

The One He Claimed Chapter 81

Chapter 81: War Preparations

Sophie

"Are you nervous?" I ask Hunter as we drive home. He's quiet and I can feel the powerful energy rolling off of him.

He looks over at me and takes my hand, pulling it to his lips.

"Yes and no. Yes, because I have so much more to lose than I ever did before. And no, because I'm strong, you're strong, and our pack is strong. They will fight for what is right and our friends will come when we call. We just need to hold ... until they get to us if we're outnumbered."

"What do you think Joshua will do when he realizes that Margot is gone?" I ask.

"He'll go hunting for her."

"I told her to come to us," I say, worried that I've brought even more chaos down on us.

"Good. Protecting those who need protection is what we do, right?" he asks me, smiling. I know he's worried, thinking through the possibilities of an attack, how we can make sure we're ready, but he's putting that aside for the moment to make sure that I'm okay.

"How can I help you? I know you won't let me fight and I won't argue on that. I love this pup already and I won't do anything to hurt him. Owen already threatened to kill him..."

The car jerks and Hunter slams on the brakes. "He WHAT?" he snarls and the anger pulsing out of him in the tight confines of the car is stifling.

I look at my mate. Shaw is very close to the surface. I reach out and stroke his face. "He underestimated you, as always," I say calmly. "He assumed someone would kill you, specifically Elias, and then he planned to take me as his mate, kill our son, and put his own pup in me. I told him I'd rip his d**k off if he put it anywhere near me," I say, watching my mate closely.

It's the last part that gets his attention. He blinks and some of the anger dissipates. "You said that?" he asks with a ghost of a smile.

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"Of course. No one touches me but you. I'd kill anyone ju trying to touch me, but then he had to go and threaten our son. I knew that you'd come out alive, especially if Elias was

the contender to take you out. You're much too smart and too strong to let that old bag kill you," I say proudly.

"Yes, and now he's the one lying dead," Hunter growls, leaning forward and taking my mouth in a possessive kiss. "And you are mine."

"Yes I am. Always and only yours," I tell him. I mean it, but I also know it will help Shaw to calm.

"As soon as our pup is born, I'll be reminding my mate that she's mine," Shaw growls, running his nose over my jaw before pushing Hunter's face against mine, scenting me.

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very much look forward to that," Hedda replies, purring at him as he rubs against us. I wait patiently while Shaw rubs Hunter's face all over mine, and down my chest, making sure that I smell

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like him before he finally pulls back.

"You know he'll want to do that again in his wolf form when we get back, right?" Hunter asks me

"I'm always willing to wear my mate's scent, as strongly as he wants me wearing it," I purr at both of them.

Hunter finally sits back and puts the car in drive, deep in thought again.

"If Owen is thinking it, so are the others," he growls. "They would be jealous, even more angry that I'm not only keeping them from capturing their mates as they see it, but also now I'm going to have an heir and they don't. Even Joshua doesn't."

He glances at me. "It means that you're at even more risk than I expected. It means, you'll be their target, you and our pup."

"They were coming for me anyway, Hunter," I say, trying to soothe him.

"I won't be their primary target like I thought. If anything, they'd want to leave me alive as a warning to others about what happens when you go against them and lose. If I lost the two of you..."

"

"You won't. As you said, you're strong, I'm strong, and our pack is strong, Hunter. We have some ranked she-wolves who are learning to fight and may want to join in the battle to protect themselves from the Alphas who don't agree with us."

"We need to start running drills more frequently. At least once a day, maybe twice a day. Maybe, and I know they'll all hate it, but some in the middle of the night. I need to know that everyone in the pack is safe, and I know that you won't get into a safe room until you know that everyone going in is safe," he says.

"We need to rethink Brooklyn and Leah's home too," I say, thinking through all of the possibilities. "She's not strong enough yet to get to a safe room quickly from their current house, and these wolves wouldn't hesitate in running her and Leah down."

"I'll talk to them. Actually, I'll address the entire pack when we return," he says, still thinking through everything.

"WE'LL address the entire pack when we return, and remember, Kinsley is also going to be in a safe room. She and I can work together to make sure everyone is safe."

"Good! That's good. It makes me feel a bit better," he says, still going through every scenario in his head.

"Did you ever cover those week spots in the border?" I ask him, remembering when we first arrived, and we were looking over the pack lands. We'd seen some gaps in protection.

"I'll double check. I'm going to run the perimeter with Lucas tonight, make sure the patrols have everything covered. Maybe I'll take Penny with us," he says, the last part an afterthought.

"Penny?"

"Yeah, I'm looking at her for the G**a position. We need to fill Koden's position. What do you think?"

"I haven't seen her spar. I take it she's pretty good?"

"She's really good. Better than I was expecting. Apparently, her pack had two Alpha males around her age that she spied with regularly and it shows."

"You're going to take a female G**a?" I ask him, making sure I understand what he's saying.

He looks at me. "I'm not a misogynistic pig, Soph. If she's strong enough to defeat my other warriors, she's strong enough to fill the position."

“Are you setting another precedent, Alpha?” I ask him. It’s a teasing tone, but I’m extremely proud, once again, to be mated to this man.

“If I don’t, Nikki surely will,” he says, making both of us laugh as we get to our pack lands.

As we drive up to the packhouse, I turn back to Hunter. “So, Joshua is our biggest threat? If he takes over Elias’ pack and he assumes Margot is here, whether she is or not, that’s our biggest threat?”

He stops in front of the packhouse and turns off the car before turning to me.

“I think Koden is the more imminent threat. Once word spreads that Owen has been taken prisoner, it’s very likely that he’ll attack the Beta for the Alpha position. I doubt Ezra will get over there fast enough to stop that. If Koden does take over as Alpha, it’s very likely that our first attack will come from him.”

“All the more reason to make sure that Brooklyn and Leah are safe. Her ex-mate is still in that pack, I believe. He came looking for them once. If Koden attacks, he’ll come looking for them again.”

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Chapter 81: War Preparations

MI agree.

We need to talk to Leah sooner rather than later,” he says as we step out.

As we gather our bags, Hunter alerts the pack that we’ll be having an all-pack meeting in one hour.

We have just enough time to unpack and let Lucas and Kinsley know what’s going on before the four of us address the pack together, presenting a unified front. Hunter fills in the pack on everything that happened at the Committee of Alphas, letting them know that the Committee has disbanded, that Elias is dead, and Owen is imprisoned. Then he lets everyone know that patrols and safe room drills will be increasing, and that everyone is to be on alert.

“Penny, you’ll be running patrols with me and Lucas tonight. Leah, I need to speak with you and Brooklyn. Everyone else, expect new patrol schedules to come out later tonight,” he says. He answers questions before letting everyone go.

Kinsley and I began preparing safe room drills while Hunter, Lucas, and Penny ran patrols and filled in any gaps in

protection. Surprisingly, Leah and Brooklyn refused to move from their home.

"We have the patrols to alert us and while we're not ranked members, we can fight," Leah said.

"I cannot ensure your safety if you don't move back to the packhouse," Hunter pleaded with her.

"I understand, Alpha. But now, more than ever, the packhouse will be bustling with activity. My Brooklyn isn't ready for that yet," Leah said, standing her ground. "I didn't do what I needed to once before to protect her. I won't let her down again, Alpha."

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She's not ready to be among all that staying where we are."

"I hope you're right about this," Hunt

Kinsley and I made sure that the two knives, hammers, and axes in case packhouse when the attack comes.

The next 24 hours were extremely t running, we ran two safe room drill: borders, and Koden attacked.

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Chapter 82: Margot

Hunter

Penny is as good as I expected, and I'm thrilled.

'I think I understand now why you elected her to join us on this run,' Lucas says in the mind link while we run through the borders.

We found an area that needed more protection, more patrols, and Penny did not hesitate to give us her ideas. Good ones. Really good ones.

'She's underage, but I'm thinking of her for the G**a position," I tell him.

'I'll keep an eye on her in warrior training. But she's got good instincts and from what I saw of you sparring with her, she's a smart fighter.'

'Agreed. I haven't told her about the G**a position. I told her she might make herself a Lead Warrior.'

'I'd put her in either position, but we need a strong, trustworthy Ga**a, and so far, she's better than anyone else we have in the pack.'

I'm glad Lucas agrees with me.

Sophie and I fell into bed late that night, exhausted. For the first time since I found her, I didn't make love to her. Instead, I pull her against me and almost instantly we're both asleep. The next morning, I make sure to start both of our day with a love and happiness. We don't have much time, but I want to take these moments when I can. Once the war starts, I won't have many moments like these to enjoy.

Lucas and I run a hard warrior training, extending it by an hour so everyone is ready. When that one is done, we switch out with the patrols who missed training because they

were working, and Lucas runs them through another three-hour training while Penny and I go to secure the areas of the pack borders where we feel we're weakest.

After that's done, she and I run another route around the pack, sniffing to see if we smell anyone scouting our borders.

By the time I return to the packhouse, I'm already feeling the exhaustion of the morning, and I've just stopped to have lunch when the patrols reach out to me and Sophie.

'Alpha, Luna, there's a Luna Margot here requesting sanctuary.'

'I'm on my way,' Sophie says.

'I am as well,' I say, knowing Sophie can't shift any longer. I meet her in the back and shift, letting her get on my back before racing to the place where I can hear the patrols standing guard. When we race up, I see Margot, looking a bit ragged and wearing a shirt she must have found along the way. Whether intentional or not, it's masking her scent. Smart woman.

Sophie gets off my back and I shift, standing behind her but letting her take the lead as I always do with the she-wolves who come to us for protection.

"Did you mean it, Luna Sophie? Did you mean it when you said you'd give me sanctuary?" Margot asks.

"Yes. We're already anticipating that your mate will attack us. Even if you weren't here, he'd expect that you were and would never believe us that you weren't. Before you come into our pack lands though, I should tell you, your father is dead."

"My mother?" she asks, worriedly

"My parents took her to their pack."

"So, she's safe?"

"Yes."

She nods. "She'll be safer if I'm not with her." Margot turns and looks at me. "If you're expecting tears for my father, you'll be disappointed."

