*\*khead Owen, he wouldn’t mark Allison without letting her mark him as well. But,” I say as we get to the packhouse and start climbing the stairs to our room. “I would expect her to have quite a few h\*\*k\*y \*s on her n\*\*k and several on and around her marking s\*\*t.

That brings the smile back to my mate’s pretty face.

“I’ll take it, it’s still a win.”

“A big win!” I say, opening the door and letting Sophie walk into our room ahead of me.

Sophie strips off her dress, tossing it aside and turning to me. She’s wearing a lace bra, lace panties and high heels.

“You know, suddenly, I’m not so tired after all,” I say. Thankfully neither is my mate.

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 53**

### **Chapter 53: A Long Night**

Sophie

When we got back to our room, I knew Hunter and I both needed something to get our minds off of Brooklyn. Hunter especially was struggling with his frustration at not being able to protect one of his previous, vulnerable pack members. So, I did what any good mate would do, I chose a position that put him in control.

Only, that’s not exactly how it played out. Hunter desperately needed a shower so after he washed off Brooklyn’s blood and her scent no longer lingered on him, I chose our first position to be in the shower. However, rather than facing the shower wall, I wanted to see him. I wrapped my legs around him and while he still had me pressed against the wall, his arms were wrapped about me and he kissed me, holding me close, until he brought both of us to our release.

He had put his forehead against mine as both of us were panting. “I need you again.”

“Bed,” I said.

We’d quickly dried and then I told him I wanted to be on top. I had planned on trying the reverse cowgirl again tonight, that was fun, but I needed the connection to my mate, and I could feel through the bond that he needed it too.

When I straddled him, he sat up, wrapping my legs around him again. We had kissed as our bodies held each other, his hands helping me to lift my hips up and down until we both came undone together.

“Again,” he said.

And it had gone on like that for hours. We switched positions, but we never weren't wrapped around each other, holding each other, connecting every part of our bodies as moved slow, fast, gentle, rough, finding our release together over and over until we were both spent.

When we'd finally fallen asleep, my mate's mind was finally settled, at peace, at least for now.

It was less than an hour later when we got the mind link from Dr. Felicity letting us know that Brooklyn was out of surgery and stable. She also let us know that Leah had been given

painkillers and medications to help her relax, to boost her system, and help her wolf heal her faster.

Hunter had pulled me closer to him and I snuggled into him and fell asleep. It was less than an hour after that when we got the mind link from the border patrols letting us know we had more she-wolves at our borders.

'Ranked she-wolves?' Hunter asks as we rush downstairs before shifting and heading to the border.

'It's both, Alpha. It seems as though some of Alpha Owen's pack members weren't happy with what happened to Brooklyn and have left his pack, coming here to ask for safety.'

'Hunter...' I say privately.

'I know. We'll figure it out,' he says. If pack members start leaving other packs, coming to our pack, it's even more likely that we'll have a war on our hands. The problem is, if these are omegas or even inexperienced warriors, it means we have more people that we have to protect, which means we need more fighters to fight.

When we arrive, I shift, quickly, then hearing Hunter's growl, I turn, letting him pull a shirt over my head before turning back to the patrols.

There are five of them, two ranked, one additional adult and two teenage pups, all female.

“Hello, my name is Sophie Reynolds. You may know me as Sophie Meyers. That was name before I was mated to Alpha Hunter,” I say gesturing to him as the two ranked members suck in a breath.

“So, it's true?” one of the ranked she-wolves asks.

“Is what true?” I ask.

“You were claimed?” the other she-wolf asks.

“I was, privately and against our laws, Hunter claimed me.”

They all glance at him, then back at me. “How about you three? What are you doing here?”

“They said you might give them refuge after one of your previous pack members was assaulted by their Alpha,” one of the ranked females, a Beta, says.

“That’s correct. Brooklyn came out of surgery just over an hour ago,” I say.

“She survived?” one of the young teens asks.

“She did.”

The adult woman steps up. “These are my daughters. I don’t want what happened to that poor girl to happen to them. It’s against the law, but unlike with what Alpha Hunter did to you, it’s not right. He...” she covers her mouth, holding back a \*\*\*b.

“What he did was wrong. That would never be tolerated in my pack. Hell, I wouldn’t even allow my own mate to go through that process,” Hunter says. He stays back, not wanting to scare the women. “If you want sanctuary, you are welcome and you will be safe here.”

“How can they possibly trust that? You have no way to prove it,” the other ranked female says. I lift my nose and sniff. She’s also a Beta.

“Are you sisters?” I ask.

They look at each other, then back at me. “Yes. We’re twins. Identical.”

This time, it’s Hunter who sucks in air behind me. I turn and look at him, then back at the young women.

“What?”

“Identical twins tend to share mates. Our mate would have had to claim both of us publicly.”

My mouth opens and closes. I can’t even imagine what that would have been like.

“Oh, well, that’s...are you looking for sanctuary?” I ask, unsure how else to respond. If I thought was afraid of being claimed publicly, these girls must feel it even more strongly. I can’t imagine standing by before or after being claimed and watching my twin suffer like that with everyone watching.

They look at each other again. “I don’t know that we can trust you. We just wanted to make sure that these three got here safely and that Alpha Hunter would be willing to accept them.”

“Hunter, what time is it?” I ask.

“It’s 3am.”

“It’s too early to wake the three girls who came here a couple days ago. There’s an Alpha, a Beta, and a G\*\*a. You can hear it from them. If you’d like to wait to enter our pack until later today, I’d suggest that you go up to the mountain where we provide food for she-wolves on the run. It’s about an hour run from here. Be careful but once you’re inside, it’s safe. We won’t force you to do anything here, but if you decide to trust us, or you want to speak to Nikki, Allison, or Letti, the women I just spoke of, come back later. What are your names?”

“Tiffany and Tammi. We’ll come back. But we just need to be sure.”

“Just be careful. My mate was almost claimed by Alpha Owen on that mountain. Be smart and on guard until you get inside the mountain. Follow the scent of my Beta female. It should be stronger than any other scent as she goes there every day to leave food,” Hunter tells them. “You three can come in. If you accept, you’re now under my protection.”

“Thank you, Alpha,” the mother says, holding her daughters’ hands in each of hers before stepping onto our pack lands.

“Are you hungry?” I ask, stepping up to them.

“Yes,” one of the girls says.

“Come on, we’ll get you some food and then find you a place to sleep. You’re safe now,” I say, wrapping my arm around the shoulders of the nearest girl. “Can I get your names?” I ask, turning to see that the Beta twins are still watching us.

“You’re still welcome,” I say to them.

“We’ll be back later,” they say and turn, jogging off into the darkness. I turn back to the ones I can help now. “Your names?”

"I'm Chloe and these are my daughters, Lillian and Addison. How is Brooklyn's mother, I think her name is Leah," Chloe asks. as we walk.

"She's in the pack hospital as well," I say. I'm not sure how much the other pack members know, so I'm not going to assume that they know that Leah rejected her mate.

By the time we get the girls settled, it's nearly time for training. I look at Hunter. "I doubt I'm going to defeat you today. I'm way. too tired."

