

The One He Claimed Chapter 71

Chapter 71: Ezra

Hunter

I don't like my mate being away from me, especially when she's in a room with an agitated wolf who just found his mates....two, two mates. I know how strong my pull was to Sophie. I can't imagine what the pull would feel like if Soph was a twin and there were two of them. His wolf must be nearly out of his mind.

After checking on Nikki, I see Penny, standing in the doorway with bags on her shoulders and in her hands, looking around wide-eyed.

"Penny. Oh my goddess, did Dutton just leave you?" I ask, rushing up and grabbing her bags.

"Yeah, sounded like he found his mate," she says, looking around the room.

"He did. Mates, actually, they're twins."

"Oh, well, um...where are they?" she asks. I watch as her eyes focus on Nikki and Robin who are dancing in the room, but the music hasn't started back up yet. I'm just about to reach out to Kinsley when the music begins again. I look across the room and see that she is taking control of everything.

'Thank you. Penny is here. I'll take her to her room,' I say to Kinsley.

'Is our Luna okay?' she asks.

'Not sure. I'll check on her when I get back.'

She begins walking toward me. "Why don't I take Penny to her room. I was watching over the twins, but I don't have to do that now. You can come with me Penny, and when we get back you can help me keep this party going," she says, smiling at Penny.

For whatever reason, it seems to put Penny at ease, so I thank Kinsley and turn.

"What else needs to happen?" I ask.

"Just keep the party going until I get back." She looks over her shoulder at Nikki and Robin, deep in conversation. "I think that mate bond will be a good one."

"I agree," I say, watching the imperturbable Nikki blushing in Robin's arms.

When I see an omega putting a large amount of food together, I walk up, asking who it's for.

"Luna asked me to bring food for three," he says.

"Make it four, your Luna forgets that she needs to eat, and I'll take it to them."

"Yes, Alpha."

I help them put the food on a cart and then I follow my mate's scent to an office space where I hear the m**d sounds of crying. I knock softly on the door before opening it, my mate walking over to me.

"How is it going?" I ask.

She opens the door a bit wider so I can see Dutton on the floor, a twin in each arm as they cry against his shoulder. He's cooing at them, trying to soothe them.

"What happened?" I ask.

"He asked how they got here. They've already told him more than they told us," she says. I nod. The mate bond is a very powerful thing.

"You let me down, Sophie Reynolds," I say.

Her head whips around to me and her eyes looking horrified. "What? How?"

"You ordered food for three, when you should have ordered food for four, or better yet, food for five. Lucky for you, your mate adores you beyond anything else in this world and rectified that," I say, smiling at her and stroking her cheek so she knows I was joking.

"I was hoping to come eat with my mate, but I think I should stay a bit longer. They're doing pretty well on their own, but the twins are skittish."

"Dutton and Orion and under control?" I ask.

"Yes. They're his mates, Hunter. He loves them and wants them to be happy. I think now that you gave him a moment to think, he'll be fine. How are Nikki and Robin?"

I smile. "Exactly as we expected."

She leans in and kisses me. "I love you, my mate."

"Not nearly as much as I love you" I say, giving her a soft, but deep kiss.

“Is this another competition, Alpha?” she asks, smiling.

“Nope, I already won,” I say, making her laugh. Dutton’s head snaps up, looking over at us. I nod at him, pushing the cart into the room and peck my mate on the lips again before leaving. Sophie’s right, Dutton seems to have this under control. If he didn’t, he would have growled at having another male that close to his mates, even a mated one.

I head back into the party, searching for anyone who looks out of place. My eyes land on Ezra who is standing off to the side, alone, watching everything. As I watch, he follows Penny, who is no longer with Kinsley, to the bar. I follow behind, wanting to make sure that Penny is okay.

“I’m underage!” I hear Penny say, her eyes wide and the scent of her fear permeating the area around her.

“That’s an interesting name, I’munderage. Where does a name like that generate from?” I hear Ezra ask casually.

“Penny, this is Alpha Ezra. He’s a friend of mine. Ezra, this is Penny. She was on the run with Sophie just before I found her,” I say, walking up.

“Penny, that’s a much more normal name. It’s nice to meet you,” Ezra says.

Her eyes track from him to me and back again.

“Uh, hi. Uhhh, hi, Alpha, it’s nice to meet you,” she says, getting a hold of her fear.

Ezra sniffs the air. “G**a?”

“Yes,” she says, nodding.

“Do you mind if I ask where you’re from?” he asks her as the omega bartender comes to take their drink order. Ezra orders a bourbon, which I knew he would, so I made sure to have his favorite on hand. I order one as well and Penny orders a glass of wine.

“I’m from out west. Sophie and I took a train to get back here,” she says, relaxing a bit in my presence.

Ezra tilts his head. “You were on the run, and you took a train? How did you have the money for that?”

“Well…” she begins, looking around as if she’s afraid to give away the secrets of the she-wolves on the run.

“Ezra isn’t an Alpha who hunts she-wolves,” I say.

“No. I found my mate a long time ago,” he says sadly.

“Oh, is she here?” Penny asks.

“No. She was one of those who took her life,” he says, shooting his entire drink. “Excuse me,” he says, walking away.

“I didn’t know,” she says, watching him.

“I know. She was my sister,” I say watching Ezra. He looks lost, sad, miserable.

“I’m sorry,” she says

“It’s okay. He’s never gotten over losing her and his daughter,” I say, shooting my own drink and heading toward Ezra.

‘Lucas, can you and Kinsley keep an eye on things here?’

‘Of course. What’s up?’

‘Ezra needs a break. I’ll be in my office. Sophie is still with Dutton and the twins, but things seem to be moving okay there and Nikki and Robin seem fine. If that changes, let me know.’

‘Yes, Alpha.’

“Why don’t you come with me?” I say, putting a hand on Ezra’s shoulder. I can see the grief in his eyes as the memories return.

He nods and I lead him away from the party, to the quieter part of the packhouse. On the way, I grab a bottle of the bourbon that I bought for him, and we go to my office. When we get there, I pour both of us a drink and gesture for him to sit.

“I can’t sit. I can’t.... It’s so different tonight. What you’ve done here, is so different than how it was when Diana turned 18.”

His eyes glaze over with the memory of my sister. “She was so beautiful that night. Well, she was beautiful every night, but that night, the first night I recognized her as my mate, she was utterly gorgeous. I had to hold Thorin back from marking her right there. He wanted every f**g male in that room to know she was ours.”

He shakes his head and clenches his teeth as his eyes fill with tears. “I tried. I tried to make it as easy for her as I could. But... when you’re in the middle all the chanting, all the feverish energy, you just want to get her away from it all, and you rush it. A woman should never be rushed her first time, or anytime, but

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definitely not the first time. We never had a chance after that. She gave herself to me, eventually, but it was never like what you have with your mate, not like what I'm seeing between Robin and Nikki. If I could go back in time..."

He shakes his head again, putting his drink down and scrubbing his face in his hands. "We should have all fought sooner. We should have all stood up for our mates. You were right, in the committee meeting. You were absolutely right that we should all be acting like the f**g Alphas that we are, not blindly following a law that's been outdated for much too long."

"I'm petitioning to have the law changed. Kayce looked it over when he was here and I was hoping to get you, Robin, and utton to look it over too."

He nods. "I'd be happy to."

He stares at the floor a moment and I wait.

"You did what we all should have done. You had the courage to stand up for what we all should have stood for. If I had done that...." his voice c**ks. I want to offer solace, but I know there isn't any.

He looks up at me. "I'll definitely stand beside you. It's too late for me. But I'll stand for the others who deserve better. I'll do it for them, and I'll do it for Diana."

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Chapter 72: Getting Settled

Sophie

Dutton got the twins calmed while I pushed the food into the room. I didn't want to intrude, but I also didn't feel comfortable leaving them alone yet. So, I grabbed the plate of food that I knew Hunter had made for me, the plate with all of my favorites, and I sat off to the side, letting Dutton to serve his mates and take care of them.

"You can eat with us, Luna," Tiffany says.

"Oh yes, you don't have to eat alone. You're already giving up time at the party," Tammi adds.

"That's okay. I don't want to intrude," I say.

“Please, Luna. Join us,” Dutton says as he serves his mates. I feel like he wants to give the girls a break so they can eat without making themselves sick with nerves, so I pick up my plate and go to sit with them.

“I’m guessing you don’t want any wine since you’re expecting?” he asks.

“No, but thank you, Alpha.”

“Do you know if it’s a boy or a girl?” he asks as he pours the wine, confirming my suspicions that he was letting the girls settle by focusing the conversation on me.

“We find out tomorrow morning. I’m pretty sure Hunter is secretly hoping for a boy, but we’ll see.”

“How did you get pregnant so quickly, Luna? I know you said it’s because you love your mate and you enjoy intimacy, but could that really be all that it is? It’s so rare for a Luna to be pregnant so soon,” Tammi asks me, surreptitiously eyeing Dutton.

“I think, from the little I know about the, let’s call them fractured mate bonds, that intimacy isn’t as frequent as what I experience with Hunter. I love being with my mate. I can’t get enough of him, and he feels the same for me. When I’m with him, I open myself to him. I accept the gifts that he’s giving me. It’s the way it was meant to be, I think,” I say smiling. “And because of that, and because we were never careful about avoiding a pregnancy, here I am,” I smile, looking down and rubbing my stomach.

