

The Luna's Choice by Kat Silver #Chapter 221 - Read The Luna's Choice by Kat Silver Chapter 221

Chapter 221

Chapter 71: Theo

Ayla and I were both feeling refreshed this morning. It had been too long since I had seen her feeling so determined and optimistic. While it made my life easier, it did make it harder to convince her to wait upstairs while we worked to open the vault. I think it was Dad's insistence that finally convinced her it was for the best.

The whole process of getting into the thing had been a pain. The stone wall was a lot thicker than we anticipated, and we couldn't get a torch powerful enough to cut through the heavy metal in one go in such a small space, let alone two stories underground. But we had some tools that were at least making progress.

By the time started to feel like we were through, we were all hot and sweaty and cranky. I kept telling myself that with our luck, this would only lead to some empty room and it was all for nothing. But my gut kept telling me something different. I needed to keep going. The closer we got, the stronger my determination got.

The others were taking a break when I felt the door shift. I stopped cutting and stood back. I pressed against the sturdy metal and it began to gave way.

"Hey, guys," I called to the others, "I think we're in."

Dad and Kingston came back first.

"You sure?" Kingston asked.

"I may need another good shoulder, but yeah," I replied, "it's ready. Come help me."

Dad handed us both masks. Kingston and I braced ourselves and, on the count of three, threw our weight against the door. It waivered but didn't fall. It took two more good shoves before is came

crashing down in a cloud of dust and debris. We rushed back, keeping our distance while the air cleared and we made sure the ceiling wouldn't collapse on us.

When it was all clear, I took the first few steps toward the new opening. I didn't know why, but my heart was racing. For some reason, I felt like I was meant to be there. My feet moved on their own as I made my way to the opening. It was dark inside. The lights from the corridor didn't seem to penetrate more than a foot inside. It should have been an eerie sight, but it wasn't. I pulled the small flashlight from my back pocket, clicked it on, and stepped inside the vault.

It was cold. Several degrees cooler than the floor above us but the air felt dry. I shined the light around, looking for anything other than stone walls. I stopped when the beam landed on a stone structure in the middle of the room.

"We need more light," I heard Dad say behind me.

"I'll bring one of the flood lamps in," Kingston replied.

My eyes were still locked in front of me. I took a few more steps closer. I could make out the markings etched into the stone. This was nicer, better-crafted stone, possibly marble. I brushed the thick layer of dust from the surface and could make out an inscription.

"It's a sarcophagus," I said.

"What?" my father reacted. "Who's?"

"Matilda Amvorov Arden," I said. "It's our founding Luna."

"But that doesn't make any sense," Dad said, coming up beside me. "She's buried in the mausoleum with her mate."

"Apparently not," I replied.

The room suddenly became brighter as Kingston set the floodlight up at the entrance. We could now see that the tomb was covered in intricate carvings. I knew there had to be some kind of meaning to them! I tugged my shirt over my head and started to wipe away as much dust and dirt as I could. Kingston quickly joined in with me.

“Alpha Kingston,” Dad began, “does any of this mean anything to you?”

“Not really...” He paused. “Wait, this is familiar. Come see this.”

I moved around to the other side of the sarcophagus. The light wasn’t as good so Kingston was holding a flashlight up to the markings. They were a series of images. As I examined them, they did become easy to recognize,

“This is our creation myth,” I said.

“Yeah, but look at the end,” he replied, pointing to the last series of symbols.

I followed the illustration, deciphering as I went. Everything lined up with the story we all knew except that last section. That seemed to add an ending I hadn’t heard before.

“Is this saying there were two Moonstones?” I questioned.

“I think it just might,” Kingston said. “And I think Matilda was the protector of the Sablemane stone.”

“Matilda and Issac, her mate, created our pack after breaking from their own,” Dad said. “It wasn’t an amicable split. I find it hard to believe that they would have let her leave with such a significant relic.”

“Maybe that’s why there was animosity between them.” Kingston shrugged. “Either way, we have to consider the possibility that there is a second Moonstone here somewhere.”

The whole time they were talking I was staring at the stone. Taking in every detail I could. I reached out and ran my fingers. along a line at the bottom.

No, it was a seam.

I pulled the pick I had been using on the entrance from my belt and started working at the mortar in the space. I lost track of whoever was in the room with me. That feeling of something driving me had taken over again. I was onto something. It was something I needed to complete.

I didn’t know how long it took, but I managed to remove the sealant and the stone panel began to shift. I sat back,

stopping myself from pushing forward. I didn't know why, but I knew something monumental was about to happen. And it wasn't just about me.

"I need Ayla."

Chapter 222

Chapter 72: Ayla

"What did they find?" I asked as I stepped off the ladder.

"Honestly," Briggs said, "I'm not sure. Just that it's big and Theo wants you in there."

I wasn't sure how to respond to that. I didn't know if I should be worried or scared or excited. We really had no idea what could be in there, but I knew it wasn't nothing. So, I braced myself for something terrible but hoped for some kind of miracle.

It didn't take long for Briggs to guide us through the passageways. It did get a little difficult to navigate around the area of the vault with all the mess and equipment. Alpha Torin and Harmon were carrying lights through the hole in the wall when we arrived and I followed them through. I stopped in my tracks just inside when I saw the huge stone structure.

"Holy crap," I blurted out.

Theo stood from where he had been looking at something on the stone and headed toward me. He immediately wrapped his arms around me, pulling me against his chest. He released a breath. I could feel that he needed me through our bond. But I still didn't know why.

"What's going on?" I asked.

He pulled back, brushing my hair from my face. "We may have found something that can help keep you safe."

"Really?"

"

"I hope so," he replied. "At the very least, this is something that will change history."

He took my hand and led me toward the structure at the center of the room. He explained that it was a sarcophagus and who was buried inside it. Then he showed me the depictions on the side. Including the one indicating there may be a second Moonstone located nearby.

“Not just nearby,” Theo said. “Right here.

He tugged me to sit on the ground next to him, showing me what seemed to be a compartment at the base of the burial.