"If our visitors weren't here, I'd say we could go back to bed, but we missed them last night. We need to be here for them this morning."

"I know. The joys of running a pack. That's okay, I want to see Allison this morning, see how she's doing."

We rush to our room and shower before heading down to warrior training. When we arrive, I see that Hunter was right.

Allison's neck is covered in h\*\*ys and Kayce's scent is all over her.

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 54**

### **Chapter 54: Lotus Flowers**

Robin

The more I get to know about that little Alpha, the more I like her. I've always wanted a mate who would challenge me, keep me on my toes, and give me a run for my money. I've got an entire pack of wolves who defer to me, obey me, and follow my lead. That's not what I want in a mate.

Yes, I want someone who can balance me. Yes, I want someone who can calm me when the Alpha in me becomes too overwhelming for those around me. But I want a challenge, I want the passion and excitement that comes from someone who can push my buttons and rock my world. And something tells me that little Alpha is just the one to do it.

Unfortunately, she's underage so I won't know if she's my mate until after her birthday, the date of which she refused to give me, which makes me think it's soon. All night at the party, she challenged me, challenged my beliefs in the public claimings and truly, more than anything else, helped me to see that this isn't a rebellion on the part of our she-wolves. They really, truly don't want this. It tears them down in a way that a mate should never tear down the one they love.



I had an opportunity to speak to Beta Lucas during the evening as well. He confirmed for me what he felt from his mate and the struggles that they have had to come together.

“Honestly, it was Sophie that I think has made the difference. My mate didn’t trust me. She’d take Hunter’s word before mine, her own mate. I think, between the two of us, Hunter and I could have helped rebuild Kinsley’s inner strength, but it was Sophie coming here that changed her. She’s seen what our mate bond could be, what it should have been from the very beginning. And I’ll tell you this. If I could go back and do it over, I’d take the stance that Hunter did every time. I would choose my mate of our laws every time, because our she-wolves are right, and our laws are wrong.”

I’d had a restless night, not only because I have to decide how I will vote at the Committee, but a certain brown-haired, green-eyed little Alpha kept popping into my head. I smile as I get ready for Hunter’s warrior training this morning. I’d noticed the little Alpha, Nikki, watching me throughout the night. She tried to be subtle, but she hasn’t had as much practice at it as I have.

When I get outside, I’m not surprised to see the Beta, Allison, covered in Kayce’s hickeys and his scent. That tells me exactly how he plans to vote. He’s siding with Hunter.

“Planning to exercise your eyeballs the entire training session, big Alpha?” Nikki says, passing me. Her crutches from yesterday are gone and she looks like she’s planning to spar today.

I quickly fall into step beside her. “Are you cleared for sparring?” I ask, secretly pleased that her antagonistic behavior is continuing this morning. I hope that means she’s enjoying it as much as I am.

She turns and gives me a look that’s all Alpha. “I don’t need a doctor to tell me that I’m healed enough to spar.”

“Actually, you do,” Hunter says, putting himself in front of her and blocking her path. “My doctors didn’t operate on you for hours just so you could mess up your leg again because you’re pushing too hard.”

“Why don’t I go with you, Nikki. We can go see the doctor now, have them take a quick x-ray of your leg and if they give the all-clear, you can come back for the second half of training,” Luna Sophie says, putting her hand on her mate’s arm and more or less pushing him out of the way.

The gesture doesn’t go unnoticed by her mate, who raises an eyebrow at her, but she just ignores him.

“Why don’t I take you, little Alpha. We can talk more about all the reasons that our laws are wrong,” I say, hoping for some more time with her before I leave today. As much as I want to stay, my pack borders Alpha Aiden’s on the side not bordered by Kayce. I don’t trust Aiden so I don’t like being gone for long periods of time when I know he’s in his pack. He’s too power hungry. However, most of the time these days, he’s out hunting she-wolves.

‘She smells really good,’ Derric, my wolf, says, breathing in her scent deeply. For someone so thorny on the outside, she smells floral, like a lotus flower. Beautiful and delicate, but also resilient and strong, just like Nikki.

“I’m perfectly capable of getting myself to and from the pack hospital, thank you, big Alpha,” she says, giving me a fake smile before turning away from me.

‘Be right back,’ I mouth to Hunter, who shakes his head at me. I see Sophie give him a worried look, but he shakes his head. Even if Nikki was of age, which she isn’t, I wouldn’t disrespect Hunter or Nikki by claiming her against her will, here or anywhere.

I quickly catch up, scooping her into my arms. Derric begins purring at having our scent on her.

“What are you doing? Put me down!” she insists as I carry her off.

“Where is the pack hospital,” I ask, looking around and ignoring her. I already know where it is, but I’m using this time to hold her close.

“Alpha Robin, I insist that you put me down this instant!” she says, crossing her arms over her chest. I notice that she’s not actually fighting me, or squirming in my arms to get down, so I ignore her again. Her heartbeat hasn’t increased, well it did, but if the increased scent of lotus flowers is any indication, it’s not because she’s scared of me.

‘I can almost taste her floral scent. I bet she tastes delicious,’ Derric says. Since Derric has never shown this much interest in woman before, I look at Nikki more closely.

“Are you going to point me in the direction of the hospital or am I going to carry you around the entire pack. I mean, I am an Alpha, honey, but this is a lot of weight to be carrying all over,” I say, exaggeratedly lifting her body in my arms, “you aren’t exactly light.”

Her eyes go wide and fire flashes in her eyes. “You did NOT just imply that I’m heavy?”

I shrug. “I mean...”

She narrows her eyes at me, leaning back against my arm.

“Hmmm, you must be one of those weak Alphas, if I’m so heavy – to you. Maybe you should head back to training and work on that muscle strength, Alpha. I guess I shouldn’t even call you big Alpha anymore, If you’re going to be such a wimp.”

Oh, my little Alpha, how I love playing these games with you.

“Or maybe,” I say, putting my mouth near her ear, “you’re so desperate to be in my arms that you’re hoping I get lost and have to carry you around for hours,” I say, murmuring in her ear.

I have to hide my smile when her body shivers in my arms.

“It’s over there,” she says snarkily pointing in the direction of the pack hospital.

“Would you prefer it if I walk you around the pack carrying you some more first?” I ask, smirking at her.

“Trying to get out of warrior training so the other Alphas don’t embarrass you?” she retorts.

F\*\*k, this woman has got me so turned on right now. I hope to hell she’s my mate because if she isn’t, I may have to fight whoever is so I can make her mine.

I carry her into the pack hospital, refusing to put her down even once we’re inside.

“We’re here to have Alpha Nikki checked to see if her leg is healed enough to participate in warrior training,” I tell the person at the front desk.

“Of course, give me one moment,” she says.

I stand there, waiting.

“You can put me down now,” she says quietly.

“You could put your arm around my neck. It would be more comfortable for both of us and maybe then you wouldn’t keep jabbing me with your elbow when I say something that annoys you.”

“Are you trying to annoy me?” she asks, narrowing her eyes. again.