“We’re very happy for you, Luna. Speaking as an Alpha, I can say that every Alpha wants a male heir, someone he knows can one day take over the pack for him. But I also believe that your mate will be thrilled to have a little Sophie running around the pack,” Dutton says, smiling at me.

“I believe you’re right, Alpha,” I say.

“What about you, Alpha? What would be your preference for a pup?” Tiffany asks him.

“Healthy, happy, and loved. That’s all that matters, boy or girl, I’ll be happy to have a pup, or pups. I’d like to have more than one and if the two of you accept me as your mate, then we can talk about how many each of you want. I’d be happy to fill my packhouse with our pups,” he says, his eyes shining possessively while his mates both blush, looking down to try and hide their smiles.

“I want three,” Tammi says, showing more confidence than I’ve seen in her yet.

“Then three you shall have,” he says, smiling as her smile widens at his words. Then he turns to Tiffany. “What about you?”

Tiffany raises her chin, looking at her sister, then back at Dutton. "Tammi and I agreed that if we ever found our mate, that I would be the one who would produce the heir. I don't care how many children I have to have as long as I have one boy."

"What if you have a boy first? Are you done?" he asks, casually challenging her.

"Well, no," she says frowning.

"And does that mean that Tammi doesn't get to have children until you have a boy? My first-born son would be heir to the

pack, regardless of which of you delivered him," he says, looking at them.

"Couldn't we just say that Tiffany's first-born son was heir to the pack?" Tammi asks.

"That would potentially take the right of being Alpha away from one of our sons, Tammi, just because he was born to you and not Tiffany. That sort of thing breeds contempt among Alphas and brothers. I would never want one of my sons to be angry or hateful toward another for taking what they feel is rightfully theirs," he says.

I know he's right, but the twins were born into an all-girl family, and they are Betas. The issue of handing over pack rights to Tiffany's first-born son seems okay in theory, but Dutton is right.

That's how discontent is started among families, and it wouldn't be the first time a brother killed another to take over the pack.

I can see that they hadn't considered all of the ramifications of their decisions.

"I believe that you all have a lot to talk about and these sorts of decisions don't have to be made today. You're still getting to know each other; you're still deciding if you are going to accept Alpha Dutton as your mate..."

"We are?" Tammi asks, looking at Tiffany for confirmation.

"Are you?" Dutton asks Tiffany, obviously recognizing that she's the mouthpiece for the two when it comes to decision making.

"Luna, how did Alpha Dutton vote at the committee meeting last week?" she asks, not taking her eyes off of him.

"He voted in favor of Hunter keeping his title."

"And how do you feel about public claimings?" she asks Dutton.

“My mind is being changed about them. I’ll admit, when I first met Luna Sophie, I was surprised to hear about the reasons that the public claimings were so traumatic for women. It’s different for men and it’s different for our wolves. Not having any sisters, I didn’t fully understand the impact that it caused. Now, seeing both of you, having you here with me, I have no intention of sharing any part of our intimacy with anyone. That is mine, for me alone to have with the two of you.”

“I believe our mind is made up, but we want to take it slow, Alpha,” Tiffany says.

“I understand. You’ve had a difficult time and I want you both to feel safe and confident that I will protect you from anyone or anything, that includes your previous Alpha and your father. And you’re my mates, you should call me Dutton.”

I swear I can see Tammi melting at his words and even Tiffany’s rigid posture seems to relax.

“It sounds like you won’t be needing me any longer,” I say, standing. “Alpha Dutton, you have a room, but the twins are sharing one. If you decide that the three of you are moving into one room, just let me know.”

All three stand and the twins turn to look at me.

“Thank you so much, Luna,” Tiffany says.

“Yes, thank you,” Tammi says.

“You’re very welcome. Please let me or Hunter know if you need anything at all. And Alpha, you and your mates are welcome to stay as long as you’d like. I believe that Alpha Robin is staying until the committee meeting later this week. He’ll be using that time to get to know his mate as well.”

“Thank you, Luna. We may do that. I’d like to give my mates some time to adjust and as you said, we have a lot to talk about.”

“I’ll leave you to it then,” I say and walk out.

I walk back into the main room, seeing that the party is still going, but it’s starting to die down. I find Kinsley talking to Lucas. “Where is everyone?”

“Well, after the birthday girl left with her mate to walk around the pack lands and probably have some privacy, everyone else started to head to their rooms.”

“Where’s Penny?” I ask, looking around.

“She got skittish about Alpha Ezra saying hi, and she retired early.”

“Where is Alpha Ezra?” I ask, not seeing him either.

“He was with me, but I think he’s retired now as well,” Hunter says, coming up behind me. “The twins?”

“They’re well enough that they’re talking about who’s going to have the Alpha heir,” I say, smiling.

“Already?” Kinsley asks as Hunter wraps his arms around me from behind, nuzzling into my neck.

“They had it all figured out in their minds, but it’s not going to work in practice,” I tell them.

Lucas looks around the room. “Come on, love, let’s get to bed. I know you weren’t feeling well this morning and you’ve had a long day. There’s no one left that needs tending to,” he says to Kinsley.

“You were ill this morning?” I ask her, concerned.

“I think something I ate last night just didn’t agree with me. I feel fine now, just a little tired, but as Lucas said, it’s been a long day.”

He wraps an arm around her shoulder and kisses the side of her head. I’m thrilled that she doesn’t flinch away from his touch.

“Come on, time for me to take care of my mate and put her to bed,” he says, leading Kinsley away

“Time for me to take care of my mate too,” Hunter growls in my ear. “Did you have more positions you want to try tonight?”

I turn in his arms and smile up at him. “Several.”

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Chapter 73: Excitement

Hunter

I’m so excited that I nearly jump out of bed without taking care of my mate. Nearly. The day I forget to start my day inside my mate, hearing her sweet moans, and my name coming from her lips, is the day that I give up being an Alpha.

When she’s lying limp in my arms, exhausted and happy, I carry her to the showers, and take her again.

“Someone’s happy this morning,” she says, smiling at me as we get ready for warrior training.

“I can hardly wait for warrior training to be done so we can find out if we’re having a boy or a girl,” I tell her.

She slowly walks over to me, her hips swaying as she walks, making me hard and ready for her again. She takes my face in her hands and lifts up to kiss me. “We need to check on our guests and we need to make sure you know I’m ready for an attack and able to protect myself and our pup, so let’s go to warrior training and have breakfast, then go find out if we’re having your Alpha heir.”

I stop, grabbing her hand as she starts to walk away. “You know I don’t care, right? You know I’m just thrilled to be having a pup with you? Boy or girl, I don’t care. I mean, yeah, I want an heir, but if this is a girl it just means we have to have another pup,” I say grinning as my mate laughs up at me. She’s so beautiful when she laughs.

“We can have a couple of each, if you’d like,” she says, sauntering away. I begin following her, my magnet that constantly draws me to her.

“Oh, I’d like. We should definitely keep practicing,” I say to her, once again making her laugh. She’s still laughing, smiling up at me as we walk out to warrior training. I’m sure I look

possessively happy as I smile back at her. The entire group goes quiet as we join them.

“About time,” Lucas grumbles as I kiss Sophie and jog up to the front.

“What are you so grumpy about?” I ask him.

He just shakes his head. I frown, but leave it for now. I begin our training, noticing that Kinsley is absent.

“Where’s your mate?” I ask Lucas in an aside.

“She’s sick again,” he grumbles.

I look at him. “Do we need to get her to see the doctor?”

“She won’t go. She says she’s fine. We’re just getting to a point where she trusts me, so I don’t want to push...”

“I’ll talk to Sophie. I’ll have her talk to Kinsley,” I say.

“Thank you, Alpha,” he says, relief evident in his voice.

I look around, seeing Robin and Nikki sparring. Robin is smiling at Nikki's skill. She's not wearing his mark yet, but I can smell his scent on her from here. They'll make a good pair.

I also see Dutton sparring with his mates. They all look exhausted, and I'm impressed that they are even up. Once again, none of them have marks on their necks. It's probably a good thing they're taking it slow.

Once the warriors are training, I move to Sophie and begin sparring with her. She's getting better, faster, and stronger. I know that's time limited for now. As she gets larger with my pup, her agility and flexibility will decrease, but I'm really proud of her. And since I don't care who wins our sparring matches, I can be extra careful with my punches, only tagging her in the arms and legs. I don't throw any serious kicks her way, but she doesn't hold back which is exactly what I want. She nearly knocks me to the ground with a low, swiping kick and I have to work to stay on my feet and maneuver to tag her on her back side. Because I'm proud of her, I swat her a**hard, harder than I would if I have landed a punch.

She yips, rubbing her a**cheek. "You're going to kiss that later and make it better, Alpha," she purrs.

"Any time, my Luna," I say, and I'm surprised when Lucas calls the end of training. It's good that I've been distracted by my mate and not focused on our doctor appointment.

We start to head inside, and I pull Sophie aside. "Lucas said that Kinsley is sick again this morning. He's worried about her but he's afraid to push her too hard to see a doctor because their relationship is just starting to improve. Would you talk to her?"

