

## **Mated to the Alpha and His Beta novel**

### **Chapter 441**

Chapter 441 Mason

Under any other circumstances, being on this luxury yacht would've been the vacation of a lifetime. The skipper, Captain Jon, greeted us with glasses of champagne and explained apologetically that he'd be the only crew on board for this trip. He said the words with a hint of confusion in his voice, like he didn't quite understand what he was saying.

He showed us belowdecks to the small but fancy cabins. None were big enough for all four of us, but we'd have to deal. This trip was only about luxury on the surface. We all had other things on our minds rather than who got to cuddle up with who.

The tour included a peek into the galley, a small dining room, and then abovedecks to take a look at the wheelhouse. Captain Jon briefly demonstrated the helm and all the equipment.

"How is she in storms?" Xander asked. He sounded a little nervous.

I couldn't blame him. I was, too. Even the minor rocking of the boat at anchor was enough to get my heart racing. Out of all of us, only Stella and the captain didn't seem at all worried.

Jon grinned. "She'll weather storms just fine. Why? Are you expecting some?" Search the [FindNOvel.net](http://FindNOvel.net) website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"I

I guess I should ask you that question," Xander said.

The captain's gaze turned a little foggy. "No. No storms."

I looked off to the horizon and the dark clouds there. "You sure about that?"

"We have to go, no matter how bad the weather gets. I'm making him see only sunny skies. Don't poke him, Abba," Stella scolded through our family link.

It turned out that Stella was doing more than making Captain Jon see only sunny skies. She was making him believe he could crew this yacht all by himself, a feat that was only possible because we were not the usual crew of rich tourists demanding gourmet meals and turn-down service.

"But...he really can sail the ship. Right?" Xander asked when we were all gathered on the back deck, watching the land recede into the distance.

Stella shaded her eyes for a moment before taking a seat in a padded deck chair attached to the deck with a chain. There was a bit of exasperation in her tone, but also fondness. "Yes, Daddy."

"She doesn't want there to be more people involved than have to be," Lanie told him.

Xander frowned and stared out over the water. "How long will it take us to get there?"

I could tell he was hating how little control he had over any of this. I felt that, too. We were supposed to be the ones leading, and all we'd been doing since we left Brightsky was following. Blindly, at that. The yacht hit a wave, and we all grabbed for the closest solid thing to hold onto. I gripped a small cafe table bolted to the deck. Zane fell backward into another deck chair. Lanie and Xander grabbed the railings.

Above us, the sky got darker.

The storms held off, though, until night. Captain Jon had powered us miles out to sea, then prepared an easy dinner for us and served it in the dining room. As he filled his plate, he dropped a steak knife. It landed point-down, stuck in the floor.

"Oops," he said. "Clumsy. I'll take my plate to the wheelhouse. Leave you folks to your meal."

Stella watched him go. She wasn't eating anything. She rubbed at her head, her eyes squinting. Finally, I called her out on it.

"I'm keeping him on course, that's all," she said. "Suppressing his concerns about the weather and our destination. He thinks we're just taking a leisurely cruise along the Alaskan coastline. But in order to keep him thinking that, I have to concentrate."

"And use energy," Lanie said firmly. "Which means, young lady, that you need to eat something. Come on. Fuel yourself."

Stella rolled her eyes, and this small expression of annoyance with her mother lifted my spirits. Things couldn't be too bad if our daughter was rebelling against her mom in such a normal way.

Lanie went to the sideboard and piled a plate with rich-looking desserts. "You don't even have to eat your veggies. Have some sugar."

Stella laughed, her eyes aglow as she looked around the table at all of us. She reached to take Xander's hand, since he was the closest to her. Then she stretched to take mine too.

"I know you're all doing your best to look out for me. I love you," she said.

"We love you, too," Zane replied.

After a few bites, Stella got some color back in her cheeks. She laid out the plans for us heading to the island and what to expect after. She told us several times that anything could change at any time, based on what the High Council decided to do or how other choices led to different outcomes.

No matter what happened, we were looking at a battle. First, against the undead or living dead or spirit dead or whatever the hell occupied Fallen Crest. And of course, the High Council themselves. "It's Grammy!" Stella gasped in the middle of her sentence. "The High Council's scrying tool has been destroyed! Her third eye is closed!"

## Chapter 442

### Chapter 442 Zane

At Stella's words, Xander was instantly on his feet. Stella took his hand again. She tugged it gently to get him to look at her.

"Daddy, she's fine. She's got a man with her."

Xander scowled. "What man?"

"He's a doctor." Stella tilted her head, her gaze going far away. "He's an eye doctor. She was sensing that something was using her vision, and she stopped it by shutting her own eyes down. He's helping her. She'll be fine. The twins are fine, too."

"And the High Council? What are they doing?" Xander demanded. [Search the Find novel.net website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"They already knew we're gone and where we're going. They..." She paused. "When she refused to let them see through her third eye any more, they destroyed the scrying device, hoping it would kill her. But i didn't! She's free!"

"Won't they be attacking Brightsky, then?" Mason interjected.

Stella laughed, bubbling with joy. "No! They don't care now! They're so focused on us, they're all coming. Every last one of them is set on destroying us!"

"They're cutting off their noses to spite their own faces," Lanie said.

"They have no choice but to do their best to annihilate us," Stella said. "Not after they've spent so much time working everyone into a frenzy about vampires taking over and hybrids being at the root of the wars. All of their lies need to be supported, or they'll find themselves destroyed."

Brightsky's safety was good news, but I couldn't get too jazzed about us being the sole targets. Nothing had changed except the number of people on our trail, but it still felt worrisome.

Lanie had fallen asleep, and I didn't want to disturb her. Xander and Mason were silently playing a game of cards that neither seemed interested in winning. My Beta senses told me I'd done all I could for them so I decided to take myself up on deck.

I spotted Stella at the back of the boat, sitting on the small lower deck used for swimming. For now, the sea was calm enough that she was in no danger...well, other than the danger we were already in. "How close will he be able to get us to the island?" I asked her as I approached.

She jumped at the sound of my voice and let out a gasp. "Oh! Papa! You scared me!"

It seemed strange that I'd been able to startle her. Maybe she wasn't so all-seeing and all-knowing as I'd thought. Or, more likely, she had so much on her mind that she hadn't been paying attention to me. "Sorry. I wasn't trying to sneak up on you."

I sat down next to her, our legs dangling over the back of the yacht's swim deck. The water was cold on my bare feet. I imagined something coming up from the depths to nibble my toes. If I was lucky, a nibble was all I'd get.

"I was Seeking," she said. "We're close to the island. We'll get there tomorrow."

She leaned against my shoulder but said nothing for a few minutes. The water slapped at the sides of the yacht. It stretched out beyond us into a vast blackness even the light of the stars could not cut. "When the sun rises, I'll know more," she said. "Fallen Crest is hidden by a fog that stretches for miles, all around it. So long as we stay just outside that barrier, I think our captain will be okay." Something in her tone sounded off. I didn't think she was lying to me, but I did suspect there was something she wasn't telling me. I gave her another minute to decide if she was going to or not. "Papa," she said quietly, then stopped.

"Yes? What is it? You can tell me."

She hitched in a trembling sigh and pressed her face to my shoulder. Her hand sought mine and took it. I linked our fingers, squeezing, and brought her knuckles up for a kiss.

"Tell me," I urged her. "We can help."

"I'm afraid I've made some bad choices. Choices that can bring harm to people. But I have no choice. At dinner..." She drew in another shaky breath. "The captain dropped his knife. It landed point down. Stuck in the floor."

"I remember." I'd wondered at the odds of that happening.

"He was meant to have it stab his foot," she said. "So he couldn't stand. It would take him longer to move around the wheelhouse. And he'd be fine. We'd get to the island, and he'd leave. He'd survive." A cold fist squeezed my heart. "But the knife missed his foot."

"Yes."

I thought of what she'd told us. How every small action or inaction affected the future's course. How every path branched a myriad of times, and not all branches led to the same conclusion.

"What happens now that he's not injured?" I asked her.

"He dies before we get to the island."

## **Chapter 443**

### Chapter 443 Xander

All of us had found spaces to sleep in the tiny cabins belowdecks. We had all wanted to be together, but there was no bed big enough for the four of us. Also, Stella had told us that she'd seen us sleeping in our own beds, and so we had agreed.

Exhaustion claimed me right away, but my sleep was fitful. I tossed and turned until finally, I sat straight up in bed and grazed the ceiling with my head. For a second, I didn't know where I was.

I wasn't tossing and turning. The yacht was. Without any windows in the cabin, the room was pitch black, but I felt the boat rolling from side to side. I put out a hand to feel for the wall, suddenly afraid I was not in a boat, on the sea, but in space, floating without protection. Maybe dreaming. Maybe transported to some far off place I'd never heard of.

The second my fingers brushed the wall, I felt solid, anchored, and myself again. I shook off the fears trying to consume me and fumbled for the light switch. The lights wouldn't turn on, even though I flicked it several times.

My wolf took over.

He didn't take my body, just my vision and instincts so I could make my way to the door and the hallway beyond. It was dark there, too, but a faint strip of emergency lighting led me to the stairs so I could get up on deck. Zane and Mason were right behind me. Lanie had beat us there. I couldn't see Stella.

"She's up there!" Lanie pointed. She had to shout over the sound of the lashing winds pushing waves up and over the deck.

The sky was light overhead, but not from the sun or the moon. An eerie green glow crackled with electricity and showed off rolling clouds of billowing fog.

"That is not normal," Zane thought-shouted to me.

The fog made a wall. It was hard to see if it was solid, as in if the yacht would crash into it or go through it, but it was definitely not moving the way fog was supposed to. The wall stretched from the roiling ocean all the way up to the skies and beyond.

