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Chapter 151 : Just Friends

Santino left with his warriors to track down Damon. Alexandra was left in charge of the pack, alone, again. She wasn't entirely happy about it, but until she and Santino figured out what they were going to do, they had to keep acting like they were a functioning Alpha and Luna team.

"Luna Alexandra, there's a problem at one of the construction sites," one of the contractors said when he called her. "Which site?" she asked. She rolled her eyes, every day something seemed to fall apart.

"One of the residential houses, belonging to pack member William," he told her.

"I'll be right there," Alexandra said. She hung up the phone and rushed to where William's house was still being built. Construction had been halted a little because of all the other things going on. The construction crew was just getting back to his house. It figures that something would go wrong! "What's the problem?" Alexandra asked when she showed up.

"Some of the interior was damaged during a recent rainfall. We need to haul it out and fix the damage," the contractor said. He handed her a chart that showed where the damage was. "How much is this going to cost?" Alexandra asked, reviewing the forms. "It isn't going to add to the overall cost of materials. We are the ones at fault for not waterproofing the site," the contractor explained. Alexandra nodded. "Good, good," she murmured. "Alex, what are you doing here?" William called to her from across the site. She looked up and handed the clipboard back to the contractor. William was smiling so widely as he ran towards her. "The contractor called to update me on what the problems are," Alexandra explained. "Oh, I figured Santino would deal with anything related to my property," William said, shrugging. Alexandra sighed. "He is dealing with another issue. Pack security stuff."

'That makes sense;" William said, shrugging.

"What are you doing here?" Alexandra countered, smiling playfully. "Well, it is my house. Of course, they are going to call me if there is a problem," William said, grinning. "Oh, right," Alexandra said bringing her palm to her forehead.

"So, crisis under control. Do vou want to grab a cup of coffee or

something?"

Alexandra swallowed. She knew she shouldn't. It could throw gasoline on an already out of control fire. But she needed a friend. William was still her oldest friend.

"Um... okay. Yeah, I've got some time," she said. They went to a coffee shop. William was surprised when Alexandra ordered decaf. She hadn't told anyone else about the pregnancy vet "I haven't been sleeping well," she said shrugging casually

"Sure, sure," William said, teasingly

They sat in a booth in the corner with a good window view outside the shop. Alexandra kept looking at the pack members walking by, wondering if any of them would report her to Santino. Having a cup of coffee with a friend shouldn't have been such an issue!

"You see distracted," William commented

'There's a lot going on, with the pack and everything," Alexandra said.

"I know, but this seems more personal," William said, sipping his coffee.

Alexandra raised an eyebrow at him. "Okay, there is no possible way you can know that," Alexandra said, chuckling. "Of course, I can. I've known you long enough, William said, winking. "Well, fine. The kids are a bit of a handful and things are tense," she said. "With Santino?" William asked.

"What is it with you males? Why do you care so much what is going on with Santino and me?" Alexandra asked, cupping her hands around her coffee. "Alex, you have to know by now," William said, looking at her with deep, smoldering eyes. A pit formed in Alexandra's stomach. She had a feeling she knew what he was about to say. She didn't want him to say it, but her voice stuck in her throat when she tried to stop him. William reached across the table and took her hand, "Alex, I love you. You've loved you for a long time. No, I mean, I'm in love with you." Alexandra sighed and cast her eyes down. "I wish you hadn't have said that," she muttered

"Why? It is the truth. You can't tell me you don't feel something for me, too," he pushed. "I do feel something for you, friendship," Alexandra said She pulled her hand away from him. "No, it is more than that." William insisted.

met his eyes and glared at him. "I am in love with Santino. I think of you as a friend, only." "Oh, okay," William said, his voice disappointed. Alexandra didn't know what else he expected her to say. Even if she and Santino were in a trial separation – which the rest of the pack didn't know about – she was still married to him. William knew she was married, and there were no divorces. He should know her better than to think she'd jeopardize her marriage or her family. That wasn't even the problem! She didn't love him. "You're one of my best friends, William. You always have been. That is the relationship I want with you," she added. "I understand," William said. He still looked disappointed.

Alexandra sighed heavily, her shoulders sloughing. "Honestly, Santino and I have been having some problems. Fighting, not seeing eye to eye, some trust issues." "You think he's been unfaithful?" William asked, eyes brightening. Alexandra rolled her eyes. "No, not like that. He doesn't trust me because of Damon. It has nothing to do with romantic loyalty.'

Of course, William would immediately jump to cheating in the relationship. As much as Alexandra wanted to be friends with William, she could only do that if he promised not to interfere with her relationship, assuming she still had a relationship with Santino. "Can we still be friends?" Alexandra asked. "Yes, yes we can," William said. "Thank you. That means a lot to me. But please, William, I can only stay friends with you if also promise not to make comments about me and Santino or innuendos," she added.

