

The Luna's Choice by Kat Silver #Chapter 211 - Read The Luna's Choice by Kat Silver Chapter 211

Chapter 211

Chapter 61: Theo

Ayla and I made our way to my office the next morning. When I opened the door, I was surprised to see Randy lying across the couch. His eyes opened as we entered and he yawned as he stretched.

"Just make yourself comfortable, I guess," I chided.

"Well, I couldn't exactly announce my arrival," he replied as he stood up. "Luna Ayla, I hope you are doing well this morning."

"I'm better at seeing you." She gave Randy a hug he was expecting, making me chuckle.

Although, I knew she wasn't feeling all that great. Her morning sickness was starting to set in more and she was up early vomiting in the bathroom. Mom was bringing one of her remedies to the office with her to help relieve Ayla's nausea.

"It's definitely a relief to have you back," I said as I shook his hand. "You made great time too, apparently. What time did you sneak in here?"

"Just before sunrise," he said. "I needed to make sure no one saw me. At least, no one who would recognize me. Things have been a bit dodgy lately. I've got a lot to fill you..."

The office door opened and Mina and Briggs walked in. Then Jimmy a few minutes after them. My parents weren't far behind him. We went through another few rounds of greetings but I was eager to get down to business. We needed more than one plan in place and as soon as possible.

With Randy there, I quickly went back through everything and started proposing our next possible actions.

"From what we can gather, there has to be multiple long- standing agents working here in the city. There can't just be one and they aren't likely to be newer members," I said.

“Especially since they aren’t actually advertising they join the Waar P ak Society as far as I can tell,” Jimmy said. “So far, the name hasn’t even been hinted at.”

“That actually makes a lot of sense,” Randy said. “They are kind of an uptight bunch. Very old blood. It took a reformed member just to get me in their ranks. This is both scare tactics and manpower. You’re right about needing to put a stop to it.”

“Do you think you could help us with that?” I asked.

He nodded, but his face said something different. “I’ll do what I can, but they’ve become more suspicious lately. It’s getting harder to get any information without drawing attention to myself. Right now, they have me working on tracking down a family in another pack. It will be hard to ask questions about what is happening here when I’m not supposed to be involved.”

“An Onyxcrown family?” Ayla asked sternly.

Randy gave her a light smile. “Don’t worry. If you want anyone to find them, it’s me. They’ll ‘disappear’ before they can get anywhere near them.”

Ayla smiled softly back.

“I have to ask if you’ll let me pick your brain a little, Randy,” Briggs said.

“Something about Theo’s role in all of this. I have

a feeling he ties into this in a way even the Waar P ak don’t know about.”

“How so?” Randy asked.

Briggs shrugged. “Just something about Ayla’s father. It’s just a hunch right now, but I’m looking into it.”

‘Hey, Alpha,’ Harmon mind-linked me, ‘you got a minute?’

‘Not really,’ I replied honestly, but something in his tone said I needed to take the minute. ‘What’s up?’

‘Well, there’s something you should come see,’ he said curiously. ‘We’ve had an... unexpected snag.’

He was still working on the tunnel and was supposed to finally be connecting it up to the cellar today. Whatever it was, would have to do with the cellar wall.

‘I’ll be right down.’

“Everything okay?” Ayla asked. She must have noticed I was linking with someone.

“I don’t know,” I said. “Harmon has run into some trouble with the tunnel build. I guess we’re taking this meeting elsewhere.”

Ayla and I went down first, the others would meet us down there slowly. Since the tunnel wasn’t complete, we still only had the entrance through the utility building and we really couldn’t risk looking suspicious at the moment. I saw Ayla’s gaze fall down the hall when we entered the cellar and felt the wave of nausea through our connection. Lloyd was still being held down here. So I knew what had her on edge. But we made our way down a different side passage instead. Keeping

clear of the vile rogue.

We passed by the few workers as they leaned against the wall and continued to the build site. The first thing I saw was

Harmon’s back. His tense shoulders indicated concern but the head-scratching told me he was also confused.

“What’s all this ab...” my words were cut off by the huge hole in the floor before me.

It wasn’t so much the hole that was startling, but the fact that it dropped down into what appeared to be another floor

beneath us.

“What the...”

“Yeah,” Harmon concurred with a nod. “This wasn’t on our survey, Alpha. You know that.”

“Yeah, I know,” I said. “So how the hell is it here? More importantly, where the hell does it go?”

"I guess that's what we need to find out," Harmon said. "And soon, if we want to get this passage connected, we'll need to seal this back up."

"And you guys had no idea there was another floor beneath us?" Ayla asked.

"No," I said, shaking my head. "We thought the cellar was the foundation floor to the packhouse."

"So, what's going on down here..." Dad came up beside me with the same reaction. "What in the hell?"

"So, I'm guessing you had no idea this was here either," I said. With a side-eye.

He shook his head. "None."

I clapped him on the shoulder. "Well, then I guess you're going down with me. Harmon, can we get a ladder?"

"Are you sure it's safe to go down?" Ayla asked worriedly.

"It's structurally sound," Harmon assured her. "It would have to be to still be holding this place up. But we'll be checking all of that as we make our way anyway. So don't you worry,

Luna."

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Chapter 62: Briggs

Mina and I made it down to the cellar after she made a couple of phone calls. She believed she had some resources that may help us. It didn't take us long to realize what the summons was about when we met up with the others. Theo was helping to lower a ladder down to the exposed level below as Alpha Torin and Harmon were gathering lights.

"You coming down?" Theo asked me as he secured the ladder.

"Do you have to ask?" I said with a smirk.

I took a flashlight and followed Theo down. We ended up in a corridor. It wasn't as tall as the floor above us, but we could at least stand up all the way. We had two options – left or

straight.

“Dad, you and Harmon go left,” Theo instructed. “Briggs and I will go this way.”

As we made our way down the stone hall, the whole situation started to feel familiar.

“This feels like the tunnels under the Onxycrown packhouse,” I told him.

“Well, let's hope there aren't any traps down here then,” Theo -replied.

“They probably would have been triggered when we retrofit the cellar,” I said hopefully.