As we all gathered on the foredeck in front of the wheelhouse, I turned to look up into the windows for any sight of the captain. His silhouette lit up in another flash of lightning. He looked scared out of his mind. His eyes were wide. His mouth, gaping open in a scream I couldn't hear over the rush and roar of the storm.

All of a sudden, his gaze locked onto mine. He disappeared from view. Moments later, he was on the deck, plunging toward us. He slid on the slick wood and fell to one knee. He struggled to get up, but the yacht was riding a tall wave that pitched us up at an angle so sharp he couldn't get his footing.

Zane lost his balance and slid down the deck to collide with a large box labeled with emergency gear. Mason managed to grab onto the railing and stop himself from falling, and he reached out to grab Lanie and hold her close to stop her, too.

I staggered back, arms pinwheeling, as the yacht's position shifted and then sent me forward again. The captain grabbed at my arm and hauled himself upright. His eyes blazed with fear. "What is this? What is happening?" His lips shaped the words, but I could still only barely hear him.

If he wasn't at the helm, were we going to crash? I didn't know shit about how boats worked. The captain grappled with me, clutching at the front of my shirt. He was still shouting, but I couldn't understand him. I felt his terror, all right. Sour and stinking even over the electrical scent of the storm.

Stella appeared like she'd been there all along and we simply hadn't seen her. Maybe she'd been invisible. Maybe we were all hallucinating.

Maybe we were all going to die.

The yacht bore down on the wall of fog at top speed. Every second it seemed like we'd burst through it, but it remained the same distance away. And then, a hand curled out of the fog. It was made of the fog itself. Long-taloned fingers clawed.

It grabbed the captain and lifted him into the air, squeezing as his arms and legs flailed. He was shrieking. The phantom fist crushed him and began to draw him into the wall of mist.

Stella held up both her hands, then slammed them down. The giant hand dropped the captain into a boneless heap on the deck. I could tell by the way he landed that he was already dead. [Search the Find\\_Novel.net website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

The hand disappeared. Was that a scream? An endless, ageless howl of rage? Or was it the storm, still rising?

Stella worked her hands again, moving them. The captain got to his feet. He lurched toward the wheelhouse.

He was dead, all right, but Stella was moving him. The rest of us fought to keep our feet as the captain reappeared in the wheelhouse windows. Stella turned and jumped up on the front of the boat, holding onto the railing as though she meant to go over.

## Chapter 444

Chapter 444 Lanie

On deck, I clung to the railing with every bit of strength I had or could steal from my wolf. The yacht pitched as each wave took us higher Than the one before it. Up, up, up, and then down, we'd plunge into the well left behind by each crest.

I thought I might be screaming, but I couldn't hear my own voice above the sound of the storm. Rain slashed at my face, cutting into my cheeks and forcing me to close my eyes. My feet slid out from under me. With determination, I redoubled my efforts to get to my daughter. Hand over hand, I hauled myself along that railing, getting closer an inch at a time to where Stella stood at the front of the yacht. I could hear my mates shouting through our mind link, but their voices sounded so far away I couldn't understand what they were saying. I knew they would be fighting to get to her the same way I was, though. This yacht might sink, but we'd swim, if we had to.



I couldn't seek the way Stella could. I had to open my eyes despite the cold, icy slashes of rain. I squinted against the harsh pellets of hail now pelting me. They bounced off the deck and made it even more slippery than it had been before. My feet tried to go out from under me again. My hands slipped off the railing. I went to my hands and knees on the slick wood. The boat rocked, up and down, worse than a roller coaster.

"I will crawl to you, if that's what it takes," I sent to my daughter, not knowing if she could hear me. Praying to the Moon Goddess and to whatever deity would listen that the sound of my voice would reach Stella. That she knew her mother was coming for her.

My nails duck into the wooden deck, swollen with saltwater. The boat pitched, and I fell forward, hitting my face against the deck. Pain flared, but I fought it. My wolf didn't try to fight for control, understanding that this was not a battle she could win. She sent me her strength, though. Her wolf's stamina. Without it, my exhaustion would have sent me into unconsciousness.

I forced my head up. I could see my daughter's dark shape, still at the front of the boat. I thanked the Goddess that Stella hadn't been swept overboard. Even as I watched in horror, another immense wave rose up like some great beast and swept over her. I held my own breath as the water cascaded toward me. It buffeted me against the deck, slamming me against the side of the cabin where the captain sat to navigate. As the wave receded, I was pulled toward the back of the yacht again. The water sucked at me like a greedy mouth trying to draw me into a monstrous gullet.

It was alive, I thought. The water. Alive. Hating and hungry.

I slammed into the back of the boat, no longer even trying to remember the nautical terms. My hip and back screamed with excruciating pain as I hit the table secured to the deck and bounced off it. Blackness tickled the edges of my vision, trying to get me to succumb to it. To sleep. Sleep would take away the pain, and the water could swallow me whole...

"No!" The shriek erupted from my throat. Tearing. I tasted blood.

As the boat tipped forward again, I pushed off with my knees. The timing was just right. Luck or skill? It didn't matter. I was on my feet, the soles of my boots gripping as my toes pressed against the deck's sharply slanted angle. It was like running uphill, but I put everything I had into it.

The rain hadn't eased, but I was able to see Xander's massive shape on the other side of the cabin. I didn't see Zane or Mason, but they'd be close by. All of us were fighting to get to the front of the yacht. The boat slammed nose-down into the emptiness left behind by another greedy wave. Now it was like I was facing downhill. I plummeted forward, skidding past the cabin. I managed to stop myself by grabbing the railing again.



I could see through the cabin window. The captain stood at the wheel. His face bore no expression. His mouth hung open. Nothing held him in place...nothing but the force of Stella's will.

I knew nothing about how to steer a yacht, especially not through seas like this. This dead man, puppeteered by my daughter, would have to get us safely to shore. As the boat slammed through another wave, I managed to get beyond the cabin to the empty deck beyond. I tore open the locker holding the life jackets and pulled one over my head. I kept the other held tight in my grip as I fell onto my knees again.

I crawled toward Stella.

Another wave crashed over us, and for a moment when it passed, I thought she was gone. Then my vision cleared. She was still there. Not safe, but still alive. And then, she began to sing.

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## Chapter 445

Chapter 445 Lanie

The waves did not calm, and the storm did not cease. The wall of fog in front of us had looked like it was getting farther away, but now it stayed in place...and we got closer. We were heading right for it. We were going to collide, and yet I wasn't afraid.

With every note my daughter sang, the fog shifted and changed in time with her melody. It was like no song I'd ever heard, and her voice was also not quite her own. She sang with a thousand voices, all at once, none I'd heard before. And yet, I would've known the sound of her singing anywhere. In any time, in any life.

The Moon Goddess had told me to TRUST. That was all I could do. Everything I must do.

I joined her. My mouth opened and filled with the slashing salt of rain and waves, but a song came out of me that could not be drowned, no matter how fiercely the water tried. It joined with Stella's, the melody rising and falling as I harmonized. There were words, in a thousand or more languages I didn't know and would never learn.

The song filled the air and blocked out the sound of the storm. As we sang, the fog began to thin. I could see the edges of what looked like land. For a second, my voice faltered.

The fog wall slammed back into being totally opaque. The yacht veered along it instead of going through. I fell onto the deck, hitting it with my face. My mouth filled with blood, but I spit it out, over and over, until I could sing again.

My first notes were low and soft and broken, but I let my heart lead. Soon, the song flowed out of me again with a force greater even than the storm. Lightning flashed and struck the deck inches from my face. The burning smell of electricity crackled through my nose, but the strike didn't even leave behind a mark on the wood.

Strong hands yanked me up to my feet. Xander and Mason held me up between them. Their mouths moved with words I couldn't hear over the sound of the song I shared with our daughter. They were shouting encouragement at me.

Zane joined them, all three of my mates supporting me and keeping me from flying backward as the yacht rose and fell. It hit the water with the force of a boulder hitting concrete. My teeth slammed together, and my scream of pain mingled with the sounds of our song. [SEARCH THE FINDNOVEL.NET WEBSITE](http://www.findnovel.net) TO ACCESS CHAPTERS OF NOVELS EARLY AND IN THE HIGHEST QUALITY.

Their love surrounded me with an almost physical force. It was as much a wall as that fog had been, but it didn't hide or obscure anything. The love of my mates made everything stronger. More clear.

The four of us turned to face our daughter, still at the front of the boat. The wind and rain had drenched everyone else, but she looked as though not even a drop had touched her. Her hair flew around her, individual strands lighting and flashing with each similar flash of lightning. When the thunder rumbled and the hail battered us, her song got louder.

My mates helped me forward. I didn't try to stand next to her, but instead kept my place behind her. Ready to catch her, if she fell.

Stella didn't fall. She faced forward, and the prow of the yacht parted the water as smoothly as a hot knife through butter. Then, it nosed the wall of fog. It split it like a curtain, or a bride's veil being lifted. A single fist had crushed the life out of our captain. Now a multitude of hands formed out of the mist. Fists, and clenching, clutching talons. Hands the size of berries and some bigger than the entire yacht. They all reached for us as we slipped through what had been a solid wall. Hands at the ends of long, snaking arms, attached to nothing.

They yanked at our clothes and hair and tried to grip our arms, legs, any part they could reach. Tiny hands tried to slip inside our mouths and nostrils, into our ears. They tried to poke our eyes. Bigger hands tore at the yacht's rigging. Claws dug into the wooden deck.

A piece of the railing flew away, clutched in a phantom hand. The wheelhouse windows shattered under the pounding of a hundred ghostly fists. Deck furniture flew past us to shatter on the water when the foggy hands dropped the pieces, like once they discovered the chairs and tables weren't alive, they didn't want them anymore.

The yacht lurched with a horrible scraping noise as we hit the shallow water. Me and my three mates fell onto our knees as the boat went ashore. Stella collapsed and fell off the deck and onto the sand. Both of us had stopped singing. I was already forgetting the tune. The words. Only the soreness in my throat remained.