“I like your spirit. I like the way you stand up to me,” I say, looking her in the eye. Whether it’s my gaze or my honesty, Nikki is at a loss for words.

Her mouth opens and closes a couple of times before she’s saved from responding by us being called back. I wait while they take her x-rays and then until the doctor comes in and tells her that she needs to take it easy one more day.

“What does take it easy mean? I can’t attend warrior training? Doc, there’s a war coming, I need to be prepared to fight,” she says seriously.

“How about punching? Can she work on her punches? That way she’s not kicking and spinning,” I say, recognizing how important this is to her.

She looks at me and I can see how surprised she is that I’m trying to find a way to help her.

“If she’s punching only, I’ll allow it. No contact from her opponent that could knock her off balance and make her fall or try to spin out of the way.”

She sighs. “Thanks, Doc. So, tomorrow I can spar?”

“Yes, tomorrow you can get back to regular training.”

She nods and I go to pick her up, but she hops down quickly and points her finger at me. “No!”

“You sure?” I ask, smiling at her.

“Yes.”

When we step outside, I can see she’s focused on her own thoughts.

“What’s going on in that head of yours? I thought you’d be happy that you could at least punch.”

She looks at me. “Who’s going to give up their training to help the near-invalid practice her punching? No one.”

I grab her arm and pull her to a stop. “Uh, I thought it was obvious that I was going to do that. Hunter has pads. I’ll put them on, and you can practice your punches.”

“You would do that for me?” She looks surprised again. I’m hoping it’s because no other Alpha has ever treated her like this and not because she thinks that I’m an a\*\*hole.

“Yeah, and besides, I wouldn’t want the other Alphas to embarrass me in training. So, you’re really doing me a favor here,” I say.

I get the smile I was hoping for and when she looks away, I scoop her back into my arms.

“Hey!”

“Hey, nothing. If we’re going to convince the others that I’m doing you a favor, it has to look real,” I say, beginning to walk to where I know Hunter keeps his sparring pads.

“Fine,” she says, and I’m rewarded by her putting her arm around my neck.

“Two weeks,” she says.

“What’s two weeks.”

“My birthday.”

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 55**

Chapter 55: How’s

“What’s pump On With Home Paris H\*\*er

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I wanch as Alisson pars off with Abra Kayce 1 saw than coming,” I say, turning to my own mate.

“Who didn’t? He’s basically put his claim in neon lights on her neck,” Hunter snorts.

“Is that what you would have done,” I ask him as we begin. As expected, my exhaustion is making me slow. Hunter, however, is somehow powering through the fatigue.

“Yes. I would have wanted everyone to know that if they touched you, I’d kill them, because the thought of anyone else putting their hands on you was and is abhorrent to me,” he says.

He’s able to put me into a hold, wrapping his arms around me and pulling my back to his chest. “Focus,” he growls in my ear.

“I’m trying. How are you able to put the lack of sleep aside?” I ask.

“What if I was Owen? Are you going to let him win just because you’re tired?”

“Hell no, but you’re not Owen.”

He taps his temple. “Mind over matter, my love.”

“Gotcha,” I hear Kayce say near me. I turn and see that he has a panting Allison pinned to the ground and then, I watch as that little brat steals my move. She lifts up, running her nose over Kayce’s neck, licking him from the top of his chest to his chin and the moment he’s distracted enough to loosen his grip, she flips their positions.

“That looks familiar,” Hunter says. “Now, back to practice,” he says, smacking my ass hard.

Tina you’re the sleazy Owen and I hate your guts,” I say. m\*\*y pulling up Owen & image in my head.

This time, I’m able to hold my own, unwilling to allow Owen to get the better of me. Hunter is a better fighter than Owen and I’m pretty sure Owen wouldn’t have been able to pin me, but Hunter did, although it took a lot longer.

“Very good,” he says, praising me before rewarding me by kissing my neck and whispering the new position he intends to try with me tonight. More than anything, Hunter’s praise and rewards will make me work harder.

My body shivers as they call the end of training and we head inside to eat breakfast.

“I’m surprised Nikki didn’t make it back,” I say as we catch up to Allison, Kayce, and Letti.

“I saw her and Alpha Robin going into that building over there,” Letti says, and I look up, just as Robin and Nikki walk out.

“What is that building?” I ask Hunter, not having seen it yet.

“It’s our indoor training facility. I’m guessing Nikki wasn’t cleared for sparring, but Robin found a way to help her work out.”

Alpha Kayce turns and looks at Hunter.

“Not like that,” Hunter says Kayce just snorts and when they walk up, Nikki let’s Hunter know that she’s cleared to return to training tomorrow.

Over breakfast, Alpha Kayce talks to Hunter about remaining in our pack until the Committee meeting so he can stay close to Allison. Hunter agrees easily.

I take the time to let the others know that we had two Beta females come to the borders last night.

“They said they’d come back this morning. I told them it was too early to wake you but that I’d let the three of you tell them that it’s safe here. Hopefully, you all feel safe and are willing to talk to them,” I say.

“Of course. I mean, I can’t speak for the others, but I’ll talk to them,” Nikki says.

“I will too,” Allison says, glancing at Kayce who somehow seems to know she’s looking at him and reaches out to touch her without stopping the conversation with Hunter.

‘I would do that too, if Letti wasn’t sitting between us,’ Hunter says in my head.

‘How do you focus on so many things all at once?’ I ask. He’s talking to Hunter and Robin, talking to me in his head, and still scanning the pack to make sure that everything is okay.

‘Practice. I’ve been doing it for years. You’ll get there, if for no other reason than I know how competitive you are,’ he says, and I can see a smile twitching at his lips.

“What about you, Letti? Do you want to join us?” I ask her.

‘I am competitive,’ I say.

‘And obviously practicing right now,’ he says.

Letti is looking at me. \*\*it, I missed what she said.

‘She said yes,’ Hunter says.

D\*\*n, that’s four things he’s listening to. How does he do it? This time he can’t stop the smile.

“Thanks, Letti. Thank you all. These two are identical twins, so I feel like they are at an even higher risk being out on their own.”

“Twins? Are you talking about Tiffany and Tammi?” Allison asks.

“Yes,” I say, frowning at her. The table goes quiet as we all turn to look at Allison.

“Oh my goddess! I know them. They’ll listen to me. Where are they?”

“Easy baby, Luna Sophie said they’d be coming back, right Luna?” Kayce asks.

Obviously, he’s also adept at listening to and contributing to multiple conversations at once.

“Yes, that’s correct.”

“But Kayce, they’re out there. Even if they’re close, Sophie was almost captured by Alpha Owen before Alpha Hunter marked her.”

She’s just finished saying it when we hear a howl, a cry for help, followed very closely by a howl of the hunt.

“S\*\*t!” I say and jump up, Hunter right behind me. I race outside and leap, ready to shift. Hunter, Kayce, Robin, Letti, and Allison all shift quickly and begin racing to the border, along with other warriors.

“NO!” Hedda yells in my head, a moment too late. Thankfully, Hedda’s reflexes are quick and I’m able to duck and roll on the ground.