"I'm glad to hear that since I was the one who killed him," I tell her.

"He was a horrible man to my mother and a horrible father to me. May I enter your pack, Alpha?" she asks, directing her question to me.

“Why are you asking me? My mate is the one who offered your sanctuary,” I say, making sure she realizes that the equality that Sophie and I expressed at the Committee isn’t just for show. It’s real.

Her eyes widen in surprise, but she corrects herself quickly and turns to Sophie.

“Luna, may I..”

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Chapter 82: Margol

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“Of course, Luna Margot, please, step across our borders so I don’t have to worry about your mate rushing up and s** you away,” Sophie tells her, making Margot smile.

She looks at me one more time, probably making sure that I’m not going to stop her and then she takes a step, putting herself on our pack lands. The moment she does, it’s like something. inside of her deflates. She slumps, panting and holding back her tears.

“Why don’t you come with me, we’ll get you settled,” Sophie says to her gently.

“There’s one more thing I need to do first,” she says, and turns. her back on us, looking out in the distance.

“I, Luna Margot Keys, reject you, Alpha Joshua Keys as my mate and Alpha,” she says, her body collapsing as she cries ou, clutching her heart.

I catch her before she hits the ground, scooping her up and looking at my patrols. “Back to work. She’s bought us some time with Alpha Joshua, but Koden and Owen’s pack are still our biggest threat.”

“Yes, Alpha.”

They begin running again as Sophie and I walk back to the packhouse.

“Should I get a doctor?” Sophie asks me.

“No. I’m surprised it even hurts. It’s not like we had a mate bond like yours,” Margot says, panting with her pain.

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Chapter 82 Margol

288 Vouchers

"Your wolf will be weak. Are you sure you don't want to see a doctor?" I ask her.

"I honestly just want a shower and a bed."

"Food?" Sophie asks her.

"Maybe later. I'm not sure I could keep anything down right now. But I'd like to speak to my mother, if I can. I want to make sure she's alright and that she knows I'm safe now."

"Of course. If you're not up to the phone call, I can call Alpha Carter and give him the message."

"No, I think it will help her to hear my voice and to know that we're both away from those men who treated us like commodities. and baby makers rather than their mates and Lunas."

When we get to the back of the packhouse, Kinsley is t.

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"Luna, Luna Sophie said you wanted a bath but may not be strong enough to take one on your own. I'll help you and get you. settled. I'll also make sure you know which safe room you need to go to when the war starts."

"I'm not a Luna anymore, Beta, but I can fight. I'm a strong fighter, or I was, at one time."

Sophie looks at me and Margot, seeing her deferring to me, turns and looks at me. "I was a Luna for several years, Alpha. I know how to defend a pack, even if it's not mine."

"Let's see how long it takes your wolf to recover, then we'll test your skill."

"Fair enough," she says, and I put her down, letting Sophie and Kinsley lead her away to whatever room they've set aside for her.

I call Carter and let him know that Margot is here. I want him on alert that Joshua is probably coming, but not as soon as we anticipated now that she's rejected him. I then call Kayce and give him the same news. He and Carter are the packs closest to me and the ones that I will call if I need assistance.

By the time I check on everyone, making sure that Margot spoke to her mother and is resting as quietly as possible, it's nearly dinner time and I realize I haven't eaten all day.

When I sit, I see Sophie and Kinsley still moving around working to make sure the safe rooms are prepared. They've already run one drill today and are planning to run another one soon.

'Have you eaten?' I ask her in the mind link.

She looks up and finds my eyes on her.

'Uh...I sort of missed lunch.'

'Come sit with me and eat. Kinsley needs to eat too. Take a break and come eat.'

She smiles at me and turns to Kinsley. A moment later Kinsley looks at me and nods.

"Thanks, Alpha," Lucas says, walking behind me and gripping my shoulder before walking to his mate and kissing her.

'Have you eaten, Lucas?'

'I will later.'

'You will after I'm done. I'll go back out with the patrols. I need you strong and healthy.'

'Yes, Alpha,' he says, giving me a look from across the room. Kinsley says something to Lucas and a moment later she's laughing at him, probably realizing that I've now ordered both of them to eat. More than anything, Kinsley's laughter and happiness will keep Lucas going. I know Sophie's does for me.

When she tries to sit beside me, I pull her into my lap.

"I haven't touched you all day. Give me these few moments," I say, kissing her shoulder.

"How can I deny you anything?"

Being with Sophie rejuvenates me and I rub my hand over her stomach, realizing that it's just starting to form a little baby bump. My pup.

After dinner, I send Lucas to eat while I go run patrols and Sophie and Kinsley run another safe room drill, this time including Margot in the drill.

It's late when I finally get back to my room. Sophie is already in bed, so I shower quickly and crawl in behind her. I feel like I've just fallen asleep when the howls of the patrols go up.

‘Alpha! Koden is here!’

The One He Claimed Chapter 83

Chapter 83: Standing Your Ground

Leah

When the alarms went up, I knew he’d come for us, my ex-mate Michael. He’s a warrior, a good fighter, but he’s arrogant and his arrogance cost him everything and nearly cost my daughter her life.

I know he never expected that I would reject him, that I could ever be strong enough to stand up to him, but he allowed our daughter to get hurt and in the worst possible way. I may only be an omega, but I’m a mother, and I will fight to the death for my child.

“Brooklyn? Brooklyn, honey, its time,” I say, going to help her get up out of bed. She still can’t walk on her own. That Alpha, Owen, nearly split her in half on that stage in front of everyone. It would have taken her a long time to heal anyway, but after he marked her, then immediately rejected her, her wolf had gone silent. I haven’t told anyone about that yet. I need to decide what I will do if Alpha Hunter and Luna Sophie decide that we can’t stay in the pack because she’s become a wolfless person.

But for now, I’ve waited, and I’ve planned, knowing he’ll come for us. My mate hates to lose, and he would consider this losing. I know he’s angry that I rejected him. He wasn’t even willing to take responsibility for his role in nearly killing our daughter.

“Mom?” Brooklyn breathes. I can smell her tears and her fear. I know she’s terrified that Michael will take us, both of us, back to that horrible pack. But I won’t stand for it. I won’t allow it. My baby has been through too much already.

“Just like we talked about, Brooke. It’ll be okay,” I say, putting her in the only part of the house that has no windows. We’ve already set it up as our own personal safe room. We have food and water, and weapons. The weapons are key. Luna Sophie and Beta Kinsley made sure that we have weapons to keep us safe. What they didn’t know was that I had ordered a gun and a case of silver bullets. No one is getting to my girl.

My biggest concern is that I’ll have to kill Michael. While I still have a lingering love for the man I gave my life and love to, I won’t hesitate to kill him. That’s not my concern. My concern is that he never accepted my rejection. If I kill him, it could kill me. If I’m dead, I can’t protect my child.

“We’re going to be okay, Brooklyn,” I say, hearing the sounds of fighting moving into our pack lands. Michael will be hunting for us. I’m hoping that he’ll start in the packhouse, not realizing that Brooklyn can’t take loud noises. When he doesn’t find us there, he’ll start searching the pack lands for us. He used to patrol these lands, so he knows where

every house is. It won't take him long, but I only need enough time to get Brooklyn settled.

"Here you are, honey. Where are your weapons?" I ask her.

"Right here. Mom..." she says, tears streaking down her face.

"It's okay. I'm not going to let anyone hurt you."

"I can't do this without you, mom. I know you. I know you'd give your life for me. Please don't. You're the only thing that's kept me going. I need you, mom. Please."

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"I can't do this without you, mom. I know you. I know you'd give your life for me. Please don't. You're the only thing that's kept me going. I need you, mom. Please."

I take my child's face in my hands, holding her gaze as I keep an ear on the fighting outside. I send up a prayer to the Moon Goddess that I'm not about to lie to my daughter.

"I'm not leaving you. I'm going to fight beside you and when this is over, you and I will walk out of this room together," I tell her. "I need you to be brave, Brooklyn. Can you do that for me?" I ask her.

She nods, pressing her lips together and fighting against her tears and her fear. The scent is permeating this room, adding to my own.

I step away from her, grabbing the gun that's already loaded. I've never shot a gun before, never had to. First, as a wolf, I can fight in my wolf form. But I've lived in a pack all my life. Omegas are not fighters, we're the ones who keep the pack running, and my mate was a warrior. If anyone was going to fight to protect the family, it was him.

But now, that role falls to me. I hear paws pounding on the ground, coming in our direction and I know that Michael has found us.

I turn and look at my daughter again. "Ready?" I ask her.

She nods, a determined look on her face. "Ready."

I move, taking a stance in front of the room where Brooklyn is. She has multiple weapons beside her in case anyone gets past me. Hopefully the silver bullets will be enough.

I hear Michael's wolf, sniffing at the door before I hear the snapping of bones as he shifts back to his human form before grabbing the front door and ripping it off its hinges. When he comes in, I aim the gun at his chest. He's heaving, whether from anger or from running to find us, I'm not sure.

"What are you doing, Leah?" he growls at me.

"I will not let you hurt our daughter again," I tell him, taking a stand.

"What are you going to do? Shoot me?" he sneers, taking a step toward me. I fire off a shot, just grazing his hip. I was aiming for his heart, s**t.

"What the f**k? What the hell's gotten into you?" he snarls

looking at his hip like he can't believe I shot him. "Silver bullets?"

"I will not let you hurt our child again, Michael!" I say, standing my ground. It would probably sound stronger if my hands weren't shaking violently.

"You are mine, Leah," he snarls.

"I was yours, until you let that monster tear my baby apart in front of everyone!" I scream. "No man worthy of being a mate or a father would allow that."

He growls at me again, but he's watching the gun as he takes another step. I fire again, this time shooting him in the shoulder.

He snarls as he leaps at me, tackling me to the ground. The gun goes off again, but I have no idea if it hit him.

He pins me to the floor, ripping the gun from my hand and tossing it aside. "You forget your place, Leah."

"At your feet? Isn't that where you've always wanted me?" I growl back at him. I can see the surprise in his eyes. I've never fought my mate before, never challenged him in any way. Not until he allowed our daughter to get hurt. I had trusted him to protect her and me, and he had betrayed us both.