The place was less of a maze than the Onxycrown tunnels, but

we did come across some doorways. Most of the rooms/were empty. A couple had the remains of very old furniture and crates, but nothing interesting. It was when we came to a locked metal door that we stopped. The door took up the entire wall. Theo pushed against to see if age allowed some movement, but it didn't budge.

“Let's get Dad and Harmon here,” Theo said. “Maybe we can try cutting it open.

I stepped closer to the door and ran a hand over the surface, removing the layers of dust. There were faded etchings engraved in the metal.

“I've seen these before,” I said, my gut tying in knots. “You grab them. I've got to make a call.”

We made our way back to the ladder. I left the cellar while Theo filled in the others. I dialed Kingston's number. I had some questions and hoped this time I would get honest

answers.

“Beta Briggs,” Kingston answered. “To what do I owe this pleasure?”

“What did you find in the Onyxcrown tunnels?” I asked calmly. “I know you were looking for something. I’m pretty sure you found it. I need to know what it was.”

Kingston was quiet for a moment. He was weighing his words. “Why do you need to know?”

I forced a hand through my hair, trying to control my anger. Starting a pissing match with him wouldn’t benefit us. At the end of the day, we all agreed that he wanted to protect Ayla.

. “I think Theo has a deeper connection to Ayla’s past than we

thought,” I admitted. “Jack knew something we didn’t. There’s a reason he put Ayla in Theo’s path. We’re still trying to figure out what that is, but I think we just found something that could prove that

theory. If only I knew what that theory was.”

“What do you mean?” he replied quickly, his interest piqued. “What did you find?”

“We’ve been working on a better entrance to the cellar and we’ve found another floor below,” I told him. “We came across a door with some of the same symbols I saw in the Onyxcrown tunnels. I think you and I both have a hunch this is connected to whatever you found down there. I need to know what that was.”

Kingston sighed. “Are you able to get through the door?”

“I think we’re going to try cutting through it,” I said.

“Okay,” he replied. “That should work, but it’s going to take some time. I’ve got something to take care of here, but I’ll be there sometime tomorrow.”

“That’s not how this is going to go, Kingston,” I snapped. “What do you think is in there?”

“Honestly, I don’t know,” he insisted. “But if it is related, it could either be really good or really bad.”

"I'm not asking again, Kingston," I said angrily. "Tell me what the hell you took from the tunnels."

"The Moonstone."

I fell silent.

"No, it's not a myth," Kingston said, sensing my disbelief.

"That's why my father taught me how to navigate those tunnels," he continued. "The Onyxcrown Beta was always in charge of ensuring the stone was secure. The Domins family had been protecting it for centuries."

"Why the f**k would you take it out then?" I shouted. "No one would have ever known..."

"Why the hell do you think Harry was there?" Kingston interrupted. "All it takes is one determined believer, Briggs. If he got that close, it was only a matter of time before someone else went looking. I took it to keep it safe."

"And you didn't tell Ayla?" I replied. "It's rightfully hers. She should be the one to decide what to do with it."

"I'll be there tomorrow," he said. "She'll find out soon enough."

He disconnected the call.

This was... Well, I didn't know. The Moonstone was a holy relic. According to our lore, the mood goddess used the

Moonstone to create the first werewolves. There were many stories about the power of the stone and what it was capable of. But we had no way of telling what was fact or fiction. It was a thousand years of stories passed down over every pack.

Even if it ended up being a hunk of useless rock, the intrinsic value to our species would make it dangerous. If the Waar Pak got a hold of that stone, they could have every religious zealot on their side in no time.

But what does any of this have to do with Theo and the Greytooth Pack? I was more certain that this was all related. I

needed to spend some time with Jack's research. We needed answers fast.

No data found.

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Chapter 63: Ayla

Mina and I were leaving the cellar when we ran into Briggs.

“Luna, I need a favor,” he said, “and possibly your help.”

“What’s up?”

“We need to get to the bottom of your father’s research,” he said. “There has to be something in there that can tell us more about what is going on. The others have this handled.”

I nodded. “Okay,” I said. “Let’s go.”

“I have an errand to run,” Mina said. “I want to stop by the lab and check in on a couple projects.”

Mina gave me a hug and Briggs a kiss before heading in the direction of her car. Briggs and I returned to my suite and hauled the trunk out of my bedroom. We pulled everything out and organized it through the living room.

“These are the books that I’ve already been through,” I said. “They’re all about my family or Onyxcrown history of the past two hundred years or so. But I didn’t find anything that appeared to connect with the Greytooth Pack.”

“We may need to go back farther,” he replied, picking up one of the file folders. “Let’s just dig in and see what we find.”

“Maybe we should call Professor Armand over?”

Briggs nodded. “I wouldn’t say no to the extra eyes.”

I sent the professor a message and he said he would be over in a few hours. I got each of us a drink and some snacks and settled in for a long session.

“I should also tell you that Kingston is coming back,” Briggs said cautiously.

“He wants to see what’s in the vault downstairs.”

“Does he know what’s in there?” I asked eagerly.

Briggs shook his head. “He says no but...” He paused for a moment. “He went looking for something in the Onyxcrown tunnels when we came to rescue you. Something dangerous. I’ll let him tell you about that. It should come from him. But he does believe that whatever may be in our vault is related.”

“Is that why you want to focus on my father’s research?”

He nodded.

"I just thought Theo sent you to distract me," I replied wryly. "But I think you may be right. I've been wondering why my father was so sure Theo and I were mates. At first, I just thought it was hopeful thinking. He always admired Alpha Torin. He must have seen something of him in Theo. But some of these letters from him tell me he KNEW. Like he was absolutely certain we were fated."

"Well, hopefully, that reason is in here somewhere," Briggs said.

We spent hours pouring over everything. Professor Armand joined us in the afternoon. He was so excited about some of the texts that it didn't take long before he was completely immersed in the work. As enthusiastic as he was, I was just getting frustrated. My morning sickness was getting worse

again and, as nice as it was to learn more about my family, we hadn't found anything useful.