‘Hedda, what the f\*\*k?’ I ask. I’ve never not been able to shift. I’m a f\*\*g Alpha after all.

“Luna? Are you alright?” Nikki asks. She can’t shift yet either because of her injury.

“Yeah, come on,” I say, and we begin running to the border, knowing we’ll get there late.

‘Hedda, what the f\*\*k is going on? Why can’t I shift?’ I ask as we run. I notice Nikki looking at me out of the corner of her eye. She’s wondering why I can’t shift too.

‘Okay, trust me, I didn’t know until this minute. I’m....we’re....we’re carrying a pup.’

I stumble again, coming to a stop. ‘WHAT?’ I yell at her in my mind.

I look down at my flat stomach. Okay, Hunter and I have been going at it like rabbits ever since that first night, but, I mean, for her to know already...

‘I’m sure it happened the night he marked us. He did say we had a lot of Alpha sperm floating around inside us. He’s done nothing but add to that number every day since we’ve been here. We’re both Alphas, so our babies will be strong and will grow and develop quickly,’ Hedda says. She’s purring in my head, proud to be carrying Shaw and Hunter’s pup, but I’m still a bit in shock. I didn’t even know we had an indoor training facility two hours ago and now I’m possibly carrying the Alpha heir?



“Luna?” Nikki asks, looking at me and my hands covering my stomach.

“I...”

“I won’t say a word. Alpha Hunter should hear it from you. Come on, let’s go find out what’s going on,” she says smiling, just as I hear snarling and snapping coming from our border.

Hot d\*\*n!

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 56**

### **Chapter 56: Alaric**

Nikki

I’m glad to know that Luna Sophie is pregnant and it’s not something else that caused her to be unable to shift. She’d looked terrified for a moment, and it had made me a bit nervous. I don’t know much about mate bonds, but I know I don’t want to lose my wolf. With all the craziness going on, pregnancy hadn’t been on my mind. They’ve only been together for a couple of weeks. It’s unheard of for a she-wolf, even an Alpha, to be pregnant that quickly. But it makes me wonder if that’s how it could be, how it should be when the mate bond is strong like theirs.

As we run to where the sounds of fighting are occurring, I catch his scent and my stomach drops. Alaric, my brother, is here. Along with that scent, I catch his Beta’s scent and the scent of two other Beta females. I wonder if these are the twins that Luna Sophie was telling us about.

When we jog up, I stay hidden behind some of Alpha Hunter’s warriors. He’s at the front of the group, in his human form, snarling at my brother and his Beta. I smell two others from my old pack, possibly his G\*\*a, and maybe another warrior. My brother is so s\*\*d. He assumes that while he’s out leading the hunt, no one will attack and take over his pack. If I was there, I would. I’d be a better Alpha than he is.

“Those she-wolves are unmarked Betas. Step aside and let us claim them,” my brother growls.

“Those she-wolves are under my protection. You will not cross my borders, or you will be attacked,” Alpha Hunter growls.

I look and see that Alpha Robin and Alpha Kayce are still in wolf form. They are standing behind Hunter, flanking him in front of his warriors. I smile. I guess that means that Alpha Robin is taking Alpha Hunter’s side on this. I’m glad. I like spending time with him, but I’d stop if he turned out to be like my brother.

“This is war, Hunter! Do you realize that?” my brother asks.

I see the Beta twins. They’ve shifted back to human form and are huddled on the ground, trying to make themselves small. Letti and Allison are in wolf form, surrounding them and Luna Sophie is there, wrapping her arms around them, trying to help calm them.

I hate my brother, he’s so arrogant. Maybe I shouldn’t, but I’ve never backed down from a fight. It’s one of the reasons his Beta covets me.

“If it does come to war, brother,” I snarl his relation to me, “then what will happen to your pack when you’re here waging war?” I ask, stepping past the warriors and looking my brother in the eye.

“Nicole. I should have known that you were here. It’s time for you to come home.”

“I don’t think so,” I say, and notice that Robin subtly shifts to stand in front of me.

Alaric looks back at Hunter. “She’s underage Hunter, she’s my sister and under my protection,” he says, and I snort. –

“Protection? Is that what you call locking me away?”

“She’s under MY protection now, Alaric,” Hunter growls.

“Nikki, you should come home,” Alaric’s Beta, Camden, says looking over my body covetously, I’m guessing my brother told him he could have me if he helped him find a mate. Camden has always liked my smart mouth and fiery spirit, but something in me has wondered if that’s only because he likes the idea of trying to break me. Cam always did like a challenge, but he’s not known for his kindness.

“I don’t think so, Camden. But Alaric, you should heed my warning. You can wage war, you can come here and attack. Alpha Hunter’s pack,” I say and see Hunter glance at me. He doesn’t like the idea of me instigating a war. Even Robin backs up as if trying to quiet me with his presence.

“But who’s watching your pack while you, your Beta, your G\*\*a, and your Lead Warrior are all here? Honestly brother, did it even occur to you that any other Alpha could just walk in and take over your pack? How foolish of you to leave yourself and your pack so open to attack and takeover,” I say, taunting him. I know my brother. He has a short fuse but he’s a coward. He’ll either s\*\*dly attack or he’ll leave, worrying that his pack has been overtaken while he’s gone.

“No one would dare,” he growls.

I look at my nails, examining them. They need to be trimmed.

"I would have, if I was there. There are a lot of ranked she-wolves out on the run. A pack left open like that is an easy target. A place where they can take up residence and have a home again."

"And what would you do when I return, little sister? I'll tell you, you'd get on your knees and beg for my forgiveness," he snarls.

I laugh. "Oh Alaric. You're so short-sighted. Any self-respecting leader would have already had the entire pack swear their loyalty to them through a blood bond, renouncing you as their Alpha. It wouldn't BE your pack any longer. They would attack you, if you came for their new leader."

"She-wolves don't lead," he growls.

"We'll just add that to the list of laws that need to be changed. I'd make a much better leader than you ever will," I snap back, standing my ground.

"You need to leave, Alpha Alaric. Your sister and those Betas are under my protection. If you choose to wage war, so be it. Your sister seems perfectly happy and capable of taking over your pack in your absence," Hunter says, surprising me.

Alaric growls, glaring at Hunter before turning and shifting, howling for the others to follow him. Camden takes an extra moment to look at me.

"See you soon, Nikki," he says, looking me over once more.

"I doubt it, Cam," I say as Robin growls a low, menacing growl, the hair on the back of his wolf going up.

"Found yourself an Alpha protector, I see. He won't be able to keep me from you, Nikki. You're mine," he snarls, eliciting a snarl from Robin who takes a step forward. I grab hold of his tail, not breaking eye contact with Cam.

"I never was, and I never will be yours, Cam. Now run along. You wouldn't want my brother starting a \*\*\*d war with someone else while you're here wasting your breath, would you?"

"This isn't over," he growls, turning to look at Hunter before leaping and racing after my brother.

No one moves while we watch the four wolves racing off.

"Double the patrols," Hunter says not turning.

"Yes, Alpha."