"When I re-mark you, all of this will be done. I won't allow you to reject me again. It's time our family was back together," he growls.

I struggle underneath him. "I will never accept you as my mate."

"You don't have a choice," he says, ripping my head to the side, pinning my head down with his uninjured arm.

From the corner of my eye, I see his canines extending and I know I've failed my daughter. I'm too weak to protect her.

"That's where you're wrong. All of us, every she-wolf, should have a choice. I won't let you take hers, like you allowed Owen to take mine," my daughter says from somewhere behind me. I've never heard the fierce determination in my daughter's voice that I hear right now. I can't see her face, but a wave of pride flows through me that she's standing her ground too.

"What are you doing, Brooklyn? I'm your father."

"No. Fathers don't allow their daughters to suffer like you allowed me to. You're just a sperm-donor, nothing more. My mother and I don't need you."

Michael's grip on my face weakens and I turn my head just enough to see my daughter holding the gun, aimed at Michael's head. Unlike mine, her hands are steady and sure.

"Brooklyn..." Michael says. I don't know what he sees in her eyes, but he sits up, looking shocked.

"Goodbye," she says and the shot rings out, echoing loudly in my ears in the small space around us.

I've barely registered that my daughter just shot my mate when the pain rips through my body. I scream, clutching my chest as Michael's body collapses beside me, his eyes open, still looking shocked.

"Mom! Mom! Stay with me, stay with me. Please mom, stay with me!" I hear my daughter's voice, but it sounds like it's far away.

"HELP!" I hear her scream as the pain of losing my mate overtakes me.

The One He Claimed Chapter 84

Chapter 84: Safe Rooms

Sophie

When the howls of attack go up, Hunter and I jump out of bed.

"Call your father and Kayce, and take care of my mate," he says, pulling me to him and kissing me fiercely before racing out of the room and leaping off the stairwell, shifting on his way down to the first floor.

I grabbed one of Hunter's shirts and my phone as I begin racing down the stairs meeting up with Kinsley as we watch wolves rushing out of the packhouse from every direction.

I dial my father's number.

"Sweetheart is everything okay?" he answers.

"We're under attack, Dad. Koden," I say and immediately hear my father's howl go up, waking up his pack.

"We're on our way. Get safe, Sophie."

"To the safe rooms!" I yell over the chaos on the first floor. I grab Kinsley. "Be careful!" I say before racing off. She and I had decided to take separate safe rooms to help facilitate everyone getting into their assigned rooms

As I run, I dial Alpha Kayce.

"Yeah," he answers sleepily.

"Alpha Kayce, this is Luna Sophie We're under attack.

"Joshua?" he asks, instantly alert I can hear him moving around, Allison's voice asking what's going on in the background.

“Koden.”

“We’re on our way,” he says, and I hear his howl go up a moment before the phone disconnects.

“What can I do? I can’t shift yet,” Margot asks, rushing up.

“Help me get these people inside their safe rooms. Can you take lead in one, make sure everyone stays calm.”

“Of course!” she says, rushing toward another safe room and helping the people get safely into their room.

‘Status check, Soph,’ Hunter says I can hear Shaw snarling in our mind as well. He’s already fighting.

‘Almost there,’ I say, looking around.

‘Move faster. I need you safe,’ he says just as the mind link cuts off.

“DOOR ONE CLOSING!” I hear Kinsley announce.

“Margot, you’re next,” I say to her

“DOOR TWO CLOSING!” she announces as I hear Kinsley’s door slam shut and lock.

“ANYONE ELSE?” I yell, looking around, as Margot’s door slams shut and locks.

“Luna!” a young woman yells, she’s trying to carry three young children in her arms. I race to her and grab one of her pups, just as the glass sliders in the back of the packhouse smash open.

‘Sophie! Tell me you’re in a safe room!’ Hunter’s voice booms in my head.

“Go, go, go!” I yell at the woman. “DOOR THREE CLOSING!” I shout as the sounds of snarling and tearing flesh move closer to us.

I race into the room, handing off the pup and turning to close the door just as a wolf slams his body against it. The women and children behind me scream, but Lucas’ wolf attacks the other wolf, grabbing him by the neck and pulling him away. I slam the door closed, just as another wolf tries to break in. His en behind me paw gets caught in the door and one of the w jumps up to help hold the door while I throw the lock, pinning the wolf’s paw in our room. His howl of pain echoes in our enclosed space as I step back panting.

‘SOPHIE!’ Hunter yells in my head

‘Safe!’

‘Thank the goddess,’ Hunter says, relief evident in his voice as the mind link closes again.

I step back, staring at the door, listening to the sounds of fighting just outside our safe room. It’s the sound of whimpering that makes me focus. I turn to address the room.

“Is everyone okay?” ask. Young pups are crying and some of the mothers are too, terrified for themselves, their pups, and the mates who are outside fighting.

I find the light in the room and see everyone huddled together. The woman who was last in is trying to hold all three of her children, but they’re all terrified. I sit next to her, taking one of her children and holding them against my body as I rock gently while we all listen to the sounds of battle going on.

I open my mind briefly to the pack, feeling the fury, the fear, and the pain from the pack. I’m not sure how my mate does it. I know he’s connected to everyone, keeping tabs on the entire pack, but it’s overwhelming to me. It’s like it was when he was listening to multiple conversations and keeping track of all of them. I don’t know how he does it.

‘We’ll practice later. Shut it down for now. I’ve got this,’ his voice floats into my head. This time, it’s distracted, busy with everything else going on around him, but as always, my mate

is there to make sure to look after me. I send a wave of bond, hoping to keep my mate energized.

I’ve never been in a safe room before, never been in a battle where I wasn’t fighting. It’s almost harder to be in here. At least out there, you’re focused on fighting, on staying alive. In here, you’re just waiting. Waiting for someone to give the all-clear, waiting for someone in your room to begin the keening sound of losing their loved one, or waiting to feel the tether to your own mate snap. Time seems to stand still in this room. In the battle, time goes by quickly and before you know it, hours have passed, and you didn’t even realize it. In here, each minute feels like an hour.

Things are still loud in the packhouse when I hear a howl I’d recognize anywhere. My father and his pack have arrived.

I gasp out a laugh and everyone looks at me. “My father. He and his pack are here,” I say, and everyone in the room relaxes a bit.

It isn’t much longer before we hear another howl, one I’ve heard, but don’t know well. Again, everyone turns to me.

“That would be Alpha Kayce and his pack.”

I carefully reach out to my mate, making sure he's alive and still fighting, but not wanting to distract him if he's in the middle of a fight.

'Koden's on the run,' he says, sounding exhausted. 'Your father's pack and Kayce's are finishing this battle quickly. It won't be much longer.'

I tell the others in the room with me, then link Kinsley and one of the women in the third safe room, letting them know as well since Margot isn't part of our pack and can't ...d link.

It isn't long before the sounds in the packhouse become quiet. We all wait, anxious to hear the sounds of one of our warriors knocking on the door to tell us everything is clear.

It's Lucas who finally opens our door. I wait until all the woman and children have emptied out, before following behind them. I look around and not seeing Hunter, I turn to Lucas.

"Where's my mate?" I ask. He presses his lips together tightly just as Hunter's voice filters into my head.

'Sophie, I need you at the pack hospital. It's Leah.'

Margot POV

I hate safe rooms. Until I was mated to Joshua, I'd never seen the inside of one. Soon after mating him, he insisted that I give up my training so that I could focus on giving him a pup.

That man worked so hard to give me a pup, never realizing that I would never, ever risk bringing a female into this world. Thankfully, I found a doctor outside of our pack who was willing to give me what I needed to ensure I never got pregnant. Joshua never suspected a thing. Why would he? I was to do what he told me to do and never stray.

Now, as I look around this room, I'm reminded again of why I miss being a fighter. It's much harder being in this room, hearing the soft cries and s**bs of the women and children, the smell of their fear so pungent that it takes everything in me to remain strong.

"We're going to be okay. I know you don't know me, but I was a Luna for several years. We're going to be okay," I say calmly.

"How do you know?" a woman asks me.

"Well, because your Alpha and Luha have a stronger bond than I've ever seen before and strong leaders make a strong pack, wouldn't you agree?" I ask them.

They look around at each other, then nod.

“So, we’ll be strong for the pack members who are out there fighting. If they’re worried about you, they’re not focusing on the fight. We can be strong together,” I say, feeling anything but strong. When Joshua comes, and I know he will, I hope I can continue to be this stable. Maybe by then, I’ll have regained my wolf and honed my fighting skills. Maybe.

We hear the sounds of wolves howling their arrival and I let the group know that their Luna contacted others for assistance. It will make this battle end much more quickly and I’m grateful. I’m getting claustrophobic, starting to feel like there’s not enough air in this room, like the walls are closing in. I don’t want my mind to take me back to that dark room that Joshua used to put me in.

‘Stay focused, Margot. These people need you. You’re a f**g Luna,’ I say to myself. This would be easier if my wolf was stronger, then I wouldn’t feel alone, but as it is, I’m trying to hold on, to keep it together, but I need to get out of here.

I’ve just reached the point where don’t think I can take it any longer, when we hear the knock at the door. I look at the others, as a gruff voice tells us that it’s all clear.

I rush to the door, throwing it open, staring into the surprised eyes of a warrior. I take a deep breath of fresh air, tainted with blood rather than fear. It’s a scent I much prefer. I stumble from the room, gasping for air, just as I see Sophie rushing past me.

“What happened, is everything okay?” I ask the warrior,

wondering if Sophie needs help. I lean against the wall, sucking in air.

“Luna Margot, come with me,” Beta Kinsley says kindly,

wrapping an arm around my shoulders and leading me away.

When we’re far enough away, she grabs a paper bag and has me sit while breathing into the bag.

“Slow your breaths, or you’re going to pass out,” she says, kneeling in front of me and holding my gaze.

She reaches up and takes my hand. I grip it tightly, fighting the darkness that’s trying to creep in

I close my eyes and focus on my breathing.