“I’ve got it ready to open,” Theo said, squeezing my hand. “But I needed you here with me.”

“I’m always here for you,” I replied.

With a deep breath, he leaned forward and started to pull at the panel. As it started to move, worry washed over me.

“Wait,” I rushed, grabbing his arm as all the possible implications of this find ran through my head. “What if this just makes things worse? This is a huge discovery. We know the Waar Pak like power, wouldn’t this put an even bigger target on our backs?”

“No one outside of this room is going to find out about this,” Theo assured me. “You can even command them yourself if it helps.”

I chewed on my lip, still unsure about the situation. Theo rested his hand on mine again.

swear, if we find something in here, I won’t use it unless you
are okay with it.”

Frustration ran through me. I threw my hands in the air with an exasperated grunt.

“You all keep talking about these damn stones as if they have some kind of magical powers,” I said. “Do you really think a rock is going to have any impact on anything?”

Theo sighed. “I don’t know,” he offered honestly. “But I have faith that it will. I don’t know why, but I do.”

“And if you’re wrong?”

“I would never bet your or our pup’s safety on this,” he said firmly. “Everything else that we have planned is still going to happen. This is... it’s just something I feel I have to do.”

Theo had opened up completely, letting everything he was feeling flow through our mate bond. I could feel the pull that was drawing him towards whatever was inside this tomb. He was right. He needed to do this. And I needed to support him. Whether I believed there was any power in the stones or not. This was something we both needed to see through.

“Okay,” I agreed firmly.

He smiled and kissed me before turning back to the stone panel. I leaned forward and helped him pry it free from the sarcophagus. It took more effort than I expected and with one big tug, it fell to the floor, sending up a cloud of debris.

“You okay?” Theo asked as I coughed and waived the dust from the air.

“I’m fine,” I assured him. “Just a little dust. Come on. Let’s see what’s inside.”

Theo positioned a flashlight so it shined into the space we had just cleared. From where I sat, I could make out a small box inside. Theo reached in slowly. The room was dead silent other than the scraping sound of the container as Theo removed it. Setting it down gently in front of us, we stared at it for a while.

“You can open it,” I finally said.

He took a deep breath and lifted the metal box onto his lap.

“He won’t be able to,” his father said suddenly.

We both looked up at him. He was looking at the head of the tomb intently, running his hand along the rough surface.

“Dad?” Theo replied worriedly.

Alpha Torin shook his head. "You won't be able to get it open. You're missing the key." He straightened and held a hand out to Theo to help him to his feet. "But I think I know where to find it."

"What are you talking about?" Theo asked as he lifted me from the floor.

"I'm sorry, son," Torin said, gripping his shoulders. "This all should have been familiar to me sooner. I guess my mind is..." His expression was pained and it broke my heart. "Look, keep that safe, okay? I will take care of this."

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

He smiled at me. "It's better you don't know," he said. He took my hand. "You may have been right in your concerns, Ayla.

But I think we can prevent them as well. I just need you to trust me. Both of you."

"Of course we trust you."

No data found.

Chapter 223

Chapter 73: Ayla After Alpha Torin left, I commanded everyone to keep what was found in the vault a secret. I didn't feel great about it, but I did find some comfort in knowing we had that bit of protection. Once that was done, we returned to our apartment. Mina and Briggs joined us, but the atmosphere was quiet. None of us were sure what our next move would be. Theo set the box gently on the dining table. We all just stood around it for a while. "So, where are we going to put this thing?" Mina finally voiced. "For now, it'll go in the safe here in the Alpha's suite," Theo said. "It's better to have it close for now. "Is anyone else as overwhelmed as I am?" Briggs asked, rubbing the back of his neck as he pulled Mina closer. "I have to say, it's getting harder to keep up with everything." "Ha," I scoffed. "You're telling me." Theo reached out and rubbed my lower back. "I know this is all getting pretty crazy but hopefully it won't be too much longer. We still have all the other plans in place. That includes our tail on Hawkins. We know he's got something going on tonight. I think we'll get some answers at the very least." Suddenly, my stomach grumbled. Loudly. Breaking the silence in the room. "It's still several hours before we have to focus on Hawkins," Briggs said. "What do you say we order

up something to eat and take the afternoon off? I think we need a little down time to regroup.” “I think that sounds like a great idea,” Theo said. ***

Kingston I had went back upstairs with the others but retired to my room. I needed some time to think. So much had happened that I was left with more questions than I could handle on my own. But I didn’t think Ayla was in the position to be my sounding board at the moment, and I wasn’t ready to turn to Theo. So, I called the one person I trusted most in the world.

“Everything okay, Kin?” Pierce answered. “I’m alive. If that’s what you mean,” I replied. “There’s been some developments.” I wasn’t able to tell him about the tomb. Ayla’s command prevented me. I ran a hand over my face with a sigh. I settled for telling him about Theo’s family line. “What do you mean they’re Sablemanes?” Pierce said. “The heir to the Sablemane Pack,” I clarified. “Technically, at least. Their founding Luna was an Amvorov.” “If he thinks about taking our pack...” “I don’t think he is,” I said. “Ayla wouldn’t allow it, and I trust her.” “Still,” Pierce replied, “you better stay on her good side.” “I wasn’t exactly planning on getting on her bad side to begin with,” I replied. Pierce was silent for a few moments. “There’s still been no sign of Grogan since you left,” he said solemnly. I nodded. “I figured there wouldn’t be. Something tells me he’s here somewhere.” “He was so focused on you, Kin,” Pierce said. “Now, even the attacks on our borders have stopped. If his attention has shifted so completely, he’s planning something big. And soon.” “I’ve already talked to Theo about that,” I said. “But with no leads on what or where that move might be, he can’t really take his focus from what we do know is going on.” “1 “Then maybe you should be focusing on that for them,” Pierce said. “You said they still have that rogue in custody, right?” Theo had said I would have free reign with the rogue. There wasn’t more I could do at the moment. “You’re right,” I said. “I think I could use some time with him. “I’ll need you to come out here, though. There are some other things going on that I can’t tell you about. Ayla will need to be the one to fill you in. It’s important that you know everything that is going on from here out.” “We still need to be careful about how many ranking members of other packs are there at once,” Pierce reminded me. “I’m worried we all may have already started to draw attention.”