My mates helped me off the boat and onto the beach. I ran for our daughter and gathered her into my arms. I rocked her, desperate to make sure she was alive.

Stella turned her exhausted face toward us.

"We're here," she said in a voice as dusty as an attic. "Welcome to Fallen Crest. The island of the dead."

## Chapter 446

### Chapter 446 Zane

As soon as the boat landed, the fog wall went back up. I could see it behind us, but I couldn't figure out the distance. It looked like it was inches away, and also miles at the same time.

The five of us stood on a narrow beach scattered with shells. They were all bone-white and worn. Here and there, I thought I caught a glance of what looked like skeletal remains also sticking out of the sand, but it was impossible to tell what kind of bones they were.

"It's quiet," Mason said. "Too fucking quiet."

Even the sound of the waves crashing was dim and far away, like a radio with the volume turned down way too low. I went to the water's edge and dipped my fingers in it, thinking of how hungry the water had felt on the boat. Now it was the land behind us that seemed like it was ready to eat us.

"We need to find shelter," Xander said. "Stella needs to warm up. To rest. We need food."

She shook her head. "Daddy, we won't find anything like that here. We need to get into the trees before the High Council gets here, but...we aren't going to find anything here that will help keep us alive." "Island of the Dead," Lanie said softly. She shaded her eyes to look into the trees that lined the sandy shore. "Those trees aren't even alive."

"Nothing here can stay living for very long. The dead here, they...want us. They need us. We have to stay vigilant. Strong." Stella drew in a long, deep breath. "I'm holding them off for now. I've got a bubble of protection around us."

"How long can you keep that up?" Xander asked.

"Long enough."

Lanie pulled Stella close to her side. "When the High Council gets here, will they be able to reach the island? They'll be able to get through the fog?"

"Oh, yes. They're all so angry, it fills them with..." Stella gestured. "Think of a juicy steak. Of how your mouth waters just thinking of it. That's how the residents here feel and think about grand emotions. Love, hate, fear, anger. None of them can feel anything for themselves anymore. They lost the ability so long ago, all they can do is remember how being alive felt."

I moved to the edge of the sand. The trees reached leafless branches toward a dull sky, bright enough to see by but without even a hint of sun, moon, or stars. The fog had made this place a tomb.

That seemed fitting.

"How long do we have?" I asked Stella.

She shook her head. "I can't tell. The council members are fighting amongst themselves at every turn. The only thing they have in common is their desire to see us all dead." [SEARCH THE Find\\_Novel.net website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

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Lanie

We didn't need shelter, and there was no food. The only thing we could do was fight our way through the grasping fingers of the dead trees and get to the center of the island. There, we found a small hut made of leaning timbers. We stepped through the door and into a vast, cavernous space so big I couldn't see the end of it. Carved columns held up a ceiling dotted with what might have been stars, but so far away they were only pinpoints.

All around us, soft sighs and whispers tempted our little group to break apart. I swatted away a vision of my mother and sister reaching for me. My heart pounded.

"Are they dead?" I cried.

Stella put her arm around my waist. "No. It's a trick. Please, none of you let what you see pull you away from us. I can only protect us within this space, and you can't see the borders of it. Stay close. Touching one another."

"Should we leave this place?" Xander asked boldly.

"This is where we have to wait for the High Council. It's the only place I can defend us while putting them in danger." Stella drew in a breath. Her voice rasped, hoarse and gritty. "They're coming for us, but the dead are going to find them first. Any who make it through to here, I'll take care of."

More figures appeared. Some I knew. Some I could tell my mates knew by the way they recoiled or muttered. The specters screamed, wailed, berated...pleaded, flattered, and cajoled.

When Orion appeared in front of us, both Mason and Xander tensed. Stella did, too. She put her arms around both of her fathers.

"He's more powerful than the others, because he's real," she said. "Stand strong!"

Orion let out a string of garbled curses and dove at our little group. We couldn't see the protective barrier, but he clearly bounced off it and fell back.

"She should be mine!" He howled, pointing at Stella. "My plans...the stakes...the council..."

His voice tattered like a silken scarf shredded by sharp claws.

Stella stepped up. "I never knew you, grandfather. But you have no power over my fathers."

"Their power is mine!"

Xander and Mason dropped to their knees. Quickly, Zane and I knelt with them to put our hands on them. Stella had said our safety was incumbent on us touching each other. We were never going to let them go.

That's when Orion breached the circle.

## Chapter 447

Chapter 447 Xander

My father grabbed the front of my shirt with fists as cold as ice. The moment he did, that same ice began to fill me. It centered around my heart. He was digging his fingers deep into my chest, tearing through muscle and bone. Blood spattered on the floor.

I fought him as hard as I'd ever fought anyone or anything in my life. I thought about the foggy hand crushing the captain. My father was trying to do the same to my heart. "Fight him, Daddy!"

The more I tried, the harder he crushed. Memories flashed across my mind. My father had been there the first time I gave my wolf control. He'd taught me how to fight. He'd trusted me enough to take his place as Alpha in our pack, even though he could have kept the spot until he died.

"I love you, father!" I screamed.

A blast of bitter, stinking wind sucked the breath out of me. The fist squeezed. I could no longer stand. The only thing holding me up was my dead father's claws digging into the meat of my heart. That, and my brother's hands.

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Mason

"I hate you!"

I'd spent most of my life hating Orion. Faced with him now, though, my heart tried to leap out of my chest. His other hand slammed into me, his fingers seeking to gouge a canyon in my flesh the way he was doing to my brother.

With every wrench of his fingers inside us, Orion's form grew more solid. The pain was excruciating and relentless. It seemed like I should already be dead, and still his hand kept squeezing. Twisting. He wasn't going to be satisfied with simply grinding our hearts to a pulp.

He was going to tear them out of our bodies.

I could hear Stella screaming at us both to fight him. Waves of love and hate flowed around us toward the specter sucking us dry. I grabbed my brother's hand. Palm to palm, we fed each other the last dregs of our strength, and the forces of our

determination mingled. Search the Find\_Novel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

I felt a hand on the back of my neck. Zane stood behind me and Xander, his hands cupping each of us. He stood straight and tall. His Beta strength filled us. Sustained us.

Orion fell back a step.

His hands slipped out of our chests. I stared down, expecting to see my shirt in shreds, my chest even worse, but I was unmarked. So was Xander.

Orion staggered backward again.

Stella moved between us and the ghost of our father. She put her hands up. She pushed outward, not touching him, but still shoving him away.

"I love you, Dad," Xander said. "But you can't have her. Or us. Not anymore."

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Zane

I'd never been more proud to see my two Alphas joining together to share their strengths. They stood up to the man who'd given them life, and they refused to let him take it away from them. Orion's form shuddered, getting bigger and smaller. Beating like a heart.

The howls of the other dead rose around us. The same hands that had wrecked the yacht onto the beach grabbed Orion. He screamed as those hands tore him into a million tiny pieces that scattered like flower petals and then disappeared.

The hands remained. New figures appeared. I didn't recognize any of them, but that didn't matter. Wolves, dragons, Fae. Even human figures became solid and faded in rapid succession. They flew toward us, striking at the invisible barrier Stella had shielded us with. One at a time, then many all at once, they attacked.

Snarling, screaming, crying out. But also laughing. They were gorging themselves on every emotion that could be experienced...and it wasn't coming from me or my mates.

The dead were sucking everything out of Stella.

She swayed but kept to her feet. Me, Xander, and Mason leaped toward her at the same time, but we fell back from the inside of the barrier. Lanie stood on the edge of it, her hands toward our daughter. Sending her waves of brilliant Luna energy, pulsing strength that bypassed the shields and filled Stella.



"Together!" Xander cried. "Stand with her together!"

Two shields of Alpha energy pulsed toward her. I added my Beta strength to it. The four of us stood, loving our daughter with everything we had inside us, and the dead gobbled it up faster than she could absorb it.

Stella no longer looked like the little girl she'd been or the young woman she'd grown into. I couldn't say what she looked like. Something ethereal and otherworldly. To call her a goddess would have been a disservice. She was something beyond anything I'd ever imagined.

But she was faltering. Growing weak. She wasn't going to be able to keep the dead outside the protective circle much longer, and there didn't seem to be anything any of us could do to help her. The doors flew open.

The High Council had found us.

## Chapter 448

Chapter 448 Lanie

The second the doors opened, the members of the High Council swarmed inside. They leaped and ran, at first in tight formation, like they were on a battlefield. Their cries rang out. Roars intended to intimidate us. Shrieks so fierce they sounded like they were tearing open their throats.

Once through the door, at the sight of the vast space that had been hidden inside what looked like a tiny hut, they spread out. Their expressions twisted in confusion. I saw a few at the rear of the attack start to backpedal, but the door had vanished and the wall was suddenly so close behind them they ran into it. I could see their plans falling to pieces right in front of us. They hadn't expected anything like this. And still, they would not stop.

They charged on, stumbling over each other. Shoving and pushing. The ones who fell were trampled by those who kept running. It was like they'd all gone mad, crazed with their hatred.

Nothing would keep them from us. I didn't need any Goddess talents to smell their fury and desire to tear us limb to limb. They burned with it, and they wanted their inferno to consume everything in their path. I saw Aldon at once, his face contorted with his screams of rage and triumph. Other Elders followed him. So did a dozen or more others I didn't know. I should have been afraid, but a strange peace stole over

me.

Whatever came next was what had always been meant to happen. Every choice we'd made had led us all to this place. We'd woven a tapestry of decisions. Taken our own paths, one step forward at a time. There had never been a different ending to this.

The dead that had been pummeling us and devouring every scrap of emotion that Stella had ever felt became a single entity with a roar so loud it seemed like it shook the entire world.