“Claustrophobic?” she asks. I nod without opening my eyes.

I feel her turn away from me and look up to see Beta Lucas checking on his mate.

"You can go," I say, hating how weak I feel.

"No. I'm right here," she says kindly, turning back to me, never letting go of my hand.

When I finally calm, my breathing and my heart rate getting back to normal, I pull the bag away from my face and look at this woman. She's been through what I have, only her mate.

e got lucky with

"Thank you. I didn't realize that the pack is not only strong because of their Alpha and Luna, but also because of their Betas as well."

"Well, I don't know about that," she says to me, standing and helping me to stand.

"I do. Thank you, really."

"How about we get you strong, so you don't have to go into a safe room again. I know I didn't particularly care for it either. The fear is suffocating."

"Yes, yes it is," I say as we walk back to the main room. As soon as we do, I see that there are a lot of injured here that need help.

"Ready?" Beta Kinsley asks me.

"Ready," I say, and we split up, going around to help those who are injured and see if they need to be sent to the pack hospital.

The One He Claimed Chapter 85

Chapter 85: The Battle

Hunter

When the howls went up, I left Sophie feeling an emotion I've never felt before. Fear.

I have so much to lose if Koden comes after Sophie. So, while I jump into the fight, I can't truly get my head into it until I know that Sophie is safe. I know my mate, I know the kind of caring, loving Luna that she is. She won't enter a safe room until everyone else is safe.

'Lucas, Sophie isn't in a safe room yet,' I call in the mind link while Shaw pins a warrior to the ground, snapping his teeth on his spine. Even after we hear the snap and the wolf falls limply at our feet, Shaw holds on, ripping part of the wolf's spine from its body.

'I'm closer. I'll go,' Lucas replies, and I see him rushing toward the packhouse. I can see that the fighting has made its way there.

'Sophie! Tell me you're in a safe room!' I call out in the mind link.

I feel teeth sink into my flank and I duck as another wolf leaps at me before turning to snap my teeth at the one holding my leg. These men are warriors and fighters, but none of them are ranked wolves. I can't worry about whether or not they chose to be here. They are here fighting, and I have to kill them. Shaw snaps his teeth at the wolf's face, grabbing on to the cheek and thrashing until the wolf lets go of our leg. When he does, Shaw throws him aside, then leaps, biting into his fleshy stomach and ripping his insides out.

We turn to fight off another wolf as I feel a wave of anger and fear wash through Lucas.

'SOPHIE!'

'Safe,' she says, a moment before the fear in Lucas is replaced by fury.

'Safe rooms are closed and locked, Alpha,' he says, and I can feel his relief the same as mine.

Now I can focus more clearly on the battle. Now, I can find
en.

I begin attacking, going after wolves, search for him.

'Shaw, where the f**k is he?'

He's just taken down another warrior when we see Koden slinking toward the packhouse, he's going for Sophie. I know my old G**a, he likes to take out mates of the person he's after, weakening them before he attacks them. I can feel that Lucas has moved to the front of the packhouse, fighting wolves out there. Whether they were trying to run, or the fighting has just moved out front, I'm not sure. Either way, he's not there to protect our mates.

I begin making my way toward Koden. He may need a weaker opponent to attack, but I don't. I've always been stronger than Koden, so has Lucas. That's why he was my G**a, but maybe he should never have even been that. Water under the bridge at this point, what's done is done and I've rectified that mistake.

I'm getting closer to Koden, sneaking up on him, when Carter's howl goes up that he and his pack have arrived. Koden's head jerks to left, and that's when he sees me. Shaw begins running hard, ready to run him down. Koden's wolf, Tormund, tries to evade but Shaw is a much faster wolf.

He tackles Tormund to the ground, Tormund rolling onto his back, and lifting his paws, scratching violently at Shaw's chest and stomach. Shaw presses his body down, trying to pin Tormund's legs so he can't continue to scratch us, while snapping his teeth at his face.

He manages to throw Shaw off of him and we turn to face off, just as I hear Kayce's howl that he and his pack have arrived.

Tormund snarls, no doubt surprised that we have not one, but two packs answering our call for assistance. Shaw leaps again, this time getting his teeth into the fleshy part of his shoulders, ripping a large chunk of flesh from his body. Tormund howls in pain but turns biting into Shaw's side. His teeth graze Shaw's ribs, but he doesn't break any bones.

Just as Shaw is about to leap onto Tormund again, two more wolves jump on him. It takes precious minutes for Shaw to get the upper hand and take out both of the wolves. When he does, Tormund is gone.

I quickly look around not seeing him. I begin hunting him when I feel Sophie's mind gently pressing against mine. I can feel her overwhelmed feelings. There is a lot going on in the pack right now, but I don't want her worry about that. She and I can work on her m**I multi-tasking, but not right now. Right now, I need her to be safe and calm.

I feel a wave of love and admiration flows through me from my mate, nearly making Shaw purr. As I look around, I've just

spotted Koden, slinking toward the pack borders, when I hear it.

"HELP!"

My head whips around and I realize it's coming from Leah and Brooklyn's house.

Before I can actively think it, Shaw is racing to their home. As we run up, I see the door has been ripped off and I smell the scent of gunpowder and blood. Lots of blood.

I shift as Shaw races up the porch steps and jog into the living area, quickly taking in the scene.

"Alpha, please help her!" Brooklyn says, looking up at me from the floor where she's holding her mother in her arms, rocking her.

I rush to her side, seeing Michael lying dead with a bullet wound to the head beside and partially on top of Leah.

"What happened?" I ask, quickly pulling Leah to me and checking for a pulse. Brooklyn is nearly hysterical.

"It's my fault! It's my fault!" she **bs.

"BROOKLYN!" I say, gently pushing my aura out to get her attention.

She jumps then looks up at me, blinking quickly.

"What. Happened?" I ask quietly and calmly.

"He came for us. Mom bought a gun and silver bullets. She knew he'd come. She put me in here with the weapons, but she protected me and then he..."

She starts to break down again into tears, but she quickly swipes her face with the back of her hand.

"He tackled her and then he was going to mark her again, forcing her back into a mate bond with him. I didn't know...I didn't know that if I killed him that it would kill her," she says.

"Come with me," I say, pushing Michael's dead body off of Leah. I pick up Leah and help Brooklyn to her feet.

"Are you injured?" I ask. She shakes her head, but I can see her body trembling. I'm guessing she's in shock.

"Can you walk?" She shakes her head, no, again.

I turn and crouch. "Get on my back."

"Alpha?" she asks and when I turn, I see her frowning at me.

"Get on my back, Brooklyn. I'm not leaving you here alone. The battle is nearly over, but it's not done yet."

"You're injured," she says.

"I'll be fine. Let's go," I say, authoritatively. I have no idea if Dr. Felicity can save Leah, but I know the longer it takes for us to get to the pack hospital, the less likely it is for her to survive.

Brooklyn finally climbs onto my back, and I stand, feeling every ache and injury in my body now that the adrenaline of the battle is starting to wear off.

'Lucas, I need you to check in with Carter and Kayce. What's the status on the safe rooms?'

'Opening them now,' he says. "Where are you?'

‘Headed to the pack hospital with Leah and Brooklyn.’

‘What happened?’

‘It looks like Brooklyn killed her father,’ I say, and I can feel the shock in him, so strong that he barely registers that Sophie is looking for me.

‘Sophie, I need you at the pack hospital. It’s Leah,’ I tell her in the mind link. She can help keep Brooklyn calm.

When I walk in, I see wolves in every stage of injury, some minor and some serious. The nursing staff is doing triage and I step up to one of them as Brooklyn looks around.

“Mate bond?” the nurse asks.

“Yes.”

“That way, Alpha,” she says, pointing me down a hallway.

I begin striding quickly down the hallway, finding another nurse who quickly looks Leah over and guides us to a room. Brooklyn slides off my back and hobbles to a chair while I get Leah onto the bed. The nurses begin attaching her to IVs and checking her vitals.

“You can leave her with us, Alpha. We’ll do everything we can for her,” the nurse says.

“What can I do?” Brooklyn asks.

“You can stay here and hold her hand like she did with you, Brooklyn. That’s probably the best thing you can do,” the nurse says kindly.

I smell my mate before I see her. When she walks in, I turn, looking her over quickly. I realize she’s doing the same to me.

“Can you stay with Brooklyn?” I ask her.

“You’re injured,” she says.

“Nothing that Shaw can’t heal,” I tell her, walking to her and pulling her against me, taking a deep breath of her scent, knowing it will help Shaw to heal faster. “I need to go check on the warriors. Can you stay with Brooklyn?” I ask her again.

“Yes, of course,” she says, and I start to step away, but she puts her hands on my face, holding me in place.

“Take care of my mate,” she says, her eyes merce. They’re the same words I said to her hours ago and it makes me smile. D**n I love this woman.

I kiss her quickly but with the same fierceness I see in her eyes before striding from the room.

"Brooklyn, tell me what happened" I hear Sophie say as I walk down the hallway, and I know my mate is taking charge and will do everything she can to ensure that Leah survives.

The One He Claimed Chapter 86

Chapter 86: Aftermath

Sophie

I stayed with Brooklyn while they stabilized her mother.

"Luna, Brooklyn, we're going to keep her unconscious for a day or so. Her wolf will have gone silent, possibly for good," the nurse says, looking at Brooklyn before looking at me. "As an omega, losing your mate, even one you rejected, can kill your wolf."

"I'm so sorry, mother," Brooklyn whispers.

"Look at me, Brooklyn," I say and wait for her to look up. When she does, I can see the devastation in her eyes. I take her face in my hands and wipe her tears. She and I are very close in age, but right now, I feel like I'm years older than this sweet, fragile woman.

"Your mother did not want to be with your father. You can't tell me that she wasn't ready to die saving you today. Am I right?" I ask her.

She nods as I wipe the tears that continue to fall. "So, even if she loses her wolf, she'll be happy that both of you are free of your father and that you're both alive. Right?"

She nods again.

