

The Luna's Choice by Kat Silver #Chapter 201 - Read The Luna's Choice by Kat Silver Chapter 201

Chapter 201

Chapter 51: Ayla

I froze when my hand touched the cold metal door handle.

What the f*ck was I doing?

I had blocked Theo from me in my anger, but he was still coming through to me. I could feel his turmoil and confusion. I could feel his pain. Pain that I caused. And for what? Because he wouldn't kill someone for me? Because he wouldn't let me kill him?

What kind of monster was I?

A million questions and accusations ran through my mind as my knees gave way, and I sunk to the hardwood floor.

What the hell was wrong with me?

Theo was right. This wasn't me. Throughout our entire fight, M knew what he was saying made sense. I knew we needed to keep him alive to get information. But my rage was so

consuming that I didn't care. I hated Lloyd so much I felt like I was on fire.

I couldn't pinpoint what cleared my mind from that haze, but something had. Now, I just felt remorse and pain and fear. I was scared of how I just acted. I felt Theo next to me. I was scared of the damage I just did.

I don't know how long it took for me to finally calm down. Theo just held me like he always did. Whenever I came close to composure, I thought about how amazing he was and another wave would hit me. When I finally felt like it had all

passed, my body ached from crying and my face was thoroughly covered in tears and snot.

"I'm sorry, Theo," I said once more as I released my hold on him. "I shouldn't have said those things. I shouldn't have tried to leave. I shouldn't have been mad at you. I don't know what came over me."

Theo sighed, brushing my hair back and wiping my cheeks with his thumbs. "You've been overwhelmed, baby. You've had a rough day. I think it's just time to call it and go to bed. And tomorrow, your life will be about the normal things, okay? School, work, friends, all those good things."

I nodded. I guess I needed that more than I thought. It was still a little painful to admit I couldn't handle it all, but I wouldn't let my pride risk this happening again.

Theo lifted me to my feet and led me to the bedroom. He helped me change into pajamas and we crawled into bed together. I was exhausted but I couldn't fall asleep. I was pressed against Theo, feeling the rise and fall of his chest, but I still felt a subtle distance between us. He was still upset with

1. me.

He sighed, resting his forehead on my head.

"Ayla..."

"Yes," I murmured.

"Don't threaten to command me again," he replied, "please."

Horror and guilt washed through me as the weight of my threat hit me.

"Never again. I swear," I said firmly. I squeezed him tighter, and he did the same.

"And please, please, don't ever f*cking leave me," he begged. "Please."

"I swear," I repeated.

He was quiet for a while. I thought he had fallen asleep when he spoke again.

"You know this will be worse for him."

"What?" I asked, looking up at him.

“He will fight every command,” he explained. “It will be long and agonizing. I will promise you that. He will get what he deserves. And when he does die, he will die knowing he helped us defeat everything he was fighting for.”

I didn’t want to say it was comforting, but it was reassuring. And it brought me a small sense of peace. I snuggled in close to Theo once more and quickly drifted off to sleep.

We had a slow morning the next day. It didn’t have class until later, so Theo got up and made a big breakfast for us. The distance I had felt last night was gone and I felt a weight had been lifted off of me. We were nearly finished with our meal when there was a knock on our door. I looked at Theo and saw someone was linking him.

“It’s Will and Kingston,” he said, pushing away from the table to go let them in. stood to follow, hanging back a little as he opened the door

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and invited them in.

“Good morning, Ayla,” Kingston said kindly.

They both looked terrible, especially Kingston. He must have been down in the cellar all night. And by the looks of it, his temper had also gotten the better of him a time or two. There were various smatterings of blood on his clothes and his knuckles were bruised and split. Kingston followed my gaze and realized the state he was in.

“My apologies,” he sighed. “I should have stopped to change.”

“No,” I insisted, taking a little comfort in what his appearance implied. “Are you okay, though?”

He gave me a small smile. “I feel a bit better,” he replied wryly, flexing his fingers.

The corners of my lips twitched. I was glad he was getting some sense of justice as well. The Onyxcrown slaughter had a far deeper impact on him than it ever would on me. He needed that experience with Lloyd.

“Were you able to get anything out of him?” Theo asked, crossing his arms over his chest as he leaned against the couch.

“Not much,” Kingston said. “He did elude to another attack on Sablemane soon. I tried to stay vague and taunting, but he gave away more than he realized. I’m pretty sure I know where this is going down. I’m going home to prepare.”

“You don’t think he’s toying with you?” Theo asked..

“Oh, he very well could be,” Kingston said with a shrug. “But I

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still think I need to be there to handle whatever happens.” His eyes met mine. “Besides, I think I need a little distance from him. Otherwise, it will be hard to keep from being someone I don’t want to be

anymore.”

I understood what he was saying. I was glad he was able to recognize that danger and step away. I would hate to see this turn him back into the person he was a couple months ago. He was better than that.

“I’ll keep you all up to date on what is going on,” he said. “Randy is already helping get some confirmation. He also said he would be making his way here soon. He wants to check this guy out as well. See if he can place his rank within the Society.”

Theo nodded. “He told me.” He straightened up. “Get some rest and clean up before you go. We’ll have an escort ready to ensure you make it back to Sablemane territory safely.”

Theo offered his hand, which Kingston accepted, shaking it firmly. I followed by stepping in to give him a hug.

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Chapter 52: Theo

I stood at the sink in the bathroom for a moment, taking deep breaths to calm my anger. Turning on the tap, I started

washing the blood from my hands. I had spent two hours in the cell with Lloyd. I didn't intend to get that physical with him yet, but he really was a vile bastard with a bad mouth. I pulled my shirt over my head and discarded it. I didn't want Ayla to see me like that. We were both trying to keep her mind off the rogue locked in the cellar.

We did manage to find a place for Denny, at least. I would be swearing him into the pack in a couple of days, and he would be moved to a halfway house nearby. It wasn't anything spectacular, but it was a hell of a lot better than what he was used to. And I trusted the woman who managed it. She was a genuinely kind soul who cared about her charges. If anyone could help Denny assimilate into pack life, she could.