"I am a little disappointed that you didn't call me sooner," he said, pulling me out of my moping. "Especially since I did actually write the book on ancient pack architecture. This cellar sounds like it's

right up my alley."

I chuckled. "That's true," I said. "I'm sorry we didn't think of it. I won't let it happen again."

"Good," he said with a grin. "Do you have any pictures of what this mysterious door looks like? You said there were some symbols on it, perhaps I can decipher them."

"Yeah," Briggs said, picking up his phone and scrolling through. "We snapped some pictures while we were down there."

He handed his phone to Armand who proceeded to examine them.

"They're a bit worn," he said as he grabbed a pad of paper and pencil.

He started to write the symbols out, making changes as he felt necessary. When he came to a stopping point he looked over his work.

"Hold on..." he said curiously. He shuffled through some of the books and files, muttering to himself until he found what he was looking for. "I think this is what we are hoping for."

"Actually, that wasn't in the box originally," I said, taking the book of folklore from his hands. "He read it to me as a kid. I just kind of put some of those keepsakes in with this stuff to

keep it all together.”

“Well, there may be a reason he picked that particular book,” Professor Armand said, flipping to a particular story. “The first families.”

It was the tale of the first group of werewolves. The first people blessed by the goddess with the ability to shift into wolves. Two families were the leaders of a village that was plagued by attacks from

neighboring forces. To save their people, they plead to the moon goddess to save them. The moon goddess responded, turning all the members of the two families into werewolves.

“But this is just myth,” I said.

“Much of what we think of as myth is rooted in truth,” Briggs said. “There always has to be a first. The Dominis family is the oldest bloodline that I know of.”

“Right, but none of the others are that old,” I said.

“Actually, the Amvorov’s are pretty old as well,” Armand said. “Of the Sablemane, Pack. But if this has to do with the

descendants of the first families, then Alpha Kingston would have been a better guess for your mate.”

I shook my head. “Kingston was adopted. He’s not an Amvorov by blood. That line died with his adopted parents. Hold on.”

I suddenly remembered seeing something about pack leaders. I shuffled through the papers to find a list in my father’s handwriting. Starting from the top, I read through it thoroughly. It didn’t take me long to find what I was looking

for.

“Here,” I laid the paper on the coffee table so we could all see. “Both the Dominis and Amvorov families kept the family in their packs. Their fated mates would always join them if they were from other packs. However, there was a daughter who left.”

“I know that name,” Briggs said.

“Every Greytooth would know that name,” Armand said.

“Exactly,” I said. “Our pack’s founding Luna was Amvorov.”

Chapter 214

Chapter 64: Ayla

“So, what does this actually mean?” Theo asked after we shared what we found. “While I can admit that this is interesting, right now, it doesn’t seem much more than a fun fact. Not anything to warrant concern.”

“We have a few theories,” I said, holding his hand. “Most of them do come back to the Waar P ak’s idea that we would take over the packs.”

Theo snorted. “Even if this did give us the power to even think about it, that’s not what either of us wants.”

“That may be true,” Professor Armand said. “But when you have people like this who have spent decades believing it would happen, you’ll have a hard time convincing them otherwise. Besides, it’s not just you two they’d be worried about, but your children as well.”

My hand instinctively went to my belly, praying for an extra layer of protection that still didn’t seem like enough. Theo’s hand tightened around mine. As much as he was trying to silently reassure me, we both felt that fear and anger through our mate bond.

“Then it’s a good thing we’re taking them out once and for all,” he said, working to sound calmer than he was.

“Speaking of,” Randy interjected. “If you plan on taking offensive action soon, Alpha Harden wants to be here. I know Alpha Kingston is also on his way. It may also be time to bring in a couple of the other Alphas. Any that three of you can

trust. This is going to cross pack borders. It’s best to have the support where necessary.”

“You know of more members than any of us,” Theo said. “You said there were multiple ranking members in the Waar P ak. Are there any whose Alpha can be trusted? Those ranking members should be our first targets.

“Most of the younger Alphas can be approached,” Randy said. “I’ll get you a list and we can discuss it with Alpha Harden and Alpha Kingston.”

Theo nodded.

“We’re going to have to find a reason for these Alpha’s to be visiting,” I said. “If someone catches on to their coming and going, it’s not going to look well in our favor about not wanting to take over.”

Randy shrugged. "Not necessarily," he assured me. "Theo has only been the acting Alpha. The other packs know he is scheduled to take over on the solstice."

"Several plan to be in attendance," Theo confirmed. "It's typical for other Alphas to visit the upcoming Alpha to confirm continued alliance agreements. Or establish new ones. We'll just have to be careful."

"Okay," I said, hoping he was right.

"I'm going to make some calls," Randy said, standing from his chair. "I'll be staying in the area. Let me know if you need me. I wouldn't mind seeing what's behind that door either."

"We'll keep you posted," Theo said.

"Have you made any progress with that?" I asked after Randy was gone.

"It's going to be harder than we thought, but we'll get there," he said.

"Hey, guys," Briggs said from the lounge across the room. He hadn't pulled himself away from the books throughout our entire conversation. "Check this out." He got up and came over, setting the book

he had in front of us. "This is one of the books we pulled from our library here in the packhouse. Pages have been torn out."

"What is the book about?"

"It's another book on folklore," he said. "But this one caters more to Greytooth history and tradition. The table of contents says there should be a chapter here titled Founder's Blood and the Solstice Moon."

"That doesn't sound like any of the stories I've heard," Theo said.

"Me either," I said.

"Yeah, it doesn't ring a bell for me either," Briggs said. "But someone thought it was interesting enough to keep. And I think they were keeping others from learning about it. I'll try to figure out who took this out of the library."

"It's worth a shot," Theo said. "I'll talk to Dad, too. See if he knows more."

"But we'll do all that tomorrow," I said. "You need to get some rest, Briggs. We'll pick back up first thing in the morning."

Briggs said goodnight and headed to his place. I stood up and started re-organizing the documents sprawled across the coffee table. We knew it would take a few days for us to go through it all with a fine tooth comb. We didn't want to miss a single bit of information. But that would be easier with fresh

eyes and a clean workspace. I was putting some of the books back in the trunk when I saw Harry's journal sitting at the bottom.