"Okay. Now it's your turn to be strong for her. You are brave and you are stronger than you give yourself credit for, Brooklyn. I believe you get that strength from your mother. She'll survive this, if for no other reason than she loves you and refuses to leave you alone. Even though you would never be alone. We would never abandon you, Brooklyn."

"What if...what if she never gets her wolf back?" Brooklyn asks me.

'She's worried because her wolf hasn't resurfaced since her attack by Alpha Owen,' Hedda says. She's been forward since the beginning of the attack, ready to protect me and our son if needed.

“Do I look like the kind of Luna who would kick you or your mother out of this pack? Do you think Hunter would do that?”

“I don’t have my wolf either,” she admits, confirming what Hedda says.

“You are still part of this pack, Brooklyn. You accepted Hunter as your Alpha and me as your Luna. I do not dismiss my pack members because they are suffering with an injury that may or may not have killed their wolves. You and your mother will always have a place here, if you choose to remain in our pack. Do not let that worry you,” I tell her.

She grabs me unexpectedly and whether it’s because of the fear of being cast out, the adrenaline rush of killing her father wearing off, or just being overwhelmed by everything, she begins to s**b in my arms.

I carefully lift her, moving to sit in a chair and cradling her in my lap, rocking her as I would a child, letting her get it all out of her system.

I nod at the nurses that they can leave and murmur soft words of comfort to Brooklyn long after she stops crying but continues to cling to me.

When she finally sits up, I wipe her tears again and smile at her. “Better?”

“Yes, thank you, Luna,” she says, giving me a watery smile in return.

“Okay, I’ll let the nurses know that you’re going to stay here with your mother until she wakes. They’ll bring in a bed or cot for you, but it may be a while. We still have injured coming in.”

“I want to help,” she says suddenly.

“Brooklyn, you don’t have to help. You can stay here,” I tell her.

“No. They said my mother will be out for another day. I can help. Sitting here, watching her sleep, won’t help anyone, definitely not me. I need to feel useful. Please, Luna.”

I think for a moment. “What do you know about injuries?” I ask her.

“I know a little. As omegas, we’re always having to help each other when we burn or cut ourselves in the kitchen since our wolves don’t heal us as fast as others.”

“I think they still need people to help them triage the injured. Do you feel up to that?”

“I do,” she says determinedly. “I can help. I’ll still sleep in here. with my mother, but I’ll do what I can.”

“Okay, let me get you a walker. I know you can’t walk on your own yet,” I say, and step out, quickly asking a nurse rushing by where I can get one. She gets it for me before rushing off to her task.

When I step back in, Brooklyn is leaning over her mother, telling her that she’ll be back soon.

I give her the walker, making sure she can use it and is strong enough to walk with it. Then I lead her back out to the main entrance. I find a lead nurse and let her know that Brooklyn wants to help.

“We can use all the help we can get. Are you sure you’re okay, Brooklyn?” she asks. All the nurses know her from when she was here in the hospital.

“Yes, I want to help.”

The nurse gestures to the room full of warriors in various stages of injury. “We have the most seriously injured in surgery or waiting to go in. We need to know of those left, who has the most serious injuries needing treatment and who just needs to be stitched up and sent home to rest.”

“I can help stitch them up,” Brooklyn says, surprising me.

The nurse tilts her head. “Are you the one that has been stitching up the omegas?” she asks her.

Brooklyn blushes and nods her head. “We don’t always have time to come in, so I learned. My mother taught me.”

“Well, you’re very good at it. If you find someone who needs to get stitched up, make sure to wash the wound, supplies are over there, and then you can stitch them up and send them on their way.”

Chald. Aftermath.

“I’ll leave you to it, Brooklyn,” I say to her.

“Thank you, Luna.”

“Thank you, Brooklyn. I’m sure the staff here are grateful for your help.”

“More than grateful,” the lead nurse says before turning to the next person in the room.

I leave her, heading back to the packhouse. When I arrive, I can see that we have even more injured here that either refused or haven’t made it to the pack hospital yet. I look around, searching for Hunter.

“Luna.” I turn and see Margot walking toward me. Her hands are bl**dy, and she’s wiping them on a towel. “How are things at the hospital? I have a doctor friend that might be willing to help, if you need him to.”

“That would be great. We need these warriors back to full fighting strength before Joshua comes,” I say to her. She presses her lips together and nods.

“Hey, I’m not blaming you. He’d come anyway, but we know he’s out there and it’s only a matter of time.”

“I’ll call my friend and let you know.”

She turns to leave. “Margot, you trust him right? We’ll be letting him onto our pack lands. He won’t betray us?” I ask, needing to make sure.

“I trust him,” she says, looking around and pulling me aside. “No one knows this except my mother, so please, keep this between

But he’s been giving me birth control since I was mated Joshua. He’s very discreet and he cares about his patients. He won’t betray me or you.”

“Okay. I trust you, Margot. If you trust him, then call him. Just let

me know his name and when to expect him so I can let the border patrols know.”.

She turns again. “Wait, Margot, how was your safe room? Is everyone okay? Did anyone lose their mate?”

“No one lost their mate, but...if I’m honest, I’d rather never do that again,” she says.

“It’s a lot easier to fight, isn’t it?” I ask her, understanding.

“Very much so.”

“Then let’s get you strong so you can fight,” I say. This time it’s. me who starts to turn away, but she stops me.

“Luna, I’ve been watching you, at the committee meetings and for the couple of days that I’ve been here. I didn’t understand the fuss before, but I do now. You really are a legend.”

I chuckle. “I’m just a girl who found her incredible mate, that’s all.”

“No, reason all of this has happened. Not in a bad

you are the way, in a good way. Things needed to change. I thought it was hype, thought your title was overdramatized, but it's not. You really are worthy of being called a legend," she says before nodding her head and walking off.

I stare after her, feeling equal parts awed and inadequate. That was high praise coming from another Luna, even if she rejected her mate. I truly hope that I never give her a reason to find me unworthy of the title.

The One He Claimed Chapter 87

Chapter 87: One and the Same

Sophie

When I turn away from Margot, I find Kinsley and get a report on the pack's injuries and how things went in her safe room.

"Where are our mates?" I ask when she's done.

"They're around, and I don't know about yours, but mine is exhausted. However, he refuses to go rest," she says, worriedly.

"Well, that's about to change. Come with me. You and I are leaders in this pack and if our mates want to tell us that we are equals to them, it's about time for them to prove it."

"This ought to be good," I hear her murmur excitedly as she follows me.

I find my mate talking to Alpha Kayce and my father.

"Alpha Hunter," I say, addressing him by his title so he knows I'm serious.

The conversation stops and he turns, raising an eyebrow at me. I look over his body, seeing that his injuries still haven't fully healed.

"You need to go shower and get some rest," I say, seeing Kayce's eyebrow go up at my words.

"I can't yet, Soph. We still have injured, I need..."

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"What you need to do, Alpha, is to go wash off this battle and rest so Shaw can heal you."

“Sophie...”

“Am I not your equal in this pack, Hunter?” I ask, stepping up to him.

“Of course you are, but right now...”

“No, Hunter. Either I am or I’m not. If I looked like you, you’d have had me upstairs and in bed hours ago. Do you trust me to take care of this pack in your absence?”

“Sophie...”

“Yes or no, Hunter.”

“Yes, Sophie, but...”

“But what, Hunter? I need you healed and strong so that when Joshua comes, you can fight again. We know it’s coming, it’s only a matter of when. I can’t fight, Kinsley can’t fight, but you and Lucas will have to, and I need my mate and my Beta at full fighting strength when the battle comes. So, I will say again, get your a**upstairs, get cleaned up, and get into bed.”

Hunter stares at me for a moment.

“Son, take a word of advice from a man who has been mated to a strong-willed woman for longer than you, never argue with your Luna. You will lose, maybe not at that moment, but you will, especially when what she’s saying makes perfect sense,” my father says, gently putting his hand on Hunter’s shoulder.”

Hunter turns to look at my father, then at Kayce as if expecting

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one of them to support him.

“Don’t look at me, I’m not arguing with her. She’s the f**g legend. I know when I’m outranked,” Kayce says, a smile twitching at his lips.

Hunter turns back to me. “You’re sure?”

I raise my chin and wait him out.

“Okay then, the pack is yours.”

"No, the pack is ours and when you're back to full strength, I know you'll get them ready for the next battle to come," I say, standing my ground.

He smiles at me, leaning over to kiss my lips quickly. "Yes, my Luna."

I turn, spotting Lucas talking to some of the wounded warriors. "Beta Lucas," I call out, my voice ringing through the room.

His head snaps up. "Yes, Luna."

Hunter stops, waiting to see what I'm going to say.

"I suggest you listen to your mate, or you will face my wrath," I say.

He frowns, looking at Kinsley.

"Upstairs, Beta. You need to rest."

"Kinsley, I can't..."

"Did you hear what I just said?" I say, the room going quiet.

Lucas frowns, looking around, finding Hunter. "Alpha?"

"I lost the fight with our Luna. Good luck, you're on your own," he says and starts limping toward the stairwell.

I turn, standing behind Kinsley as she and her mate have a silent battle of wills.

"Fine!" he says, throwing up his hands. "Who's making a list of the injured then," he says, obviously aggravated.

"Me, of course, I'm a Beta, am I not?" Kinsley asks him.

His mouth opens and closes several times before finally shutting.

"Let's go Lucas. The sooner we heal, the sooner we're back," Hunter says, and if I didn't think it would make him look weak, I'd go help him up the stairs.

"Don't do it," Kayce says softly behind me.

"I know," I say, watching him start up the stairs before turning back to my father and Kayce.

“Okay, first, I’m sure Hunter already thanked you for answering our call, but I want to thank you as well.”

Both men’s lips are twitching as they look at me.

“Did either of you lose any men?”

“A couple,” Kayce says, his face becoming serious.

“Same,” my father says.

“I need a report of how many dead and from which packs. I need to know how many are from Owen’s pack and how many we think escaped so I can inform Alpha Ezra. Can you get those numbers for me Alpha Kayce?”

“I certainly can Luna. Or should I call you Alpha?”

“In this pack, Alpha Kayce, they are one and the same.”

“Apparently so,” he says, this time his smile is wide.