I was dressed and presentable when I heard Ayla arrive home. Zeff was in town, and I could hear them talking about something that had Ayla in good spirits. I smiled in relief. I was glad that I was able to mend things between Zeff and me, both as his Alpha and for Ayla. If our plan worked out, he would be spending more time with her soon. And while it seemed strange to be grateful for my mate to be in the company of an unmated male, I couldn't deny how important his friendship was to her. She needed that these days, and I was giving her something familiar and normal. She deserved that.

I left the room and met them in the living room. Ayla smiled

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and met me with a kiss. She already seemed lighter and happier.

"Zeff," I greeted, shaking his hand.

"I hear you have a proposition for me," he said.

"That I do," I said. "If you have time, we can talk now. Or do you want to get settled in first?"

"I'm free now," he said.

"Great," I replied. "To start, I need to show you something."

"You two go ahead," Ayla said. "I'm going to change and finish up a couple emails for school real quick. I'll meet you there."

She kissed my cheek before going to the bedroom. I led Zeff out of the packhouse and walked to a nearby house. It was one of the first built, so it was older and needed some updates anyway, which was part of the reason it was perfect. I unlocked the front door and Zeff followed me inside.

It was completely empty at the moment. We had already had the furnishing removed, with the exception of the beds and dressers in two of the three bedrooms upstairs. Everything else had been cleared out. Zeff was obviously confused but interested in what I was going to say.

"How is the magazine going?" I asked, taking him back to the kitchen.

"It's going really well," he said with pride. "It's gotten off its feet sooner than we had expected."

"I'm glad to hear it," I said, leaning against the counter. "Ayla tells me you two have mostly been working out of each other"

s homes so far. Have you guys thought about setting up a headquarters yet?"

Zeff shrugged. "It has been discussed. It hasn't been a priority yet, seeing as all of our contributors work remotely anyway."

I nodded. "But that means you could set up anywhere, right? If the opportunity presented itself?"

"Yes," Zeff answered slowly. "I suppose so."

"Good, because I would like for you to set it up right here," I stated, indicating the house we were standing in.

Zeff looked startled. "May I ask why?"

My lips twitched at his skepticism. "I need your help. It's for Ayla."

"I'm listening," he replied, crossing his arms over his chest and leaning against the wall.

"I know she's told you everything that's been going on," I said. "She trusts you explicitly. I won't try to deny that I haven't looked into you more to make sure her trust is well-placed, because I have."

"You didn't hide it all that well," he smirked. "I had some people reach out."

"I wasn't intending to," I grinned back. It was a power move and he knew it. But he respected it and I liked that. "But when it comes to Ayla, I trust you, too. I need that right now."

I motioned for him to follow me as I moved to a door off of the kitchen. It led down to a basement that already had Construction supplies stacked up.

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"We need better access to the cellar," I said. "Something more discrete. So, we're building a tunnel entrance from here. It lines up well and is close enough that it shouldn't take long with a good team. However, that means this can no longer be used as a residence. I already have offices established for

my business that Harmon runs in the city. I do everything else from the packhouse. So, we need a cover. As you said, most of your work is done remotely, so you wouldn't have a lot of traffic coming in and out of the building. And again, I trust you to keep this secret. So, would you be willing to set up shop here?"

Zeff thought for a few moments as he looked around the area.

"What all would this entail for me?" he asked.

"It would require a couple responsibilities on your part," I said. "Mostly just monitoring who is coming and going, but a large part of that will be done by the security system. Other than that, we just need the company to occupy the space. This also will give Ayla a space outside of the packhouse to work. We'll turn the dining room and master bedroom into offices on the main floor. A third office on the second. The other two rooms I'll leave for you to do what you want. You can even live here if you like."

He had listened intently and considered the offer.

"I'll have to talk to Holly, of course," he said. "She's my partner. So she'll have to agree."

"Does she know who Ayla really is?" I asked sternly.

Zeff shook his head. "No," he replied firmly. "And she won't until you choose to tell her."

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Chapter 52: Theo

I nodded, feeling better about trusting him.

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"Talk to her. You can bring her out to check things out. Tell her I'm giving the office to Ayla as a gift if you want," I said. "Just let me know what you decide."

Chapter 203

Chapter 53: Ayla

It had been three weeks since I had stepped back from the Waar Pak investigation. It had been hard at first. I kept feeling like I was being left out, which would manifest in mood

swings. Theo would update me on anything I needed to know, which helped some. He still hadn't been able to get much out of Lloyd, but we weren't surprised that the process would take a while.

Eventually, I settled into a normal routine that kept me busy enough that I could keep my mind off of the things I wasn't doing. I was still working on my dad's research with Professor Armand, but other than that, I hadn't touched Harry's journal or anything else. I was finally Recharge successful! with school and really starting to enjoy my classes. I was even making more friends on campus.

However, there was one thing that had been off.

I was still getting sick.

Ever since that night with Lloyd, I had been nauseous frequently. At first, it wasn't that bad, and I chalked it up to stress and knowing he was still there. I had started using some herbal remedies that had helped for the most part, but for the past couple of days, it had gotten worse.

"Okay, Ayla," Maggie said from outside the stall door as I hung my head over the toilet. "It's time to face it."

"I know. I know," I groaned, flushing the contents of my stomach down the drain.

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I left the stall and rinsed my mouth at the sink while Maggie offered me a cool, damp paper towel for my face.

"We'll stop by the pharmacy on the way back," she said. "When is Alpha done today?"

"He said he wouldn't be back until late," I said, sounding more bitter than I had meant.

He hadn't been working late a lot, but he always seemed to have bad timing when he did. With me being sick, Dasha had been in a weird mood that had us both feeling unusually clingy. So, when Theo wasn't close by, I would get annoyed, especially since he had been evasive about where he had been going. He said he was working on a project with the company from the office in the city while Harmon was still in town. But whenever I asked, I could feel something through our bond. It made me feel like he was hiding something.

I didn't like it.

"Let's go, Luna," Maggie said, hooking her arm in mine. "It's time to get some answers."

I let Maggie drive because my stomach was still queasy. We had made our pit stop and were back home in my suite in less than an hour. I immediately flopped down on the couch, trying to breathe through the nausea.

"Nuh-uh," Maggie said as she dropped the paper bag on my Jap. "Go. Now."