“I know,” I said. “Bring Emma with you. If we can make it look like a social visit I think we’ll be fine.” “I can definitely manage that,” Pierce said. “She’s been dying to see Ayla.” “Good,” I replied. “Let me know when you’re headed this way.” I hung up the phone and grabbed a pen and paper. After scribbling down what I needed, I headed straight down to the cellar. When I arrived, there were still two guards stationed at the cells. “When was the last time anyone was in there?” I asked before going in. “Other than dropping in food and water, at least a week, maybe two,” one of the guards replied. “He’s been

quiet for a few days.” “Are either of you getting off soon?” “My relief should be here within the hour,” one answered. I pulled the paper out of my pocket and handed it to him. “If you could get me everything on this list I’ll make sure you’re paid overtime.” The guard looked at the supply list and a smirk crossed his face. “I think I can do that,” he replied, tucking the paper into his pocket. “We may even be able to throw in a few extras. With how difficult the bastard has made this job, we’d be happy to provide.” “That’s good to hear,” I said. “Do you want us to restrain him for you?” “That would be helpful, yes,” I confirmed. The guard unlocked the cell door. We entered, the second guard shutting the cell behind me. Lloyd looked up at us from a cot in the corner of the room. A nasty sneer crossed his face when he saw me. He didn’t put much effort into fighting the guards as they lifted him over to the metal chair in the middle of the cell floor. The silver restraints were quickly fastened and I waved for the guards to leave the room. “Before you get too comfortable,” I began, “I should let you know that I will not be as lenient as Alpha Theo and his men.” “Before we start this little game,” Lloyd croaked, “tell me what day it is?”

Chapter 224

Chapter 74: Theo We followed Briggs’ suggestion and spent the afternoon laying low. We were still hanging out in the living room when Jimmy mind linked me. ‘Alpha, Hawkins managed to slip out of the house,’ Jimmy informed me. ‘Just as you expected. I’m on his tail. He’s heading out of the city.’ I’m on my way,” I replied. ‘Don’t lose him.’ ‘Wasn’t planning on it,’ Jimmy confirmed. “Everything okay?” Ayla asked. “Hawkins is leaving the city,” I said. “He’s escaping?” “No.” I kissed her temple and stood from the couch. “I think he’s meeting someone. Jimmy’s following him. I have to catch up. Briggs, come with me.” Briggs nodded and was right behind me. Mina was on her feet as well. “Take the neural patches,” she told us. “I’ll tell Alpha Harden and the others to wear them, too./Open the mind link when you catch them. Then we’ll have plenty of witnesses.” The pride on Briggs’ face was evident as he pulled her to him for a deep kiss. “If only we had a way of recording it,” I joked, knowing her suggestion would be more than enough.

“I’m on my way to get that set up,” Mina replied as she grabbed her stuff. Ayla laughed. “I told you she was brilliant. I’ll be with her if you need anything else.” Briggs and I said goodbye to our mates and headed out of the packhouse. ‘Jimmy, where are we headed?’ ‘He’s shifted,’ Jimmy replied. ‘We’re about two miles northeast of the packhouse. You’ll catch up faster on foot.’ ‘Done.’ We attached the neural patches behind our ears and stripped down quickly, taking off at a run as we

both shifted into our wolves. Kieran took over in an instant. It had been too long since I had let him loose. He was practically salivating at the thought of catching the traitor who was threatening our mate. We slowed as we closed in on the location. 'Stay back if you didn't cover your scent,' Jimmy reminded us. He could sense Kieran's excitement. 'Keep the link open,' I told him. I felt for Mina, making sure we were still in range of the link. My connection to her was faint but there. 'Mina, how close are you to being set up?' 'Five minutes,' she replied. 'But you're too far out to get a clear recording. Ayla is going to edge of the packhouse property and see if that works to boost the connection.' 'Maggie's coming with me,' Ayla came through the link. 'Okay,' I replied. 'Jimmy, what's our status?' 'Hawkins has stopped,' he replied. 'He's at the edge of a clearing. He's definitely meeting someone, but they haven't shown up yet. I shouldn't have any trouble getting close enough to hear.' Kieran was pacing in the shadows. I worked to calm him. We were still a safe distance from the meeting spot, but we didn't know what direction this contact was coming from. Kai, Briggs' wolf, grunted from a nearby tree. 'Calm down,' Briggs urged. 'We've got this.' Kieran chuffed, but ultimately settled down, crouching low to the ground to keep out of sight, but remaining hyper-vigilant. It was another twenty minutes before Jimmy said he spotted someone approaching Hawkins. The mind-link was open and, as the Alpha in my wolf form, I could see and hear what my pack members were experiencing. Almost like seeing through their eyes. But we had to be careful. If we widened the connection too far, Hawkins would sense our presence. It is possible for an Alpha to force this connection with their pack members, but I had never done so, and swore I never would. Now was definitely not the time to break that oath. Luckily, Jimmy was exactly where I needed him to be. "I thought I told you to lay low," the contact hissed. Jimmy couldn't see any of his features, but I didn't think Hawkins could either. From what he said, it seemed that he was always

shrouded or kept to the shadows. However, the voice was familiar. Very familiar. "We need to talk," Hawkins replied firmly. "We're running out of time, so we need to make some decisions. I think you need to meet with Alpha Theo." The mystery scoffed. "I knew you had been caught. You're no good to us now." "Just hold on," Hawkins insisted. "You knew this was always a possibility. I said from the start if I had the chance to bring in the Alpha and his family, I would take it." "And I told you it was foolish," the voice replied. "She's his mate. He'll never see reason." "He might," Hawkins said. "I've been talking with him. He won't admit it to me, but he has his doubts in her." I had to stifle Kieran's growl. They wouldn't hear him, but if I didn't keep him under control he would certainly give us away as this conversation progressed. I was still trying to place that voice. I knew that voice. But who was it? "Hmmm..." the

stranger said. "I have a hard time believing that." "He did reject her originally," Hawkins said, making my gut twist. "Not many people know that, but I have a reliable source. And the timeline adds up. He must have had his doubts from the beginning. I think he'll listen to us." Kieran was beginning to rage. At me as much as them. How could Hawkins have found out? How dare they use my rejection against Ayla when it was never her fault? Whoever told him had to have lied about the circumstances. We would rip them apart. Kai growled low, stepping in front of Kieran who had stood. 'Don't,' Briggs echoed.