Then it burst into a million pieces again. Hands. Faces. Tails, claws, horns, teeth. Arms and legs and fur and scales. Every creature who'd ever lived and every single one that had ever died all showed themselves in the same instant. And every single one was focused on the High Council.

Stella's feet rose off the ground. Her toes pointed downward. Her hands were at her sides, palms up. Her hair flew around her the way it had done on the boat, snapping and crackling with electric life. She spun slowly in the air, still rising. She was so far up now that I couldn't have reached her even if I jumped as high as I could. I wanted to fight out of the protection she'd placed around us, but her quiet voice whispered to me through our family link.

"Stay inside the circle," she breathed inside our minds. "All will be well inside of it."

It took everything I had to obey. I could tell her fathers were fighting the desire to break free and attack the High Council. The council members themselves were pelting toward us at top speed. There'd been the illusion that they were only feet away when they burst through the door, but now they seemed miles from us. Then inches. Then they might have been on the other side of the world.

Stella was causing that to happen. She was using everything she had to fight them off. The dead of Fallen Crest, on the other hand, were drawing them in. Desperate and hungry, greedy for their rage and fear and smug arrogance. The dead and the wolf-kind High Council were racing toward each other with our daughter in between them. The only thing keeping them apart.

And then... She stepped aside.

She was back inside our circle with us. Still invisible, but I could feel the renewed strength of it. All of us grabbed hands, making our own circle within a circle.

Within seconds, the High Council began to change. Howls filled the cavernous space as their wolves tore free of their human bodies. Their beasts fought the restrictions of their clothes. Naked, they leaped, twisting and shifting in mid-air, only to land on human feet.

Over and over again, the High Council shifted from wolf to human and back. Some were stuck half changed, paws at the end of human arms. Wolf muzzles stretching from human faces. Wolf canines sprouting in human jaws. Human eyes with wolf pupils. Fur and skin and claws and soft flesh, all twisting together.

Their screams turned from arrogance to agony. Triumph to tragedy. The dead surrounded them, wrenching and tearing. Cracking them open like crab legs and sucking out the meat. One by one the High Council fell. One by one, they were consumed by the dead.

One by one, until the five of us were all that remained. [SEAR\\*ch the website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

## Chapter 449

Chapter 449 Xander

Watching the High Council become nothing more than dried-up husks had been one of the most terrifying and satisfying sights of my entire life. Yet, already, the memory of it was fading. We'd fled the island on the boat the High Council had arrived on, and Stella had managed to keep us safe to just beyond the wall hiding the island. The farther away we got, the blurrier everything became.

"How much will we be able to remember?" I asked her. We were all in an SUV she'd commandeered for us as soon as we made it back to the mainland. I knew that's what had happened, although the details of the journey were almost gone.

Stella was in the passenger seat and turned to me. Her gaze was solemn. "Probably nothing. The dead might not have been able to take our bodies, but they had to be satisfied with something. They will gnaw on the memories of that battle for eons."

I looked into the rearview mirror at my three mates. Lanie's gaze met mine. Shadows hollowed her cheeks and under her eyes, but she smiled at me. She was the most beautiful woman I'd ever known. Mason leaned forward to look out the front windshield. "Are we ready to do this?"

We'd returned to Brightsky. This time, we'd stopped in Standard to go through the regular process of being admitted to the enclave. None of us wanted to face whatever security defenses Malachi might have put into place after we left. Stella had been unable to tell us if we'd been in danger or not.

"My visions have gone dark for now," she had said without any strain or concern in her tone. "When I need them again, they'll return. For now, we have to rely on our instincts."

It might have felt like a punishment, being denied the guidance from...well, whoever or whatever it was that had guided Stella as a Celestial. Instead, it felt more like a reward. We had come through the fire and been hardened, like diamonds.

We could trust ourselves to make the right choices.

"Let's go in," I said. "See what kind of welcome we get."

\*\*\*

Gabriela

I stared into the mirror with a sigh at my reflection. The glasses didn't feel right. I just couldn't get used to them.

"I think you look gorgeous with them," said Targon as he hugged me from behind to kiss my cheek. "Admittedly, I'm biased. But still. Gorgeous."

Targon Alonius had saved my life with a couple discs of glass and wire frames. The eyeglasses had honed my vision and revealed the third eye implanted by the High Council. The moment I found out about it, all the memories of Orion and what he'd allowed them to do had come flooding back. In minutes, I'd blocked every vision that could be sent to the scrying device.

I'd expected an attack from the High Council because of that and had even warned Malachi to prepare, but to our mutual shock, nobody came. Everything in Brightsky had been quiet. Stable.

For the first time in years, I'd allowed myself to entertain the idea that I could be happy with a partner who didn't try to use me for his own gain. Targon and I had fallen for each other hard and fast...but I wasn't complaining. I'd learned that life was too short to waste.

"Grammy." Alaina tugged my sleeve. "Daddy."

Startled, I shook my head. "Honey, this is Dr. Alonius, remember?"

Alaina burst into laughter, shaking her head. She pointed toward the living room. "No! Daddy!"

I turned with a gasp of surprise. "Xander!"

My boy had come home. Until I had my arms around him, or at least as much around him as I could get, I couldn't believe that he was real. He lifted me off my feet, squeezing the breath out of me, and twirled me around.

All of them had come home. I hugged them each in turn. We laughed and cried with joy as the twins greeted their parents and their sister. And then I introduced them to Targon, and although Xander grumbled, he also shook the doctor's hand.

The door flew open, and we all turned toward it. Malachi flew toward Lanie and grabbed her up to fly her around the room so fast they both became a blur. She staggered, laughing breathlessly when he put her down. The Ancient vampire hugged her, then held her off at arm's length.

"Welcome home," he said. "By the Sun's golden mantle, I thought for sure all of you were dead."

Within minutes, he was calling for a celebration throughout the entire enclave. We had so much to celebrate, the festivities would last for days. The whirlwind of our reunion finally simmered down when Malach left us alone once again. [Search the FindNOVEL.net website](http://www.FindNOVEL.net) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

The twins were sleepy eyed despite the excitement, and Stella took them off to bed with the promise of a bedtime story. Nothing too scary. My heart swelled with gratitude as I looked at my family, returned to me. We had so much to talk about...but in the end there was one ending to the story that they all expected and I couldn't provide.

"We're leaving the enclave," Xander said. "This isn't the place for us anymore. We can go after the parties are over."

"No. Not me." I said to each of them, meeting their gazes one at a time. "I'm going to stay here. This is where I belong."

## **Chapter 450**

### Chapter 450 Lanie

The celebrations weren't over, and they wouldn't be for a long time. But I was bone-tired and ready for some quiet time with my children and my mates. A hot shower. A warm, soft bed.

We weren't going to stay here in Brightsky. As wonderful a place as it was, it still wasn't home. And while there might always be a need for some to seek sanctuary behind its gates, we, the wolves of Constantine, no longer needed it.

The High Council's utter destruction had left a void in the world of wolves. There'd been talk of having Xander step in to fill at least some of it, but he wasn't sure he wanted to. Definitely not alone, and the idea of co-Alphas was new and strange. He and Mason had talked about it long into the past few nights, but I wasn't sure what they would decide. Whatever it was, Zane and I would support them.

For now, I was happy enough that our little pack was going to have some time alone before we hit the road at the end of the week. Malachi had asked us to stay at least that long to finish out all the celebrations and give all the Brightsky residents a chance to thank us. He had other reasons, too. Gifts to present to us, including the transfer of large sums of money that would do a lot to help rebuilding Constantine. So, even though I was itching to get on the road, I'd agreed that we would stay a little longer.

I couldn't hide my yawn, though. My grandfather caught it, even when I hid it behind my hand. He leaned over to me and spoke in a low voice I could still hear over the sounds of the music, singing, and dancing.

"You don't have to sit here all night. I can tell you'd rather be alone with your mates. And they alone with you, I rather suspect." He chuckled. "You wolves don't have the stamina of us vampires. We can party all night."

"But we can party in the sunshine," I told him without malice.

He guffawed. "True, true. Ah, granddaughter. Are you sure I can't convince you to stay here? I'm going to miss you. There's still so much you have to learn."

"You're welcome to visit us any time you want to in Constantine. I'll be busy helping repair and rebuild, but I guess I could make some time for my Ancient grandfather." I leaned against him for a second before sitting up straight again in my chair. "If I can tear my mates away from the buffet, I'm going to take them back to our quarters. We've been running on fumes for days. They need their rest." "You are truly a genuine Luna." Malachi shook his head gently. "Your care, concern, and consideration are beyond compare. Even if you can't manage all your talents...All right! Apologies!" He ducked away from my playful swat.

I kissed his cheek before I wove my way through the crowd toward my three mates. Each had piled their plates high with food, but they were starting to slow down. Even their massive appetites were being sated, and I knew what that meant. Soon they'd be hungry for something other than food.

The thought made me grin. I was definitely looking forward to having some time alone with my three men. Alone, in our own home, the one we would spend our time building together.

For a moment, I pressed both hands to my belly. Maybe there would be more pups. Maybe, I thought as I caught sight of Stella across the room, there might even be grandpups.

I could only shake my head with laughter at the thought of it. Me, a grandmother? It would hardly be the strangest thing our family had weathered.

Stella saw me looking and waved for me to join her. I pushed through the crowd of people dancing and singing to get to her. She grinned and hugged me. "Having fun, little star?"

"Everyone is so happy," she said. "It's filling me up with all of their joy. It's almost overwhelming...but I love it."

"They're grateful to you," I told her as people swirled around us, smiling and gesturing their gratitude.

Stella ducked her head. "I know. But all I did was..."

"All you did was save them all. And probably the world as we know it," I told her firmly. "No false modesty, little star. Without you, none of us would still be here. You deserve to take pride in that." "Umm, Stella? I was wondering, hoping, I mean, if you'd maybe like to dance with me?"