Thuffed dramatically. Dragging myself off the couch, I carried the bag to the hall bathroom with me. I shut the door and pulled out the box with the pregnancy test. I looked at it in my hands and a wave of emotions flooded through me.

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Chapter 53: Ayla

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I didn't know why I had been avoiding this. Maybe because I didn't know how I would feel about the results.

No. That's not true. I knew how I would feel.

I would be ecstatic to be having Theo's pup. Over the last few weeks especially, he had shown me just how amazing he would be as a father. He had been taking care of me so well. And I knew how much having kids meant to him. Not to mention what it would mean to his parents. I would be over the moon to be able to give Torin his wish.

But there was anxiety there as well.

Despite the break from the Waar Pak investigation, I still knew the threat was still very real. It felt like I constantly had a target on my back. It felt irresponsible to have a pup while that kind of danger loomed over our heads.

And what if I wasn't? Sure, getting pregnant on your first heat after a mating wasn't guaranteed, but it was pretty damn common. If I wasn't, then what if that meant something was wrong? I had been taking wolfsbane for over a week when I went into heat. What if that did something to prevent it?

I guess that didn't matter at this point. All I could do was take the test, get the results, and go from there.

I tore the box open and grabbed the stick. When I was done, I carried it back out to the living room without even looking at

1. it.

"We have a few minutes before it's ready," I said when Maggie looked at me expectantly.

I set the test stick on the coffee table face down and paced,

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chewing on a fingernail as I did so. Dasha was practically giggling in the back of my mind.

‘Well, you’re not telling me anything,’ I shot at her.

‘Not sure,’ she replied.

Although I had a feeling that wasn’t true. Ever since Maggie had suggested I could be pregnant a week ago, she had been acting smug whenever I asked her what she felt. Even though she would deny knowing anything. Werewolves had shorter pregnancies than humans like the way we healed faster, our pups developed faster as well so she should have been able to tell something by now.

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“It’s going to be okay, Luna,” Maggie assured me. “This is a good thing. Great, even.”

I sighed with a light laugh. “I know,” I said.

She came over and grabbed my hands. “Can I tell you a secret?”

I nodded.

“I kind of really hope that you are,” she said almost giddily with a broad smile.

My face quickly mirrored hers as I admitted my own feelings to myself. “Me too.”

She glanced at her watch. “It’s time.”

I nodded and took a deep breath. “You do it.”

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Maggie leaned over and picked up the device, turning it over to read the result.

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Chapter 204

Chapter 54: Theo

I stopped by the office to put the plans in the safe before heading back to the apartment. The last thing I wanted was for Ayla to stumble across them. It had been hard keeping the secret from her, but it would be worth it.

“Hey, babe,” I called as I entered the apartment. “I’m home.”

Something felt different. I paused for a moment, trying to gauge the feeling, but I couldn’t. I couldn’t place it as good or bad, just different, which was strange in itself.

“Ayla?”

She wasn’t in the kitchen or the living room. I could sense her close by, and she said she was home when I messaged her a little while ago. It was later than I had expected, so I figured she may have gone to bed already. However, she would usually wait up for me. She hadn’t been thrilled when I told her I would be out late again that evening. Was she mad at me?

I went to the bedroom, but she wasn’t there, either. I heard a thump and a muffled curse. My brow furrowed. I looked down the hall and saw the door to one of the spare rooms ajar. I opened it to find chaos. There were boxes scattered around the floor. Everything had been removed from the surfaces of the furniture and packed away. Every frame was taken down from the walls and tucked into the boxes. The sheets had been stripped from the bed, and Ayla was

currently trying to move one of the nightstands.

“What in the world are you doing?” I asked amusedly.

She jumped slightly. She must have really been focused and hadn’t noticed me come in.

“Oh, good, Theo,” she said, waving me over. “Come help me move this.”

Kieran was bouncing in anticipation. Ayla had been having weird mood swings lately, and he had been overly sensitive to them. Tonight, I could definitely tell he knew something was up.

“And where am I moving it to?” I replied as I closed the distance.

“The other spare room for now,” she indicated. “I’ll have some pack members come and move them out tomorrow.”

“Okay,” I said slowly. “But why? You said you liked how Mom decorated the place and didn’t want to change it.”

Ayla’s attention finally settled on me. I hadn’t realized she had been partially blocking our connection until she opened up, and I nearly fell to my knees from the strength of her emotions. I reached out and held her face, holding her gaze as she worked to tell me whatever it was she needed to.

“Well...” she began, “I believe pups prefer a crib to a bed and maybe some brighter colors.”

I froze. Did she mean...? Was she...?

“Ayla, are you...?” I stammered. “Are we having...?”

She nodded, tears welling in her eyes. My lips slammed into hers. Joyous laughter bubbled up as I tasted her. I lifted her off the ground, wrapping her legs around my waist as I carried her to our bedroom. She tugged at my clothes, her arousal filling my senses as we fell onto the blankets. We were undressed in record time, and she moaned happily as I slid into her entrance.

I paused, still buried to the hilt, as I gazed down at my perfect mate. I calmed myself from my frenzied state before I gently rocked in and out of her. I kissed along her skin, savoring the feel of it against mine. I worshipped her glorious body as I worked to bring her as much pleasure as she had given me.

I felt her tighten firmly around me, demanding my release as she cried my name. I fell onto the mattress, panting as I held her tightly against me.

“I love you, Ayla,” I said. “I love you more than words can say. You have made me happier than I ever deserved.”

She giggled against my chest. "I love you, too, Theo. And you deserve every ounce of joy I can give you."

I pulled the blankets up over us, tucking us in as I looked down at Ayla's beautiful face again. I trailed my knuckles along her cheek, weaving my fingers through her hair before trailing them down her neck. I paused for a moment to trace her mark before my hand made its way to rest on her belly. I slid down the bed, kissing her stomach.

"And you're sure?" I asked.

She laughed. "After five pregnancy tests, yeah," she said. "I'm pretty sure."

Her fingers combed through my hair as my head lay on her abdomen. I inhaled deeply, breathing in her scent in that perfect moment.

Goddess, she was so f**king perfect.

Images of what our pup would look like, whether they would be a boy or girl, and all the things we would do with them were circling through my mind when Ayla finally spoke again.

"And you're sure you still want this?" she asked quietly.