Kayce turns, jogging over to where Allison is still standing guard over the Beta twins. They huddle away from him as he approaches, but Sophie calms them, letting them know that he's on our side.

I didn't realize I was still holding Robin's tail until it pulls out of my hand as he shifts.

"What the \*\*k was that?" he asks, turning on me. He is very, very angry.

I lift my chin, ready for the fight.

"My brother is a coward. I knew he wouldn't start a fight. I wasn't instigating a war..."

"I don't give a f\*\*k about a war, what was that between you and that Beta."

I frown. Robin is panting in his anger, his aura pushing out all around us. I tilt my head to the side and look at him, realizing that his wolf is on the edge. I'm not sure why, but I put my hand on his bare chest, wanting to soothe him.

"I'm pretty sure my brother told Camden he could have me as his mate, as long as he tamed me," I say, shrugging. The others around us are slowly starting to head back, the patrols getting back to guarding the borders.

"He can't have you," he growls...

"I said as much, didn't I?"

He yanks me against his body. "You're mine, Nicole."

"I hate that name," I say softly.

His voice softens. "You're mine, Nikki."

"That remains to be seen, Alpha. And it very much depends on how you side on this public claiming law."

"Mine!" he says, before his mouth claims mine in a kiss that is somehow soft and dominantly possessive at the same time.

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 57**

Chapter 57: News

Hunter

My mind is all over the place. First, I'm worried about Sophie. She and I had been side by side when we left the dining hall, but she hadn't shifted and come with me. I knew

the moment she arrived with Nikki, but she wasn't in her wolf form. As worried as I am about her, I have to put it aside as I have two Beta females who rushed past me begging for sanctuary, and right behind them are three ranked wolves and another powerful wolf.

I had assumed that once Nikki knew her brother was here, she'd remain quiet, but I quickly learned that I was wrong. If anything, she seemed quite antagonistic toward her brother. At first, I thought she was instigating a war, but then she made the comment about her brother's pack being unprotected. I need to make sure I never underestimate this woman. She strategizes like an Alpha, an Alpha who runs a pack. I'm not sure if anyone else would have threatened to overtake Alaric's pack and as his sister, she would have an easy claim, although she's right, the laws are against her.

I can tell that Robin isn't happy with the Beta who tries to stake his claim on Nikki. While the two of them sort it out, I need to find out what's wrong with my mate and deal with these Betas.

"Tiffany and Tammi, the two of you are now under my protection. Are you both okay?" I ask, coming up and pulling my mate to me. I need to touch her, make sure she's alright. Her mind is swirling around, but nothing that makes sense to me.

They stare at Sophie, not answering me.

It's okay. I told you Hunter claimed me differently. Our relationship is very different than what you've experienced before," Sophie tells them.

"Trust me, it is," Letti says, shifting. I nod to one of my warriors who quickly gets some shirts in one of the many spots in the pack where we keep them for times when they're needed, like this. I toss one to each of the twins, one to Letti, and one to Kayce who is standing over Allison's wolf, his hand stroking her fur. I'm assuming he doesn't want her shifting in front of all of us, since there are a lot of males around.

"So, are you both okay?" I ask again.

"Yes, thank you, Alpha," they say.

As soon as Allison shifts, Kayce has the shirt over her head.

"Tiffany! Tammi!" Allison says, hugging the twins.

"Ali! Oh my goddess, Ali! We didn't know you were here!"

"Why don't you take them inside and get them something to eat," I say. Sophie and I will be right there and then we'll find you a place to sleep and talk about what you'd like from us."

“Thank you, Alpha. Thank you for not letting them claim us publicly,” one of the twins says. I’m not sure who is who. Their scents are similar, but just a bit different. They both have a sweet citrusy smell to them, one is vanilla and lemon, the other is vanilla and orange. Once I connect their scent to their name, I’ll be better able to tell them apart

“You’re welcome and I meant what I said to Alpha Alaric. You’re both under my protection now.”

They nod and begin walking inside, Kayce following behind like a warrior protecting his queen. I wonder if that’s what I look like. with Sophie.

“Probably,” she says, turning in my arms. “Can we sit? I’m guessing you’re worried about me not shifting?”

“Yes. Are you okay. Is something wrong?” I ask, stroking her hair out of her face so I can see her more clearly.

She chuckles. “You could say that. Come on, let’s sit.”

She takes my hand and pulls us even farther away from the others. I sit on a tree stump and pull her into my lap.

“What is it? What’s wrong?” I ask her.

“So, Hedda swears that she didn’t know until that very moment, but...” she stops, looking at me and I see Hedda shining in her eyes. Shaw pushes forward, wanting to be here for his mate, no matter what they tell us.

“I’m pregnant.”

I blink. I blink again. I watch as a frown begins to form on Sophie’s face.

“Hunter? Did you hear me? I said I’m pregnant.”

“With a pup?” I ask. Okay, it’s not my finest moment. But the first time you hear that you’re going to be a father, especially when it’s only a couple of weeks after finding your mate, after wanting her and not finding her for years...well, you might sound

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You te bevoNG YOU'RE HAVING MY PUPY SAV jumping up and swinging Sophie around in my arms!

She begins laughing her sweet Shphie laugh. Then I stop stigate and kasing this anazing woman who lets gling me outs in my e

I pull back abrug). You need to eat! You need to eat more And no more training! You can't gain if you're pregnant."

Hurter." she says warningh

"You're carrying my pup, Sophiel

"Yes, and I was carrying your pup this morning, yesterday, and the day before and I was able to train," she growls.

"But that was before I knew... She puts her fingers over my mouth.

"Why don't we ask the doctor what they think before you start putting restrictions on me that are going to cause us to have an argument," she says, as if this is the only reasonable solution.

"Sophie..."

"Are you a doctor?"

"No, but.."

"Have you ever had a pup before?"

"No, but..."

"Do you know what's best for me?"

I open my mouth and quickly close it again. It had been on the tip of my tongue to say yes, but I know my mate well enough to know she won't accept that answer.

"That's a trick question," I say instead.

She smiles. "I'll make an appointment to see the doctor. Until then, if Hedda says I can do it, then I'm doing it."

"Doctor, today or tomorrow, and I want to be there," I insist.

"Where else would you be when I get confirmation that I'm having our pup," she says, cupping my face in her hands and lifting up on her toes to kiss me.

I growl possessively, now not just for my mate, but for the pup that she's carrying. My pup. I'm going to have a pup.

F\*\*k! We're going to war and I'm going to have a pup. That adds an entirely new level of stress to an already stressful situation. Now, there's no option of defeat, no choice that I could possibly lose. I had too much to live for before, but now? Now, there's no alternative. I have to win the battle with the Committee of Alphas, and I have to win this war for Sophie and for our pup.

I lift my mate into my arms and carry her into the packhouse. I should probably wait, the doctor hasn't confirmed it yet, but I'm too excited.

I step into the dining room that is full of our pack members and our guests.

"Attention everyone! Your Luna has just informed me of some exciting news!"

"Hunter..." Sophie says, looking at me.