"Idiot," I blurted out. "Sorry, not you guys. Me," I clarified when Theo gave me a look. I lifted the book from the trunk. "How much do you want to bet it was Harry who took those pages?"

"Da mn," Theo said, scooting up next to me as I flipped through the pages. "He did seem to know a lot of things we didn't. Did you finish deciphering that thing?"

I shook my head. "No, and unfortunately the code started to change later on." I looked at them. "As his mind deteriorated he seemed to become more paranoid. But I'll get there."

Theo's hand went to the nape of my neck, pulling me in to kiss my temple.

"Okay," he said softly. "Just be careful. If working on that starts to get to you... If it starts to bring back memories..."

"I'll be okay, babe," I assured him, squeezing his hand.

He nodded but was still worried. "If the nightmares come back..."

"I'll hand it over to Briggs," I interjected. My hand went to my stomach. "I have enough keeping me awake all night already."

Theo smiled softly, resting his hand on mine over our growing pup.

"Speaking of," he said as he pulled me closer, "did you remember to get a doctor's appointment?"

I smiled. "Oh, your mother took care of that for me."

Theo laughed with a shake of his head. "Of course she did. If she ever gets too overbearing, you tell me. She'll get carried away if you let her."

"No, appreciate her being here," I said genuinely. "It means the world to know I still have family with me."

"Always, love."

Chapter 215

Chapter 65: Theo

"Kingston will be here later today," I told Alpha Harden over the phone the next morning. "I'll keep him here until you arrive. I don't think it will be a problem."

"Good," Harden replied. "Cooper will be coming with me, of course. He'll have the best information to approach the other packs with. I do suggest you go ahead and reach out to Alpha Vincent. Cooper worked with him recently with a Waar P ak situation. He doesn't know it was Waar P ak, but I think it's safe to bring him in."

"That's concerning," I said. Alpha Vincent was the leader of the Dawnfall Pack. Their land bordered ours to the west. "It sounds like the Waar P ak are surrounding us."

Harden sighed. "It has been considered, but we didn't have enough to bring to you yet."

"We'll add it to the agenda," I stated. "I'll contact Alpha Vincent. If I can get all of you here together, it will go a long way to getting his support. I'll keep you updated."

"We'll see you soon," Harden said.

I hung up the phone and leaned over my desk, pinching the bridge of my nose to ease the headache. I was exhausted. I wouldn't have been able to sleep last night even if Ayla hadn't been up and down vomiting all night. It was hard enough seeing her going through that. The worry that something would happen to either her or our baby was gnawing.

A knock on the door pulled me out of my commiseration. It was Mina.

"Come in," I called.

She entered with a box in her hands.

"Whoa," she said. "You look like sh it."

"Ha," I scoffed. "Your baby cousin is keeping their mom and dad up already. I wonder which side of the family that comes from?"

"Yours, of course," she teased, setting the box down on the credenza. "I come baring gifts."

I stood from my desk and crossed the room, watching as she started to remove the contents.

"What's all this?"

“Well, the lab had been pretty focused on our project,” Mina explained. “As per our agreement, they have been doing their own developments.” She opened a small case and showed me the patches we had found on Ayla before. “These have been modified. Instead of blocking the mind-link, you can use them to link with anyone wearing one. That should help with cross- pack communication.”

“That definitely can,” I confirmed.

“We reformulated the de-scenting spray,” she continued. “It still shouldn’t be used long term, but it’s safer than what Harry was using and more effective than the police standard. There are a few other things in here that weren’t from Harry’s work, but I thought could be helpful.”

“This is fantastic, Mina,” I said. “Thank you. We’ll definitely put all this to use.”

“There’s something else I think you’ll be eager to learn,” she said, crossing her arms over her chest with a smug look.

“What’s that?”

“We have all agreed that Harry didn’t do all of this by himself,” she said. “He had to be working with someone.”

“Yeah, or working for someone,” I agreed. “The Waar P ak, from the looks of things.”

Mina nodded. “Yes, well, one of the techs at our company recognized some of the engineering. He thinks he knows who was responsible for it and – who they work for.”

“He thinks?” I asked sternly. “How does he know this?”

“He’s been thoroughly vetted,” Mina assured me. “In fact, he was all too happy to give the information once he was sure. So, I did some digging.”

“And?”

“And Harry’s contact is an engineer working for a research and development firm in the Moonshadow Pack,” Mina said. “And guess who one of their primary shareholders?”

I scoffed. “Charles Anderson.”

Mina nodded. “Mhmm. His niece and nephew have a stake as well.”

I wasn’t surprised, but it was unexpected. If it was anyone else, I would have been enraged. But my dislike for Anderson

and his family just made me grateful for a reason to be rid of them.

“We’ll have to try to prove their part of the Waar P ak before we can move against them,” I said.

“It also begs the question of whether Alpha Anthony is a member also,” Mina said. “Charles was his father’s Delta as well. The fact that he maintains that position even now suggests a close relationship.”

“He’s definitely a concern,” I concurred. “We’ll discuss it in our meeting with Harden and Kingston. Thank you, Mina. Seriously, this has been a huge help.”

“Anything for family,” she replied with a smile. “And genuinely, you look exhausted. Why don’t you get some rest before everyone gets here?”

“I’ve got to go to the cellar,” I said. “But I’m sure Ayla would be grateful for your company if you have time to stop by and see her.”

“I’ll be bringing them lunch in a little while,” she informed me. She paused for a moment. “Briggs told me what you’re doing with Hawkins. You’re not starting to believe him are you?”

“Of course not,” I rushed.

I was shocked, and a little insulted, that she would ask. But then I realized it was a reasonable question. With my history, I wouldn’t expect Mina to ever fully trust my judgment when it came to Ayla. That doubt would always be there. As much as it may pain me, I had to accept that.

I sighed. “I understand how complicated this will be,” I said,

leaning against the credenza. “I hate having to do this. /

Probably more than you. And not just because of the outward implications. I can’t imagine distancing myself from Ayla right now. In any situation.”