'Concentrate. Who is he talking to?' Kieran shook himself to refocus. "Well, that is interesting information," the man cooed. "Perhaps he could be of value to us." "He just needs more evidence," Hawkins said. "I can set up a meeting for you two." "No," the voice replied. "I'll have to bring someone else in for this. It may take some time."

"You said we don't have much more time," Hawkins said with frustration. "Why can't you just do it?" "Trust me, he won't listen to me. I finally recognized the voice. 'Malcolm.'

Chapter 225

Chapter 75: Theo 'Get them,' I commanded as Kieran took off. Kai and Briggs were right behind us as we darted through the trees. The mind-link was still open and I saw Jimmy leap into action. His wolf taking Malcolm to the ground in a matter of seconds. Kieran burst into the clearing minutes later, growling as he advanced on the traitor. Hawkins was yelling at us as Briggs grabbed hold of him. He hadn't shifted whereas the torn seams of Malcolm's shirt indicated he had tried to. I shifted back into my human form, forcing Kieran back. Jimmy shifted too, yanking Malcolm up by his hair to kneel on the ground, holding him firmly in place as three more of my men joined us. "I'd like to say I'm surprised to find you here, Malcolm," I said menacingly, "but I'm not really. I'd also like to say I'm not pleased about what will happen next" – I knelt down to look him in the eye- "but I'm not." I stood and turned away. "Take him to the precinct." "Alpha Theo," Hawkins pled, "wait, it's not what you think. I was trying to get the evidence we ta..." "I know exactly what you were doing, Hawkins," I spat. "What part of house arrest didn't you understand?" I got in his face. "Malcolm was right. You're a fool if you ever believed I would betray my mate. You may think you have some kind of damning evidence against her, but I promise you, you're wrong." I looked to Briggs. "Take him to the precinct. Arrest him for treason." "But Alpha... wait... I..." Briggs and Jimmy handed their captives off to the other warriors. I watched as they were dragged away, Hawkins yelling the whole way. I worked to suppress my anger. It had taken a lot not to execute them where they stood. But Malcolm wasn't my pack member.

‘Mina, tell me you got that recorded.’ ‘I think we did,’ she replied. ‘It’s still a new process, but it looks like we got it. “This is going to require a little diplomacy,” Briggs said. “Charles isn’t just going to sit by about this. It was one thing to have his niece fired from your project. Executing his nephew is an entirely different

matter “The Waar Pak will be scrambling now. I have a feeling this will force them to take action on whatever they had planned,” I said. “I think we can use this to our advantage.” The three of us shifted back into our wolves and made for the packhouse. I needed to get dressed and get Harden and Kingston. I would need them on my side for this. We stopped side for this. We stopped at one of the sheds at the back of the packhouse and grabbed some clothes. I was relieved to see Alpha Harden and Alpha Cooper waiting in the lobby. “We heard everything,” Harden said as we joined them. He touched the back of his neck. “I will say, these little devices you’ve made are quite impressive. When this is over, I think we should talk some business.” The corner of my mouth twitched. “When this is over, I’d be happy to.” “I sent Randy back out into the field,” Cooper said. “Once word reaches Charles about his nephew, the Waar Pak lines of communication will be busy. I’m confident we’ll learn something useful.” I nodded. “Good. I had them brought to the precinct for questioning. I don’t want either of them anywhere near the cellar. Besides, there’s no way of keeping this a secret.” Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Ayla, Maggie, and Mina enter the lobby. “We’ll head over there now,” Harden replied. “You’ll need the witnesses.” “Thank you,” I said. “I’ll be there shortly. I need to speak with my Luna for a moment.” They all moved to leave, but I caught Alpha Harden’s arm before he left. “There’s something else I need from you,” I said once we were alone. “I need some advice... from an experienced Alpha. And with my dad gone, I was hoping you could help.” “It would be an honor,” Harden replied kindly. “I don’t want my time as the pack Alpha to begin with an execution,” I said quietly. “But I don’t see any way of avoiding it.” Harden placed a hand on my shoulder. “Unfortunately, you may be right, son. But this will ensure your

pack’s safety going forward. Any Alpha that hasn’t already chosen a side will think twice when the time comes.” “I know,” I said. “I understand what this will do for my reputation. The message it will send to our enemies. And even to my pack, but...” — I glanced at Ayla, talking quietly with her cousin — “something doesn’t sit right starting our leadership with violence.” “Violence was brought upon you, Theo,” Harden insisted. “Whatever actions you take now were not forced upon you. Show mercy where you can, but the best thing you can do, is start your rule with a victory.” I nodded. Harden squeezed my shoulder before heading out of the packhouse. I went to Ayla and pulled her

into my arms. "This will end soon," I told her. "I promise." "Mina was able to get the recording we needed," she replied. "I'm going to reach out to a few of the Luna's I met at the Gathering. If this conspiracy is going to come out in the light, it's time I built my own army. I'll be personally inviting them to join their mates to the meetings." I smiled. "Brilliant as always. "Also, I'd like to speak with Hawkins," she requested. "I think it's time he heard my side of whatever stories he's been fed." "Deal."

Chapter 226

Chapter 76: Ayla

We went down to the precinct together. Acting Sheriff McCabe greeted us immediately and took us to the cells where the two conspirators were being held.

"Malcolm hasn't said anything," McCabe said. "But Hawkins has been pretty verbal. I cleared the building before bringing him in. Good thing, too. He was spewing some pretty serious allegations. I still don't know who here would side with him. So that was the last thing we needed."