"Absolutely. I can't have my Beta getting sick on me," she says.

"You are utterly incredible. Do you know that?" I ask her, pulling her to a stop as we walk into the dining hall.

"I think you're pretty incredible too, Alpha."

I lean in, cupping her face in my hand as I kiss her. Here, in our pack, I don't have to wait for her to kiss me. I can feel through our bond that she trusts me and our pack. As I kiss her, I can once again feel the pack's happiness, their contentment at our relationship.

"Can we have that?" I hear a soft voice ask as I continue to kiss my mate.

"That's exactly what I want us to have," I hear Dutton say.

"Us too?" I hear Nikki ask.

“Nah, I want you leaping into my arms and wrapping yourself around me when we kiss,” Robin replies and I hear Nikki snort.

I smile, feeling Sophie smiling as well, both of us having heard their conversations..

She pulls away from me, still smiling up at me. “When you trust your mate like I do, you can have any kind of relationship you want,” she says loud enough for them to hear, once again. making me feel like a f**g king.

stroke her cheek. “Goddess, I love you.”

I take her hand and we walk to where the food is laid out. When we fill out plates, we return to the table with our guests who also now include Ezra and Penny

“Penny!” Sophie says, rushing to say hello to her friend. I smile, then turn to Ezra who is watching me closely.

“I missed you at training,” I say.

“Apparently you did, since I was there,” he says, raising an eyebrow at me.

“You were?” I ask and he nods.

“Sorry, my mind’s on our appointment this morning,” I say.

“I understand. If you don’t mind, can you send me that draft of the law change you’re proposing? I’m leaving after breakfast,” he says.

“Is everything alright?”

He looks down at his food, and I see him swallow a lump in his throat. “It’s hard. Being here. Seeing what you have. I’m happy for you, but...it’s hard.”

“I understand,” I say, and I do. I know that if Sophie took her life, I’d be devastated. I’m not sure I could go on like Ezra has. Maybe I’d dedicate myself to my pack, but I don’t even know if I’d have the will to do that. Their bond may not have been as strong as mine is with Sophie, but I know Ezra loved my sister with everything in him.

When we’re done with breakfast, I know our time is getting close. I feel like a child on his birthday waiting to open his presents.

“I think I’ll take my mate to our appointment before his nervous energy begins to permeate the entire pack,” Sophie says, smiling at me.

“I’m not ashamed that I’m excited,” I say, smiling back at her.

“Come on, Alpha, let’s go,” she says, standing and taking my hand.

We say goodbye to our guests and walk together to the pack hospital. I feel like I’m walking on air, like I want to s**p down the street. I’m practically giddy with excitement. I can feel Shaw’s excitement mixing with mine, intensifying my emotions.

Sophie just chuckles at me as we walk in and announce ourselves. I can’t sit, too excited to find out what the gender of our baby will be.

When we get into the room and Dr. Felicity comes in, she smiles at me before turning to Sophie. “I see our Alpha is ready. Are you, Luna?”

“Yes,” she says, and Dr. Felicity squirts some goo on Sophie’s stomach and turns on a television monitor.

“Okay, let’s see what we can see,” she says. Sophie reaches out her hand and I take it, leaning over her to wrap my arm around her, putting my face close to hers and kissing her cheek quickly before focusing on the monitor.

“Here’s your baby’s heart. It’s beating beautifully,” Dr. Felicity says, and I see a small pulsing blob on the screen. She clicks a button and Sophie and I can both hear the sound of our pup’s heart. I can smell the salt of Sophie’s tears and I lean in, nuzzling the side of her head as I watch the monitor in rapt attention.

“It’s small, and maybe hard for you to see, but this is your baby’s head,” the doctor says, clicking a button. “This is their bottom, which means they’re being shy and turned away from me. Typical Alpha making my job hard,” Dr. Felicity says good. naturedly, which makes my mate chuckle. I kiss the side of her head, my eyes still glued to the screen.

Dr. Felicity moves the wand around on Sophie’s stomach, trying to get a better picture of our pup.

“I’m going to poke you a little, to see if I can get closer to your pup, Luna. If I hurt you, let me know.”

Sophie nods and Dr. Felicity begins moving the wand around of different parts of Sophie’s stomach, pushing until she finds the spot she wants and the freezes the image on the screen.

“You want to know what you’re having, right?” she asks, looking over at us.

“Yes!” we both say.

“Well, Alpha, Luna. It looks like you’re having a boy.”

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Chapter 74: Hunter's Fear

Sophie

I knew Hunter wanted a son. He says it didn't matter, but he's an Alpha. It was always hard for my father that he never had a son to pass his pack along to. I've wondered from time to time what he plans to do with his pack. He's getting close to

retirement age. If either Amelia or I had been a male, we'd have taken over the pack for him by now.

So, when my mate howled his excitement, I wasn't surprised. I was thrilled and touched to the point of tears, though, when I heard the entire pack respond, their own excitement palpable. I love how every little thing that makes us happy, seems to make the pack just as happy. It's almost like there's a direct line. between mine and Hunter's happiness and the pack's. Maybe there is.

He made Dr. Felicity take nearly a hundred pictures of our pup, intending to pass them around to the pack members, as if they'll know what they're looking at. I'm not even sure I know what I'm looking at. Then, after I was cleaned off and dressed, we discussed my next visit, what to expect in the future, when to be concerned, and all the things that a couple who is pregnant with their first pup needs to know. Hunter listened with rapt attention, asking lots of questions, and making sure he understood every possible thing that could go wrong and the signs to look for.

Dr. Felicity patiently answered all of his questions about me and our pup, my eating, my weight – yes I need to gain some, no being slightly underweight doesn't put me at risk of losing our pup, exercise, warrior training – yes I can continue for now, sex, sleeping, every possible thing he could think of that might cause me or our son problems.

When we finally leave the hospital, pictures in hand, my mate is still practically floating down the street. However, this time, his mind is preoccupied with how he's going to make sure that nothing happens to me or our pup, rather than the excitement he had about finding out what our pup was going to be on the way to the pack hospital.

"Hunter..."

"Yes, baby?" he says distractedly.

"Hunter!" I say, stopping and pulling him to a stop.

"What?" he asks, focusing on me.

"Stop worrying. I'm going to be fine. Our pup is going to be fine."

"Maybe you should stay home when I go to the committee meeting this week."

“No f**g way, Hunter. Don’t you dare push me out of that. No one would be s**d enough to try and hurt me and if they were, you’d end them.” I reach up and put my hand on his cheek. “You can’t keep me locked away in a tower until I deliver our son. That’s not the life you promised me and that’s not the Alpha female I am or the mate that you were given. Stand beside me, protect me from any threats you feel I need to be protected from, but don’t hide me away and keep me locked up, Hunter.”

He pulls me to him, wrapping his arms around me and holding

me tight. I can feel the fear in him. Fear that he never shows and almost never feels. It’s a fear that something may happen. to me and his pup.

“I’ve never known fear until this very moment, Soph. I’ve never had so much in my life to live for, so much that could be taken away from me, so much to fight for. If anything were to happen to you or our son...”

“It won’t. You won’t allow it. I trust you, Hunter. Completely. Now, it’s your turn to trust me. Trust that I won’t allow anyone to hurt our son either. I won’t allow anyone to take me or him from you. And don’t even get me started on how feral Hedda would go if someone tried to take you from me,” I say, earning a smile.

He lays his forehead against mine. “I’m not going to tell you that I won’t become overbearing, especially when we’re at the committee meeting.”

“I have no intention of leaving your side. You’re my mate. We are partners. We should stand side by side against those who want to make our world less than it should be.”

Hunter starts chuckling.

“What’s funny?” I ask him.

“Can you imagine what this conversation is going to be like one day between Robin and Nikki?”

I laugh. “She’ll win that fight.”

“Just as you did,” he says, taking my hand and walking us toward the packhouse,

“I wouldn’t call that a fight,” I say.

“A battle of wills?”

“Hmm, you gave in awfully quickly if that’s what that was.”

“You made some very good points and I also know deep down that I’m being unreasonable because of my fear.”

“Well, today, let’s celebrate with our pack,” I say as we walk inside.

“WE’RE HAVING A BOY!” he announces and as the pack comes to congratulate us, he begins handing out pictures, showing everyone where he thinks our son’s penis is proving that it’s a boy.

I shake my head and accept hugs from our pack members and our friends. When the congratulations finally die down, I head to the kitchens, looking for Kinsley. I need to find out what’s going on with her.

I say hello, thanking more people when they congratulate me on our pup, but I’m not seeing Kinsley anywhere. I’ve just about decided to mind link her to see if she’s still upstairs when I see her walking out of a bathroom in one of the downstairs hallways. I watch as she wipes her mouth as she closes the door. When she looks up and sees me watching her she jumps.

“Luna! I, uh, I hear congratulations are in order.”

“Thank you. Walk with me, Kinsley.”

“I have some things to do...”

“Walk with me,” I say again, not giving any room for argument.

Her head drops but she follows me as I walk back out to the front of the packhouse, thanking more pack members as the good news of my pup spreads like wildfire around the pack.

I wait until we’re far enough away from the packhouse that no one can hear us.

“Talk to me. What’s going on?”