My head snapped up in utter confusion. "Why wouldn't I want this, Ayla?"

She sighed, avoiding my eyes. "You've been gone a lot lately, and..."

"Baby, stop," I interrupted.

I moved back up the bed to face her. Could she really believe that I had been out late because I didn't want to be with her? Now that I knew she was pregnant, it explained her mood swings and attachment lately. I knew her hormones were messing with her, but could she convince herself I didn't want her anymore? That I didn't want children with her anymore?

"I've wanted this more than anything since the moment I

came to my f**king senses and accepted you, Ayla," I said firmly. "You, and now our pup, are everything to me, baby. My entire world. Do you understand me?"

She nodded with a smile. I kissed her deeply and passionately, enforcing my words.

“Get some sleep,” I whispered. “I want to take you somewhere in the morning.”

It was time I showed her my secret.

Chapter 205

Chapter 55: Ayla

Theo woke me up the next morning with a bubble bath waiting for me. Once I was in and relaxing, he told me to take my time and that he'd be back soon. Emphasizing that he would be in the packhouse and to just mind-link him if I needed anything.

I remembered he said he wanted to take me somewhere the night before but refused to tell me anything when I asked about it. He just told me I would know soon enough, and I'd have to trust him. I chuckled as I watched him leave.

He seemed nervous. But a good, excited, nervous. I didn't know if it was because of my pregnancy or whatever he had planned for the day. Possibly a little of both. Either way, I wasn't worried. The level of happiness passing between our mate bond was more than enough to keep me

calm.

When I was done soaking, I got dressed and spent some time making myself look nice. Nothing much, just spending a little time more time on my hair and makeup than I usually did. When I was satisfied, I stood in front of the mirror and looked myself over. My hand instinctively went to my stomach. I wondered what Theo would think when I was big and round in a few months. Dasha lingered smugly and contently in my mind. She had enjoyed every second of our mate doting on us.

‘Mate thinks we’re beautiful. Mate happy,’ she cooed with pride.

I giggled softly. ‘I would hope so. He did his job well.’

'Dasha happy,' she replied.

'Me, too,' I concurred.

I heard Theo return and went to greet him. We bumped into each other in the hall as we were both heading for each other. We laughed as we kissed, my arms going around his neck as he held me close.

"You ready?" he asked, brushing his nose against mine.

"Mhmm," I nodded.

"Great."

With his arm around my waist, he led me through the packhouse and out the front entrance. His car was already parked at the door ready for us. Theo opened my door but stopped me before I got in.

"Turn around," he said with a mischievous grin.

"Why?" I asked cautiously.

"Just turned around," he chuckled.

I sighed but did as he said. My vision suddenly went dark as soft fabric covered my eyes.

"What the..."

"This stays on until I tell you," he said as he tied the blindfold securely. "Understood?"

"Is this really necessary?"

He kissed my cheek and guided me into the front seat.

"Absolutely."

The door shut and Theo was climbing in next to me within a few seconds. I heard the engine come to life, and we were on our way... to wherever the heck we were on our way to.

“You’re really not going to tell me what this is all about, are you?” I asked.

“Nope,” he replied.

I wracked my brain, trying to think of where he could be taking me.

“We’re going to your parents’, aren’t we?”

“Nope,” he repeated. “And you’ll never guess, so you might as well think of something else to discuss.”

I crossed my arms over my chest with a huff, resisting the urge to pull the blindfold off. “Fine.”

Theo chuckled, grabbing my hand and squeezing it. I could feel how excited he was, and it was so adorable. I didn’t want to ruin that for him. So, I relaxed back in the seat and went along for the ride.

“We will have to tell your parents soon,” I said.

“My mother would kill me if I kept this from her, so I definitely agree.”

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“But I want to hold off a little before we formally announce it to the pack,” I said. “Get a little further along. Maybe closer to our ceremony.”

“I can live with that,” Theo said. “However, I can’t say I can do anything about the rumors once you start to show.”

I laughed. “I don’t expect you to be a miracle worker,” I said.

We drove a little longer, but it didn’t seem far when we stopped, and Theo cut the engine.

“Wait here a moment, babe,” he said as he kissed the back of my hand. “And don’t touch that blindfold. I mean it.”

I chuckled. “I promise I’ll leave it be,” I said. “Just hurry up.”

He kissed my neck before getting out, leaving me in darkness. I could hear him get something out of the trunk of the car before listening to him walk away. I cracked the door open and took a deep breath. It may have been cheating, but I wasn't breaking my promise.

We definitely weren't in the city anymore. The air was fresh and clean, with the smell of fall trees around us. It was also quiet, only the sound of nature filling my ears.

It was peaceful wherever we were.

Finally, Theo returned and pulled my door open all the way. He took my hands and tugged me out of the car. With his hands on my hips, he walked me to whatever spot he had picked out.

"Ready?" he whispered from behind me.

"Yes," I insisted eagerly.

He tugged at the tie of the fabric and the blindfold fell away.

We were in a clearing surrounded by trees. A large pond butted up against the stretch of land, and fall wildflowers were growing along the treeline. It was a gorgeous space. Right in front of me was a blanket with a picnic spread out on top. At the end of the blanket, there was a board set up. Pinned to it were blueprints.

"What is this?" I asked.

"This is our home," he said gently, holding back his excitement and nervousness. "Or it will be when I'm done building it."

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"What?" I turned to him.

"Do you

like the land?" he asked urgently. "I know I probably should have asked you, but I saw the property for sale, and I thought of you. I know how much you like the water. And it's not so far from the city. And the blueprints aren't set in

stone. We have plenty of time to make any changes you want, babe. It's all whatever you want."

I threw my arms around his neck, my mouth taking his.

"Is this what you've been up to when you were coming home late?" I asked as I pulled away.

He nodded sheepishly. "I wanted it to be a surprise."

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I kissed him again. "It's perfect."

Chapter 206

Chapter 56: Kylee

"Hey, Carrie, do you mind if I take my break? Ma's calling," I said as I clicked the vibrating phone in my pocket. I didn't have to look at it. Ma was the only one who called me these days. "All my tables are good."

"Sure, go right ahead," she replied with a smile.

I headed through the kitchen and out the back door. I dialed Ma again.

"Hey, Ma, what's up?"