"Since you're asking so nicely, I'll refrain," William promised. "Thanks," Alexandra said, grinning. William stood up and stretched. He held a hand out to Alexandra. She accepted and he pulled her into a hug. "Friendly hug," he said when Alexandra tried to pull away. She sighed and hugged him back. It wasn't so bad to have a comforting hug after everything she'd been through. "I've got to get back to work," Alexandra said, pulling away quickly. As innocent as a friendly hug was, she had a feeling Santino might not see it that way. She didn't want to keep making things worse or giving reasons to be mad at her. If she was going to actually take their separation seriously, the point was to take time and reconsider what they meant from each other.

William had gotten her to admit to him, and herself, that she was in love with him. That still meant something to her and meant she wanted to make things work. When Santino returned, she was going to try and make amends. It was the only way to heal her heart and her family.

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Chapter 152 : Heartbreak

Buzz... buzz...

Santino's phone was vibrating in his pocket. He growled and pulled the phone out. Since he'd left the pack, there had been a constant influx of texts and calls about this thing and that. He thought Alexandra was handling it all, but people were still reaching out to him. Riley and the warriors had joined Santino on his Damon hunt. They'd tracked him to a small human town but were losing the light. Riley had booked them rooms at a local motel.

"Is that another text?" Riley asked when Santino pulled his phone out again. "Yeah," he grumbled. "Alexandra? She likes to check in a lot, huh?" Riley teased. Santino rolled his eyes. "No, not Alexandra. I keep directing these complaints to her, but they somehow keep ending up back on my phone." "Well, the rest of the men are settled for the night. Why don't you take care of that and then meet us at the bar," Riley suggested. "Yeah, I'll see you there," Santino said waving as Riley walked away.

Santino checked his messages where he had several new messages from Tatiana. Groaning, he wondered what she could possibly have to say to him now.

The first couple messages were asking where he was. Then there was a message that said she'd always have his back and always care about him, followed by a picture message. He couldn't see it very well, it was kind of blurry, she he made the picture larger on his screen. Santino's eyes nearly popped out of his head. Even though it was blurry, he could unmistakably see Alexandra hugging William in a coffee shop. It looked like there were on a date, next to a table for two. Was that why things at the pack weren't getting taken care of, because Alexandra was dating and ignoring the pack!?

Santino growled and stuffed his phone back in his pocket. He stormed off to the bar and ordered a whiskey. It would take a lot more than beer to quell his rage, and the impending heartbreak rising in his chest. He knew they were on a trial separation, and Alexandra had talked about a future outside the pack. He had no idea she'd move on so quickly. "Santino, what's got you down?" Riley asked as Santino ordered his second whiskey. "Why do I have to be down?" he asked, "Because you're drinking whiskey," Riley said, laughing. "That's a pretty big tell." un

"F*ck off," Santino growled. Riley put his hands up and backed away. Santino didn't need his friends analyzing him right now. He just wanted to drown himself in another whiskey and think about what happened.

As angry as he was, it was all an act. He was really feeling heartbroken. When Alexandra had told him she was leaving, he should have stopped her, he should have fought Every night since then, he had tormented himself with the things he should have said. Of course, he trusted her. He'd never shown her that. He'd never given her reason to think he really did.

And instead of being there for her, of alleviating her fears, he'd just let her walk away. It was a huge regret he'd had. He'd hoped that after he returned from hunting Damon, enough time and distance would have passed and they could reconcile. Now, it didn't look like Alexandra wanted to. She was already moving on! Well, if she was going to move on, Santino didn't see any reason why he couldn't. He scanned the bar. There were lots of human women there.

A lot of them were already sloppy and drunk. He wanted something a little classier. His eyes settled on a dark haired, athletic woman. From across the bar, their eyes met. Santino down the last of his whiskey and smiled at her. She winked and waved him over. "I was waiting for you to notice me," she said seductively when Santino joined her at her booth. "I needed to get a little more whiskey in me," Santino admitted. "This isn't the kind of thing I do often." "I can tell," the woman laughed. She patted the seat beside her. Slowly, Santino sat down. She was a very attractive woman. Even though she was human, he could smell her pheromones and they weren't entirely unpleasant. "So, why are you drowning yourself in whiskey?" she asked. "That isn't an interesting story."