She looks at me and I can see that she’s about to lie to me. I raise an eyebrow at her, daring her to lie.

She looks back down and I can smell the salt of tears.

“I don’t know. It started about a week ago. Things between Lucas and I have gotten more intimate and...” she stops, stifling a s**b. I put my arms around her, looking for someplace where we won’t be seen or overheard. I lead her over to a seat near the forest and hold her while she cries.

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Chapter 75: Kinsley’s Surprise

Sophie

When she calms, I look at her. "You've gotten more intimate and what?" I ask gently.

The tears continue to fall as plucks imaginary lint off of her clothes. "Lucas thinks it's because I'm m**y unable to handle our intimacy." She looks up at me with pleading eyes. "That's not it at all. I'm not disgusted by being with him. The first time, it was hard, yes. We both had to work to keep me in the moment and not flashing back to my marking day. But we've tried a couple more times and each time it's gotten easier. But then, then he caught me throwing up and he thinks I'm not being honest with him. He thinks that it's my disgust at being with him that's making me sick. I told him it isn't, but he thinks that even if I don't think it, that subconsciously I don't want to be with him," she says, breaking down into **bs again.

I pull her into another hug, holding her while she cries. "That's not it at all. Truly Luna. Things have finally started to get better between us. Seeing you and Alpha together, I know that's what I want, and I know that it's up to me to give Lucas a chance to show me that I can trust him. But now...now he won't touch me. He's so worried that I hate his touch that he barely even holds me. I'd just gotten to the point where I wanted him to hold me and now he'll barely touch me and if he does, it's only for a few moments." She continues sobbing as she tells me all of this, hiccupping through Her words and rubbing tears and s*t o**n my shirt as she cries.

"Kinsley, when you say that you've been together, do you mean that you've had sex?"

She nods against my chest.

"And when you had sex, did he come inside you?"

She nods again.

"Kinsley, have you taken a pregnancy test?" I ask, pulling back to look at her. For me, this is simple, but I can see that the two of them are so twisted up over their mate bond that they can't see this for what it is.

"It's too soon, and it was only a few times," she says. "No one has pups this quickly."

"Really?" I ask, giving her a look as I wipe the tears from her eyes.

"You're different. You're Sophie Meyers, now Sophie Reynolds. It's different for you."

"I don't think so. Come on," I say standing up and holding out my hand to her.

"Where are we going?"

“We’re going to see Dr. Felicity. If you’re not pregnant, she can still look you over and figure out what’s wrong. But if you are, she can let you know that pretty quickly.”

“I don’t know...”

“I will not allow you to be ill, Kinsley. I cannot run with this pack without you. You are too valuable to me and to this pack, and that doesn’t even begin to account for how much you mean to your mate. He’s so worried about you. Let’s at least let him know what’s going on with you. If nothing else, if you are sick with some bizarre wolf disease, then he’ll know it’s not in your mind, Kinsley. He’ll know this isn’t about him and the two of you can continue to work on your mate bond.”

She nods, finally accepting my hand and together we walk to the pack hospital.

“We need to see Dr. Felicity,” I say when we walk in. She’s walking by at that moment and looks around the corner.

“Luna, is everything alright? Everyone is talking about your pup already. The pack is very excited,” she says.

“Yes, I’m good, but I’d like you to take a look at Beta Kinsley for me.”

“Sure, come on back.”

When we get to the room, she turns and looks at Kinsley.

“Tell me what’s going on,” she says. I continue to hold Kinsley’s hand as she tells the doctor about being sick in the mornings, how she feels better as the day goes on, and then goes on to tell her about Lucas’ fears that this is all in her head.

“Well, I don’t think it’s all in your head. Have you been more tired lately?”

“Well, yes, but we’ve had so much going on.”

“And how about food. Are certain foods that you usually like smelling bad to you?” she asks.

Chapter 75 Kinsley’s Surprise

“Yes! How did you know? Do you know what’s wrong with me?”

she asks.

Dr. Felicity smiles. “I’m pretty sure I know what’s going on, but I’d like to take some blood and get some urine. Then I can confirm my suspicions and let you know for sure.”

I stay with Kinsley while Dr. Felicity draws her blood and I wait while she gives her urine sample. Then, I hold Kinsley's hand as we wait for Dr. Felicity to return. I can feel Kinsley getting more and more nervous the longer we wait.

"It will be fine, Kinsley," I tell her.

When Dr. Felicity walks back into the room, she sits down and H**ks at Kinsley.

"Well, Beta. It looks like you and our Luna are going to be having pups around the same time. You're pregnant."

I watch as Kinsley's mouth opens and closes several times before words come out.

"You're sure?" she whispers.

"I'm positive. I'll want you to start coming in for routine exams. You and your mate will most likely want to hear the heartbeat of your baby. We can do it now, but I'm sure Beta Lucas would want to be here as well," Dr. Felicity says and Kinsley nods. "And depending on how far along you are, in the next week or two, we'll be able to tell you if you're having a boy or a girl."

Kinsley turns to look at me, then bursts into tears again. I reach out to hold her again and Dr. Felicity gives me a tissue for her along with some instructions for her to start following before her next visit.

"Thank you, doctor," I say.

"Congratulations, Beta."

Kinsley pulls away from me and smiles at her. "Thank you."

"Ready to go tell your mate?" I ask her.

She nods, choking out a laugh between her tears. "Yes. He'll be so excited."

"Yes, he will," I say, and we walk back to the packhouse quietly. I leave Kinsley to her thoughts, knowing that it must be overwhelming for her right now.

When we get back to the packhouse, Lucas finds us almost immediately as if he's been searching for Kinsley.

"Kins! Oh, Luna, is everything okay? You've been crying, Kinsley?" he asks, and I understand exactly what Kinsley meant about him not wanting to touch her. I can see his hands twitch wanting to hold her and if it were Hunter, he'd have pulled me into his embrace the moment he saw my red-rimmed eyes, but Lucas is holding back.

“Can we talk privately, Lucas?” Kinsley asks and I watch as he steels himself for what he must think is terrible news, probably that she really doesn’t want him touching her.

“We’ll talk later, Kinsley,” I say, leaving them to their conversation. I’m headed to Hunter’s office when I hear Lucas’ howl of excitement Coming from across the packhouse.

Hunter comes running out of his office. “What’s going on?” he asks as several pack members respond to Lucas’ howl.

“We should have a party tonight, Alpha. We have more than one pup to celebrate,” I say, wrapping my arms around his neck as he wraps his around my waist.

“Lucas and Kinsley?” he asks excitedly.

I nod and he lifts his head, howling almost as excitedly as he did when he found out about our pup earlier today.

My response, or maybe it’s Shaw’s, is instinctual. I lift my head up and howl my utter happiness with this news.

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Chapter 76: Happiness

Hunter

We had quite the celebration the night I found out that my mate is carrying my son. Between that, and then finding out that Lucas and Kinsley were also expecting, the pack was beyond excited. Their happiness was palpable and both Robin and Dutton commented on it.

“I’m not sure I’ve ever felt this level of happiness in a pack, not mine, certainly,” Dutton said, watching the festivities and smiling when one of the twins comes over to hug him or wants to be held by him for a moment. I can see that he’s letting them initiate the interactions, but he readily agrees to every bit of attention, lavishing them with love each time they approach him. Tammi, especially, seems to thrive on his affection. Tiffany seems a bit more standoffish, but she still seeks him out. frequently.

Nikki and Robin are a whole other level. The sexual tension between them is as heavy in the air as my pack’s excitement.

“Do you think it’s because your ranked members are so happy?” Robin asks, participating in the conversation but his eyes never leave his mate. She’s talking and laughing with Sophie and Kinsley, but her eyes continue to track back to Robin frequently.

“Maybe, or maybe it’s just Sophie, I’d like to think it’s all of us, but the feeling of the pack changed when I brought her home. Well, that and I got rid of the ones who weren’t in agreement with abolishing the public claimings. She’s made everything

different, better.”

“Speaking of public claimings, I heard that the girl Owen claimed then discarded is here now, right?” Dutton asks, tearing his gaze away from his mates to look at me.

“Brooklyn, yeah she’s here. She and her mother were finally released from the hospital. Her mom, Leah, rejected her mate for not protecting their pup, so she’s also been healing. I’ve put them in a house outside the pack because Brooklyn can’t take loud noises and crowds right now, it’s too triggering for her.”

“She’s an omega?” Robin asks, also directing his attention to

me.

“Yeah,” I growl, knowing they’ll understand the damage that an Alpha did to a young omega in that type of situation.

“What an a**hole. I’d like to talk to her while I’m here, if that’s possible. I’ll be careful with her,” Dutton says, turning back to his mates. “Aiden’s the one who chased my girls onto your pack lands, right?”

“That was him. He’s also the one who was hunting Sophie when she ran home. I wasn’t kidding when I said that any one of them could have captured our mates. Can you imagine if he’d have caught the twins?”

Dutton’s possessive growl is not unexpected. I felt the same way when I heard Aiden had hunted Sophie. Several people look up, but it’s the twins who look concerned. Dutton sets his drink down and opens his arms. I smile as both mates come over, wrapping themselves in his embrace.

“What is it?” Tiffany asks.