I turn to my father. “Can I ask you to have your pack members run patrols for my pack until some of my injured are healed. We have a lot of warriors down from fighting before your packs. arrived.”

“Of course, Luna.”

“Thanks, Dad,” I say, smiling.

I turn, looking around, my mind going through everything that needs to be done, when I see Hunter standing on the stairs, watching me.

“What are you still doing down here?” I ask him.

“I’m taking a moment to admire my impressive mate,” he says, and I feel a wave of pride come through the bond. I know I blush. a deep shade of pink, pleased with his pride in me.

“Get upstairs, Alpha,” I say, more because I’m embarrassed than because I’m worried about him.

“Yes, my amazing Luna,” he says and begins walking up the stairs. He passes Lucas who is watching his mate with a similar expression on his face.

“Upstairs, Beta,” Kinsley calls out, not looking up from the report she’s putting together on our injured.

“Yes, ma’am,” he says, grinning hugely and following Hunter up the stairs.

“I’m so very proud of you sweetheart,” my father says softly behind me. “Your mother will be too when I tell her.”

“Thanks, Dad,” I say, beginning to feel overwhelmed with the pride I’m feeling from the pack.

For the next several hours, Kinsley and I get through all the pack members, making sure everyone who was injured receives treatment, seeing some return talking about how delicate Brooklyn was when she stitched them up. Kayce gets me the report of the dead. Almost all of them are from Owen’s pack. As he said, he lost two, my father lost two and we lost four. Their mates are in the pack hospital, and I mind link Brooklyn to ask her to check on them while she’s there.

“Yes, Luna,” she says.

Once everything is settled, I go into my office and call Alpha Ezra.

“Alpha Ezra,” he answers.

“Alpha, this is Luna Sophie. I’m not sure you heard that we were attacked by Owen’s pack last night,” I say. The lack of sleep and stress of the day is starting to catch up to me. I think I forgot to eat too. Hunter won’t be pleased.

“Luna, is everything okay? Is your mate alright?”

“He is. He was injured, but he’s resting, letting Shaw heal him so we can be prepared for the next battle. I wanted to let you know about the number of dead that we have from Owen’s pack and the number we feel escaped when Koden fled.”

He’s quiet.

“Alpha? Are you there?”

“You’re calling to give me the report?”

“Yes, Alpha. That’s why I’m calling,” I say to him.

“You’re Alpha went to sleep without getting the numbers from his pack?” he asks, clarifying.

“Alpha Ezra, I know you haven’t spent as much time with us as Alpha Kayce and Alpha Robin, but I would have thought that you would have seen that my mate and I are equal partners in this pack. I may have had to remind him of that earlier today, but

make no mistake, Alpha Ezra, I am perfectly capable of running this pack while my mate heals," I say indignantly.

"My apologies, Luna. I meant no disrespect, it's just...."

"Never been done before?" I ask him, a bit snarkily.

"Exactly. But that doesn't mean that it's not a good thing. It just reminds me that I didn't do right by Hunter's sister when she was my mate."

I moderate my tone when I respond, knowing that he's still struggling with how my relationship with Hunter differs and is better than his was with Diana.

"I'm pregnant, as is my Beta female. We cannot fight, so I need our mates strong and ready when the next battle comes, as we know it will," I say.

"And yet, I probably still wouldn't have given in to Diana's request if she had made it to me under the same

circumstances."

"Oh, make no mistake, Alpha. It wasn't a request on my part. I was not taking no for an answer.

He chuckles. "Legend, indeed," he says under his breath, but I still hear him.

"I don't know why everyone keeps saying that today," I say.

"Probably because you're proving that you're worthy of the title, Luna. Or should I call you Alpha?" he asks, and I can hear the smile in his tone.

"I'll tell you what I told Alpha Kayce. In this pack, they're one and the same."

"Indeed, they are. Thank you for the information. My warriors are planning to head to Owen's pack early tomorrow morning and take over the pack. Did Koden survive?"

"He did."

"I'll keep that in mind," he says. "And thank you, Luna, not only for the update, but for the reminder that I need to keep an open mind about the changes that are coming and the role that ranked females will play in the future of our packs."

"You're welcome, Alpha. Please call when you have an update on the status of Owen's pack."

"Will do."

When I'm done, I lean my head back, utterly exhausted. I give myself a moment then force myself to get up. There's more work to be done.

I look around making sure I have everything as I walk to the door and nearly run into Hunt He's leaning against the

doorframe, watching me.

"My Luna looks exhausted," he says, looking me over. I do the same to him, seeing that his injuries are healed.

"How are you feeling?" I ask him.

He pushes off the doorframe and comes to me, pulling me against him. I lean into him, wrapping my arms around his waist.

"Rested, unlike you. Time for bed, my Luna."

"I just need to get with Kinsley..."

"Oh no," he says, pulling back and lifting my chin so I'm looking up at him. "I believe we had the conversation earlier about being

pat equal partners. Anything that still needs to be done, I'll take care of. My mate and my pup need sleep. Did you eat?"

I grimace which elicits a growl from Hunter.

He scoops me into his arms, and I see his eyes go unfocused. We walk out of the office and toward the stairs and are met by an omega holding a sandwich in her hands.

"Here, Luna. I had this made for you earlier, but you never stopped to eat," she says, pushing the sandwich into my hands. She pulls a bottle of water out of her pocket and hands that to me as well.

"Thank you," I say as Hunter begins carrying me up the stairs. As he climbs, I fill him in on everything that has happened while he's been asleep, giving him the list of things that I had planned to follow up on.

He sets me down on the bed, putting the water on the

nightstand before going into the closet and getting me one of his t-shirts. I start eating the sandwich while I wait, struggling to chew before swallowing the large bites.

“Don’t choke, Soph,” Hunter says, helping me to undress, then pulling the shirt over my head. I finish the sandwich and Hunter gives me the bottle of water, unscrewing the top before he hands it to me.

“Better?” he asks when I hand the empty bottle back to him.

“Yes. Thank you.”

“Thank you, my mate. You really are an incredible woman. Now get some sleep. I know how to run our pack.”

“Yes, Alpha,” I say. I’m pretty sure I was asleep before he stepped out of the

The One He Claimed Chapter 88

Chapter 88: Rendered Useless

Hunter

My mate was dead on her feet when I finally woke, feeling. amazingly refreshed and ready to take on anything, including Joshua and another war. Now that I’ve had a moment to step. away from the battle, I can see that she was right. I needed to heal so I can be prepared to fight again, but when she first approached me, I had been very surprised at how insistent she was that I get some sleep.

‘Lucas?’ I reach out in the mind link as I leave my already sound asleep mate.

‘Putting my mate to bed. I’ll be right there,’ he says and I’m sure Kinsley is in the same position that Sophie is, exhausted.

When I get downstairs, I see Penny working through the patrols with our Lead Warrior.

“How do things look?” I ask, walking up.

“Oh, Alpha. You look well rested,” Penny says.

“So do you,” I say, looking her over.

“Luna and Beta Kinsley had all of us rotating through a sleep schedule so she could let her father and his pack members get back home. We’re just about to switch out the last round of patrols who are waking up and then we should be back to normal,” Penny says.

“Well, that’s great. Can I take a look?”

I look over what Kinsley must have put together for the day, slowly weeding out Carter's pack so that they could go home. Penny's right, this is the last shift with Carter's men.

"Are Alpha Carter and Alpha Kayce still here?" I ask as Lucas walks up. I hand the patrol schedule to him, knowing he'll be proud of what his mate has done.

"No, Alpha. Alpha Kayce left a while ago after getting the list of dead for Luna Sophie. I believe that report is on your desk. We've also set up pyres for the four that we lost and buried the ones that came from Owen's old pack," she reports.

"The mates of the ones we lost?" Lucas asks.

"Luna had Brooklyn checking in on them, since she's there with her mother. You should know too, that many of the warriors have commented on Brooklyn's steady hand and gentle touch when it came to stitching them up," my Lead Warrior says.

"Is that so?"

"Yes, Alpha."

I look around, feeling completely unnecessary. Sophie and Kinsley have this pack nearly back to fighting strength in less than twelve hours.

"If I may, Alpha, Luna Sophie and Beta Kinsley were incredible. They answered all our questions, listened to our advice, made sure everyone ate and was looked after...I don't want to say that they were better than you and Beta Lucas, but I don't think you'll find anyone in the pack who would say they felt the loss of your time away," my Lead Warrior says, and Penny nods her head agreement.

"I'm starting to feel like I should retire," I mumble. "If you need anything, your Luna and Beta female are asleep, you can come to me or Lucas now," I say louder.

"Yes, Alpha."

I walk to the kitchens, seeing that there are easy grab and go foods available so that anyone coming in from patrols or waking up for their shift can get food. I see Margot getting food, looking like she just woke up.

When she sees me, she walks over. "Oh good. Please tell me your mates are asleep."

"They are. They were exhausted," Lucas says.

"They went non-stop. I'm not sure either of them ever ate. It's very impressive. I got to see what it would have been like for if I were an equal partner to Joshua."

"We should talk about that," I say to her.

She nods. "You're worried that killing him will kill me because he hasn't accepted my rejection?"

"Yes," I say, getting food and going to sit with Margot while Lucas gets food and goes to check on those in the pack hospital.

She looks down at her plate. "You don't need to worry about my Alpha."

"That's not how it works, Margot, not in my pack at least. You are here for my protection. I take that seriously."

She smiles at me. "I told Sophie that now I understand what all the hype is about, her being the legend and all. She showed that, clear as day today, when she whipped this pack into shape after the battle. But now, I'm also starting to see why you are mated to a woman such as that. The two of you are very strong, but you don't have to prove your strength, you can let the other be strong without feeling intimidated. That's true strength, don't you think?"

"I don't know about that, but what I do know is that my mate is a strong, powerful, Alpha female. Whether it's her strength or her love, I know I'm a better man and Alpha having her by my side. If I had stifled that in her, I would be no better off than I was before. She makes me a better person and I want to be a better person for her. I want her to always be proud of me and proud to be my mate," I say honestly.