"I was just wondering if you were going to be home in time for my call with Avla," she said.

I winced. I had told her I would try to be there this time, but I had been in a better mood that day. Therapy was going well, and I thought I was progressing better in dealing with my situation. But now that the time had come, I wasn't so sure I was ready.

I hadn't spoken with Ayla since she went back home to the Greytooth Pack. I hadn't expected to hear from her. She made our position perfectly clear, and I couldn't blame her. But I missed her terribly. I couldn't count the times I wanted to pick up the phone to call her and tell her about my day. However, I would always be left feeling awful, as it was mostly just to complain. It really made me realize how often I did that with her over the years.

I had worked through that with Dr. Whitham. She actually had me excited about talking to her again. But then I got an email from an old friend back home. I sent her my new number and had been texting. Apparently, Ayla was doing really well. She was thriving in her new role. She was thriving with Theo. Finding that out made the prospect

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of talking with her more daunting.

Don't get me wrong, I was truly happy to know she was doing so well, especially after everything we all had put her through. The same went for Theo. I was surprised to realize that I was glad to hear Ayla was making him so happy. It was a big step for me. I was getting over him and moving on.

But then I thought about what I would actually say to Ayla. She was flourishing and here I was... moping. Yes, moping. I was still feeling sorry for myself. It was still something I couldn't get over just yet. And I didn't think I could handle her seeing that.

"We're pretty busy right now," I told Ma. "I only have a minute to call you back. So, I'm not sure I'll make it back in time."

"We can wait for you," she insisted. "I'm sure Ayla won't mind."

"No, no," I assured her. "You just give her a call. Don't worry about me. I'll... I'll try to call her later."

Ma paused. "Okay," she replied doubtfully. "Well, I'll let you get back to work. Love you."

"Love you, too," I said.

Right as I hung up, the alley door opened and Carrie popped her head out.

"Your special friend is here," she cooed, waggling her eyebrows. "I put back in booth one for you."

I sighed. "He's not my friend, Carrie," I said, following her inside. "He's just a regular."

"Well, he's not interested in being my special friend," she said. "So, I suggest you take the opportunity. You could use a good night out."

I shook my head.

She was talking about Derek, the guy who moved here recently. He had been coming to the diner multiple times a week and would only sit in my section. He had asked me on a date more than once, but I always declined. He was really nice and very attractive. But he wasn't my mate. I had learned my lesson and had no interest in a relationship with anyone who wasn't my mate. And I wasn't ready for anything casual at the moment.

Although, I had to actively remind myself of that fact every time I saw him. Tonight was no different. He was sitting in the booth looking incredible in a nice blue button-up and slacks. The color made his blue eyes pop as he perused the menu as if he didn't know it by heart by now. My stomach did a flip, and I had to clear my throat to pull myself back to reality before making my way to his table.

"Hey, Derek," I said brightly, placing his regular soda on the table in front of him. "Did you come from work again?"

He looked up at me with a huge smile. "Well, there's my favorite girl," he said. "Yes, my boss is really pushing for this deal to go through soon."

"He works you too hard," I replied.

"I can't say it's just him wanting this to go through," he said cheekily. "If this works out, my boss wants me to be the head of the new location. So, it looks like I'll be moving here more permanently."

"Oh?" I said, surprised.

"Then you'll have to let me take you on a date," he insisted. "Distance won't be an issue anymore."

My mouth fell open. "Derek, we've..."

“Come on, Kylee,” he interrupted, reaching out to brush his fingers along my wrist. “It’s not like I have anyone to celebrate with. This is a big step in my career.

I sighed, unable to ignore how nice his touch felt.

“Alright,” I said, “IF you close the deal and IF you get the promotion, I’ll celebrate with you.”

His smile broadened and he squeezed my arm gently.

“But only as friends,” I insisted, despite leaning in closer to him. uncontrollably.

“Of course,” he replied wryly.

I took his order and walked back to the kitchen to give it to the cooks, the whole time wondering what I had just gotten myself into.

Chapter 207

Chapter 57: Theo

Ayla and I were trying desperately to hide our excitement throughout the entire dinner. As I looked around the table at my parents and

Briggs and Mina, it was getting harder and harder not to just blurt it out. The fact that Mina had been eyeing Ayla suspiciously all evening didn’t help. Thankfully, it was the end of the meal. I didn’t have to wait any longer.

‘Are you sure you don’t want to wait for Jimmy,’ Ayla linked me.

‘No, he said he likely wasn’t going to make it,’ I said, disappointed. ‘But he insisted there was something important he had to do.’

‘Okay,’ she replied. ‘You ready?’

‘Are you kidding?’ I teased, throwing my arm around her shoulder.

She elbowed me subtly before clearing her throat to get everyone’s attention.

“So, Grace,” she said. “I’m afraid I have some bad news.’

“Oh?” Mom replied, the atmosphere dropping slightly.

”

“You know the dress we had picked out for the ceremony?” Ayla stated. “Well, I think we’re going to have to return it. I don’t think the style is going to be appropriate anymore.”

“Honey, what are you talking about?” Mom said, not catching on that she was trying to tell her something else. “The dress looks stunning on you. It’s perfect.”

“Now, perhaps,” Ayla continued. “But I think I need something that will be a bit more... accommodating.” She looked at me with a wry grin and I kissed her temple. “My figure isn’t going to be the same by the solstice. I’ll probably be a bit... rounder.”

The room went silent for a moment as everyone let her words sink in. A huge smile slowly spread across Mina’s face.

“I knew something was up,” she exclaimed. “You’re pregnant!”

My mate and I looked at each other again, pure happiness flowing between us.

“Yes,” Ayla replied.

Mina jumped up from her seat and was around the table in a

nanosecond, hugging Ayla tightly. My mother was covering her mouth as tears of joy began to well in her eyes. Briggs and my father were up and clapping my back in congratulations. Over the next five to ten minutes, more smiles and embraces were exchanged than I had experienced since I didn’t know when.

“Okay, Dad,” I said as he squeezed Ayla happily. “Let’s not crush my mate and pup.”

“I think the pup will be just fine, babe,” Ayla laughed.

I wrapped my arm around her waist and pulled her to me. Mom came up and grabbed her hands.

“We’ll go back to the dress shop as soon first thing...”