“Are you worried the space will start to change your mind?”

I scoffed. “No, not at all,” I assured her. “I just hate the idea of her facing any part of this without me.”

Mina rested a hand on my arm. “She won’t be alone, Theo. None of us would ever let that happen. You just focus on getting this over with. So we can all get on with our lives.”

Chapter 216

Chapter 66: Theo

“Gentlemen,” I said as we gathered in the conference room late that afternoon. “I’m grateful for your attendance here today. I understand that this threat is primarily to my pack.”

“They have been targeting our pack members for too long as well,” Alpha Harden assured me.

“I’m glad to have you all on my side,” I said. “I hope to return the favor down the road. For now, I need your help. The Waar Pak Society has become more aggressive. While the attacks on our borders have been controlled, we have found they have been spreading their beliefs among my pack members. Recruiting people to their ideals.”

“We have evidence of that happening in Sablemane, too,” Kingston offered. “Gamma Lou has been working on stopping the spread.”

“Yes, well, unfortunately, they got to the sheriff here in the city before we could,” I said, hiding my bitterness and shame better than I thought I would. “I have someone coming up to replace him. He should be joining us soon.”

With perfect timing, there was a knock on the door and McCabe entered the conference room.

“Sorry I’m late,” he said, moving to stand in the back of the room.

“Don’t be,” I said, waving him to a chair at the table with the rest of us. “Have a seat. I was just telling them that you would

be the acting sheriff while Hawkins is on suspension. Gentlemen, this is Finley McCabe, the sheriff of one of our southern border towns. He’s been running the task force that has stemmed the rogue attacks.”

The others nodded their greetings but didn’t make any further introductions at that time. We needed to get down to business.

“Okay,” I continued. “McCabe, Jimmy, and I will be working with the former sheriff to find whatever contacts are working on recruiting. Alpha Kingston, I’d like for you to take over the rogue issue. Our captive is still here. You may be able to get more information from him than we could.” I looked him in the eye. “I no longer care about the means in which that is accomplished.”

He nodded once, understanding my meaning completely.

“Alpha Cooper, there is some new information we just

discovered about a business associate of mine. It seems Delta Anderson of the Moonshadow Pack may be connected to the Waar P ak."

Both Alpha Cooper and Alpha Harden perked up at that statement.

"We have a list of suspected ranking members in several packs," Cooper said. "The Moonshadow Pack is high on our list. This is helpful information, and not surprising. It shouldn't take us long to confirm his involvement."

"You have no idea how good it is to hear that," I stated. "Alpha Harden, I have a more delicate task I need your help."

"You know I'll do what I can," he replied genuinely.

"Alpha Vincent is on his way," I said. "He'll be here tomorrow. He doesn't know what this meeting will be regarding. I would like you to be with me when we have the discussion. Alpha Kingston as well, if he can spare the time."

"I'll be here for a while it seems," Kingston replied. "The more Alphas we can get on our side, the better. And I would suggest that you have Ayla present at this meeting. They will be fighting to protect her, after all."

"We both agree with you on that," I said. "She will be there. If there is any other information any of you can provide that may be helpful, it would be greatly appreciated. For now, I will let you all rest and prepare yourselves. We have set up a private dining room for you in the café downstairs. Please feel free to utilize it whenever you like."

Everyone stood to leave but I held Kingston back with me. -needed to have a one-on-one with him. I sat back down at the

head of the conference table and motioned for him to sit to my right. I wanted him close enough to look me in the eye.

"So, are you ready to tell me about the Moonstone?" I asked, keeping my tone as flat as possible.

Kingston's expression stayed the same, but I didn't miss the flash in his eyes that said I got some kind of reaction.

"I retrieved it from the vault in the Onyxcrown tunnels," he said. "Yes, I knew it was down there. Yes, I pursued it while Ayla was still in danger. But if you hadn't been there, I wouldn't have taken that risk. And, truth be told, I wasn't exactly in my right mind at the time. It was a mistake in judgment I carry heavily. I understand Ayla will think of me what she will for that. I accept that consequence because I deserve it, not

necessarily because I would make the same choice again.”

I regarded him for a few moments. I knew he had been deeply affected by Ayla when they were together. We know now it was because they were not mates. That was painful enough to accept. It wouldn't help either of them for me to hold this against him any longer.

“That's something you'll have to address with Ayla,” I said calmly. “My concern now is with the Moonstone and what it can do. Your family was its main protector. That's how you knew where it was and how to get it. My question is why? What were you planning to do with it?”

Kingston averted his gaze for a moment, not meeting my eyes.

“I won't pretend that my original plans didn't revolve around getting Ayla back,” he said heavily. “And I won't lie and say that it's not still a temptation. But I do accept that that would not be what's best for Ayla. She's happy with you. Whether I agree with that or not, it is a fact. So, I have hidden it somewhere safe.”

“Can it be used to help us now?” I asked.

“I'm not sure,” Kingston said. “Truthfully, we were only its protectors. But I have been researching, and I believe it is possible. But I think Ayla is the only one who could successfully wield its power. It's tied to her bloodline.”

“Or perhaps the oldest bloodlines,” I said thoughtfully. “There's something you should know about my family.”

Chapter 217

Chapter 67: Ayla

I watched Kingston pace the floor as I nursed my ginger ale, trying to settle my stomach.

“Kingston, calm down,” I urged him. “It's not like that and you know it. No one is going to take your pack from you.”

Kingston scoffed. “Like I would ever let that happen,” he spat. “But I wouldn't put it passed him to try.”

“That's not fair, Kingston,” I argued.

“Is it?” he replied sharply. “He sure had not trouble taking you from me.” As soon as the words left his mouth his expression changed. “I'm sorry. That was unfair. And uncalled for.”

“Yeah,” I said, crossing my arms. “It was.”

Kingston sighed and dropped into a chair across from me. “I’m sorry. It’s not every day you find out your biggest rival is also the rightful Alpha to your pack.”