We both turned to see a handsome young warlock. He blushed, but boldly held out his hand to her. After a moment, she did.

"Go on," I told her. "Your fathers and I will be waiting for you back at the apartment. Enjoy tonight. Tomorrow, we head back to Constantine."

I watched her walk away with her admirer and sent a mind link to my mates that I'd be waiting for them at home. In bed. Naked.

They all chimed in at once to say they were hot on my heels.

"Mother!"

I turned as Stella ran to hug me. S~earch the FindNØVEL.NET website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.



"I won't be out late. I want to get an early start tomorrow. I can't wait to get to Constantine. I think it's where I'll finally be able to discover my true purpose as a Celestial."

"All in good time, little star," I told her. "Everything will happen exactly as it's meant to."

All of us would find our purpose.

We were finally going home...for good.

## Chapter 451

Chapter 451 Lanie

It felt strange to be back in Constantine..

I hadn't lived in the mansion very long, and so I'd never really managed to think of the big house as "home." There were a lot of memories here, for sure, and they weren't all good. I'd entered the mansion mated to Xander and Zane when they were in love with another woman, and none of us had been happy at first.

But we were happy now. I rolled over to quietly get out of the bed that would need to be replaced as soon as possible, since it was way too small for the four of us. My three mates were still snoring away like they didn't have a care in the world, and I paused to look them over. My heart stilled as I pressed a hand over it, and my eyes filled with tears of joy to see them all asleep. Without worry and fear for the first time in so long I couldn't recall just how long it had been.

The household staff was already bustling in the kitchen when I went down to see if I could grab a cup of coffee before I had to face the day. No enclavian spiders to lead my way this time. I had to follow the scent of freshly baked bread and other delicious smells. The Constantine mansion wasn't nearly as big as the enclave had been, but it was still enormous, with multiple branching wings, and I took a few wrong turns before I ended up where I wanted to be.

"Luna," the cook greeted me with a hint of surprise in her voice. "It's an honor to have you here. Are you looking to inspect the kitchen?"

I laughed, shaking my head. "Oh, Goddess, no. I just desperately need some coffee and maybe a piece of whatever smells so good. Cinnamon?"

"Cinnamon buns," the older woman said proudly and also sounding a bit shy. "I'm happy to serve you one. They just came out of the oven."

"And coffee's here," said another staff member from across the kitchen. "I'd be happy to pour you a mug. Do you want to take it in the dining room? We're setting up the breakfast buffet. And... Luna..." I waited, watching the young woman's eyes light up as she clearly struggled with what she wanted to say.

"Luna, we are so happy that you've all returned to Constantine!" Her voice rose into a squeak, and she blushed so fiercely I could almost feel the heat in her cheeks from all the way across the room. [SEARCH THE FIND NOVEL.NET WEBSITE](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

My own flush warmed my throat and face. It was going to take some time for me to get used to being called Luna with such respect and admiration and that little touch of intimidation. All of this was going to take some time to get used to...for everyone.

"I'm sure I speak for my family and not only myself when I say that we are all very, very happy to be back." I tried to sound gracious and also approachable, the way Gabriela had always sounded. She'd had years to perfect her Luna attitude, though. It was going to take me some time to get it just right.

The staff didn't seem to mind. The cook and the maid both grinned at me and bustled around serving me up a cinnamon bun the size of my head and an oversized mug of coffee. In the dining room, I wasn't sure where to sit. The long table had seats for twenty, more if people squeezed in. Nobody else was in there yet.

"Traditionally, if this was a formal dinner, you'd be at that end." The maid from the kitchen cast her voice low and pointed. "The Alpha would be here." She touched the tall, throne-like chair at this end of the table. "But you're of course welcome to sit wherever you like, Luna."

"Thank you...what's your name?"

"Karys, Ma'am."

"Thank you, Karys."

She beamed. "Will you be wanting to set up a meeting with the staff today, Ma'am? Or will you be settling in first? We're all pretty eager to find out about any changes you'll be making to the household operations."

Changes? Household operations? All of that, I guessed, was going to fall under my control now. As the Luna Constantine, I'd have to oversee the running of this entire mansion.

A chill, anxious sweat trickled down my spine. I'd survived multiple attacks on my life, fled more times than I could count, discovered I was a hybrid, gained and loved three mates, and gave birth to extraordinary children, all while serving the Moon Goddess, and this was what made me want to bite my nails? I had to laugh, and Karys looked at me curiously.

"I think I'll have to call a meeting later in the week," I started to say, but I was cut short as the big double doors at the far end of the dining room flew open with a bang.

There was a scream.

## Chapter 452

Chapter 452

Xander

My hand slid over a bare spot on the bed, no longer warm from my Luna's naked body. I shot up in bed, my heart hammering, before I remembered...we were safe. All of us. Back in Constantine. [SEARCH the FindNovel.net website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

With a slight groan, I fell back against the headboard and reached out with the mind link to see if I could sense Lanie's location. She was in the mansion somewhere. Feeling fine. No hint of danger or fear. "You okay?" Zane yawned and stretched, joining me against the headboard. He tipped his chin toward the still-snoring Mason. "Look at sleeping furry over there."

I scrubbed at my face and looked around the luxurious room. It was familiar and strange at the same time. Our quarters in the enclave had been fancier in many ways, but this room was...home. "We're gonna need a bigger bed," I said.

Zane laughed. "Yeah. My ass was hanging over the edge all night."

Mason stirred with a snort and opened his eyes. For a second or two, it looked like he was going to leap up with his fists out, but he calmed down. He also yawned, ending it with a little yelp, and pushed up on his elbow. "Where's Lanie?"

"Feels like she's having breakfast," Zane murmured. "Which sounds good. If I could manage to get my ass out of bed."

Mason flopped onto his back. "Damn, it feels nice to just wake up without an alarm. I don't just mean the kind that comes along with a clock. Just...no alarm, and nothing alarming."

I raked a hand through my hair to get it off my face. I couldn't recall the last time I'd had a cut, and it was way too shaggy. Now that we were back in Constantine and would be hosting official events and shit like that, I'd need a trim, at least.

Zane looked over at me, sensing my thoughts. "It's going to feel weird. Getting back to regular business."

Mason huffed out a low noise and, with a groan, got out of bed. He stretched widely and went to the window to peer out, twitching the curtains back and then letting them fall again as he turned to face us. "Xander, I'm going to let you take the lead on how we approach things, but we are going to need an official gathering meeting sooner rather than later."

"Yeah," I agreed. "We need to let them all know that you and I will be co-Alphas and what that will mean for the pack."

My brother's expression eased. I could tell he was relieved that I'd brought it up so he didn't have to. Mason and I hadn't fully discussed how things were going to work now that we'd all returned to Constantine and the truth was, I couldn't really be sure yet. I did know that we'd figure it out together.

"The pack is going to be confused," Zane said quietly. "There might be some pushback."

"They've all dealt with what amounts to a reign of terror," I said firmly. "Lies. Betrayal. The High Council kept them all scared, all the time, so they could be controlled. Well, that's not how I want to run things here."

"No, me neither," my brother said. "But I am fully aware that I'm the new guy. The bastard son of Orion Constantine. It's likely some of them are going to have a hard time accepting me for that reason alone. They'll feel that I don't have a right to be Alpha."

"It's not a question of feeling. Our father passed his Alpha powers to me, and then he also passed them on to you when he died. That's something nobody can argue with, or take away from you," I told him. "Is it kind of fucked up? Yeah. Will we handle it together? Also, yes."

Mason chuckled, shaking his head. "You got it, bro. I got your back...and I know you've got mine."

We'd come a long way from my brother hating me and actively planning my demise to this. We both grinned at each other. I got out of bed to stretch.

"The first thing I want to do is establish that Mason and I are a team, one they can count on to keep the pack's best interests at heart. Two Alphas and a Beta, working together

with our Luna. With the shit we've been through, we can handle a scared pack," I said as I rummaged in the dresser to find a pair of sweatpants to pull on.

I felt a pulse of warmth emanating from Zane. Relief. Pride. Friendship. I turned to him.

"Your place is still by my side," I reassured him. "I'll make sure the pack sees that. More than that, that they feel it."

He nodded. "We got this."

That's when all three of us heard the scream through the mind link.

"Lanie!"

## Chapter 453

### Chapter 453 Lanie

I almost didn't recognize the woman rushing across the room to hurtle herself against me. My scream rose, joining hers, turning to a squeal at the last second as my best friend Mindy hugged me so hard she squeezed the breath out of my lungs. Laughing, crying a little, I wrapped my arms around her and hugged her back as hard as I could.

"Lanie! Goddess, you look so good! I mean, you always looked good, but you look..." Mindy held me at arms' length, then hugged me again. "You look like a Luna."

Her words tickled my earlobes. "I am the Luna."

Mindy's laughter had an edge of tears as she pulled away again. "I was going to say you looked older, but I thought that might come out wrong."

"I am also older," I said. "You look good, too."

We both hugged each other again, dancing in place. I'd put the thoughts of my bestie entirely out of my head for so long, incapable of giving myself permission to miss her. Now that came flooding back into me with the force of slamming into a brick wall. I wanted to cry, laugh, scream, jump up and down, run around the room...I settled for hugging her hard one more time and then stepping back to take another good, long look at her. [SEARCH the FindNOVEL.net website](http://www.findnovel.net) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"I'm home," I said.

Mindy's eyes welled with tears. "It's been a long time, bestie. Don't you dare ever go off like that again."

"I hope I never have to." I knew better than to make a promise that I wasn't sure I'd be able to keep.

The High Council had been soundly and permanently defeated, but I'd seen way too much out there in the big world beyond Constantine to ever think there was no possibility that something else might happen. I pushed those thoughts away for now, though. Whatever might happen in the future, for right now, we were all safe and sound.

"I'm starving," Mindy stated. "I'm going to get myself one of those buns and some coffee and probably a whole plate of other goodies... The buffets here are amazing, please tell me you're not making any changes to the way they do breakfast here!"