Suddenly, our door slammed open. We all turned to see Jimmy standing in the doorway, panting and looking disheveled.

“We’ve got a problem,” he burst out.

He looked back into the hall behind him, checking in all directions before shutting and locking the bolt before coming in and collapsing on the couch. He was wearing sweatpants and a T-shirt but no shoes. He must have shifted to get here. Ayla rushed to get him a glass of water, handing it to him as he caught his breath.

“What happened?” I insisted, feeling his anxiety.

“I found a meeting,” he said. “I suspected a local group of having ties to the Waar Pak. Caught wind of a get-together happening tonight. So I showed up.”

“And?”

“Oh, it’s Waar Pak, alright,” he said. “They don’t come out and claim the name. At least not yet. Right now they are referring to themselves as Purists, but what they’re spouting is pure Waar Pak rhetoric.”

“Did you get names?” I asked.

Jimmy looked at me gravely. “Yeah,” he replied with a nod. “A few actually. Sarah Walport’s man, John, was there. I know you were worried about him. But... the real problem is the sheriff.”

“What?” I hissed, my fists clenching in rage.

Jimmy nodded in confirmation. “I got a good look before someone recognized me. I didn’t raise any flags at first. But someone voiced my loyalty to Luna and that caused some issues. Theo, they weren’t just trying to run me out of the meeting. If I hadn’t gotten away... well, I’m not sure exactly what they would have done with me, but it wouldn’t have been to just let me walk away. They’re planning something they want to keep secret. We need to move fast before they scatter.”

I cursed as Briggs started mind-linking those we knew were loyal to us. I pulled my phone out of my pocket.

“We need Randy here,” I said, dialing his contact.

“Yeah?” he answered.

“You somewhere private?” I asked

“Hey, man,” he replied casually. “I’m not sure if I can but what’s the plan?”

He must have been in the field and couldn’t talk freely.

“Just get here as soon as you can,” I said, keeping it vague.

“Right, I’ll see you in the morning,” he replied before hanging up.

By the time I hung up, Maggie was knocking at our door.

“Maggie, you’re with us tonight.” I held Ayla’s face in my hands. “I need you to stay here with my parents, babe. I don’t think they’re going to try anything tonight, but I’m not about to risk anything. Don’t leave the apartment.”

“I’m not going anywhere,” she said, reaching up to kiss me. “Just be careful, please. You’re just as much a target as I am now.”

“Don’t worry,” I said gently. “Nothing will keep me from coming home to you both.”

“The warriors are gathering outside the packhouse,” Briggs said, holding Mina to his chest. “They should all be there within the next fifteen minutes. We should get moving.”

I nodded before turning back to Jimmy. “You still got some energy left in you?”

“There’s no way in hell I’m sitting this one out if that’s what you’re asking,” he said, rising from the couch.

“Good,” I said. I kissed Ayla one more time, firmly and thoroughly. “I love you. Both of you.”

She smiled gently. “I love you, too.”

No data found.

Chapter 208

Chapter 58: Theo

We met our men outside to set a plan.

“Briggs and I will be going to the sheriff’s house. Jimmy, you take a few wolves back to the meeting spot and see who you can track down from there,” I commanded. “The rest of you split up into groups of three. Jimmy will link you any names he has. Start at their houses and hunt them down from there.”

“Don’t attack unless they do,” Briggs said. “Until we understand their loyalties, they are only to be questioned. They are still our pack members.”

“Let me know as soon you have them in custody,” I said.

Briggs and I headed to my car and I sped out of the parking lot. I hoped I was hiding my rage as well as I hoped I was. Sheriff Hawkins was a veteran from my father’s time as Alpha. We had had our disagreements in the past. He had always been a bit old-fashioned. But he didn’t have enough power to do any harm and he was loyal – or so I thought – so our differences didn’t seem like enough to take a man’s position.

That would change now.

“Theo, you understand how delicate this situation is, right?” Briggs said, his eyes falling on my white-knuckled grip on the steering wheel. “If he’s not speaking out against you as Alpha...”

“Loyalty to their Luna comes hand-in-hand with loyalty to me,” I said through gritted teeth/

“Hawkins is loyal to your family...”

“Ayla is my family,” I interjected.

“Theo, I’m trying really hard not to point out the obvious, but her taking the role as Luna hasn’t exactly been universally accepted,” Briggs shot back.

He was talking about what I had done with Kylee. The rumors that had spread after Ayla and my relationship came out would have caused doubts in Ayla’s character. I thought I had put those doubts to rest, but I guess we hadn’t been as thorough as I had hoped.

“Right now, we just need to get to Hawkins and find out what the f*ck he’s planning,” I said.

“Agreed,” Briggs said.

I pulled into the clubhouse parking lot of Hawkins' neighborhood and parked around the back where it was dark. I wasn't sure if he would be home yet and I didn't want to tip him off if he came back after us. We walked the short distance to his house, keeping out of sight as much as possible. The place was quiet and all the lights were off.

"His mate's car is in the garage," Briggs said as he peered through the windows.

I knocked on the door. After a couple of tries, I heard movement from inside. A moment later, Angela, his mate, opened the door.

"Alpha?" she said worriedly. "What are you doing here? Is something wrong? Has something happened to Bill?"

"May we come in?"

"Of course," she replied.

I didn't really wait for an answer and was already on the foyer,

listening for any signs the Hawkins was actually there somewhere. I didn't sense anything. The house appeared to be in order as well, so I didn't think he had already come and gone. Besides, I didn't think he'd leave his mate behind if he was going to run.

"Don't turn the lights on," Briggs said, stopping Angela as she reached for the switch.

"What's going on?" she asked again, pulling her robe tighter around her.

"Do you know what your mate has been up to lately?" I replied. "Outside of his job requirements, that is."

"I... I'm not sure what you mean," she said.

"Angela," I warned. She was lying. It was obvious.

She recoiled slightly, her shoulders falling. "Whatever he is doing, it's to protect you and your family."

"Bullshit," I snapped. "Do you know what he is involved in?" I commanded.

"All I know is that someone came to him with information on a threat to the..."

"Shut up, Angela," a voice burst through the room. Bill Hawkins emerged from the shadows of a back room. I had sensed him come in the back door. "Alpha Theo, Beta Briggs. I a s s u m e you're looking for me."