"It's too good not to share, Soph," I say, kissing her nose.

I can feel the excitement in the pack. It feels like the stronger my bond is to Sophie is, the stronger my bond is to my pack,

"Your Luna and I are going to have a pup!" I say, leaning in to kiss Sophie as the room erupts into deafening cheers all around US.

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 58**

### **Chapter 58: Preparations**

Sophie

I glad Hunter is happy that we're having a pup. I do wish he'd waited until we'd at least seen the doctor before he announced it to the pack though.

'Why? I'm sure,' Hedda purrs in my head.

'I know. I'm just...there's so much going on right now, Hedda. So much that could go wrong...'

'Or right...' she says. 'You don't know what's going to happen at the Committee meeting.'

She's right and after Alpha Alaric chased the twins over our borders, it's been crazy getting ready for the Committee meeting. Kayce stayed as expected while a very



reluctant Robin finally left and returned to his pack, swearing to Nikki that he'd side with us, and he would be returning on her birthday to claim her...privately.

I can see she's nervous, but she's been incredible around the pack, helping in warrior training, assisting with the patrols. She called Allison a beast, and Allison is great, but Nikki? She's all Alpha.

Meanwhile, Hunter, Kayce, and I have been on the phone nearly non-stop with my father, Alpha Dutton, Alpha Robin, Alpha Calvin, and Alpha Ezła. Hunter had spoken to him, and he'd been willing to support changing the laws. Even without having ever met the man, I could hear his depression through the phone, the loss of his mate still wolghing heavily on him.

This morning, I'm getting ready to finally stand in front of the Committee of Alphas. I stare at myself in the full-length mirror, watching Hunter getting ready behind me.

"How many are there again," I ask for the hundredth time. My palms are sweating, and my stomach is in knots. What if they Insist that Hunter claim me in front of them? What if they refuse to let us leave without him doing it? What if they deny me as his Luna? I can't leave Hunter. But the thought of having to have something so private, so special, shared in front of those disgusting Alphas In makes me want to vomit.

Hunter's hands come around me from behind, his lips press against the back of my head as Shaw begins purring loudly, working hard to calm me.

"Fourteen, including you and me. Twelve who will be on the voting panel. Your sister, as a Luna isn't considered a voting member," he says, kissing my shoulder. Of course she isn't. Women aren't considered equal by this Committee, even if we have Alpha blood.

"And we need a majority to keep from going to war?" I ask, knowing we have six on our side.

"Yes. Alpha Zahn is still an unknown."

"He's the one whose mate threw herself off a cliff?" I ask.

"His second mate. His first one killed herself too."

I suck in air. "But then..."

They don't care about fated mates any longer. They will never have what we have. But I don't pity them," he growls. "They did this to themselves.

"What...what happens if we don't get the majority vote?" I ask, turning in his arms.

He shrugs. "They could insist that I mark and mate you in front of them and then all is fine," he says. I knew it, but I still tense. He leans in and kisses my nose. I won't. Ever."

He sighs, looking over my head. "Then, they will threaten to have you removed as my Luna and they will threaten to have my title as Alpha removed, and then it will be the threat of war."

And then we go to war," I say.

"Then we go to war," he confirms. "But Nikki did give me a great idea when she was talking to her brother. I already had an angle, one that I know will hit home with the Alphas on our side and if nothing else, clearly bring them into the war with us. But her angle helps us even more."

"What angle is that?" I ask.

"About no one watching the packs while the Alphas are out hunting their mates. If they declare war on us, and still think that they will be able to hunt for their mates, they are sorely mistaken. I haven't felt the need to decimate their packs until now, but I will, if it comes to that, preferably starting with Owen," he growls.

"What other angle do you have?"

"Your pregnancy. It's unheard of for a mated couple to be pregnant this soon. Your sister and Calvin are pretty rare and that has been two years. Two weeks? Unheard of."

"That's why you got the doctor's report that says that I'm carrying your pup?"

"Yep. Got it right here," he says, lifting the notebook that he's bringing to the Committee meeting.

"And we're sure, our six are truly on our side?" I ask, my heart still thumping in my chest.

He pulls back, looking at me. "Do you have concerns about any of them?"

shrug. "I don't know them as well as you do. I believe Kayce, Robin, and my father will definitely side with us. I'm pretty sure that Calvin will as well, especially since my sister will be there. But I'm not confident about Alphas Dutton and Ezra."

"Dutton will stand beside us. I've known him for a long time, and you gave him a lot to think about. Ezra will also. He still struggles with losing my sister. He loved her completely, like I love you. Unfortunately, she was never able to give him the same love and affection in return."

He strokes his fingers across my cheek, staring at his hand. "I'm only now realizing how hard that must have been for him, for Lucas, for Calvin. To have the woman that you feel everything for and knowing that she doesn't feel the same for you because of what you did to her. I can't..." his voice is quiet and by the end, his voice breaks. I can feel the fear through the bond of what it would mean to him to lose me, for our bond to be broken like that.

"And thankfully, you are a strong enough man to stand up for what is right. You are the kind of man who would burn down the world for the woman he loves. And I'm the lucky woman who gets to call herself yours."

"I think I'm the lucky one. I AM mated to the legend, you know," he says, smirking.

I grunt. "Not that again."

"You know it will come up today. The Alphas want nothing more than for you to go away. They blame you for everything that has happened."

"Isn't it amazing that they give me so much power but take it all away from the other ranked she-wolves."

"You scare them with the amount of power you wield."

"I don't wield any power," I say, leaning into him.

"Don't you? Those she-wolves are only here in our pack because of you. Kinsley is getting stronger, in large part, because of you. I am a stronger man, a stronger Alpha, because of you. You have more power than you know, Sophie. You may not want to be the face of this revolution, but make no mistake, if you were to stand against those Alphas, you could start a revolution all on your own. You don't need me at all."

"On the contrary, Alpha. I desperately need you. Multiple times a day," I say, smiling flirtatiously up at him.

"Needing me for sex and needing me in your life aren't the same, Soph."

"I need you for everything, Hunter I didn't realize how much I needed someone else until you came into my life. But even that night when you took Nikki to the pack hospital, I was feeling out of control, uneasy. Just reaching out and feeling your presence. In my mind, even though you were focused on her, it still soothed me. If I am to be the cause of the revolution, you, my dear mate, are the foundation that allows me to lead and to shine. Without you, I wouldn't be able to do it."

He smiles down at me for a long moment. "How is it possible that I can love you more every day?"

"I don't know. But I feel the same, He leans in, kissing my softly, sweetly, tenderly. The kiss lingers and all my worries about today leave my mind. Maybe that was his plan, because by the time we're ready to go, I square my shoulders, lift my chin, and take my mate's hand.

"Let's do this."

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 59**

### **Chapter 59: Committee of Alphas**

Hunter

I can feel my mate's tension as we walk into the committee chambers. The Alphas, being pompous a\*\*holes, made sure that their seats sat up much higher than those who were there to be heard. This way, they can literally look down their noses at you.