"That's the second time this morning already that someone's asked me if I'm going to make any changes to the way things have been running." I followed her to the buffet so we could both load up our plates. "Why is everyone assuming that?"

Mindy looked over her shoulder at me as she piled her plate with cheesy scrambled eggs. "Well, Gabriela had her ways of managing the mansion, and when you all were gone, the mansion chatelaine took over. Now that you're back, as Luna, you get to decide how things work. Oh, Goddess, they've got blueberry muffins today."

"I promise to keep the muffins," I said with a laugh as I watched my friend add an enormous muffin to her plate.

Mindy gave me a serious look. "I'm so glad you're back, and not just because you said that."

We both laughed and carried our plates to the table and took our seats. She dove into her food at once. I'd never seen Mindy eat like that, but before I could ask if she might have a special reason for her hunger, I heard heavy footsteps thundering toward us.

My three mates barreled into the room, Xander in the lead with Mason hot on his heels and Zane bringing up the rear. When they saw me and Mindy at the table, our forks paused halfway to our mouths in surprise, Xander let out a grunt.

"Damn it, Lanie. You scared the shit out of us with that scream!"

Mindy blinked, looking at the three men. They were all familiar to me, but I tried to see them through her eyes. They'd all aged, too, of course, but they'd also gotten-

"By the Moon," Mindy breathed. "They're huge!"

I laughed, watching my mates relax when they saw I wasn't in danger. They had all gotten bigger. Thicker in the arms and chests, legs like tree-trunks. My heart thudded with a sudden, fierce influx of love. It burned inside me hot enough to flood my entire body with heat.

Mindy turned to me with wide eyes. "And they're all three mated with you. How do you...I mean..."

She coughed into her fist as her blush deepened. Mindy and I had shared most every detail of our lives when we were younger, so I could practically see the wheels spinning in her head now. I didn't need her to finish her sentence, but she leaned closer to whisper to me anyway.

"Fit," she finished. "How in the world do you all fit!"

"Very nicely," I promised her in a low voice laced with laughter.

I watched her gaze go beyond the three giant men stalking into the dining room. She looked surprised then confused, then surprised again. She turned to me.

"Who is that?"

## Chapter 454

### Chapter 454 Zane

I'd never had much chance to get to know Lanie's best friend, but watching the two of them laughing together was a real treat. The four of us had been a tight-knit unit and a team, but I could tell Lanie had longed for female companionship. Seeing her with her best friend made me realize how lucky I was that Xander was not only my Alpha, but also my best friend. Search the FindNOvel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Lanie had her arm around Stella's shoulders as she introduced her to Mindy, who understandably looked boggled. Her mouth hung wide open for a few seconds before she caught herself. She finished chewing and swallowed, then got to her feet.

"This is baby Stella?" Mindy asked, shaking her head and looking astounded. "I expected all the pups to be bigger, obviously, but this is way, way more than any doubling!"

Stella's light laughter tinkled through the air. "Everyone was surprised. But it's me. Baby Stella."



"All grown up," Lanie said.

We hadn't told anyone in Constantine that Stella was a Celestial, but rumors about her advanced aging had managed to get here ahead of us. Maxim and Monroe, Xander's most trusted High Guards, had been among the first he'd contacted when we were on our way back home. They'd been able to fill him in on some things we could expect.

They'd told him there'd been news coming to Constantine about the destruction of the High Council, but that the details had been sketchy, and they were doing as much damage control as they could until we got back and could fill everyone in on the truth. As Mindy's mates, they must've made the choice not to tell her much, since she was so clearly shocked.

It was obvious that Mindy was bursting with questions, but she only nodded and got up to hug Stella before she sat back down at her chair. Lanie took her seat again, too.

"Where are the twins?" Lanie asked Stella.

"Still sleeping if you can believe it." Stella laughed. "They were wiped out. But I bet they'll be up all night tonight!"

Mindy's eyes got even wider. "The twins...baby Lanie-er, Alaina—and Isaac...they're not all grown up, too, are they?"

"They're bigger than they were the last time you saw them," Lanie assured her, "but they're not quite as grown up as Stella."

The three women chatted while the rest of us helped ourselves to the buffet.

"This is new," I said to Xander as he stacked thick, savory, cheddar and jalapeño waffles on his plate.

He grinned. "Yeah. But I like it. Lanie, love...keep this morning buffet!"

She rolled her eyes but did it with a smile. "I think I need to make a general announcement. I am not planning on changing anything! At least not until I've had the chance to settle in!"

At the sound of heavy footsteps, I looked toward the doorway. I tensed automatically, and so did Xander and Mason. But when I saw that it was Maxim and Monroe, I put my plate on the table and went to greet them. Xander joined me, while Mason held back a little bit.

"By the Moon, it's good to have you back! All of you," Maxim said with a quick look at Mason. Maxim gave him a deferential nod, clearly acknowledging his Alpha role.

Monroe grinned and slapped Xander on the back, then pulled him closer. "Bring it in, bro. We missed the fuck out of you!"

"Glad to see you seem to have held things together while we had to be away," Xander said.

Maxim and Monroe high-fived me, then Mason. Their joyful energy was infectious, and I could see Mason relaxing a bit as they treated him pretty much the same as they were treating me and Xander.

"It's all going to be all right," I thought to Mason and filtered some calming Beta energy his way. "They're good guys. Xander and I trust them wholeheartedly."

We took seats at the table's other end, giving our mates room to chat with each other. Xander dug into his plate of food, while Maxim and Monroe filled theirs and then joined us. "When are you having the meeting?" Monroe asked around a mouthful of scrambled eggs.

Mason shot him a look, then one at Xander, who was spreading a bagel with a thick layer of cream cheese. When Xander didn't answer, Mason said, "We figured it would happen pretty quick. We don't want people spending too much time worrying or wondering what happened, or what how we intend to move forward."

I could feel him almost holding his breath as he waited for Maxim and Monroe to respond. I couldn't blame him for being a little anxious about it. They were the trusted High Guards, and he...well, he'd made no secret before about his loathing for his brother. It was going to take some time for Mason to feel like he had the right to be here, and in charge.

"We'll call it for after breakfast," Xander said casually. He didn't emphasize the "we," but we all heard it.

Maxim and Monroe exchanged looks.

"So...it's true, then?" Maxim asked after a second.

Xander wiped his mouth. "What was?"

"About your father," Monroe said. "We were hoping it was just another rumor."

## Chapter 455

## Chapter 455 Mason

The minute I heard the doubt in Monroe's voice, I almost got up from the table. I should've known they weren't going to welcome me here. I might've been a Constantine by blood, but I'd known for my entire life that blood was not necessarily thicker than water.

"What do you mean?" Xander asked in a cold, hard tone. Full Alpha mode. Search the Find novel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Monroe shrugged. "It just sucks to find out that your dad really wasn't the great guy we all thought he was. That's all."

He turned to me. "Xander says you're his brother, and as far as I'm concerned, that's enough for me."

"Same goes for me," Maxim said so firmly that I knew he meant it.

"Mason, you're super tense, man. Relax a bit." Zane's calming voice reached me through the mind link we shared with my brother.

"They're cool," Xander added.

I forced a smile I hoped looked natural as I offered my forearm to Monroe to grip. Then to his...were they brothers? They looked like they could be. I offered my forearm to Maxim for a grip.

"I'm glad to be a part of the pack and share the leadership challenges with Xander," I told them both, making sure I made eye contact with each of them to show my sincerity. "I vow to do my best to stand by his side and also have his back."

The other two men nodded with nearly identical grins. They looked down the table toward their mate. Mindy and Lanie were giggling, heads together, while Stella watched with wide eyes. She joined their laughter a moment later.

Isaac and Alaina came into the dining room, both looking sleepy and grumpy. Alaina rushed to Xander, who held out his arm to pull her close. Isaac walked a little slower, his eyes already on the food. "Morning," our son grunted as he headed right for the buffet.

Alaina hugged Zane next, then me. She leaned her head against mine for a few seconds, and I felt a small press of reassurance swirling around her. I looked at her in surprise, although I shouldn't have been shocked that she was able to affect me like that. The twins would always share a bond with Xander and Zane from being raised by them from birth, just like Stella shared the same with me. But Alaina was my daughter. My blood.

"I love you, Abba," she said.

"Love you, too," I said. "You'd better get some breakfast before your brother eats it all."

Alaina rolled her eyes. "Ugh. He's being so gross."

"He's growing," Xander said with a laugh.

"I'm growing, too," Alaina said, putting her small hands on her hips. Her scowl was fierce and formidable...and I saw a lot of her mother, Alice, in that expression.

Xander and Zane saw it, too. Guilt swept over me like a tidal wave. This was the house where Xander, Zane, and Alice had thought they'd live and be mates together. Where they'd raise their pups. And hadn't had some of the same thoughts and feelings about her?

The three of us looked toward our Luna as she tipped her head back in a sweet flurry of giggles. I could never have imagined loving another woman as much as I loved her. Never thought I could share my mate with anyone else. Yet there the three of us were, sharing her the way we'd unwittingly shared Alice.

It was a bit of a mindfuck.

"Abba?" Alaina frowned. "Why does your face look like you just ate something sour?"

I quickly pushed away those thoughts. It shouldn't be a secret that Lanie was not the twins' biological mother, but yet we'd never really talked about it. They were babies, and then they grew up, but not quite as fast as Stella. It was probably time we let them know the truth. Now that we were all back in Constantine, we'd be fools to think that nobody would ever talk about Alice.

"They'll have to find out, and better from us," Zane thought to me and Xander. He'd caught my thoughts, but Xander hadn't.

My brother looked at Alaina though, brow furrowed, and figured it out. He nodded and thought to us both, "We'll tell them, but privately. I want them to know we all love them. And Lanie will want to make sure they know that she loves them, too."