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“I was confirming with Alpha Hunter that it was that a**hole. Aiden who chased you onto his pack lands,” he tells her, and I see Tammi shiver in his arms. He kisses Tiffany’s forehead while pulling Tammi closer, then kissing the top of her head. Both women relax in his embrace and I smile, looking up to see my mate watching. When her eyes meet mine, I wink at her.

‘Did we decide who won our bet this morning?’ I ask her in the mind link, watching a soft blush spread across her cheeks. Then her chin goes up just a little.

'I did, but I was intending to defer to my mate, hoping he'll teach me some new positions tonight,' she says, and now it's my turn to growl possessively, although much less aggressively than Dutton.

"Is all this growling an Alpha thing, or a male thing?" Nikki asks, walking up and eyeing her mate seductively.

"Both," all three of us say at once.

"Hmm, and what is all this grumbling about?" she asks.

"Who chased you? When you were on the run, who hunted you?" Robin asks her, tugging her against his side when she doesn't immediately lean against him.

"I'm much too fast to be caught by one of those a**h**s," Nikki says with all the arrogance of a true Alpha.

Robin just smiles at her. "I'll bet you couldn't get away from me."

"What's the bet?" she asks, and I snort, going to find my own mate.

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I wrap my arm around her, leaning down to kiss her lips when she looks up at me, then I look at my Beta, who is happier than I've ever seen him in my life.

"They've already gone to hear the baby's heartbeat," Sophie says.

"When did they have time?" I ask.

"Lucas told Kinsley that he didn't care about the party, she and his pup were more important." As I watch, Kinsley looks up at her mate, love shining in her eyes!

"This is going to be very good for them," I say, watching as Lucas leans over and kisses her softly. For once, she doesn't flinch.

"We're building something really good here, Hunter. Can you feel it?" she asks me softly.

"I can, and I'm not the only one. Dutton and Robin can feel it too," I say. She turns, looking behind us. I follow her gaze to see Robin and Nikki nearly nose to nose as they talk, both are smiling, and it looks like both of them have forgotten they're in the middle

of a party. As I watch, Nikki leaps into Robins' arms and he growls possessively before walking away from the party, his mouth firmly attached to Nikki's.

"Want to bet she's marked tomorrow?" Sophie asks.

"I feel pretty confident that she will be. But if you want to make a wager and you want to make it worth me losing, I'm happy to take that bet," I say, looking down at her. Her eyes darken as she looks up at me.

"I'm not sure I'm prepared to make another bet. My mate hasn't yet shown me all there is to sex and our sexual positions," she says in a mock pout.

"Oh, my little mate, you are poking the wolf. I hope you aren't tired. If you want new positions, I can keep you up all night long, have your screaming until you can barely breathe and your voice is gone, have your body quivering from my touch, my mouth, my fingers, and my c****k. I can make your body so sensitive that I could make you come just by blowing air on your nipples," I say, my voice getting much deeper with my desire for her. As I've talked, her mouth has opened, her eyes have become glassy, and the scent of her arousal has begun to permeate the air around us.

"Is that what my little mate wants?" I growl, leaning in so I can hear her soft gasp.

"Yes," she whispers.

I stand, taking her hand and turning. I nod to Lucas who smiles at me, then at Dutton who goes back to his conversation with his mates before taking my mate upstairs and showing her everything she wants to see for hours, long after she's told me she can't take any more, and long after her voice is completely gone from screaming my name, and from taking me down her throat as she greedily sucked me off.

In the morning, I let her sleep as I get ready for warrior training, quickly showering the scent of sex off my body and her arousal off my face before jogging downstairs. Lucas is dragging himself to training, looking exhausted, but happy. I notice his mate mark looks freshly re-marked. Robin shows up a few moments later, also exhausted and wearing a new mate mark.

"Congratulations!" I say, slapping him on the back.

"Thank you, it feels good to have her mark on me and mine on her."

"Does this mean she'll be joining us at the committee meeting this week?" I ask.

"Do you really think I could keep her from coming?" he asks, raising his eyebrow.

"Not any more than I can keep Sophie from coming," I say.

Dutton is noticeably absent from this morning's training and even if he did mark his mates, I'm not sure they would be joining us for the committee meeting. His mates are definitely more skittish than Sophie and Nikki, but I'm pleased that they seem to be giving their trust to Dutton.

Penny joins us for warrior training and since Sophie isn't here this morning, I get a chance to see her skills. I hadn't intended to, but I end up sparring with her, testing her strength and skill. What she lacks in strength, she makes up for in agility and c**g. She's a smart fighter, landing several strong, potentially deadly hits on me.

"Where did you learn to fight?" I ask her.

"My Alpha had two sons my age. We were the only children of that age and while the Alphas could spar with others older than they were, I was frequently put up against one or the other. They didn't take it easy on me, forcing me to use my own skills to defeat them."

"And did you? Defeat them?"

"Several times. They made the mistake of relying on their strength. Since I was never going to defeat them with strength alone, I had to learn to fight smarter."

"It shows. I'm impressed. Nice job, Penny."

"Thank you, Alpha. And, umm, if you talk to Alpha Ezra, can you let him know I'm sorry. I didn't get a chance to tell him myself. I feel badly about how I acted around him."

"It's understandable. No one realizes how different our pack is until you're in it and see it for yourself."

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She looks around, feeling the emotions of the pack around her. "It's true and I wanted to talk with you, Alpha. I'm not sure if now is the right time, but you and Luna Sophie are the type of leaders that I want in my life and my pack. I'd really like to join your pack, if you agree."

H

"I would be happy to have you and I know Sophie would as well. We're going to have a ceremony before we leave to go back to the committee the day after tomorrow. I have a couple of people who want to join or rejoin the pack too. I'll make sure you're included in that list."

"Thank you, Alpha.

“Penny, how old are you?”

“I’m seventeen, Alpha.”

“I’ll talk to Lucas. I’d like for you to start training with the different warriors in our pack. I’d like to assess your skills. If you’re interested and you show that you are capable, we may have a Lead Warrior position for you,” I tell her.

“Thank you, Alpha! I would love 1

I smile as I walk away. I don’t see the potential, I think she will, I m her.

“Thank you, Alpha! I would love that!” she says excitedly.

I smile as I walk away. I don’t say this to her, but if she shows the potential, I think she will, I may have a G** position for her.

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Chapter 77: Three Lunas

Sophie

Hunter asked me to facilitate the meeting between Dutton and Brooklyn. I understood why Dutton wanted to talk to her, he wanted the information first-hand so he could better argue against Owen, but Brooklyn was terrified of being in a room alone with an unmated Alpha again. I can’t blame her. Her body still isn’t fully recovered from what Owen did to her.

When I first asked Brooklyn if she’d be willing to speak with him, she had started to hyperventilate, her eyes going wide. I’d had to take her face in my hands and help her to regain her

composure.

“Is it really necessary Luna?” her mother, Leah, asked with concern.

“No, it isn’t. You can say no, Brooklyn. But Alpha Dutton wants to hear in your own words what happened, so he can help fight against the injustice of what happened to you. He has found his mates here in our pack. The Beta twins that came in around the same time you did.

“Did he...” she begins.

“He hasn’t marked them yet. He’s giving them time to get to know him and showing them that he can be the type of mate they want.”

I told her this before I saw Dutton that morning. When I did, I realized that I was incorrect. Alpha Dutton was proudly strutting around with not one, but two mate marks on his neck, one on each side.

I let him know that Brooklyn had agreed to meet with him, but her mother and I would be there and if at any point one of us decided it was too much for her, he would have to leave.

“Of course. I understand. My own mates needed a gentle touch, if you will, to get them to believe that I was a trustworthy man.”

“Will they be joining us at the committee meeting?” I ask as we walk to Brooklyn’s house.

“No. I gave them the option, but they’re too afraid to be there, especially knowing that Alpha Aiden will be there as well.”

“Are you planning to flaunt those marks while you’re there?” I ask, smiling at him.

He looks at me with fierce determination in his eyes. “I have every intention of making sure that Alpha Aiden knows that those girls are mine and if he ever thinks of trying to take what is mine, I’ll kill him.”

“Good for you, Alpha. Do you plan to return home before you go?”

“No. I’ll talk to Hunter, but they are comfortable here and the committee meeting is in a couple of days. I’d rather not introduce them to a new pack, then leave them.”

“You are all welcome to stay, you don’t have to ask Hunter,” I tell him. He stops and looks at me.

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“Hmmm,” he says, frowning.

“Hmmm?” I ask.

“I’m not used to being around a Luna who runs the pack as an equal partner. I’ll have to make sure that I remember to treat my Lunas as equal partners as well,” he says, and we begin walking again.

“How are the twins? I’m assuming they’re both marked and mated now?”

“Yes..That was....we had to figure out the logistics of it, but in the end, everyone was happy.”

“Good,” I say as we approach the door. I knock, waiting for Leah to open it.

When we step in, Brooklyn is seated on the couch, a blanket over her legs.

I'll give Alpha Dutton credit, he did everything he could to make his interview with Brooklyn easy. He sat in the chair f**st away from her, although I could tell he wanted to be closer. He kept his voice soft and gentle, even when asking her difficult questions. When she began to cry, he got a box of tissues and handed them to her, once against stretching to keep himself as far from her as possible before returning to his seat and giving her a few minutes to collect herself. He was patient with her, not rushing her, but getting the answers that he needed.