I've never liked the practice. We're Alphas, why do we have to prove that we stand above the others? If those who present themselves in front of the committee don't realize that just by our aura and presence, then perhaps those in their Alpha positions don't deserve them.

This time, it's me and Sophie who are on the floor, looking up at the Alpha chairs as the committee members enter.

I feel Sophie stiffen beside me and turn to look at her, keeping my eyes on the Alphas.

"What is it?" I murmur.

"Who is the Alpha that just came in?"

"Alpha Zahn, why?"

She looks at me. "He was the one who caught his mate in the woods where I was staying. He's the reason I ran."

I look at Alpha Zahn again. The timing would have been right.

He caught his mate and she threw herself off a cliff right around

Babes & Commoner i Aphae

the time that I found Sophie.

I nod, acknowledging that I heard her, but continuing to watch as the others enter. Kayce walked in with us, but I nod as Dutton, Carter, and Luna Amy enter the room. I

see Sophie. finger wave at her parents and her father winks at her before taking his seat. I notice that they are all sitting on the left side of the seating, while Zahn, Alaric, and Owen have chosen to sit on the right side.

When Ezra walks in, he raises his eyebrow, looking at the seating arrangements. "Choosing sides already, I see," he says, sitting beside Kayce.

"That's Ezra," I say in an aside to Sophie.

"And that?" she asks about the Alpha who just sat down on the right side of the seating area.

"That's Alpha Aiden," I whisper.

She nods. "He's the one who was hunting me before I got on the train," she says and an inadvertent growl escapes.

I cut it off, but not before the room goes quiet. Since the meeting hasn't started, everyone looks at me, then turns back to their own discussions.

'He's second after Owen on our list to obliterate,' Shaw says in my head, seething at the man who hunted for my mate.

'Yes,' I say. I'm not going to argue. If he'd caught Sophie, I would never have found my fated mate. She'd have been taken by someone else and she'd be a shell of the person she is today watch as Alpha Joshua walks in with his mate, Luna Margot. She's stoic, always has her face well-schooled, and in the three years since she's been mated to Alpha Joshua, I've never once seen her smile.

Next to enter is Calvin with Luna Amelia. I knew from our discussions that he didn't want her here because of her pregnancy, but Amelia, being the Alpha she is, insisted. Calvin sits her in between himself and her father. The safest place in the room by his standards.

I watch as the last two enter the room, Alpha Elias and his mate Luna June. June moves to sit beside her daughter, Luna Margot. I watch as she takes the younger woman's hand and they both face us, as if creating a unified front. Alpha Elias, the oldest Alpha in our Committee, leads these meetings.

He stands in the center of the seating area, looking down at me.

"Alpha Hunter, you have been commanded in front of this Committee of Alphas today because it has been brought to our attention that you have broken one of our laws. How do you plead?"

"Guilty."

He wasn't looking at me, obviously expecting me to argue. But I won't. I'm standing up for Sophie and for what I believe in.

His eyes snap back to mine. "You agree that you broke one of our laws?"

"It's a law I don't agree with, as this committee is aware."

"Whether or not you agree with it, it is still a law Alpha."

"Yes," I say, standing my ground. Because he's above us, and because I'm an Alpha, my chin is raised to look him in the eye. I'm glad and proud to see that Sophie's is as well

Alpha Elias looks at me a moment, obviously restructuring the argument he had already planned

"You took this woman as your mate?" he asks.

"I believe you know I did. I'm sure that when my previous G\*\*a joined Alpha Owen's pack, he let Alpha Owen know, who then let you know just who my mate is," I say, looking at Owen, then back at Elias. I'm not going to let them play games with me.

"Yes," he says growling as he looks at my mate. "Sophie Meyers."

I take a protective step forward and partially in front of Sophie.

"She's Sophie Reynolds now."

"That remains to be seen," he says, refocusing on me. "You have broken our laws. Do you intend to rectify that here and now?" he asks.

"How do you propose that I do that?"

"You would need to mark her in this committee chamber, of course," he says arrogantly.

"Do your noses not work?" I ask innocently. Sophie has placed her hand on my back, whether to keep herself or me grounded I'm not sure, but my protective Alpha nature is pushing forward.

"Excuse me?" he growls, but I see Kayce smiling. He and I discussed this.

"Well, as Alphas, I would assume that you can see my mark on Sophie's neck. As Alphas, I would assume that you can smell my scent on my mate, and hers on me," I say, stressing her relationship to me. "So, I'll ask again, do your noses not work?"

“Of course our noses work. But that is not the law,” he says banging his fist on the banister of the seating area. “You must claim your mate publicly.”

“So, you only need to see Hunter mark me, is that correct?” Sophie asks, moving herself to stand beside me again.

Elias looks at my mate-in the condescending way that I’m sure he looks at his mate and his daughter. “That is not the law,

young lady. Marking and mating of all ranked females must be public.”

I can feel the anger in my mate, feel her Alpha aura pushing out. I want to protect her, but I know my mate is about to put these Alphas in their place.

“Why? Because you’re nothing more than lecherous, disgusting men who get off on watching women taken against their will? As my mate said, you can see his mark, very clearly on my neck. You can smell his scent intermingled with mine. I am willing to stand here and allow him to mark me in front of you, even though that can be quite....personal. So, why then must you witness a man having sex with a woman? I can only assume that it’s because you’re all sick, twisted, loathsome men,” she says, and I have to fight hard to keep from smiling at her spirit. I notice her father ducks his head. I’m assuming he appreciates his daughter’s spirit as well.

“How dare you?” Alpha Zahn snarls, standing up and glaring down at Sophie. I pull her back, taking a protective stance in front of her again.

“How dare I, Alpha Zahn?” she asks, and I can see his shock that she knows his name. D\*\*n I love this woman.

“How dare I? Let me ask you, how many women have to kill themselves before you stop this brutal practice? I saw you, in the woods, claiming that poor girl. She sobbed after you stripped her bare for your pack members to watch while you claimed her. I saw how you slammed your canines into her neck, not even attempting to be gentle. It’s no wonder she threw herself off a cliff. So, I ask you, Alpha Zahn, How! Dare! You?” This time, it’s my mate who snarls.

Zahn glares at her, but he sits back down.

“You need to get your mate under control, Alpha,” Elias growls.

“Why? For speaking the truth? I don’t think so. And while we’re on the subject of Zahn claiming multiple mates who keep killing themselves to get away from him, have those of you who haven’t been hunting your mates considered what this means for you?” I ask, looking to the ones seated on the left.

“If Alpha Zahn caught his fated mate, and she killed herself to get away from him, then who’s mate did he catch this time? Yours Alpha Dutton? Alpha Kayce? Alpha Robin? These men aren’t just hurting our she-wolves, their stealing your mates with no care for them or you. Maybe that’s your mate lying in his pack hospital. Or she would have been, if he hadn’t claimed her. Alpha Owen nearly claimed my mate. If I hadn’t intervened, I may never have found the love and passion that I have with Sophie,” I say, turning to look at her.

She smiles at me, putting her hand in mine.