Margot looks around the room. "What you're doing here, it's a good thing, Alpha, a very good thing. You're giving women like me a chance to find a happiness that we didn't know existed. But you need to realize that you can't save all of us. I've had my time, Alpha. When Joshua comes, don't hesitate to kill him. I know if I have the chance to kill him, I won't hesitate. I'm okay if that's the end of my life. If I go out, knowing that I've made even a small difference in this world and the future of our female population, it's worth it."

"That's not okay with me, Margot," I tell her.

She smiles sadly. "That's why you're an Alpha worthy of the Legend. But if you hesitate and he gets away and hurts another she-wolf, that will be on you. Alpha that on your conscience," she says, standing. "If you'll excuse me, I need to get back to the pack hospital. I'm helping the nurses there with some of the injured and with the women who lost their mates."

"Thank you, Margot," I say standing as well.

"Thank you, Alpha, for everything," she says walking away. It feels so much like a goodbye that it takes everything in me to let her walk away. Instead, I make a mental note to have Sophie talk to her, maybe Kinsley as well.

I watch her walk away for a moment, then leave the dining hall, noticing that there are still some folks just waking and that the patrols are just coming off duty.

I head to my office and see the report that Kayce started, and Sophie finished for me, with a little note on it.

'I hope this is okay. It's my first report. I just wanted you to have all the information when you woke up.'

I smile, feeling incredibly proud of my mate. I quickly look over the report and then call Kayce.

"Alpha Hunter, you're back in the land of the living," he answers.

"I am and I'm back to fighting strength. What did I miss?"

"You got the report of the dead?"

"Yes. I'm sorry for your loss," I say, knowing he'll be feeling the loss of his two pack members the same way I'm feeling the loss of my four.

"I lost their mates as well," he says sadly.

"I'm so sorry to hear that," I say, and I hear movement on the other end of the phone. It sounds like Allison just came to sit on Kayce's lap.

"I won't keep you. I just wanted to thank you again and see if there was any news on Joshua."

"I haven't heard anything new, but you know he's coming."

"I do. Thank you again, Kayce."

"You would do the same for me, Hunter, and there may come a time when I call on you."

"We'll be there," I say, hanging up.

Next I call Carter but instead of him answering, I get Luna Amy.

"Luna, I was looking for Alpha Carter."

"Oh, he's asleep, dear. He had a long day, refused to come home until everything was settled in your pack. How is my daughter?"

“Sleeping and I’m sure your mate told you, but she did an excellent job of running this pack while I slept.”

“So I heard. Between you and me, Alpha, she gets that from me,” she says conspiratorially.

I laugh. “I am absolutely sure she does, Luna Amy. Will you let Alpha Carter know that I called and to give me a call when he wakes if there’s anything I can do to help ease the passing of your dead.”

“We’ll be laying them to rest tomorrow, but thank you; Alpha.”

“Thank you, Luna.”

After that, I call Ezra.

“Luna Sophie?” he answers.

“No, it’s me, Hunter,” I say.

“Hunter! You’re back with us?”

“I am. I know it’s a bit late, but I wanted to give you the update on Owen’s dead...”

“No need, your mate already called me, hours ago.”

“She did?” I ask, sitting back.

“She did. I’ll tell you what I told her. I’ll be heading over there tomorrow morning to take over the pack.”

“Good. That’s good. You shouldn’t have too much trouble, we have quite a few dead here.”

“When do you want to deal with Owen?” he asks.

“Let me talk to Brooklyn. She actually shot her father, killing him and now her mother is in the pack hospital fighting to survive since he never accepted her rejection.”

He whistles low. “How is she doing?”

“I haven’t seen her yet, but from everything that I’ve heard from my pack, she’s much better than I would have expected.”

“That’s good, I’m glad to hear it. Well, once you know when you want me to come by with the asshole, just let me know.”

I chuckle at that. "Is he causing you any problems?"

"He's loud and obnoxious, but otherwise no."

"Okay, I'll be in touch."

I sit back looking over my desk which Sophie straightened up for me today as well. There's a knock at the door and I look up to see Lucas. He's frowning as he walks in.

"Kinsley did everything while I was out," he says, sitting in the chair opposite me.

"Sophie did the same," I say, looking at him.

I realize that our mates have rendered us utterly useless in the matter of one day.

The One He Claimed Chapter 89

Chapter 89: Dr. Caspian

Brooklyn

I'm not sure why it helped me, but it felt cathartic to help the warriors coming in who were in various stages of injury. It had been a pretty non-stop flow of them from the moment that I walked out to help. I quickly realized that the best way for me to be effective was to pass off the bigger injuries to the nurses and for them to leave the stitching to me. Eventually, there was a line of warriors waiting for me to stitch them up.

"You have a very soft touch, Brooklyn," the current warrior I'm stitching says softly. I'm not sure if they have all just appreciated me or if it's because they know what happened, but every warrior I've spoken to, no matter how injured they were, has been kind and gentle with me.

"Thank you, Warrior. You, on the other hand, have a very deep g**h. I'm going to need to put several layers of stitches into his wound to keep it closed while your wolf heals you."

"Do what you need to do. Argus is exhausted and needs his sleep," he says, referencing his wolf. "As do you, Warrior," I say, looking up and meeting his gaze for the first time. This warrior is older, my father's age and I can see the sadness and the kindness in his eyes. Yep, he definitely knows what happened to

me.

I get back to work, worrying that my trauma will be the way that everyone remembers me. I know it was bad when I got here. My mother barely got me here and I was

unconscious, but I've heard the whispers and I know how many stitches were required. to put poor little Brooklyn Row back together again.

When I'm done, I put a bandage on his hip and he sits up, flexing his leg before standing. I turn from washing my hands to see if he has another injury that I missed, but he's looking at me.

"For what it's worth, we all think you were very brave for what you did. If you or your mother need anything at all, you let me know," he says.

The line of warriors behind him echoes his sentiment and I feel tears p**k at my eyes.

"Just so you know, we're going to get the body out of your house and we're fixing your door so that when you're ready, you can go back to your home," the next warrior says walking up and sitting down.

"Thank you," I say, feeling overwhelmed with their kindness.

About an hour later, one of the female warriors sits down. I begin working on her while she quietly assesses me. I'm not sure what she sees, but I have a job to do, so I do it quietly.

"They're right, you do have a soft touch. I barely felt that," she says to me. Once again, she stands and waits for me to look at her.

"If you ever decide that you want to learn to fight, let me know. I'll work with you. Even if you're not ever a warrior, knowing that you can throw a punch can make you feel powerful," she says to

me.

"Thank you," I say, feeling overwhelmed with gratitude to this

pack and the warriors who are being so kind to me.

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Throughout the day, I've had whiffs of my favorite dinner, roasted chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy. My mom would make it for me on cold days when our omega wolves struggled to keep us warm. The comfort food always made us warm and happy.

I've asked a couple of people if that's what they are making in the kitchen for lunch and now for dinner, but no one seems to know. All I know is that I've gotten whiffs of the mouth-watering food and I've even felt my quiet wolf fluttering around in my mind today. I'll have to tell my mother when she wakes. If our favorite comfort food is all I need to awaken Ermelinde, my wolf, my mother will make it every day until she returns.

I've just finished stitching up the last of the warriors, taking a moment to accept their thank you for gently stitching them before I close my eyes and stretch my neck and back. My body is aching from bending over to stitch all day.

I stand and turn, beginning to clean up my area. The nurses, once they realized that I could stitch up everyone, had brought all the supplies to me so I didn't have to waste time searching for them or someone to tell me where the supplies were.

I've just gotten the last of the garbage cleaned up when I smell it again, my favorite comfort food. I lift my nose in the air and take a deep breath. They must be making it either here or at the packhouse. My mouth waters and my body begins to calm after the long day.

I turn and stop, seeing a man I don't know watching me closely. He's in scrubs and he has a surgical hat in his hands like he pulled it off his head and then forgot he was holding it.

I take a step back quickly, terrified of who this man might be.

The man raises a hand and takes a step toward me. I whimper, not sure if I can find help before he gets to me. Just then a nurse walks by and stops, seeing me staring at the man. Her nose lifts and she comes rushing over to me.

"Brooklyn, it's okay, this is Dr. Caspian. Luna Margot asked Luna Sophie if he could come help us. We needed extra hands, as I'm sure you realized. He's not going to hurt you, he's a doctor. He's been here for several hours helping us with the more difficult injuries," she says, putting her arm around my shoulder.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to startle you. Brooklyn, is it?" he asks me.

I nod, leaning against the nurse.

"Doctor, did you need something?" the nurse asks him, a bit protectively. I'm very thankful for her right now.

He frowns, looking from the nurse to me. "Do you not....can you not sense who I am to you?" he asks me.

I whimper again, closing my eyes, as the nurse sucks in air beside me. He's where the smell has been coming from. They aren't making my comfort food, it's the scent of my mate..

"I can't. I can't. I can't," I say, beginning to s**b. The doctor takes a step toward me, and I yelp, terror filling my body.

The nurse holds out a hand to stop the doctor, and turns to me, taking my face in her hands. "Brooklyn, look at me. Look at me. Breathe, sweetheart. Breathe. That's right, just breathe with me."

She gently wipes the tears from my eyes and turns to look at the doctor. "Stay put," she says sternly before guiding me toward my mother's room.

"Why don't you sit with your mother. I'll have food brought in for you. You're exhausted after all the work you did today. It will be good for you to eat and then get some sleep."

I nod, beginning to breathe more easily as we walk away. I turn and see Dr. Caspian watching us, hurt clearly written on his face.

Luna Sophie asked me to check on all the mates who are in the hospital, and there are four, not including my mother. Since they are all in the same wing as my mother, I check on her first, then go to check on each one of the women, letting them know they aren't alone, letting them know that their children need them if they have them, or that the pack needs them if they don't. I don't know if it will help, but hopefully they can hear me.