Gently, I pushed Alaina in the direction of the buffet. "Go get yourself a plate. You need a good breakfast so you can keep on growing and not let your brother get bigger than you."

Lanie's sudden cry of joy had us all turning. Our Luna stood up so fast she overturned her chair with a clatter. She ran toward the woman in the doorway to the dining room. Alaina looked surprised. "Who's that lady and that girl?"

## Chapter 456

Chapter 456 Lanie

My mother enfolded me in her embrace, and all I could do was cling to her as I shook with sobs. I breathed in her familiar scent. Her warmth. She rocked me as we hugged, and her hand stroked down my back, over and over again, exactly the way it used to when I was a little girl who'd woken up from a nightmare.

"Oh, my Lanie. Let me get a good look at you." She pushed me away only for a second before hugging me hard again. "No, not yet, I can't let you go. Oh, I just can't let you go."

I closed my eyes and let my mother hold me. It had been so long since we'd been together. I'd forced myself to barely think about her, my sister, and my dads, much like I'd stopped myself from thinking too much about my best friend. It had been easier for my mind to focus on the dangers we were navigating. But, oh, now that my mother was here and hugging me, every second of the time we'd spent apart slammed into me like a hammer pounding a nail.

"Mama?"

At the sound of Stella's hesitant voice, I turned. I had to wipe away the tears blurring my vision, but I used one hand to do that while I held out the other to gather my daughter close. My mother drew in a sharp breath.

"Is this...?" she asked, sounding awed.

I knew that there'd been some advance word, rumors, about Stella, but since I hadn't been expecting my mom to be here at the mansion, I couldn't assume anything about what she may or may not have heard.

"Mama. This is my daughter. Stella. This is your grandma, Julia Stanton," I said to Stella.

"But she's..." My mom fanned her face, her eyes wide. Search the Find\_Novel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Stella might be adult-sized, and she might be special with all the talents of ever supernatural that had ever existed, but I could never forget that she was also my child. I pulled her in next to me, offering my support and warmth. I could feel her muscles trembling the tiniest bit with her nervousness.

"Beautiful," my mother finished and opened her arms for a hug. "Stella. Come here and give me a hug."

"Hello, I'm here, too," a voice said in a sour tone.

I'd been so caught up in greeting my mom that I'd almost totally missed my sister. "Selena!"

She hugged me hard, but only briefly before stepping back. She eyed me cautiously. The last time I'd seen her, she'd been underage, but now she was over eighteen. Shit, I didn't even know if she had been mated yet. I didn't know anything about what had gone on while we were away. Had the High Council and Elders still been assigning two males to every female wolf in the pack? Or had that stopped? Were pack members allowed to choose their own mates?

So much to find out...so much to consider about the way things had been and how they were going to be. Everyone was asking me about making changes. Well, I'd finally started thinking of a few I was going to tell the Constantine Alphas to make.

There was more to learn about my baby sister, now that she'd come of age. For instance, had the spell our mother asked a witch to cast to dampen her vampiric powers worked on my sister? It had failed in me, but that didn't mean it hadn't worked for my sister.

Selena's eyes blazed soft green for a moment. Her wolf was close. I could sense my sister's agitation and hated that the first time we saw each other in so long had to be tainted with any bad feelings. But could I blame her for being wary of me? Mason and I had snuck out of my childhood home without saying goodbye. I'd left my sister behind to take care of our mother, even though I knew Orion had been targeting her. She'd told me I had to, but...even so, the look on her face told me she wasn't ready to accept me back with open arms.

She looked at Stella with a blank expression, very different from the first time they'd met when Stella was an infant.

"I'm your aunt Selena," she said in a stiff voice. "I'm sure you don't remember me. You probably never even heard of me."

"Selena," our mother said in a shocked tone.

Stella, my dear little star, stepped forward. "Of course I did. Mama told me so many stories about the two of you when you were both little. I don't remember you from when I was a baby, but of course I know who you are."

Little white lies. As a Celestial, Stella could certainly call on the memories of anything that had happened when she was a baby. She was being kind and gracious.

Too bad my sister didn't respond the same way.

## Chapter 457

Chapter 457 Lanie

"Let her go," I murmured to my mother when Selena turned on her heel and stalked out of the room.

My mother shook her head as she cast a worried look after my sister. "She's been having a rough time. I thought it was better, but ever since she heard you were coming back to Constantine...well. A rough time, that's all I can say."

Stella had a distant look in her eyes. I couldn't be sure, but it felt to me like she was following my sister with her mind but doing it so subtly that my mother wouldn't guess. Her gaze snapped to mine, and she gave me a small, almost imperceptible nod. Without words, she told me that my sister was okay...for now.

"She was rejected by the mates the High Council tried to assign to her," my mother said, keeping her voice pitched low. It was rough with sadness. "Not even the threat of prison could get them to agree to the match. She took it hard...not because she was in love with them, but to be so violently rejected..."

My heart ached for Selena. "That must have been horrible!"

My mother nodded, her expression full of shadows. "After you all left, Lanie, things were very dark here. Orion's death changed so much, and the High Council was out of control. I think the pack truly believed we were going to all have to go rogue. Everything was utterly falling apart."

I didn't know what to say. If I tried to apologize, I knew my mom would try to tell me it wasn't my fault, but that wouldn't stop me from trying to take the blame. Because it was our fault...me, Xander, Zane, Mason. We hadn't been the ones to set anything in motion, but we'd been the ones to make sure the High Council couldn't simply keep on doing what they'd been doing all those years. We'd broken the pack.

Now, we'd have to work hard to put it all back together.

My mom cleared her throat and said in a brighter voice, "Your dads are beside themselves. They'll be back tomorrow or the next day. They'd have been here sooner, but they were sent so far away, and the High Council made it so hard to get back here on purpose."



Tears shone in her eyes, but there was hope and happiness in her voice.

If I couldn't wait to see my dads, I could only imagine how much my mom was looking forward to it. I let my gaze linger on my three mates bent over their plates as they talked to Monroe and Maxim. It felt impossible that I could survive being separated from any one of them for longer than a few hours, much less months. Years.

"Goddess," I murmured, mostly to myself. "Has it truly been more than a year?"

For all I could tell, it could've been closer to two. Three, four...I shook my head. It couldn't have been that long, but I had completely lost all track of time while we were gone.

"If a mother judges the passing of time by the way her children grow," my mother said, "I can see why you're not sure."

She hugged me again, and then we joined Mindy and Alaina with freshly filled plates. Isaac had moved to the other end of the table with his fathers and the High Guards. It was a clear separation, and my heart panged at the sight of my little boy beginning his journey into manhood.

Mindy saw me looking and paused with a forkful of food halfway to her mouth. She let out a snuffling sob and put the fork down. "He's so big! Lanie, how do you st-st-staaaaaaand it!"

Alarmed, I patted her shoulder. Emotions rose, swelling and swirling all around us. Mindy had always been excitable, but this seemed kind of extreme, even for her. I chalked it up to all the upheaval with our return, and in seconds her wails and tears turned to laughter. She swiped at her eyes.

"Sorry," she said. "It's just that I missed you so damned much, Lanie. I was so scared I'd never see you again. I missed my bestie!" [SEAR\\*ch the FindNOvel.net website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

We hugged, laughing and crying while Stella shook her head with amusement. Alaina watched us both carefully, her brow knitted. She was clearly studying what was going on but not sure what to think about it I held out my arms hand for her to take.

"Don't fret, sweetpea. We're all just diving way down into our feels this morning," I assured her while Mindy sniffed but beamed a wide grin beside me.

Alaina didn't smile. She squeezed my hand and then let it go. "May I be excused?"

"Sure. Where are you going?" I didn't want her running off until we'd had some time to get settled. "Daddy's going to be calling a pack meeting for everyone pretty soon, and we want you there for it." "I'm just going up to my room," Alaina said and left the room.

Stella watched her go. I couldn't read her expression. I touched her hand until she looked at me.

"Stella? Everything okay?"

She nodded and smiled, but her gaze was locked on her sister's retreating form, and a tiny shiver tickled my spine until she looked at me. "Yep. All good." But something felt off.

## Chapter 458

### Chapter 458 Mason

The air in Xander's office crackled with an electric tension as we gathered around his desk. He'd called for the pack meeting to be held in the town square and put out the word that every pack member able to make it should plan to attend. There'd be many who couldn't make the journey in time, but according to Zane's statistics with confirmation from Maxim and Monroe, we were looking at a huge group. "Zane, you've got the lead on the speaker system and all of that?" I asked.

Zane nodded. "Yep. Maxim and Monroe have put together an amazing communications setup, too. Great job."

Maxim laughed and jerked a thumb at his partner. "Blame this guy. I'm just the one who installed the equipment. He's the one who planned the system."

"It looks state of the art to me," Xander said with admiration lacing his tone. "Something my father would never have embraced. Too much access to information, too much transparency about what the Alpha was doing? Fuck no."

"But you're not your father," Zane told him. "And this is no longer your father's pack. Or the High Council's."

Maxim and Monroe nodded. I was still having a hard time telling them apart. They were the same size, same shape, their voices sounded the same, all of it. They looked more alike than Xander and I did, but Zane had told me they weren't brothers.

Not so far as anyone knew anyway. That was my private thought, which, admittedly, was probably formed by my own existence as the son whose father hadn't known about for a long time.

I looked out the window toward the town square. I couldn't see it from here, but the rest of the mansion grounds were bustling with activity. I let the curtain fall and turned back to the room.

"We want there to be a solemn but also joyous feel to the meeting. We want the pack to be assured that Xander and I are a team, working together, to protect and lead. But we can't promise that every threat's been extinguished. There are still those hybrid testing places out there, for one thing," I said.

"On my list to immediately disassemble," Xander added. "But we can't just go in with teeth and claws. There are innocents in those places."