"Nice work," Theo said. "Keep that up. None of the officers are to deal with either of them."

3. 3.

"Yes, Alpha."

I was looking through the glass at the former sheriff. He seemed distraught, but whether that was simply because he was caught and facing a treason sentence, I couldn't tell. I told Theo I wanted to speak with Hawkins alone. He compromised and insisted Maggie go in with me.

We stepped into the interrogation room and Hawkins looked up at me. I wasn't sure how to read his reaction, but I doubt I was mistaken when I saw disdain mixed with his surprise. I took a seat in the chair across the table and looked him over.

"I'm sure it's not necessary, but I'm going to introduce myself anyway," I said. "My name is Ayla Garner, oldest daughter of Jack and Marie Garner. Although, I'm sure you know that wasn't my father's real name." He remained quiet but shifted in his seat, confirming my statement. "I hear you have some

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kind of evidence against me and my intentions for this pack. Evidence that supposedly proves that I'm not only unfit to be Luna but unfit to live. I would like to know what that is."

"We never planned to kill you," Hawkins rushed.

I raised an eyebrow. "The scar on my side from being stabbed with a silver blade says otherwise. An act carried out by my own packmate. A packmate that, much like yourself, I had never met before. So, please, enlighten me on the terrible things I have apparently done to make people I've never met hate me so much."

"It's what you will do," Hawkins said. "It's what you're capable of. I've seen proof of that."

"And what am I capable of?"

"Lying, deceit," Hawkins spat. "You use people. Take advantage of them. I'm the sheriff. I will never allow a common criminal to be my Luna."

I had to fight to push back the rage that surged through my connection with Theo. I was sure someone was in there holding him back.

"Okay," I replied. "So show me the evidence that was so damning you would risk your life?"

"Three years," Hawkins stated. "Three years you worked with a loan shark, helping build his empire in this territory. You

helped him gain from others misfortunes. And once you made your own fortune, you just walked away."

The corner of my lip twitched in amusement but I didn't say anything, but Hawkins continued.

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"I'm sure you neglected to tell Alpha Theo about your lucrative career. After that, it must have been easy for you to break your sister's heart and take her mate from her. But let's face it, we know you're after every Alpha you can get your claws into. Just like the Sablemane Alpha. And once you have their loyalty, you'll take over everything. Destroy our way of life."

"Why does everyone believe I stole Theo from Kylee?" I said with exasperation. "You know situations like this happen all the time. Wolves date and their fated mates come along and end it. It's not even that uncommon for it to happen within families. But so many of you refuse to believe the obvious, normal, truth."

“Either way,” I proceeded, “that’s all a lie.”

“So, your sister, the one you and so many others dote upon, is a liar?”
Hawkins interjected.

I met his eyes, holding his gaze intently. “Yes,” I said firmly. “She lied. About a lot of things actually. Although” – I raised my hand “to be fair, there were some things she didn’t know about that meant she didn’t realize she was lying. But still, there were a lot of lies.”

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Hawkins was shaking his head. “I looked into you,” he said. “I have surveillance footage from when you worked with Guillermo.”

“Oh, I did work for him,” I said. “As the manager of his legitimate business. And I did it as a deal to protect my mother and pay off her gambling debts. I was never knowingly involved with his illegal activities.”

“Oh please,” Hawkins spat. “Even if that was true, you knew he

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would find a way to use you.”

“And wouldn’t that make me his victim?” I pointed out. “Not his accomplice? You’re right. I’m not stupid. But sometimes we have to choose naivety to put food on the table. Begrudge me that all you want, but I will never regret what I did for my family.” I stood up, finished with the conversation, but I met his eyes one more time. “Oh, and yes, I did tell Theo. He knows everything.”

I left the cell, unsure about how I felt about this information I had received. Theo met me in the hall.

“Are you okay?” he asked as he grabbed my face.

“Are you?” I replied. “It felt like you were about to come through that glass.”

“I know, I’m sorry.”

I placed a reassuring hand on his chest, but my brow was still furrowed as I thought about our conversation.

“What?”

“False or not, I still don’t understand how he could be so dedicated to the Waar Pak from that information alone,” I said. “He committed treason for this, but he still seems loyal.”

Theo sighed. “Hawkins is passionate about fighting

corruption,” he informed me. “Always has been. If he believed you were working as a loan shark, he wouldn’t accept you in any position of power.”

My face creased with deeper concern. “Which means the Waar Pak isn’t just targeting groups with general rhetoric,

74.68%

they’re getting specific. Personal. They’re fighting with psychological warfare that we can’t predict.”

“That’s why we need to end this,” Theo said. “Now.”

Chapter 227

Chapter 77: Theo

I took Ayla’s hand and joined Harden and Cooper outside Malcolm’s interrogation room as Cooper was hanging up his phone.

“I knew I recognized this guy,” he said. “I can’t believe it took us this long to make the connection to Charles Anderson. You said this is his nephew?”

I nodded. “Yeah, but from what I can tell, the relation isn’t common knowledge. The only reason I found out was

because his sister let it slip during one of her clumsy attempts to seduce me.”

“Well, he’s popped up in almost every pack over the last couple of years,” Cooper said. “But he’s not always there in association with Charles company, and he often uses an alias in those cases. So it took us some time to make a connection, but we still couldn’t tie him to Charles definitively. Until now, at least.”

I looked at Malcolm through the glass, holding back the storm of emotions boiling within me.

“I’m going to have to start a war, aren’t I?” I asked quietly. “I’m not letting him live.”

“My suggestion – call an urgent Gathering,” Cooper said. “We know there has to be Alphas involved in this. However, I don’t think any are as directly involved as the leaders, but there are some who have at least turned a blind eye to their practices. You need to offer them the option to back out. To turn

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against the Waar Pak Society. Allow us to set up provisions to hunt the participants down.”

"You think that would actually work?" I asked.

"I wouldn't expect a perfect outcome," Harden said. "But it's probably your best option. Including all the other Alphas in this matter supports you and Ayla's claim against the Waar Pak allegations. And, if anything, it will help us identify our enemies."