Each time I've stepped out of a room, I've smelled my favorite. comfort food. I don't know if he's nearby or if he's just been down this hallway a couple of times, but I always take a deep breath before going into the next room. When I go back to my mother's room, I see that one of the nurses has brought me a cot to sleep on with blankets and a pillow. I sit beside my mother, telling her everything that I did today and how proud of me she would be. I remind her that I need her and that I know she's suffering, but it will be okay and that Luna Sophie said we could stay even if we don't have our wolves. I know she was worried about that, so hopefully she can hear me.

I finally lay down to sleep, but I can't. I toss and turn, unable to get the hurt look on Dr. Caspian's face out of my head. I finally

decide to go check on the other women, since I'm not sleeping anyway and I quietly step outside my mother's room. When I turn, I see him, Dr. Caspian. It looks like he's been waiting here all night to talk to me. He sits up from the slumped position that he must have fallen asleep in and puts his hands up.

"Please don't run from me. I won't hurt you. I swear."

I look around but it's the middle of the night and everything here is quiet now. I refocus on him. "What do you want?"

He scrubs his hands over his face before looking back up at me. "One of the nurses told me what happened to you."

I nod. Everyone in the pack knew anyway so what's one more

person.

"I took the liberty of reading your chart from when you were in the hospital and I have to tell you that I've never wanted to kill someone so much as I want to kill that Alpha for what he did to you," he says. I can tell that he's working hard to control his emotions, so he doesn't scare me by growling or snarling.

"Look, I know I'm a few years older than you are..."

I raise my eyebrow and I see his lips twitch.

"Okay, I've seven years older than you are, which means, I've been looking for my mate for seven long years. I didn't realize that you were going to be younger than me by so many years, but I believe that fate has brought us together. It was Luna Margot that asked me to come help with the wounded. She's not even part of this pack. I didn't have to agree, but I did, and because both of those things happened, I found you."

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The One He Claimed Chapter 90

Chapter 90: Protection Detail

Sophie

I come awake slowly, feeling warm and comfortable, my mate's pine scent filling my nose.

I shift, stretching to work out the kinks in my body.

"Mmm, good morning," Hunter's sleepy voice says from behind me, as he buries his face into my hair, kissing the crook of my neck just behind my mate mark. It sends shivers through my body, just as his deep, husky voice does.

He tugs me against him, and I feel his arousal pressing against my bottom and back.

"How are you feeling?" he asks.

"Stiff, but well-rested."

He chuckles behind me. "You should be, you slept nearly a day and a half."

"What?" I ask sitting up quickly.

"Baby, you were exhausted. You and Kinsley did everything to get this pack in order while Lucas and I slept. It seemed only fair that you get to sleep it off. And before you start arguing that you didn't fight any battles, you are carrying my pup and that along with the stress of the battle and aftermath is enough to drain anyone's energy," he says, pulling me back down and curling his large frame around me.

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describe Brooklyn any longer."

"Why's that?"

"She was incredible sewing up the warriors after the battle. They've all complimented her and for whatever reason, they've all sort of rallied behind her. They cleaned up her house, removed her father's body, fixed her door, washed the inside so the blood is

gone. No one asked them to do it, they did it on. their own. I even heard that one of our female warriors offered to teach Brooklyn to fight if she wanted to.”

“Good for her! I’ll check in with her, find out her feelings about being a part of Owen’s execution, and I’ll also check out this Dr. Caspian. What about Leah and the other mates?”

“We lost one of the mates. She was older, her pups grown. Brooklyn took it hard. You apparently tasked her with checking on them and she took that to mean that it was her job to keep them alive. I feel like the others are alive just because of her. She’s a lot stronger than she comes across.”

“That which doesn’t kill you...” I say.

“I think she was strong before this. I think Michael just kept her and Leah under his thumb. It will be interesting now to see what happens with them.”

“Has she regained her wolf?” I ask.

“Not yet. Even if they don’t, I have no intention of rejecting them from the pack,” Hunter says, making me smile.

“Good, because that’s what I told Brooklyn when I saw her last,” I say as we step out of the shower and dry off.

“Great minds think alike, my love!

He leans down and kisses me. This time he takes his time before releasing me.

“Oh, I have one more favor to ask you. I need you to talk to Margot, maybe with Kinsley.”

“About what?”

“She’s planning to die when we kill Joshua, basically told me to not let that stop me from killing him because she won’t let it stop her. I need you to talk to her try to convince her that she shouldn’t give up. She’s still young enough to live a full life. She may never choose to be mated again, but that doesn’t mean that she has to give up and die.”

“I’ll talk to her. She has so much to give to a pack, even if it’s not as their Luna. I’ll get Kinsley to talk with us as well, that’s a good. idea. Kinsley understands better than I do about what Margot went through.”

"I'm glad you don't know, glad you never had to feel that kind of embarrassment, shame, or pain," Hunter says, pulling me against his body and wrapping his arms around me.

I sigh, leaning into him. He really is the perfect man, the perfect mate.

'Perfect for you because you're perfect for me,' he says in my head, listening to my thoughts.

"I love you, my mate," I say, looking up at him, letting my feelings of love flow through the bond.

He growls, leaning in to kiss me. "Were you planning on leaving this room? Because when you do that, I just want to bury myself inside you again."

I giggle, before getting lost in his kiss, his scent, and his taste.

It's a bit later before we finally leave our room, going to look for breakfast. Hunter had apparently called off warrior training yesterday and today to allow our warriors to heal before getting back into sparring, so breakfast is being served a bit later than usual.

After breakfast, I kiss my mate again, wave at Lucas and let Kinsley know that I need to chat with her later.

"Are you headed to the pack hospital?" she asks me.

"I am. I'm going to talk to Brooklyn. Want to come?" I ask her.

"Sure do. I need to check out this Dr. Caspian for myself," she says, making me laugh. It seems everyone is protective of Brooklyn.

When we walk in, I see a couple of warriors sitting around, Brutus and Matthew.

"Is everything okay?" I ask them, not having heard that someone was in bad shape.

"We're keeping an eye on the new doc who says he's Brooklyn's mate," the older warrior, Brutus, says, jutting his chin in the direction he's looking.

I glance at Kinsley and see her lips twitching.

"So this is a protective detail?" she asks the two warriors.

"We watch out for our own," Matthew says.

"I heard what you did at their house. That was very generous," I say.

“Luna, I know you were busy, but that woman stitched up warriors for twelve hours non-stop the other day. Didn’t stop to eat, barely stopped to pee or drink any water. She never acted tired, never lost her steady hand, and never became rough with her stitches. I, myself, had to get three layers of stitches while Argus healed me. Found out about the doc, because, you know, gossip hotline, and all. So, we’ve decided to stand guard and make sure this new guy doesn’t try anything with our Brooklyn. She’s been through enough.”

Brutus is sitting with his large arms crossed over his body. He’s slumped in his chair, but he’s glaring past me. I turn and see a man I don’t know who keeps looking up at Brooklyn. I know the look well. My mate looks at me like that all the time.

I turn and look at Kinsley. “I think it’s time we met this Dr. Caspian for ourselves, Beta.”

“I couldn’t agree more.”

The two of us make our way over to where the doctor is looking through charts.

He looks up as we approach. “Hello, can I help you?” he asks.

“Doctor Caspian?” I ask.

I watch his nose twitch. He turns one way, then another, sniffing both of us.

“Do we need to make this conversation private, ladies?” he asks softly.

“I don’t know, do we?” I ask frowning.

“Follow me,” he says, nodding at Brooklyn who hoks at us curiously before he leads us to a room.

As soon as we walk in, he turns to us. “You’re both pregnant.”

“Yes,” Kinsley and I say together.

“By choice?” he asks.

“Yes,” we say and the tension in him eases.

“Good. I was concerned that maybe...you wouldn’t be the first she-wolves who had asked me about terminating their pregnancies when they find themselves pregnant with a female pup. I thought this pack was different, but I didn’t want to make assumptions.”

“I’m Luna Sophie and this is my Beta, Kinsley,” I say to him.

“Oh. OH! Oh, my goddess, you must think me crass. I’m so sorry. I was so worried about the pups I smelled on you that I didn’t smell the rank. I apologize. What can I do for you?”

“Brooklyn Row,” Kinsley says, jumping right in.

“She’s my mate,” he says, leaning back against the wall, casually, but I can tell he’s ready to argue if we tell him to leave her alone.

“What are your intentions?” I ask him.

He raises an eyebrow at that. “My intentions?”

“Yes, what do you intend to do about being mated to Brooklyn?” I ask him.

“Do I need to sit down for this?” he asks.

“That’s up to you, doctor,” I say.

He does sit and when he does, it’s like he deflates. “I know what happened to her. I saw her chart. I don’t even know how she survived something like that. Don’t know how her mother dragged her practically dead body all the way to this pack. to by sheer force of will, which only reinforces to me that

Brooklyn gets her strength from her mother.”

It had

“You understand that if you do anything to hurt that sweet girl, this entire pack will rain down hellfire on you like you’ve never seen?” Kinsley asks him.

“I would expect nothing less from a pack that’s run by the Legend,” he says, looking at me.

I roll my eyes. “Not you too?”

“I’ve known Margot for many years. She’s not one to exaggerate, so if she says you’re the real deal, then I believe her.”

I nod, looking at Kinsley who also nods. “You’ve been warned, doctor. And while we greatly appreciate your assistance with our pack members, we won’t hesitate to turn on you if you hurt her.”

“Understood. I have no intention of hurting her, but I do intend on staying close and letting her guide our interactions. With that in mind, I’d like permission to stay in the pack for the foreseeable future. Should I speak to Alpha Hunter about that?”

I look at Kinsley and she gives me a nod that she's in agreement. "No, you can stay. I'll have a room made up for you as long as Brooklyn is in agreement with that."

"I can stay here. I'd prefer it while Brooklyn is watching over her mother."

"Any news on Leah and the other mates?"

"They're stable. In situations like this, especially with omegas, it can take up to a week before she regains consciousness."

"Thank you, doctor." I turn and begin walking out but turn back. "I'm going to confirm with Brooklyn about you staying here, but as her mate, I should warn you, Alpha Owen is going to be here this weekend for his execution. I'm going to speak to Brooklyn now about what role, if any, she'd like to play in that. She may need you, doctor."

"And I'll be here for her," he says determinedly.