"They'll need compassionate care once they're released," Zane said quietly. His gaze darkened. "Some of their families may not be around any longer to take them back in."

"Got it." Maxim tapped the keys on his laptop and squinted at the screen. "Fuck. I think I need glasses."

"I've got the catering team working on putting out snacks and drinks," said Monroe, tapping on his own laptop. "Unless you think it would be more appropriate for the Luna to handle this?"

"Let's give Lanie a bit of time to get acclimated, especially since you two have been doing such great job handling shit while we were gone." Xander got up from his seat and went to the same window I'd looked out of. He turned back to his friends and grinned. "I gotta be honest, guys, I thought I'd be coming back to a real mess."

Maxim and Monroe both grinned back at him. [SEAR\\*ch the \(Find\)NOvel.net website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"Gotta say, kind of the same thing on our end," Maxim said with a look at me. "We figured you might be returning in pretty rough shape. Looks like your co-Alpha and your Beta took good care of you." The fact they were clearly accepting and making the effort at acknowledging me went a long way, but it was still going to take some time before I could fully get comfortable here. In Stillwood, I'd known my place. My friends had become my family. Here in Constantine, I had friends, and I had family, but I'd also need to join this pack. That was something I'd never been a part of.

"Hey...Mason. I just got a ping," said Maxim, looking at his laptop. "Some new arrivals. A... Quinn and Sable from Stillwood?"

A wide grin spread instantly across my face. "Yeah? They're good. You can let them in. Is there anyone else with them? A man? Asher?"

Maxim tapped a message into his computer and waited a couple of seconds before shaking his head. "Nope. Just the two women. They said they know the Luna?"

"They're the mom and sister of my best friend from Stillwood. Yeah, they know Lanie. Sable delivered Stella. Can you have someone let her know so she can greet them at the front door?" I told him. Maxim nodded and took care of it while Xander let out a small whistle. He put his hands on his hips. "I guess this shindig's getting bigger by the second."

"Should we hold it off?" I asked him.

He shook his head. "I don't think so. The pack is going to be eager to see us, and we owe it to them not to fuck around much longer. They deserve to be told as much as we can. And, you deserve to be greeted and welcomed as their new co-Alpha."

"Right," I said, but inside, I wondered if that was how all of this was going to go.

I'd have to face a crowd of people Orion had betrayed. What if they decided I was a good target to take the punishment he'd never had to face?

## Chapter 459

Chapter 459 Xander

I'd called for the entire pack to congregate here, but I hadn't thought so many would be able to make it. As it turned out, pack members had traveled hard and fast to get here. They were still pouring into the square, hanging out of the window of storefronts, and lined up along rooftops.

I shaded my eyes to look out at the crowd from my place on the small stage Maxim and Monroe had arranged to have built. With my brother on one side, Zane on the other, and my High Guards behind, we waited for the crowd to settle, but they weren't. The tensions were high and rising. Nobody was getting rowdy, but they could go that way, if we weren't careful about what we said...or how we said it. [search the Find\\_Novel.net website](http://www.Find_Novel.net) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

My father had often addressed the pack like a beneficent king, but one who definitely expected you to kiss his ring or find yourself facing a not-so benevolent ruler. I didn't want to approach any of this the way he had. It was going to be hard enough to hold onto the good memories I had for my dad without trying to behave in his bad ways.

"They're getting restless," Zane thought to me. "Even if they're not all settled, you should probably start to address them. I can sense a growing dissatisfaction, some fear, a lot of curiosity."

I looked at him with one brow quirked. "Could you always do that?"

"I think Stella lent me some of her empath talents," Zane sent through the mind link.

I didn't have time to consider this or dwell on what that might mean for my Beta, or even if there was a chance that our daughter had done the same for any of the rest of us. The crowd was swelling, pressing up toward the base of the stage. Their murmuring voices were rising, and I could catch bits and pieces of what they were saying. Some of it was regular excited chatter, but there was also some undertones of discontent.

"Let's get started," I said aloud so Maxim and Monroe could both hear me, too. I switched on the mic Maxim had tucked into the collar of my Henley. I saw Mason do the same. I faced the crowd. "Greetings, Pack Constantine!"

My father would never have used technology to address a meeting like this. He'd have expected his voice to boom out over the restless crowd and that they all would simply shut up and listen at rapt attention. Hell, he probably would've had guards stationed throughout the crowd to haul off anyone who wasn't listening.

"I am not my father," I said to them all. I kept my voice as slow and steady as I could. I let my eyes sweep the crowd, making contact with several people here and there. I looked upward to some on the roof, too. I wanted them all to feel like I was looking at them as individuals. "So let's just start off with that, okay? I'm Alpha Xander Constantine, and I'm here today to let you know that...well, from here on out, things are going to get better."

I wasn't prepared for the thunderous applause. It was so loud it reverberated through my mic and almost caused a squeal of feedback before it softened. My heart thudded as emotions swept over me. I caught Zane's eye. He was channeling some of the crowd's feelings so I could get in touch with them.

"Thanks," I sent to him.

To the crowd, I said, "As I'm sure you all know, the High Council has been disbanded. Destroyed, actually. And I know some of you have concerns about that, what it means for our pack overall, as well as for the families of those council members. So first, I want to let you know that anyone who'd like to discuss it can make an appointment with me or my co-Alpha. My brother, Mason."

Silence.

Then, the rustle of voices.

I didn't give them time to start shouting. I held up my hands, and the crowd obeyed.

"I know the rumors have preceded us, so I want to set all of your minds at ease. My brother Mason is also a son of Orion, and when our father died, Mason inherited Alpha powers. Same as me. I know this isn't how it usually works, but this is how it works for us. So if you have concerns about that, you can also make an appointment to see us. We're here for you, the entire pack."

I could hear questions being shouted, but Zane pulsed feelings toward me. Mostly acceptance, tinged with confusion and a lot of hope. There were a few bits of discontent, but it was outweighed by the positive.

"Where's the Luna?" A single voice rose, joined soon by a bunch of others. "Show us the Luna Gabriela! Prove she's alive! I heard she was killed to hide the truth about her mate!"

Shit.

## Chapter 460

### Chapter 460 Lanie

When I heard the cries of "show us the Luna" I knew I had to step forward and show myself to the screaming group. I'd been waiting behind the stage, quietly, offering my support to my mates but not wanting to overstep. It wasn't usually the Luna's place to address anything at a pack meeting, unless it had to do with the duties a Luna usually oversaw. Orion had never let Gabriela do much more than smile and wave, looking pretty, even though she'd been a warrior in the Great Wars, same as him.

With the announcement about there being two Alphas, we'd all felt that it would be for the best not to rock the boat any more than necessary. Whatever other changes my mates were going to bring to the leadership of this pack, all of it would be taken one step at a time. But now it looked like we had to take a few more steps, and make them a little faster than planned.

I stepped up onto the stage and moved in front of Xander and Mason. I didn't have a microphone, so I didn't try to speak. I just let the audience see me. I kept my chin up and my shoulders straight. No amount of criticism or judgment could rock me. I'd faced a lot worse than this.

Maxim quickly handed me a handheld mic and turned it on. For a moment, a squeal of feedback sounded and then eased. The crowd quieted expectantly.

"Hello, everyone!" I waved. "I'm Lanie, and I am your Luna. For all of you concerned about Gabriela, I want to reassure you that she's alive, well, and living her best life. She declined to join us in returning to Constantine, not because she didn't want to be with

her family, but because she's found a new loving partner and wanted to stay where she was."

"Proof!" rang out that first voice.

I shaded my eyes to see if I could hone in on the accuser. "I can't give you proof, since it didn't occur to any of us that some would be needed. But we can get in touch with her, and let her know you're all asking about her "

"I'll handle this, Mother." Stella's calm voice murmured through our joint mind link. "Daddy, Abba, Papa, I'll ease this man's mind. I can't do it for every person here, but he's the one shouting."

I wasn't wild about Stella manipulating anyone's thoughts or emotions, but in this instance, it looked like the guy in the crowd was dead set on derailing this meeting. "Thank you, little star." The man didn't shout again.

"Lanie is our mate and our Luna." Xander turned to gesture at me. "Me, my Beta, Zane, and also my co-Alpha, Mason. The four of us were blessed by the Moon Goddess in our unconventional union, and it's my firm expectation that you'll all welcome her to the role of Luna."

I had to stifle a laugh at Xander's "dad" voice. It offered no argument, kind of the same way when he was making our pups finish their meat at dinner before they'd be allowed to have candy. I kept myself from laughing though, even as I caught sight of Zane's grin.

"They're happy to accept you. And us." Zane's thoughts filled the mind link.

I felt a rise of hesitant happiness coming from the crowd through him. This was weird, but I rolled with it. I raised my hands and addressed the crowd again.

"It's my honor to serve as your Luna, and I look forward to it!"

The crowd rose in a rush of cheering. It faded when Xander stepped back up to the front. He gestured for Mason to join him at the front of the stage.

"We, the co-Alphas of Pack Constantine, understand and empathize with how much damage the High Council left behind. But we want to make it clear that other supernaturals are not our enemies." He paused as though expecting some pushback, but the only sounds were soft murmurs. He pressed on. "We know it can be hard to change your minds after being told so many lies. We intend to set all of the records straight and bring truth back to this pack and all of wolf society. We'll be leading with transparency, honesty and integrity."

The crowd roared. My heart swelled with pride and love. These people could have rushed the stage and thrown all of us in prison, poisoned by what the High Council had

done. They could have let another war start, continued the lies, refused to listen to reason. Instead, they were embracing my mates and me. [SEARCH THE WEBSITE](#) TO ACCESS CHAPTERS OF NOVELS EARLY AND IN THE HIGHEST QUALITY.

When I'd first been mated with Xander and Zane, I'd never imagined a day like this.

As it turned out, nothing in my imagination could have prepared me for today.