"Our enemies?" I asked a little bitterly. "The fact that I've already gained enemies is bad enough. I can't let you take them as yours as well."

Ayla squeezed my hand. "Theo's right," she said. "As far as we know, no other pack knows about your connection to this. It may be better for you to arrive with the rest of them. To show neutrality. This is our fight."

Harden smiled at Ayla. "As I told you before, my dear," Harden stated, "your father was a close friend. I despise the Waar Pak's ideals. Anyone who stands with their beliefs, stands against me and my pack. If fighting this battle helps protect Jack's daughter, well, that's just a bonus."

I saw the tears start to form in Ayla's eyes before she embraced Harden. He chuckled as he patted her back. She swiped her eyes as she pulled away.

"I'm sorry," she apologized sheepishly. "I'm a little emotional these days."

"Nothing to be sorry about," he replied. "In fact, I think you should be one to call the gathering, Ayla."

23.40%

"Me?" Ayla replied in confusion. "Can I even do that? It's an Alpha Gathering."

"The Lunas will surely be there as well," Cooper said. "Or, at least, they will be informed of what is going on by their mates. Their opinions will have weight. And yes, a Luna has every right to call a Gathering. I agree with Harden. It's a bold move that may work well in our favor."

I rubbed Ayla's back in support. I had every faith that she could do this. I even sensed an eagerness beneath the hesitation coming through our bond. She needed to do this.

My attention returned to Malcolm.

"In the meantime," I began, "what are we going to do with him? He has information we need, but we can't harm him. Not before the other Alphas arrive."

"I could command him," Ayla said.

"No," I asserted. "I don't want you in there with him. Malcolm is smart. Sleazy and obnoxious, too, yes, but still smart. I'd be too worried he'd use whatever happened in there against you if the Alphas request his testimony. If Harden and Cooper agree that we shouldn't wait, then I can handle this."

"Like you said," Cooper said, "we can't use drastic techniques. But I think it would be wise to get what we can out of him as soon as possible."

I nodded. "Harden, my mother has left with my father, would you mind helping Ayla call the Gathering?"

"It would be my pleasure," he confirmed.

Offering Ayla his arm, he led her away. I watched them go, feeling the urgency of the upcoming events looming over me. I would make our world safe for her. Even if it was the last thing I did. She deserved that more than anything. And I would start by taking care of Malcolm Neal.

I entered the interrogation room, letting every ounce of my Alpha energy permeate the space. Malcolm recoiled from the weight of it and I didn't bother hiding the pleasure it gave me to see. I sat in front of him and waited. I knew Malcolm. He was smart, but I knew that if you gave him enough rope, he'd eventually hang himself with it.

And I had time to be patient.

But something told me he didn't. It wasn't long before he began to speak.

"I suppose it's no use to reason with you?"

"This isn't a business negotiation, Malcolm," I said flatly.

"That's debatable," he said brazenly.

My energy pulsed forcefully through the air, sending Malcolm farther back into his chair. But I didn't let my anger take over. I remained quiet.

"I won't talk," he said.

Still no response.

"But I am curious," he stated. "Your man, Hawkins, he really did believe you were having doubts about that charming mate of yours. I wonder how much of that was an act to catch us and how much was real."

The corner of my mouth twitch upward. Whether he believed I had doubts or not, he wouldn't actually try to turn me against Ayla now. But he would appear to try to get information from

1. me.

That's what I was counting on.

Chapter 228

Chapter 78: Ayla "Okay," I said as I sat down at Theo's desk, "what's the best way to do this? I'm guessing we want to contact them all at once." "A video message should do the trick," Alpha Harden said, "We have a program designed for this kind of communication. Do you know what you're going to say?" I took a deep breath. "I think so," I replied as I typed in Theo's password on his computer. Harden leaned over and pulled up the communication program he was talking about, opening it to the camera feature. I thought back to the lessons I had been working on with Luna Grace over the past few months. Hoping I would get it right, I hit record and started talking. "Fellow Alphas and Lunas," I began. "For those who haven't met me, I'm Luna Ayla Garner of the Greytooth Pack. I'm contacting you all in regards to a serious matter that needs our attention. As acting Luna, I am requesting an emergency Alpha Gathering to take place at the Greytooth packhouse seventy-two hours from now. Please be aware that this concerns the future peace of all the packs. A peace Alpha Theo and I desperately want to protect. We depend on your attendance." I stopped the recording and turned to Alpha Harden. "How was that?" "Perfect," he said. Not wanting to let doubt sink in, I hit send. I sunk back in the

chair with a sigh. "Do you think they will attend?" "They have to," Harden said. "In some capacity or another. But yes, I think most of the Alphas – and Lunas – will attend personally." – — "And you're sure this is the right move?" I asked. "We don't know who is working with the Waar P ak. We may be inviting an army that's against us."

Harden took a seat in the chair on the other side of the desk. "It was a few months before I was scheduled to take over my pack... when the Waar P ak struck the Onyxcrown Packhouse. I saw the fallout that happened after the attack. Most of the Alphas were outraged." "Then why does it seem like my father's pack was forgotten?" I asked. "Left in the past." Harden shook his head. "They weren't forgotten. It was a group effort to take down the Waar P ak back then. However, life goes on. They never targeted any other packs directly after that. The effort to find all of them became too costly when they were no longer a threat." "Justice isn't enough of a reason, I suppose," I said bitterly. "It is for some," he said, holding my gaze intently. "Of course," I sighed. "I'm sorry. I know we owe you a lot." "Not at all," Harden said. "Your father saved me and my mate's lives. I owe him everything. Plus, I like you, my dear." I couldn't help but smile. "Now, we need to start preparing for your guests," Harden said, standing up. "It's going to be a very busy few days." ***

Theo I hadn't responded to Malcolm in hours. He was starting to lose his control. His fidgeting had increased. He was barely able to keep still for more than a few seconds. I pushed my energy out a bit stronger again. "You know my uncle will be coming for me," Malcolm spat. "I'm counting on it." "He's not going to sit by and let you murder his nephew." "You were caught plotting against the Alpha and Luna of another pack," I said. "It's not murder. It's my right. Your uncle is a Delta. What power do you think he holds against our laws?" "He has friends," Malcolm replied with a wicked grin. "More powerful friends than you know."