“He doesn’t want your pack, Kingston,” I assured him. “We’re happy right here with our own. In fact, it would be better for everyone if we kept this a secret. With the Waar Pa k believing that I am going to take down the Alphas somehow and make myself some kind of queen, anything that would suggest the Greytooths are gaining more territory could be... Well, it could be really bad.”

With another heavy sigh, Kingston rubbed his face, leaning his head back against the chair. “I know that,” he said. “You know I wouldn’t do anything to put you in that kind of

danger.”

I raised an eyebrow. “Do I?”

Kingston winced, knowing exactly what I meant. “Yeah, I

guess you wouldn’t,” he conceded with a sigh. “Ayla, I’m truly sorry about that. I... With the state of mind I was in, I

convinced myself you would be fine. That Theo or I would get to you in time. I really am sorry.”

I sighed in return, my stomach turning as a wave of nausea hit me. I breathed out slowly, trying to control my gag reflex. “Everything worked out in the end,” I said. “I can forgive you, but it does change things, Kingston.”

“I know,” he admitted, looking back at me. “Ayla, are you okay? You’re flushed.”

“I’m fine,” I insisted.

He still didn’t know about the pup. Theo and I didn’t want to tell anyone else yet. I was enough of a target as it was. Theo was afraid my being pregnant would accelerate whatever plans they may have.

Kingston stood up and came to my side, pressing a hand to my forehead.

“Ayla, you’re pale and clammy,” he said. “You look like you’re going to be sick. Come on. I’m taking you to the infirmary.”

I put a hand on his arm. “No, no, I’m fine,” I insisted. “I promise.

It’s nothing. I’ve just been pretty stressed lately. As I’m sure you can imagine.”

He tipped my chin up to look at him and a terrible smell

washed over me. I jumped from my seat, pushing him out of the way as I rushed to the bathroom. I don't know how I managed to lock the door before falling to my knees in front of the toilet, throwing up

everything that was possibly in my stomach. I couldn't imagine there was much left. The past two days had been the worst. I had barely eaten anything all day because I didn't think I could keep it down.

'Baby,' Theo's voice came through the mind-link. He had been feeling my symptoms more when we were apart. 'I think it's time we saw the doctor about this.'

'I have an appointment next week,' I said. 'It was the earliest they could get me in.'

'Not for the Luna, it's not,' he growled.

'You know I don't like using my status to get favors.'

'This is different,' Theo insisted. 'I'm calling them. End of story.'

He cut the link as I threw up again, and I honestly didn't have the strength to argue.

"Ayla," Kingston called through the door as he knocked. "Are you okay? What the hell?"

"I'm fine, Kingston," I replied.

I was feeling better now that I got it out, but I knew it wouldn't last. Sure enough, by the time I splashed some cool water on

my face and cleaned up, my stomach was uneasy again. Kingston was still at the door. I took some deep breaths to gather myself before leaving the bathroom.

"Ayla, this isn't okay," he said sternly. "This is all too much. I get that Theo won't suggest it, but I really think you should consider going away for a little while."

I stopped in my tracks and looked at him. "Absolutely hot. Not with everything going on."

"You need to get some rest and take care of yourself," he replied. "All of this stress is making you sick. You can't keep going like this, Ayla. I think you should go with Alpha Harden when he leaves. I'll have him talk to Theo..."

"It's not stress," I blurted out in frustration. I hid a grimace, hoping I hadn't said too much.

"Then what the hell is going on?" Kingston took my arm, his grip earnest but gentle. "Ayla, are you sick?"

I met his eyes and saw the genuine concern and fear behind them. I sighed, feeling terrible about worrying him like this. But I didn't think the truth would be any better. Still, I felt like I needed to tell him. I rested my hand on his.

"No, Kingston," I said with a small smile. "I'm pregnant."

Kingston froze for a moment, our eyes holding each others. I couldn't read his expression. So I was shocked when his arms were suddenly around me, squeezing me tightly.

"That's amazing news, Ayla," he whispered.

His words were entirely and completely genuine. I felt tears start to sting my eyes as a lump grew in my throat.

"Really?" I gasped.

He pulled away, holding my face in his hands as he looked me in the eye. "Of course it is," he said with a smile.

"But..."

"Ayla, I let go of any notion of you carrying my pups the moment Theo marked you," he interrupted. There was still a touch of sadness in his words, but there was no bitterness. "No one in this world deserves to be a mother more than you. I'm happy for you."

He kissed my forehead. It was sweet and loving and purely innocent. A sob escaped my lips and tears ran freely down my cheeks, but I was laughing through it.

"Now, stop those tears," Kingston urged, wiping my face. "You'll get me in trouble."

"Sorry," I sniffled. "Hormones."

Chapter 218

Chapter 68: Ayla

Theo and I got out of the car at the doctor's office later that afternoon. The parking lot was nearly empty as they had probably stopped seeing patients for the day already. Theo had managed to get them to fit me in today.

"This may be better anyway," he said as he wrapped an arm around my waist. "The fewer people see us here, the less risk of rumors starting."

He kissed my temple and walked me inside.

"Hello, Alpha. Luna Ayla," a woman in a white coat greeted us at the door. "It's a pleasure to meet you. I'm Dr. Albright."

"It's a pleasure as well, Doctor," I said, shaking her hand. "We're sorry to keep you here after hours."

"Don't you even worry about that," she said. "I'd be here doing my notes anyway. Come on back with me."

Theo squeezed my hand as we followed the doctor back to an examination room. She started off with a standard exam and talked about what I could expect during a werewolf pregnancy. She took her time, letting us ask as many questions as we had.

"There has been a lot going on ever since Ayla and I got together," Theo said. "She has been going through a lot of extra stress lately. Now, her morning sickness has been getting worse, so she's not sleeping. I know this can't be healthy for both of them."

"It's not healthy for any of you," Dr. Albright said. "Ideally, we want both Mom and Dad to get rest and relaxation. However, life often has

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different plans. I can definitely give you something that can help with the morning sickness. As well as some pamphlets with techniques that can help reduce stress. It is something important to consider. But what can help with that is to remember that we are a resilient species, and babies are often as resilient as we are. But I'd like to do an ultrasound today anyway. That should help put you at ease."