It took everything in my power not to launch myself across the room at him.

"Sit," I forced through gritted teeth, indicating the chair Briggs had

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moved to the middle of the room.

Hawkins did as he was told.

"I would like to start off by saying that my loyalty to you or your father has not changed, Alpha Theo," he said.

"Then why did my Gamma find you in a meeting plotting against our Luna?"

Angela gasped from the corner.

Bill shook his head. "She's not our Luna, sir."

I advanced toward him, but Briggs stopped me.

"Ayla Garner is Alpha Theo's fated mate," Briggs said, holding my shoulder firmly. "She is our destined Luna. What makes you think she's not? Who has told you otherwise?"

"Alpha Theo," Hawkins replied coolly.

"Excuse me?" I spat.

"You accepted and announced Kylee Garner as your mate and Luna," he insisted. "For over a year, she was your fated mate..."

"She was never my fated mate," I bellowed. "I never once said that."

"Then why does half the pack believe that?"

"Kylee lied," Briggs said. "Regardless, Theo has marked Ayla. She is fulfilling the role in an exceptional way. Why question her legitimacy? What kind of threat is she supposed to be?"

"Ayla's the one lying, sir," he said confidently. "She has done something to manipulate her way into being our Luna. I know you don't want to hear it, but it's the truth."

"You have no idea what the truth is, Hawkins," I stated, "Kylee is the one who manipulated her way into my life. I was stupid and blind. She's anything but worthy of being a Luna. If you truly knew anything about either of them, you'd see that."

"Okay," Hawkins replied. "Let's say Kylee isn't your fated mate either. If she was capable of manipulating you like that, why wouldn't you believe Ayla was also capable of it as well?"

Briggs grabbed me again.

"We know exactly who Ayla is," he confirmed. "We aren't here to entertain the contrary. All we want to know is who told you she was a threat and why you believe them over your Alpha."

"Because her father set you up."

Chapter 209

Chapter 59: Theo

I wasn't even going to consider this conversation. It was pure nonsense. But whoever was coming after us, they were getting closer. And smarter. I needed Hawkins to talk.

"If this is so concerning to you, why not come to me or my father? Why skulk around behind our back?" I asked.

"You wouldn't have listened," he said. "She's marked you, Alpha. You won't listen to reason now."

"And what reason is that?" I ground out, trying hard to maintain control. "What was her father trying to accomplish by making her my Luna?"

Hawkins shook his head. "They want to take control. She wants to get rid of all the Alphas. To become queen."

I ran a hand over my face, pinching the bridge of my nose. "Do you know how ridiculous you sound?" I said.

"I said you wouldn't listen," Hawkins replied.

"If this was true, why me?" I asked. "Why the Greytooth Pack? We're far from the most powerful pack. We may have one of the biggest territories but there are several other packs that outnumber us. Not to mention resources. So, why me?"

Hawkins made a face. "That... I'm not sure about," he admitted. "However, your family is one of the most respected. Your line of Alphas is long and well-established. You have more allies than most of the other packs. That would give her access to a lot of trust."

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"Okay, Hawkins," I said. "Let's say you weren't blatantly committing treason against your Alpha. For now, let's say I believe you." Briggs gave me a burning look, but I ignored it. "Who has given you all of this information? Who are you working with?"

Hawkins grimaced. "I can't tell you, sir."

"I can make you tell me, Hawkins," I insisted. And if I couldn't, that would mean he was under the command and Ayla could break that.

"No, that's just it," he said. "I don't have a name. He is very secretive. I've never actually seen his face."

"Then why trust him over me? Over my father? You want me to listen to what you call reason, but you have nothing to go on."

"I have evidence," he said. "I have research. Anything you want to know, I can get you."

I looked to Briggs, nodding for him to step outside with me.

"Don't move," I commanded Hawkins and his mate.

Briggs followed me outside where I immediately started to take deep breathes.

'You don't actually believe this, do you?' he linked me. We still couldn't risk them overhearing our conversation.

'Of course I don't,' I snapped back. 'All of this is ridiculous. It's a ploy to turn our pack members against Ayla. But if Hawkins thinks we believe him, even a little, it could give us another angle to get to the Waar Pak.'

'True, but it's going to be difficult,' Briggs said. 'He's not going to by that you accept him at his word. You two don't have the greatest track record.'

'No, it won't,' I said. 'But if he's being honest about believing he's protecting us, then he will eventually.'

'Do you really think he's telling the truth about that?' Briggs asked. 'Or do you think this is an opportunity for him?'

'Both,' I said. 'But Hawkins isn't power-hungry. He wants respect, and to be the smartest person in the room. I'm not surprised that they got to him. If he believes he has some special, secret information about anything, he's going to cling to it. But I'm hoping we can use that against them, just like they tried to.'

Briggs nodded in agreement.

'In the meantime, I'm calling McCabe back up here,' I said. 'I want him to be the acting sheriff for the time being. I don't want to trust anyone already established in the force.'

‘Agreed.’

We went back inside. I was feeling more calm. I felt more worry than anger. I sat back down on the couch, keeping my expression unreadable.

“I want all the information you have,” I stated. “You will be stripped of your position and both of you will be on house arrest until I say otherwise.”

“But, sir...”

“Be glad you’re not dead where you sit,” I snarled. “Whether you agree with it or not, regardless of whatever you believe about her, as of right now, Ayla is my mate and your Luna. Whatever good deed you believed you were doing is moot. So, until I get to the bottom of this,

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you will be under constant guard. Is that understood?”

“Yes, Alpha,” they both said in unison.

We left the house and I called a few warriors to come stand guard. I checked in with Jimmy. They were able to grab a few of the attendees. I told him to take them to the precinct. We still didn’t know how serious their involvement was. I didn’t want them tipping the Waar Pak off about our investigation if we were forced to let anyone go.

I climbed back into my car and put my head in my hands.

“What the f*ck is going on, Briggs?” I said. “How do we fight this?”

“The same way we have been, man,” he said with a sigh.

He was quiet for a moment and I could tell there was something on his mind.

“What is it?”

He made a face. “I’m not sure,” he said with a shrug. “There are just some more things that don’t add up. Maybe Randy can help us out, but I’d like to take a look at Jack’s research myself. Do you think Ayla would be okay with that?”