I crossed my arms over my chest as I sat back. "Perhaps." 'Theo,' Briggs linked me. 'You have a phone call.' 'Who is it?' 'Who do you think?' Briggs replied. 'He's refusing to speak to me again.' I stood without speaking to Malcolm and left the room. Briggs was waiting just outside holding the phone. I took it but didn't

answer yet, making my way to McCabe's office first. McCabe was there with Jimmy and indicated for them to listen in. I clicked the speaker button and took the call off hold.

"This is Alpha Theo." "Where is he?" Charles Anderson barked over the line. "I know you have my nephew, Theo Arden. Now, tell me where he is." "Delta Charles, he's being held in the city police station," I stated plainly. "He has been arrested for treason, along with a few other serious charges." "On what grounds?" Charles demanded. "That will be discussed with Alpha Anthony," I replied. "I have no obligation to disclose any evidence to you. However, you are welcome to come witness the trial. I'm curious to see what you know about his activities of late. Particularly those targeted against my Luna and myself." There was a tense silence but it was brief. "I'm afraid I have no idea what you're talking about," he replied, sounding like it took effort to make the denial. "But rest assured I am on my way to clear up this mess, Alpha." "I have no doubt you will try," I said threateningly. "I'm very interested to see how you will make the attempt. We're looking forward to your visit." I hung up the phone and dialed another number. "Alpha Theo," Alpha Anthony answered. "We were just preparing to leave." "That's good to hear, Alpha," I said. "I just spoke with Charles Anderson. He is also on his way. I hope you have stuck with our agreement and not informed him of

the Gathering that will be taking place." "Delta Charles has no reason to know about this Gathering," Alpha Anthony said a little testily. "But I would still like to have a better idea of what is going on, especially since so many members of my own pack seem to be involved." "I would be happy to inform you," I said.

“However, it really is necessary that we wait until everyone is in attendance.”
“Very well,” Alpha Anthony replied. “We will see you shortly.”

Chapter 229

Chapter 79: Theo

I stood at the back of the banquet hall as I watched the room full of Alphas, Lunas, and other ranking pack members settle into their seats. Cooper and Randy had really come through for us the past few days. Now that they knew of Malcolm’s ties, they were able to compile an entire dossier on Charles Anderson and his connection to Waar Pak

activities.

Once he arrived in our territory, he was immediately sequestered and kept in a safe house and not allowed to leave. He was currently being escorted to the packhouse and would be arriving any minute. Until then, I was staying clear of the other Alphas. I had greeted them upon their arrival out of courtesy and respect, but I didn’t want to put myself in a position that would allow them to badger information out of me.

Briggs went to the front of the hall to direct everyone to prepare to start the meeting. Just as he was greeting the group, Charles Anderson was brought through the door next to me. He noticed me first and stormed into the room. He was about to start speaking when he noticed the full banquet hall he had just entered. He scanned the faces and realization quickly dawned on him.

“What is the meaning of this?” he whispered forcefully.

I stepped in close to him, making sure no one could overhear. “Did you really think it would only be Malcolm on trial here?” I looked him in the eye. “The Waar Pak ends today.”

Charles’s head snapped to the front of the room as Ayla’s voice reached us. She was addressing the pack leaders to formally begin the proceedings.

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I stopped back from the podium as Theo took over. My heart was beating tot as my nerves ate at me.

“You know we won’t let anything happen to you,” Kingston whispered

Part of getting the Alphas to help take down the Waar Pak meant revealing my identity to them, and Kingston’s. There was no way of knowing if this would help or hurt us. I knew Harden had said the other packs were appalled by the Onyxerown massacre, but that was almost thirty years ago.

“I’m more worried about what this information with do to our packs,” I said quietly. “Are we about to make more enemies?”

Kingston sighed softly. “I don’t know,” he replied. “But Theo is right about keeping this a secret being a bad idea. If anything, we need to know where the other Alphas stand. Better the enemy you know, right?”

“True”

Chapter 79 Theo

288 Vouchers

“Her father couldn’t take us down and neither will she,” Charles growled low.

“As long as a member of the Onyxcrown lives, we will hunt them down. She will not hold power over us.

”

“You’re right,” I said. “But everyone in this room does and I doubt they will be too pleased about your conspiring.”

I signaled the guards to seat him as Ayla called me to the front of the banquet hall.

Ayla

I stepped back from the podium as Theo took over. My heart was beating fast as my nerves ate at me.

“You know we won’t let anything happen to you,” Kingston whispered next to me.

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"True."

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Chapter 79 Theo

288 (Vouchers

"Just..." Kingston began but paused. It was like he was struggling to find his words. That was the moment I noticed how tired and worn out he looked. "Whatever happens after today, just remember to trust me, okay? I will always protect you, Ayla."

I was about to ask what he was talking about but Theo's voice broke our conversation as he told the room who I was. The room fell silent for a moment. It was Apha Weston of the Wildtail Pack who spoke first.

"How do we know she truly is the Onyxcrown heir?" he asked. His tone was calm.

I stepped forward and removed the chain around my neck, holding my father's ring up for them to see.

"My father gave me this ring before he died," I said. "I didn't know what it meant back then, but he told me to never let it go. That this was part of our family. Part of who I was."

Alpha Harden stood. "I have confirmed that it is the Dominis family crest. The Onyxcrown crest," he said.

"My father, Alpha Torin," Theo said, "has also confirmed Jack's identity. He came to my father as a refugee once he arrived in our territory. He asked for asylum. To be left to live a quiet life as he grieved the loss of his pack."

"This threat is coming at us under the pretense that the Dominis family and, subsequently, I wish to take over the packs," I addressed the group. "I can

assure you all, that is an idea that never crossed my mind. Our system of governance, our way of life, has allowed us to live in peace for generations. The Waar Pak are the ones threatening that. Please, we are here to ask for your help in putting an end to these attacks once and for all.”