When we left, Brooklyn looked exhausted, but she thanked him for coming and for supporting her at the committee meeting.

“That was well done, Alpha,” I say as we walk back.

I can feel the anger radiating off of him. “Do you have a gym or someplace I can go punch something?” he asks.

“Yes, we have a gym. I can show you,” I tell him, then mind link Hunter.

‘What can I do for you, my love?’ he answers.

‘Dutton needs to work off some anger,’ I tell him.

‘Brooklyn?’

‘Yes.’

‘Where are you?’

‘Headed to the gym.’

‘I'll meet you there.’

When we arrive, I open the doors and Dutton turns, looking at me before walking in. “I always knew that Owen was a prick, but to do what he did to that sweet girl...”

He growls and turns to walk into the gym. I watch him a moment as he walks straight up to a punching bag and punches it so hard it bursts.

I turn and see Hunter jogging up.

“You’re late. You’d better hurry before he destroys all the punching bags,” I tell him. He looks past me into the gym as I hear another punching bag get smashed.

Hunter takes an extra moment to lean in a kiss me, before heading inside. I leave them to it, knowing I need to make sure

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everything is ready for us to be gone for a couple of days again.

When I get to the office that Hunter set up for me, right next to his and with an adjoining door, I pull up my computer and see that Hunter has sent me the law about public claiming along with the edits that the other Alphas have provided. I look it over, thrilled that my mate has asked for my input.

I make my own tweaks to the document, clarifying that we’re not against Alphas or ranked members marking and mating others that aren’t ranked members. We just don’t believe that it should be public and that the new law should be instituted across all packs, not left up to the individual Alphas or packs to decide how they want their ranked members claimed.

Thinking of Brooklyn, I also add that ranked members may not mark a she-wolf, then decide that they don’t want them. If they mark them, they must take them as their mate.

There’s a knock at my door and I look up to see a sleepy Nikki smiling at me.

“Nice mate mark,” I say.

Her hand flies to her neck, and she blushes as she smiles. “It’s already everything you told me it would be,” she says.

“It only gets better. Did you need something?” I ask.

“I was actually going to see if you needed anything. Robin is doing some work and I feel sort of useless,” she says.

“Actually, I’m glad you’re here. Come look this over with me,” I tell her.

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I print out the document that we’re editing and hand it to her to read. As she goes through the document, she looks up at me. “Is this you, saying that if they mark a woman, they have to take her as a mate?” she asks, sitting down.

“Yes. What do you think. I’m hoping it makes them think twice in doing things like what they did to Brooklyn.”

“That’s true, but what about women who refuse to become their mates? If they force their mark on them, we’re then forcing the women to become their mates.”

“Ugh, I wasn’t even thinking about that,” I say.

“We should call Allison, see if she has any other ideas. I’m pretty sure she’ll be there as well. She should know that this is on the table if Alpha Kayce hasn’t already told her.”

“Ohh, and we can see how she likes being mated,” I say, getting the phone and pulling it over to a table with my computer. I dial the pack and Nikki asks for Luna Allison, then she puts the phone on speaker.

“This is Luna Allison,” she says, sounding very proper.

“Hey, girl!” Nikki says.

“Nikki!”

“Yep and I’m here with Luna Sophie too.”

“Hey, do you have a computer, can we video chat?” I ask her.

“Yes!” She gives me her information and I set up a video chat, dialing in while we wait. Nikki moves her chair over and a few moments later, Allison joins the call.

There’s a lot of squealing at first, and when Allison sees Nikki mate mark and there’s even more.

“So, how do you like being mated?” Nikki asks her.

She sighs. “It’s great, isn’t it?”

“Good answer,” we hear Kayce say behind her. She turns, giving him-a huge grin.

“Kayce, it’s Nikki and Sophie.”

Kayce leans over, kissing the side of Allison’s head before turning to look at us. “Hello Luna, hello....well, Nikki. That’s a good-looking mate mark you’ve got there.”

“I think so,” Robin says behind us, walking in and leaning down to kiss his mate in almost the same way Kayce just kissed his.

“What in the goddess’ name are you three Lunas up to?” Kayce asks, narrowing his eyes at his mate.

“Actually,” Nikki jumps in, “I’m hoping you’ve already shared the new proposed law with Allison because we have some ideas too.”

“I’ll send it to you, Allison,” I say, sending the updated document to her email.

Kayce looks at the camera and shakes his head. I can see Robin smirking from the corner of my eye. “Goddess save us from intelligent, determined women.”

Kayce leans over Allison’s shoulder and looks over the changes we’ve suggested. “Actually, these are really good ideas. I think it’s important that we figure out a way to punish the Alphas and

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other ranked members that don’t get consent from their mates before marking them.”

“I agree. I’m not sure what that would look like or what would be appropriate, but we can let you Alphas figure that out,” Allison says.

“Are you including me and Sophie in that?” Nikki asks her.

“Oh, I hadn’t, but…”

“It’s okay, punishment isn’t really my thing. You male Alphas are better at that,” she says, and the three of us start talking through all the points in the law, making our changes, modifications, and suggestions.

At some point, I realize the men are gone. They’ve left us to make changes, but there’s a note beside Nikki.

‘When you’re done, send all three of us your updates.’ It’s signed by Robin and Hunter. I hadn’t even heard him come in.

We spend a couple more hours on the law, then talk about how excited we are to see each other in a couple of days before hanging up.

I send our notes to all three of our mates and then I sit back, looking at Nikki. “I think that’s enough for one day, don’t you?”

“I absolutely do,” Hunter says from the doorway, Robin standing beside him.

“Come on, my mate. I’ve been lonely all day,” he says, taking Nikki’s hand and leading her from the room.

Hunter closes the door and looks at me, his eyes dark. "And I've Lunas

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Chapter 78: Introductions

Hunter

I'm so proud of my mate and our friends. I knew Sophie would be an amazing Luna, but having a strong partner at my side is truly making me and our pack stronger. And then, my friends not only listened to me about not claiming their mates publicly, but they went ahead and marked their mates privately, wanting the same kind of relationship that Sophie and I have.

Now, we're back on the road, headed to the Committee of Alphas meeting where Owen will go on trial for what he did to Brooklyn. He's crazy if he thinks that I would ever vote for him to keep his title after he hurt her so terribly, and that doesn't even begin to cover the damage that was done m**ly because he did it so publicly.

It had taken Dutton a long time to calm down. He'd been afraid to go to his mates in the mood he was in, worried that he would scare them, so he and I had sparred for nearly two hours. He needed to hit someone, and he needed a challenge. It could have been any of us, but he was in my pack and Brooklyn is my pack member, so it was me that helped him deflate his anger.

In the end, it was his mates, who were worried about what they were feeling in the bond that helped him the most. They must have gone to Sophie who brought them to us. The moment he saw them, he'd pulled them against him, holding them tightly. They had wrapped their arms around him, concern etched on their faces.

Chapter 78: Introductions

"Come talk to us," Tiffany had said, while Tammi had caressed his face, wiping away his frown lines with her thumbs.

He'd emerged later, smelling strongly of his mates, but looking better, calmer, and ready to fight at the committee meeting.

We'd taken separate cars, with Robin planning to take Nikki back home when they leave. I can tell she's excited and nervous, but she and Robin already have a strong bond and that will show in the committee meeting. Dutton is also riding separately because Sophie and I are staying the night and he wanted to return quickly to get back to his mates.

When we arrive, Sophie and Nikki race over to where Kayce and Allison are waiting for us. We all smile as our mates hug tightly.

“Good thing we already had strong alliances, or we’d be in big trouble,” Kayce says, still smiling fondly at his mate.

“I’m pretty sure these women would have written up an alliance document and made us all sign it,” Robin says, his eyes shining with his happiness. It’s good to see the others looking as happy as I am. Not only will this make their packs stronger, but it will make our alliances stronger, making us a true force to be reckoned with if the others decide to go to war.

“Did you save any

save any of that love for me?” Luna Amy asks, walking up to the girls.

“Mom!” Sophie says, hugging her mother and introducing her to the others.

“That’s a lot of happiness. Happiness I’m not sure I’ve ever seen in newly mated Lunas,” Alpha Carter says walking up behind us, watching his mate and ours.

Chapter 78 introductions

“Well, when you’re right, you’re right, and Hunter was right,” Dutton says, slapping me on the back. Sophie’s father turns and looks at him, his eyes going wide when he sees the marks that he’s proudly displaying.

“The twins?” Alpha Carter asks.

“Yes, they’re mine now,” Dutton says smugly.

“Are they here?” Carter asks.

“No, they are still too nervous after being hunted by Alpha Aiden.”

Carter nods as Alpha Calvin and Luna Amelia walk up. She is much more reserved, frowning at the interactions of the others.

“You should go say hi,” I say gently.

She looks at me, then at Calvin before walking over and joining the conversation. Sophie and her mother hug Amelia and then Sophie does introductions again.

“How are we sitting today?” Robin asks quietly as we begin to make our way towards are mates.

“The same, but our mates sit as far away from the others as possible,” I say.