When I turn back, I can see that all three men look stunned. I knew they hadn’t considered this. They didn’t agree with the practice of hunting for their mates, but they didn’t see the bigger picture that their mates are being stolen from them.

Neither did I until it was right in front of my face.

## **The One He Claimed Chapter 60**

Chapter 60 Trust

Hunter

“Let me ask this committee something else. For those of you who have claimed your mates publicly, where are your pups?”

“Mine is right here,” Elias says, gesturing to Luna Margot.

“You have one. Only one, after all the years that you and Luna June were mated,” I say, nodding at Luna June so she knows I mean no offense to her.

“Alpha Joshua, you and Luna Margot have been mated for three years, is that correct?” I ask and I see Margot glance at him from the corner of her eye.

“That is correct, although I don’t see the relevance,” he growls.

“I’ll get there,” I say, smiling a fake smile. “No pups?”

“You know we don’t,” he growls, but I turn to Calvin.

“And you, Alpha Calvin, your mate is pregnant after two years, is that correct?” I ask. I’m not sure he wanted the others to know, but this is important.

“Yes, that’s correct,” he says and the Alphas on the right begin murmuring. They weren’t aware.



I nod, as if considering my next words. I pull Sophie to my side, smiling down at her. "My mate is pregnant after two weeks of being mated."

"That's a lie!" several Alphas say, shouts and gasps echoing around the room. I can see the impact my words are having on Luna June and Luna Margot, see the anger and frustration in Joshua. I hope I haven't made Margot's life more difficult, but they need to know the impact that this law is having on our she-wolves and the alternative that we could have if the law was changed.

Elias calls for quiet but before he can begin talking again, I jump in.

"How many of you can say that your mate trusts you? How many of your mates seek you out when they need comfort or affection? How many touch you of their own accord? How many give themselves to you freely? My mate does," I growl possessively, looking at her.

"Is this true, Luna Sophie?" Luna June asks.

"Yes ma'am. I trust Alpha Hunter completely without hesitation." She steps up to me, wrapping her arms around me. "I love my mate with everything in me. I trust him. I know that he will never allow anyone or anything to hurt me, or our pup, even if we have a daughter."

"You could just be commanding your mate to say these things." Alpha Elias snarls.

"What sort of Alpha would command his mate? If you can command her, you don't have a true bond. A true Luna is equal to her mate," I say.

Every Alpha on the right side scoffs at my statement. The ones on the left are sitting forward, looking intrigued, especially Ezra who hasn't spent any time with me and Sophie.

Sophie looks up me. "Command me."

"What do you want me to command?" I ask in the mind link.

'Command me to kiss you!

'You know the others will feel the need to respond, I tell her.

leatherAngry

'Good, then the other Alphas won't be able to deny that you can't command me.'

I smile at my mate, so strong and powerful, so sure of herself and of me. She always knows how to make me feel like a f\*\*g king.

“Kiss me,” I command, letting my Alpha aura push out. I already know it won’t affect her.

“No,” she says, causing several Lunas to suck in their breath. Our eyes remain locked on each other. I can see the mirth in Sophie’s eyes just as I’m sure she can see the determination in mine.

I push my aura out even harder. “Kiss me,” I command again, hearing some of the Lunas in the room whimpering as my command begins to affect them.

“No.”

“Kiss me!” I command, releasing the full effect of my Alpha aura. Several Lunas stand, stepping toward me, their mates reaching out to grab them, snarling at me.

“ENOUGH!” Alpha Joshua roars. He’s holding his mate from coming to kiss me. Elias moves quickly to block Luna June and

I see Luna Amy standing, but I think that’s more because she was worried about her daughter. I’m pleased to see that my command doesn’t impact Luna Amelia and I see her recognition of that as well.

“Do you believe us now?” Sophie asks, as I hold the command. She hasn’t taken her eyes off of me.

I hear the growls of the Alphas. “Yes.”

As soon as I drop my aura, and the Lunas sit down, panting heavily, my mate smiles. “Now, I’ll kiss you,” she says and lifts up on her toes, pressing her lips to mine. I wrap my arms around her, deepening the kiss. I feel her momentary hesitation, then she wraps her arms around me, letting everyone see that she trusts me completely and that she loves me unconditionally.

I deepen the kiss, loving this woman so very much, but I make sure it doesn’t become something lewd in front of the others.

“Uh, Alpha Hunter, perhaps we can get back to the meeting,” I hear Kayce say. I can hear the laughter that he’s fighting in his voice. He and Allison have gotten closer over the last few days and now, he’s seeing what it can be like for the two of them. I’m sure he’s anxious to get this meeting over so he can return to her and finally mark her.

“Kissing is one thing, trust is quite another.” I’m a bit surprised that it’s Alpha Calvin that says this. I see Luna Amelia glance at her mate. Perhaps they haven’t come quite as far as I thought.

“You’re right, Alpha Calvin,” I say, looking down at Sophie who still has a glazed look on her face from my kiss. I love that look.

I stroke my knuckles over her cheek. "Do you trust me?"

sony and smile as me and exposing her mate mark, in front or of Aphas. I hate that she is, but she's in my never let anyone else take credit for my mate's look up at the Aphas, extending my canines. I hear Luna Amela and Luna Amy suck in air, but I don't look at them. I keep eyes focused on Blas as I lean down and very carefully let

just the tip of my canines sink into my mate's neck.

I can see the lascivious look on Bles' face, feel it on the right side of the room with Alphas who think that I'm going to take advantage of my mate's trust and claim her here, for them see. But I would never.

My mate's gasp of pleasure and her body shivering in mine, return my focus to her. I pull my canines out and lick the small wound watching it heal over.

I would never, ever do anything to betray my mate's trust. Not for you, not for anyone," I say, pulling my mate to my side and tucking her under my arm protectively.

If you are not willing to renounce her as your Luna and you are not willing to publicly claim her today, then this committee will vote to remove you as an Alpha," Elias says.

"You can try, but I'll tell you now, I won't step down. I am right in

this, I know I am. If you can't see that the bond that I have with my mate is something far beyond the bond that any of you have with yours, then you're blind and you are the lecherous,

disgusting men that my mate claimed you to be," I say, standing my ground.

"Then it is to be war?" Alpha Owen asks. I can see the excitement in his eyes.

"If that's what this committee decides, then yes. I will go to war for Sophie and for every other she-wolf on the run who wants a relationship with their mate like I have with mine. But think of this, Alpha Owen. If you go to war with me, who is home watching over your pack? Who is keeping your pack safe while you battle with me."

"There is more than just me here who will go to war with you," he says.

"And more than just Hunter who will go to war against you," Carter says.

"How will you hunt for your mates if you're at war with me? And if you truly believe that you can trade out with the other Alphas, or whatever you think you might do to keep a war against my pack going, then you'll be away from your packs even more than you are now. Don't give me more reason to decimate your pack, Owen. You're lucky I haven't come for you yet, just for trying to claim what is mine," I snarl.

“It is time to put it to a vote. We are voting for Alpha Hunter to lose his rank as Alpha and require him to renounce his pack. We’ll start on my right-hand side with Alpha Dutton,”