“You’ll have to ask her,” I replied. “But I don’t see there being any issue. What are you thinking?”

“Well, it’s something you said,” he explained. “Why you? If Jack had some nefarious plan, why target you? He could have put in the path of any Alpha. Hell, Kingston makes a hell of a lot more sense than you. I think that’s something we should focus on.

”

I thought about it for a moment and it did start to make sense.

“Okay,” I said. “You take the lead on that then. I’ll deal with the Waar Pak recruits.”

Chapter 210

Chapter 60: Ayla

I was pacing the room as I waited for some kind of news. It was already passed midnight and we hadn’t heard from anyone what was going on.

“Ayla, sit down, please,” Mina said. “I’m sure they’ll be back soon.”

“To say what?” I asked. “How I’m causing even more trouble for everyone?”

“You know that’s not true, sweetheart,” Grace insisted. “You haven’t caused any of this. It’s the Waar P ak.”

“But they wouldn’t be doing any of this if it wasn’t for me,” I sighed. “It’s not like we’ve found any evidence that they’re so concerned about Kylee and she’s my sister. She has the same blood I do. No” – I shook my head – “they only care about me.”

“That doesn’t mean it’s your...”

The front door opened and Theo, Briggs, and Jimmy walked in. I breathed a sigh of relief as Theo and I fell into an embrace. I could feel the tension rolling off of him but he was physically in the same shape as he had left. Theo led me to the couch. He kept his arm around me as he informed us about the night’s events.

“We can’t keep doing what we’re doing,” I said when he was finished. “We need to be more proactive about this. It’s time the Waar P ak became our priority.”

“What are you suggesting?” Alpha Torin said.

“Well, first, I’m going to put college on hold for a little while,” I said. I raised a hand when Theo went to protest. “No, it’s time we face that it needs to be done. I’ll have more time later when all of this is over.

Second, I’m going to be working closer with Luna Grace. Make more of an effort to get out and let people see me in the Luna role.”

“I think that would be very beneficial,” Alpha Torin agreed with me.

"We'll get all of that figured out tomorrow," Theo interjected. "For now, I think we all need to sleep on this. We're all exhausted and will be making better decisions in the morning. Why don't we meet in my office around ten?"

Everyone acknowledged their agreement and started to make their way out. When they were all gone, Theo took my hand and led me back to our bedroom. He sat me down on the edge of the bed and knelt down in front of me. His arms wrapped around my waist and he laid his head on my chest, holding me tightly.

"What's wrong, Theo?" I asked gently as I stroked his hair.

He sighed and pulled away, looking up at me. "You know I love you more than anything, right?"

"Of course," I said, getting more worried. "I love you, too."

"I know that," he said strongly. "I know with every fiber of my being that we were meant for each other. I just need you to know that. Without any doubt."

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1. Theo, what is this about?"

"What Hawkins was saying..." he began, "He still seems to be loyal to my family. If... if I'm going to get more information from him, the best way is to make him think I believe him." He rested a hand on my stomach. "But it would kill me if you ever thought I would."

"That won't happen, Theo," I said firmly, ignoring the tightening in my chest.

"Ayla, it's a dangerous game to play," he said. "But it's the only way to avoid hurting my pack members."

"Then that's the way we go," I said. "We'll make it, babe."

He finally looked up at me with every ounce of love and faith in his eyes. His hands went to my face, pulling me into a deep and passionate kiss. He pulled my shirt over my head before sliding me up on the bed. We stripped each other down as our hands trailed across the other's skin. Each movement was slow and deliberate. His tongue grazed my mark as his fingers touched between my folds, sending electricity through me from both directions.

I groaned as he worked my clit. I was getting close to my climax when he slipped inside me, removing his hand only when he filled me to the hilt. We stayed still for a moment, reveling in our connection. Feeling every inch of each other, sensing our souls mingling into one.

Theo began to move, hard and steady. His lips pressed firmly into mine. My legs wrapped around his waist as he pushed deeper inside me. I whimpered as I felt my walls tighten and my release came closer. His thrusts became more urgent, sending me hurtling over the edge. His growl vibrated through me, deep and resounding, as we came together.

He rolled to his side, taking me with him as he held on tight. We lay there as we waited for our breathing to slow. When we had relaxed, Theo moved to pull the covers down, tucking us in beneath them before pulling me back into his arms. We lay there tangled up in each other. His hand sliding through my hair as I started to drift off to sleep.

"You're right, you know," he said softly. "It's time we started fighting back."

I looked up at him, resting my chin on his chest.

"Mom will have a circuit of events for you to help her with," he continued. "And we're going to need you back on the investigation. Primarily your father's documents. But you can't quit school entirely. We'll cut you back to one class, but I need you to maintain a presence on campus."

"Why?"

"Two reasons," he said. "One, to keep those who have already taken a liking to you on our side. And two, to keep an eye out for recruiters. Maggie will be a big help with that, and Jimmy is going to be working with campus security even closer now. The more recruits and meetings we find, the easier it will be to track the information back to the source. That's the most important thing. That's how we'll take them down once and for all."

"Do you think they'll still be recruiting there if I'm still attending?" I asked.

"I'm counting on it," he said. "My guess is they'll try to use your status as Luna against you. Try to push the idea of favoritism. There are ways to narrow down those students that would be most susceptible to that kind of rhetoric. And honestly, I feel

safer with you on campus than traveling around the pack territory. This will keep you close to me until this is over. Especially if..."

He paused, not wanting to say his next words.

"Especially if what?"

He sighed. "I may have to start distancing myself from you in public," he said sadly. "If I'm going to convince Hawkins that I'm on his side, I'll have to appear to distrust you. But only in public. He knows I wouldn't be able to

separate from you completely.” He reached up and brushed his knuckles along my cheek. “You’ll still have every part of me when we’re in private.”

I pushed up on my elbows, letting a smile cross my face to lighten the mood. “As long as I don’t have to decorate the nursery alone.”

Hello, fans! I apologize greatly for my absence! I had a family emergency that took a LOT longer and a bigger toll than I had expected to take care of. But I will be dropping a lot of

chapters over the next few days to catch up and get back on track. Thank you so much for your patience and continued support!