I hadn't realized it this morning when Sophie was getting ready, but as we approach them, and they turn, I can see that Allison, Nikki, and Sophie are all wearing dresses that proudly show off their mate marks. Amelia's is showing but not so obvious, and the same with Amy's. But our mates are proud to show off theirs, and it makes me feel honored to be mated to a woman who is so proud to show off my mark.

"Did they do that on purpose?" Kayce asks quietly.

"You know they did," Robin says, with the same level of respect and admiration in his voice for his mate that I'm feeling for mine.

"D**n," Kayce says quietly. "I had no idea how right you were, Hunter."

"You can't until you find her, and she does simple things like this to honor you," I say. Sophie looks over at me, tilting her head at me. I know my eyes are burning with my love and gratitude for this woman.

When I step up to her, I lean in, needing to show her how much she means to me and how appreciative I am of the woman that she is.

When I pull back, I realize that Kayce and Robin have done the same, both of their mates blushing softly. My mate, more used to my shows of affection, smiles up at me. "Shall we?"

"We shall," I say, putting my arm out to her. I nod at Ezra, who once again is watching our interactions intently, his sadness and regret evident on his face.

When we walk inside, we see Luna Margot and her mother Luna

June.

"I'd like to meet them," Sophie says softly.

"We can try. I doubt Elias or Joshua want their mates talking to you, especially."

We walk forward, catching both women's gazes. Now that I know that my mate is proudly wearing her mark, I'm noticing that these two women actively try to hide theirs. They are not proud of them at all.

"Luna Margot, Luna June, I'm Luna Sophie."

"Oh, we know who you are, Luna. You've made quite a ruckus around our packs," Luna Margot says, not unkindly.

"Hopefully not anything that has caused you problems," she says.

Margot looks down, her lips pressing together so tightly they turn white. I have to wonder what kind of problems my mate bond is causing her. I'm hoping it's not about becoming pregnant.

"We've lost some pack members. We're hoping that maybe they've made it to your pack?" Luna June asks quietly.

"Who are you looking for..." Sophie begins as Elias walks up.

"What is the meaning of this?" he barks, his Alpha aura coming out and I notice that both women's necks raise in submission. Sophie notices it as well and I can feel that it makes her angry. She, of course, is immune to his Alpha aura.

"I'm just saying hello to my fellow Lunas, Alpha. Surely you can't be concerned about that?" she asks, challenging him. I step closer to her as I feel his aura push out even more, trying to put my mate in line. Before I can push mine over him, I feel hers push out.

"There's no need for a battle of wills, Alpha. I'm an equal partner in my pack, and an Alpha female by birth. You'd do well to remember that," she says. Somehow, her aura pushes over Elias, but it releases the other two from their submissive stances. Interesting. It's almost as if Sophie pushed his aura back, putting all of hers onto him, leaving the Lunas alone.

I can see that Elias is huffing with his anger. He snarls at his mate and daughter to take their seats, putting them as far from us as possible. Fine by me, I don't want my mate anywhere near Elias or Joshua. They both disgust me.

When we turn, I can see that Robin and Kayce are quietly telling their mates who everyone is as they come in.

"Hello, Nicole. What are you doing here?" I hear just as Sophie sits down. Alaric's voice is dripping with condescension.

She stands, facing her brother proudly. I look at Robin who also stands, but he's focused on Alaric and his mate.

"It's Luna Nikki now, or have you lost your eyesight, brother? Do you not see Robin's mark on my neck?" she asks, challenging her brother. Robin steps up behind her, pressing his body against hers. She leans back against him, and the motion does not go unnoticed by Alaric.

"Camden will be very unhappy to hear this," he snarls.

“Camden is not her mate, I am. He can go find his own. Make sure your Beta knows that if he ever comes for what’s mine, I’ll kill him.” Robin never raises his voice, but his wolf’s voice intermingles with his, making the threat low, gravelly, and very real.

“Everyone have a seat, this Committee meeting is hereby commenced,” Elias’ voice rings out and we all take our seats been hungry for my mate all day,” he says, before laying me on my desk and devouring me.

The One He Claimed Chapter 79

Chapter 79: Chaos and Mayhem

Sophie

This is only my second time at the Committee of Alphas, and the first time that I’m up here in the seating area. I’m not sure if it’s always this tense, but I can feel the Alpha auras pressing in around me from every direction, Hunter’s included.

I look back and see that, on our side, it looks like my mother, sister, and friends can feel it, but it isn’t impacting them. However, when I look at Luna Margot and Luna June, they both look like the weight of all these auras is pressing down on them heavily.

“We have two items on the agenda today, the first is to discuss whether or not Alpha Owen broke the law by claiming an omega publicly and the second is a law revision requested by Alpha Hunter. Before we start the meeting today, it also appears that we have two Alphas with new mates. To my knowledge, these Alphas did not publicly claim their mates, and therefore must be scheduled for trial. They will be excluded from the voting today.”

“Absolutely not!” Kayce says, jumping to his feet. “You have no right to remove me from the council.”

“Did you publicly claim your mate, then?” Alpha Elias asks.

“No, and I will not. But the precedence has been set. We all voted that Hunter would keep his title, which is why the law is on the floor to be changed.”

“Yes, Alpha Hunter has set quite a precedent, hasn’t he?” Alpha Alaric says, sneering at Hunter. “It seems he’s collecting ranked she-wolves and giving them to his friends.”

“That is absolutely untrue,” Nikki says, standing to face her brother.

“Is it? Because when you were underage, he refused to hand you over to me, your brother,” Alaric says, also standing.

“At my request. I asked Alpha Hunter for safety, and he provided it, even after Alpha Aiden attacked me and nearly separated my leg from my body,” she says, glaring at Aiden.

“You shouldn’t have interrupted my claim of that she-wolf who now wears another’s mark. She was mine and you interrupted a claiming. I was in my rights as an Alpha and a ranked member to claim her publicly. You, little girl, were not,” Aiden spits at her.

Robin snarls, standing up, ready to attack Aiden. Kayce looks ready to attack him as well.

“Enough!” Elias says, trying to maintain order.

“And where are my twins, Alpha Hunter? You’ve been hiding them away from me. I’ve requested access to your pack to see them, but you’ve denied me that access.”

“Those twins are no longer available. They are mine,” Dutton growls, standing as well.

“You son of a b***h. Those girls were mine! I had nearly caught them when they ran onto Hunter’s pack lands. He’s the only reason I didn’t claim my mates,” Aiden snarls, pointing at Hunter.

11:27

Chapter 79 Chaos and Mayhem

‘You need to be ready to move quickly if things get out of hand, Sophie. I won’t have you or our pup injured in an Alpha fight. Grab your sister and get out of here,’ Hunter says in my head, watching the interactions intently. He’s moved so that his body is basically shielding mine.

I nod, knowing that he’s right. In these tight quarters, there’s no way that I wouldn’t be injured if a fight broke out and while I want to help my mate, I’m not willing to risk our pup.

“ORDER!” Elias booms out. I look over and see that both Luna Margot and Luna June have their necks raised in submission and they have tears streaming down their faces at the massive amount of power being displayed in this room. There’s so much anger and animosity that I can’t imagine what it’s like for them, feeling the weight of it all. I can feel it, like a heavy blanket trying to weigh me down and I’m sure that others feel it too, but those two have no defense against it since their mates haven’t made them equal partners in their packs.

“I think Alpha Hunter should go back on trial for pretending to take in rank she-wolves, only to hand them out to his friends like candy,” Alpha Owen says from below us. He’s obviously enjoying the show from the safety of the pit.

Hunter growls, but I put a hand on his back. Owen is trying to get a rise out of him, maybe hoping to start a fight that he is safe from participating in.

“Alpha Dutton should definitely go on trial for stealing my mates!” Aiden snarls.

“They’re not yours, Alden. They never were,” Dutton snarls back, his claws coming out.

“If I kill you, they will be,” Aiden taunts and that’s all it takes to snap the tenuous thread of composure this group had. Dutton leaps, going straight at Aiden, both have their claws out.

“NOW SOPH!” Hunter yells, standing and putting his body between me and Alphas on the other side as everyone’s claws come out.

“Nikki...” I hear Robin say.

“Don’t you start with me, Robin,” she says, as her own claws come out.

“Amelia! With me!” I yell at her just as Hunter turns, wrapping his arms around me. He snarls loudly and I smell blood, his blood.

“Your b***h of a mate started all of this!” Elias snarls from close by me and I realize that he had leaped at me, and Hunter had taken the brunt of his claws to protect me.

“Go, Soph. Get out of here now!” he says in my ear, pushing me forward and away from the fight before turning and slashing Elias down his face and throat. When he turns, I can see the long g**hes left in his back from Elias’ claws, but thankfully, they are already starting to heal.

Allison and Nikki stay to fight, but I grab Amelia so Calvin can fight, and then my mother. “Come on, we need to get out of here,” I say.

“I can fight,” my mother says.

“Protect our daughters!” my father growls, before jumping onto Alpha Joshua.

We pass Ezra who leaps just as we pass him. I’m not sure if he was guarding our exit or if he is just last into the fight. There’s a lot of snarling and snapping as I push my mother and sister out of the room.

“Get outside,” my mother says, and we begin to make our way out of the committee building.