Chapter 79 Theo

288 Vouchers

“How do you propose we do this?” Alpha Patrick asked. “If they are still working underground, this would take an extensive collaboration effort to take them down.”

“We have already been working on this solution,” Theo said. “We know how to hunt the culprits down. In fact, we have thorough evidence that we have found one of their leading members. We have asked you all here to help us determine the fate of the perpetrator. As the Alphas and Lunas of the packs, we need to show a united front against this very serious, very real, threat against us. Do you agree to review the evidence with us?”

There was a low murmur throughout the room as our guests conversed between themselves. Slowly, they began to stand, acknowledging their agreement to proceed with the trial.

“Thank you,” Theo said. “We have come to strongly believe the leader of the Waar Pak Society is Delta Charles Anderson.”

Chapter 230

Chapter 80: Ayla

Three days.

It had been three days since we had started the trial and it finally felt like we were getting close to a decision. We didn’t think we would get a unanimous agreement on the executions, but we didn’t need it. The majority support would be uncontestable in this situation. Protecting us from any retribution from other pack members.

After Theo had closed out the proceedings for the day, I invited the women for dinner and drinks in the cafeteria. I had reserved the private room off the main dining area thinking it would be a good opportunity to decompress before making any decisions the following day.

Annabelle had helped organize the get-together, which was a goddess- send with it being such short notice. I extended the invite to all Lunas, but it wasn’t

a requirement, so I was curious to see who would attend. I was pleasantly surprised that all of them showed up.

It wasn't a large group. Out of the nine packs, only five currently had mates. Six, if you included Theo and I as acting Alpha and Luna. However, there were three Beta's mates that had also come along as well as Mina and Maggie, of course. But it was a nice balance. Even when the evening was in full swing, it still felt intimate.

"Thank you for coming," I said as I handed Luna Victoria, Alpha Harden's mate, a glass of wine. "It has been so nice to finally meet you. Alpha Harden has spoken so highly of you."

"I can say the same about you, my dear," Luna Victoria replied with a bright smile.

Chapan kò Arta

298 Vouchers

"Well, I can only hope I live up to the expectations," I replied. "I can't say I was exactly prepared for this role."

"Oh, honey, most Luna's aren't," Luna Emma said. "Rarely do those who plan to be Luna actually become one."

"And yours hasn't exactly been a normal transition," Mina defended.

"I know this can't have been easy on you," Luna Victoria commented. "Harden tells me you were just as surprised about your father's identity as the rest of us."

"Not just me," I said. "Mina isn't only Beta Briggs' mate. She's also my cousin. Her mother was my father's sister. Honestly, I don't know how I would have gotten through these last few months without her."

The conversation continued through various topics. Mina again came to my rescue a few times when there were questions about the more complicated rumors. Particularly the ones regarding Ma and Kylee and why I was at the annual Gathering with Kingston. As the night progressed, I found myself alone with Luna Victoria.

"I really want to say that you have been handling this impressively, my dear," she said. She leaned in and added quietly, "especially in your condition."

I was a little startled, almost dropping the glass I had taken from the server. I wasn't sure if she meant what I thought she did. I resisted the urge to reach

for my stomach. I had begun to show, but not so much that I couldn't hide it. And I had been meticulous in doing so.

"I'm sorry, Luna," I replied nervously, "I'm not sure what you mean."

"

"Don't worry, sweetie," she said with a reassuring squeeze of my arm, "your secret is safe, with me. I can understand not wanting to announce the news with everything going on. But you have my congratulations."

Chapter 80 Ayla

288 Vouchers

"How did...? Did Harden...?"

"No, no," she rushed. "Of course not. Just call it a woman's intuition. We older Luna's are always on the lookout for the next generation of leaders. So being a newly mated couple, the signs of pregnancy are easy to spot."

Suddenly, someone bumped into me, spilling the drink I held down my hand.

"I'm so sorry, Luna," a young man about my age said. "Please, forgive me. I'm so clumsy."

"It's okay," I assured him with a smile as I took the offered towel. "Accidents happen. No harm done."

"Please, let me get you another drink."

Before I could answer, he had taken the glass and hurried off. I shrugged as I finished drying myself off, returning to my conversation with Luna Victoria. Not long after, I noticed it was getting late. I wanted to thank everyone again for coming, so I called for the room's attention. Annabelle came out just in time to hand me a fresh drink.

"I want to thank all of you for being here this week," I said. "I know that this issue with the Waar Pak is primarily affecting Theo and me and our pack, but I truly believe that they are a threat to us all. To have all of you strong women here shows an amount of support and respect I could have only dreamed of. I truly can't express how much it means to me that I can move forward knowing I can rely on guidance

and validation. From the bottom of my heart, thank you. Now, a toast, to the Luna's our people would be lost without."

There were cheers and a round of applause throughout the room before we all took a drink,

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Chapter 80 Ayla

288 (Vouchers

“You ladies are welcome to stay as long as you like and enjoy our hospitality.”

To reinforce my speech, I made my rounds around the room and thanked everyone individually. I made sure they were all taken care of and had everything they needed, both there and throughout their stay at the packhouse. I was really feeling like I was becoming a part of the group and enjoying my time when Dasha became agitated in the back of my mind.

Since we can't shift, our wolves often become dormant during pregnancy. Not like before when I had lost her. She was still always there where I could sense her. Just conserving energy for our growing pup. So to have her suddenly so present was a little concerning.

I excused myself from the group and had Maggie take me back to my apartment. As we entered the elevator, a wave of nausea hit me, making my head spin a little as the lift began to move.

‘Something’s wrong,’ Dasha whimpered.

“You okay?” Maggie asked, concerned.

“Yeah,” I said. “My medicine has just worn off.”

The feeling passed quickly and I was fine before we even made it to our floor. Dasha seemed to calm a little, so I just brushed the incident off. This was the first time I had missed a dose. So it was probably just my morning sickness returning.

I told Maggie goodnight and headed into my apartment, ready to tell my mate what a success the night had been.