"Thank you, Doctor," I said.

She took us back to the ultrasound room and instructed me to lie down. It was a strange feeling waiting to see my pup for the first time as she prepared the machine. She touched the wand to my belly and within seconds, we could hear a heartbeat coming through the monitor. Theo's hold on my hand tightened. A smile spread across the doctor's face.

"Everything looks fantastic," she said, "And here" – she turned the monitor in our direction and pointed to a spot on the screen

"is your little pup. Strong and healthy."

I swiped at the tears that started to fall as Theo kissed my temple, whispering how much he loved me.

"You will probably start feeling it kick any day now," she said.

"Already?" I asked.

She nodded. "It's growing pretty fast. It's not terribly uncommon to see some pup develop faster than others. And it is possible that you could have conceived shortly before your heat, as well. Either way, you're doing a great job and your baby is doing great.

I breathed a sigh of relief, leaning into Theo as he held onto me. Dr. Albright wiped my belly clean and covered me back up. She printed out some of the images from the ultrasound and handed them to me.

"First pictures of baby. I'll get you something for the morning sickness, continue with your prenatal vitamins, and just keep doing what you're doing," she said with a smile.

"Again, thank you," Theo said. "We really appreciate you fitting us in. And for your discretion."

"Of course, Alpha," Dr. Albright replied. "We are all excited about our new Alpha and Luna. The pack will be just as exciting when they find out about the new addition. The least I can do is help protect them." She stood up and smoothed her coat. "Take any time you need, but there isn't anything else for me today. See yourselves out when you're ready."

We thanked her again as she left. The moment the door closed, Theo was kissing me. I chuckled against his lips.

"Do you feel better?" I asked when he finally pulled away.

"I do," he confirmed, helping me off the bench. "Do you?"

"I will feel even better once this morning sickness is under control," I chided. "But yes, it's a big relief knowing that, with everything else, at least our pup is strong and doing fine. Thank you. For insisting I come in."

He brushed his fingers along my cheek. "It's my job to take care of you, love," he replied. "Both of you. I'm not going to let you suffer. Even if it is normal or because of our pup."

Well, it's 1

“”

understanding that we may need to get used to a little bit

of suffering when it comes to our kids,” I teased.

“Not a chance,” he insisted with a grin.

After a few more kisses and caresses, we headed back out to the car.

My mind wandered to something I had been putting off as we pulled out of the parking lot.

“What’s wrong?” Theo asked.

“Nothing’s wrong,” I assured him. “I was just thinking. Now that we know everything is fine, it may be time to tell Ma and Kylee

Chapter 219

Chapter 69: Kylee

“Kylee, it’s normal to be experiencing these emotions in situations like this,” Dr. Whitham said as I paced the room. “I’m here to help you work through them.”

I checked my watch. We still had twenty minutes left in the session, but I really wasn’t sure I could make it through. I pinched the bridge of my nose with a heavy sigh.

“I know,” I finally replied. “But honestly, I think I need a little more time to brood. You did say it was important to feel my feelings so I could understand them better.”

“That is true,” she agreed. “If you believe you need a little time with your thoughts before moving past this, then we can reschedule for a better time. But I advise you not to make any decisions or take any actions because of those feelings. The outcome may not be a good one.”

I nodded as I grabbed my purse. “I know. Thank you, Dr. Whitham.”

I left the office and headed to the parking lot. I climbed into the driver’s seat of my car, resting my head against the headrest as I stared at the ceiling.

I had managed to scrape together a down payment for the sedan and bought it earlier that week. I had actually felt a sense of pride when I drove it off the lot that day. It wasn’t anything special. It was ten years old and had fifty thousand miles too many on it, but it was mine. I had gotten all on my own.

I had wanted so badly to call and tell Ayla about it. Thinking about

how proud of me she would have been. But I stopped myself before dialing her number. Because she wouldn’t be proud of me. At least, not in the same

way she used to be. I felt that ever-present guilt pang again, but I didn't let it ruin my moment completely.

That was another great moment for me that week. I allowed myself to feel pride in myself for the accomplishment. I may have made a lot of mistakes, but this was one thing I did right. It's something Ayla would want me to be proud of. And it made me understand her a lot better.

But then she called this morning.

I was home with Ma when the call came in and she told us she was pregnant.

So many emotions hit me all at once.

Excitement. Happiness. Pride. Relief. But then there was disappointment. Shame. Jealousy.

I am happy for her and Theo. That I can honestly say. I've worked through a lot the past couple of months and I realize now just how wrong Theo and I were for each other. The delusion I had of him and me together disappeared and I no longer see him romantically.

But I'm still not a part of their lives.

I still don't get to be there for Ayla. I won't get to be Auntie Kylee. I'm still not welcome back home. I'm going to miss out on so much. And all for so little.

I was still wallowing in the car when my phone buzzed. I checked the message. It was from Derek. He was asking to see me yet again. I looked at my phone, then towards my therapist's office, then back at my phone.

"Screw it."

I sent a brief reply and pulled out of the parking spot.

Derek didn't live far away, so it wasn't long before I was knocking on his door. He was surprised to see me, but at least I knew it was a pleasant one.

"Well, this is an unexpe..."

"Shut up."

I wasn't there to talk. I pushed into his apartment and yanked the front of his shirt. His lips slammed into mine and he responded quickly and eagerly. I kicked the door shut behind me right before his hands moved to my ass and he picked me up, wrapping my legs around his waist. His tongue sought mine and I met him happily. My back hit the wall as my hand moved between us.

He inhaled sharply as it slipped beneath his waistband and slid around his cock.

He was impressive, at least.

I stroked him as he set me down on the hallway table. He stripped me bare from the waist down in less than a second. His teeth bit at my ear as he pushed two fingers inside me, making me moan as he found my clit. It felt good but it wasn't enough. It wasn't what I wanted.