“I knew I should have marked you when I had you. If I had, none of this would be happening. I’d have put you in line, just like Luna Margot and Luna June,” I hear Owen’s

smarmy voice say from beside us. Rather than jumping into the fight, he's come. after us.

"Stay away from my daughters," my mother growls, putting herself in front of me and Amelia.

Owen ignores her, looking at me and licking his lips. "Once Elias or another Alpha kills Hunter, I'll take you and once we get rid of his pup, I'll make sure to put mine in you," he sneers. "The thought of breaking such a strong woman makes me hard," he says, rubbing his c**h.

"You come anywhere near me, and I'll kill you," I tell him. "You're a disgusting excuse for an Alpha."

"But I caught you, didn't I?" he sneers.

"But you couldn't do it on your own, could you? No self-respecting Alpha needs all his ranked members to help him bring down one small little she-wolf. But then, you have no respect for your title, your pack, or your pack members, do you?" I sneer back.

His lip curls in anger as he glares at me. "You have a smart mouth. I can't wait to see how smart it is when it's full of my c**k."

"I'd rip your c**k off before I'd let it anywhere near me," I growl back.

From behind him, I see Luna Margot and Luna June rushing out the doors. Luna Margot sees Owen, and grabs a chair, swinging it at him, smashing him in the head and knocking him out.

"Go! Now's your chance!" Luna June says to her.

"Not without you, mother," she says.

"Sweetheart, I'd only slow you down. You're young and strong, go," her mother says.

I watch as Margot hugs her mother tightly. "I'll come back for you."

"Don't. Go live your life. Mine is done."

"You're running?" I ask her.

Margot turns and looks at me. "Are you going to stop me?"

"No. Go to our pack. We'll give you sanctuary. If not ours, then Alpha Kayce's, he's taking in she-wolves as well."

“Or ours, we’d take you in,” my mother says.

“Thank you,” she says and hugs her mother tightly again before turning, shifting, and racing off into the woods.

“You could come with us too,” I tell Luna June.

“No, it would only become more of a manhunt for my daughter if I were with her,” she says, turning to my mother. “You understand, don’t you?”

“I do. But my offer stands. Anytime,” she says, just as Hunter comes stumbling out of the building. He’s covered in blood.

“Hunter!”

“The committee has been dismantled. We’re going to war.”

The One He Claimed Chapter 80

Chapter 80: Alpha Battle

Hunter

I’m not sure if this group has just been a powder keg waiting to explode, or if me taking a stand on the public claiming and others following my lead has pushed this group over the edge, but an Alpha fight is never a good thing.

I saw Elias go for Sophie and rather than risk him hurting her, I used my body as a shield. Feeling his claws rake down my back did nothing but infuriate me and Shaw. He had extended his claws, swiping them down Elias’ face and neck, attempting to rip his throat out for coming after Sophie.

We left him to bleed out, before turning back to the fight. Robin may have intended to go after Aiden, but Alaric attacked Nikki and he jumped into the fight with her. Kayce and Allison are fighting against Alaric and Aiden, but Dutton and Aiden have both shifted and their snarling and growling is shaking the walls of the room. There’s barely any room for us in our human form. Adding two wolves is making it even more cramped in here, making it hard to fight and evade injury.

I see Sophie, Amelia, and Amy leave the room before Ezra leaps at Alpha Zahn. Carter and Calvin are double teaming Alpha Joshua. I turn to make sure Elias is still down, noticing that Owen is no longer in the pit.

I look all around, trying to find the weasel, before Alaric smashes into me. I jump up, leaping over him as Nikki goes for his throat, Robin right behind her. Ezra is on his own against Zahn, so I move to help him, slicing my claws down Zahn’s back.

The smell of blood is heavy in the air, and the snarls are so loud it's hard to hear anything above the noise. I see Alaric push back, away from Nikki and Robin, grabbing Aiden and standing his ground. "This isn't over," he snarls.

"Come for what's mine and I'll kill you," Dutton growls, having shifted back. He and Aiden both have bite and claw marks all over their bodies.

Joshua steps back, standing with Alaric and Aiden. He's bleeding from multiple wounds where Carter and Calvin slashed at him. "You have no right," he snarls.

"We have every right," Kayce says, pushing Allison behind him. I can see that she's taken a swipe across the thigh and she's limping. Kayce is pretty b**dy too, but he's standing his ground, protecting his mate. "What you are doing is wrong. We will protect our mates and our packs."

"We will not stand by and allow you to hunt our she-wolves or claim warriors and omegas in public with the lies that you are taking them as your Lunas. It's time we made a stand and if you go against us, we will fight you to the death," I say.

Zahn steps back, joining forces with the other three. "So be it."

I watch Joshua look over and see Elias still on the floor, his hand to his throat which still has blood pouring out of it. Elias reaches out his hand to Joshua.

"Sorry old man, I guess it's time for a change on leadership in your pack," he says, before turning and leaving him to die. The others step back, watching us before turning and racing off as fast as their injuries will allow.

"No honor among thieves, I guess," Ezra says.

I turn and look at the others. Robin is looking over Nikki's injuries as is Kayce with Allison.

"Owen's missing," I growl, moving quickly. I have a pretty good idea where he went while I was preoccupied. When I step outside, I see Owen unconscious on the ground and Luna June standing with Sophie and her family.

"We're going to war," I tell them as Sophie rushes over to me, wrapping her arms around my neck and holding me. More than anything, hers and Hedda's touch strengthens Shaw enough that my wounds start healing faster.

"Luna June," I say when I look up. "Your mate is inside dying. Joshua left him, and I'm assuming he'll be taking over your pack once he heals enough to get there."

I'm surprised when she doesn't even flinch. "Then I need a phone, if anyone has one. I need to alert my pack members before I'm unable to function," she says.

Luna Amy hands her a phone and she steps away, quickly making calls.

“What about Owen?” Sophie says. “He was supposed to be on trial.”

I look up as the others walk out. “The others left him, so I guess it’s up to us to decide what to do with him,” Robin says.

“We can’t effectively strip him of his Alpha title without all of the Alphas in agreement, which we will never get,” Carter says, limping out. Luna Amy rushes over to him and wraps her arms around him.

“I say we kill him,” Ezra says.

“I second that,” Dutton growls. He’s also covered in bites and scratches, some of them nasty. It’s hard to get out of the way when you’re in tight quarters like we were inside.

“I don’t feel good about killing him while he’s unconscious,” I say. “He should know that we’ve put him on trial and order his execution.”

“Let’s get him back to one of our packs. We can put him in a cell until we decide what to do with him. The girl he hurt may want to see justice done,” Robin says to me.

“What about his pack?” Nikki asks.

“I wouldn’t want to see his Beta take over. He’s no better than Owen,” Sophie says.

“His pack is close to mine. I have someone who may be interested in taking over as Alpha,” Ezra says. “Or we can open up to anyone within our packs. I’m guessing we’re going to have a lot of restructuring soon.”

“Aiden and Alaric are the biggest concerns and they both border one of our packs with another close. If they attack, we’ll wipe them out.”

“I don’t think they’ll attack us,” Carter says. “You and Sophie started this. They may feel that they could make a better statement if they take you and your pack out, especially since you’re housing all those ranked she-wolves and handing them out like candy to your friends,” he says sarcastically, making my mate snort.

“That was quite the visual,” Calvin says, smiling as he hugs his mate. He’s also got bites and scratches all over his body.

“So, who wants this a**hole?” I ask, just as we hear the high-pitched keening of someone losing their mate.

Sophie pulls away from me and her mother does the same, rushing over to Luna June who is on her knees, clutching her chest. Alpha Elias is dead.

“We’ll take Luna June. Where’s her daughter?” Alpha Carter asks.

“She ran,” Amelia says, watching her sister and mother as they hug and console June while she grieves.

“It didn’t even seem like she loved him,” Allison says, leaning into her mate as she watches the grieving woman.

“It doesn’t matter. When you’re marked and mated, if you haven’t rejected your mate and they die, you feel the pain,” Alpha Carter says as Kayce kisses the top of Allison’s head.

“Come on, we need to get back to our pack. Aiden borders Robin and we need to be prepared to fight,” Kayce says.

“Plus, we’ve already started taking in ranked she wolves as well,” Allison says.

“We’ll take June, but that still leaves Owen,” Carter says.

“I’ll take him. If we think that Hunter’s pack is going to be attacked, I don’t want those a**holes letting him out of his cells,” Ezra says.

“Thank you.”

He nods, grabbing Owen’s shirt by the collar. “When you’re ready, I’ll bring him over so you can execute him in your pack. If that she-wolf wants to be there, she should have that opportunity and your pack probably needs the closure of him having a public execution.”

“Let’s see what the war brings,” I say, watching as Ezra drags an unconscious Owen toward his car.

“Come on, baby, let’s go home,” I say, as Carter walks over to pick up June from the ground.

“We’ll be in touch,” Carter says as he and Amy get June settled in their car.

“As will we,” Calvin says. “I’m closest to Ezra. If he needs back. up, my pack will be there.”

“Thank you.”

We say goodbye to Robin and Kayce, Dutton having already left to get his mates and get to his pack. We all need to be ready for an attack, but our pack needs to be ready more than the others. Carter is right. It’s me and Sophie that started all of this, so it’s us that the other Alphas will be coming for.