I pushed his hand away and positioned him at my entrance, tightening my legs around his waist. He thrust into me hard and rough, immediately adopting a grueling pace. I was getting close to my release when he suddenly pulled out. My whimper was cut off by him yanking me off the table and spinning me around. His hand fisted my hair and he pushed me forward before ramming back into me again. Reaching around, he worked my clit bringing me to the edge again. Lifting my hips, my orgasm washed over me as I cried out. He growled against my back as he stiffened behind me with one last thrust.

We stood there panting for a few moments.

"Well," Derek breathed heavily. "That was a pleasant surprise."

He finally pulled out of me and covered my exposed body with a blanket from the couch nearby. Now that I was calming down, my brain kicked in again. I clenched my jaw as I realized I just did exactly what my therapist advised me not to do. I quickly picked up my pants and slipped them back on.

"I have to go," I mumbled. "Sorry."

He grabbed my arm. "Wait a minute," he insisted. "Hold on. What are you talking about?"

"I'm sorry," I said again. "I shouldn't have come here. It was stupid. I just need to go."

He held firm. "Kylee, what's wrong? What is going on? Talk to me."

"It's nothing. I just... I just made a mistake."

He pulled me over to the couch and sat me down, sitting in front of me and holding my hands.

"Something's wrong, Kylee," he urged. "You can tell me."

I closed my eyes. "It's stupid," I said quietly. "I just got some news this morning and it kind of hit me hard."

"That's not good," he replied. "What kind of news?"

"I found out my sister is pregnant.

Chapter 220

Chapter 70: Ayla

By the next morning, I was feeling fantastic. The medication the doctor gave me was exactly what I needed. Theo and I got a great night's sleep and we both woke up feeling refreshed and more relaxed than we had in weeks.

I was down in the cellar in the investigation room with Mina and Randy. Theo and some of the others were down by the vault trying to get it opened. They were hopeful it would be soon. It was hard to determine how far they would have to cut to get in. We're all curious to see what we find. Theo wouldn't let me stay down there, though. They were worried about the traps or a collapse, even the air quality. Torin, Kingston, and Alpha Harden all agreed that a pregnant woman shouldn't be breathing in whatever is down there.

So, I begrudgingly came back up to wait. But I was keeping busy. I felt like it was the first time I could really focus on getting answers. Professor Armand had brought in some other texts from both the local

and university libraries. He had also reached out to a colleague in

another pack for some additional information on ancient werewolf history and folklore. Those hadn't arrived yet, but would hopefully be there soon.

In the meantime, we had plenty to work with.

"Hey, here's something," I said to the others. "It's one of my dad's books. I think I found where the Blessed One story came from." I set the book down on the table as Mina and Randy came closer. "This is actually from a historical record. It's a biographical entry on a high priestess of the moon goddess. She was actually one of my ancestors, as well."

"It looks like she had some kind of predictive ability," Mina said as she read over my shoulder.

I nodded. "The description of her ability is a little vague, though. I can't tell if she had premonitions or was some kind of medium. Either way, she said she was given a message from the moon goddess about a reincarnation on earth. That must be the story's origin."

"Okay, but why?" Mina said. "All cultures and histories have these kinds of tales. They always take place against some massive event. Usually to counter some kind of threat. While the Waar Pak wiping out a bloodline is terrible, but I don't think that's enough of a reason for a goddess to personally step in like

that. Especially since it's this. story that has caused all the drama in the first place."

I snorted. "You've never heard of self-fulfilling prophecies?" I teased. "Besides, that really only matters if you buy into me being this Blessed One."

"You still don't?" Mina asked. "Even though your dad believed it?"

I scrunched my nose. "No, not really. I think it's all a fairy tale. I love Dad, but this is a bit too fantastical for me."

Mina shook her head. "And you're supposed to be a writer with this grand imagination," she tisked. "What about you, Randy? I mean, you've dedicated your life to fighting the Waar Pak. Surely you think it's possible."

Randy shrugged. "We work to protect the Onyxcrown survivors. That includes the Dominis bloodline. The Waar Pak killed innocent people because of the place they were born or the family they belong to. That doesn't seem like a cause that needs some deeper story to justify."

"But to defend it as strongly as you do..." I said, looking up to meet his eye. "There's something that feeds that dedication."

The corner of his lip lifted. "My mother was Onyxcrown," he said. "She may have left the pack to be with my father, but she raised me on stories of how great her birth pack was."

"So, do you believe Ayla is the Blessed One?" Mina asked.

"I think she's something special," he replied with a smile. "I think Luna Ayla is capable of great things. Whatever the reason for that doesn't matter, and is always worth protecting."

My face flushed red. "Thank you, Randy."

We returned to our research while Randy returned to his phone. He had been communicating with multiple people all morning.

"Getting anything useful?" I asked him.

"Maybe," he said without looking up. "I believe the information about Alpha Theo's friend, Charles Anderson, has opened up some new avenues for us. I'll follow up with Gamma Jimmy before I make any determinations, though."

"You said once that you suspected the Waar Pak had bigger intentions and specific beliefs that you didn't know about," I said curiously. "That you thought the leaders were a group of fanatics. Have you learned anything since then

that may tell you more about what these leaders believe? Why they are doing all of this?"

Randy looked up at me hesitantly. "Truthfully, no," he said. "Most of the contacts I'm involved with don't even have an idea that there's more to this. However, that's who they target to join them. Many of their mid-level members are entitled assholes who only hope to gain from this. Those that believe you or your family were ever actually a threat to our way of life only believe so because they've been told it would

stop them from making money if the Dominis succeeded."

"How in the world would that work?" Mina scoffed.

"Our pack system allows for the possibility of anyone becoming Alpha," Randy said. "They can take it or it can be given to them. It also means that their position and successes are only dependent on their own pack and Alpha. It gives many more options and more opportunities."

"And how would the Dominis family ruin that?"

"As you know, their working belief is that you would take over the packs and make yourself queen," he said. "They can't count the ways that could possibly destroy them. But ultimately, it's all greed disguised as werewolf rights. But it's dangerous. And convincing enough to anyone who thinks they don't have any control over their lives."

"If the current pack system is failing them," I concurred, "then there's no way a complete sovereign could do any better."

"Exactly," Randy said.

Suddenly, Briggs came through the door. "We need you guys down in the vault."