The woman leaned on his shoulder, darting her tongue out to lick his cheek. Santino smirked and slipped his arm around her waist. Apparently, women were incredibly forward

"It caught my attention," she whispered, running her finger down Santino's chest. Her skin was warm through his shirt, and it sent tingles through his body. "Trust me, you don't want to know," Santino sighed. "Come on. It isn't like it is going to change my mind about you. This is just for fun, right. Nothing serious," she said. 2/3

Santino sighed. She had a point. "The mother of my children, a woman I thought loved me and wanted to have a relationship with me, started seeing someone else. We've only been separated for a few days." For some reason, telling a human stranger about his problems actually felt good. "What a tramp!" the woman cried. "Let me guess, he's someone from her past, someone who has always been a close friend of hers." "Actually, yeah," Santino said. The woman giggled and nibbled on his earlobe. "I know the story. It is a common one. Don't worry, it is just a rebound. She doesn't actually feel anything for him. He's just a close friend that caught her at a vulnerable time." "That doesn't make me feel any better," Santino muttered. "Besides, doesn't that make this a rebound?" "Whatever. I'm not looking for anything more than a one–night stand," she said, laughing and throwing her arm around Santino's shoulders. Santino chuckled too. It felt nice to let loose with a total stranger, and one that was attractive and clearly wanted him. "So, are you ready to get out of here, or what?" she asked, leaning in and kissing his cheek again.

"Honestly, no," Santino said. As much as he wanted to get back at Alexandra, as much as he wanted to have an enjoyable night, he knew he'd regret it in the morning. "Well, fine. We can do it right here," the woman said. She straddled Santino in the booth and tried to kiss his lips. "No," Santino said. He stood up and forced the woman off his lap. "Sorry, I'm just not in the mood." "Well, fine! You jerk!" she collected her things and stormed off.

Santino didn't want to hurt Alexandra. In a moment of anger, he could have done it easily, but it wouldn't make him feel any better. He'd probably just feel worse, about himself, about their relationship. Even if Alexandra was going to move on, Santino still cared about her. He wasn't going to jump into bed with someone else just because she didn't care anymore. He wouldn't be ready for that until their relationship was truly and forever over, Even then... Alexandra was his mate. The thought of being with anyone else... Santino decided life as a bachelor might be the only way to heal his heart.

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Chapter 153: Women's Center

"Logan, there is another pressing matter that needs to be handled," Carson told him, dropping a folder on his desk. Logan snapped out of his stupor. He'd been thinking about Serena and the kids. She hadn't spoken to him, but he had been spending plenty of time with the kids. He missed Serena, though. "What is the problem?" Logan asked. He opened the top of the folder and looked in at the pages. They were personal documents of Moonshine refugees. Logan looked through the top pages. They were all women, all single mothers. "Moonshine has a lot of single mothers," Carson said. "They'll be needing support," Logan said. Carson nodded in agreement.

"Whatever Alpha Damon put them through, it wasn't good. Alpha Thomas has sent over all the details and wants to know what we can do to help," Carson reported.

"Don't call him that," Logan grumbled. "What?" Carson asked. "Damon, do not honor him with the Alpha designation," Logan clarified.

"Right, sorry," Carson said. "These mothers, they'll need medical care for themselves and their children, housing resources, career placement," Logan said. Carson nodded.

"I know you don't want to hear it, but there is a pack member who has experience with these things," Carson said. Logan raised an eyebrow at him. "What things?" Logan asked, crossing his arms. "Medical care, being a single mother..." Carson trialed off. Logan nodded. "I'll give her a call," he said, waving Carson out of his office. Logan sighed, but he picked up his phone. "Hello?" Serena asked in an unenthusiastic voice. "Serena, I have a pack matter I need your help on," he said. Serena sighed heavily, like helping him was the last thing she wanted to do. "I'll be right over," she said. She hung up before Logan could say anything else. He'd seen Serena in passing when he went to spend time with the kids, but he hadn't been alone with her or had a close up, one–on–one conversation with her for a while.

When she arrived, Serena was all business. "What can I help you with?" she asked. She sat in the chair across from Logan and crossed her legs.

Your father sent over information on several Moonshine refugees that are single 0.51

mothers," Logan explained. "I want to open a Women's Center for them, one that could give them and their children medical attention, support and child care when needed, job placement resources, all of it." Serena smiled, her whole face lighting up. "Logan, that is a really great idea," she said. "I'm glad you think so," Logan said with a nod. "You have particular expertise that is useful to this project." "I do," Serena agreed.

Logan put Serena in charge of the logistics for the center. He found a location where they could start setting up the facility. By the time he told her about it, she already had equipment to be brought in and set up to make it homier and provide the services needed.

The Alpha checked up on her while she was overseeing the renovations to the building and the installation of the new facilities. "How's it going?" Logan asked. "Take those bunk beds into the back room," Serena said, directing some wolves moving bunk beds. She turned to look at Logan, raising an eyebrow at him. "You don't need to check in every day." "I'm Alpha, of course, I do," he told her plainly. Serena sighed and shook her head. "A lot like the hospital renovations," she said. "But everything is coming together really well. We could open this place up pretty soon." "Is there anything I could help you with?" Logan asked. Serena narrowed her eyes at him.

"I've got it under control," Serena said, taking a step back from him. "If I need anything, you'll know." Logan sighed. Impulsively, he reached out and grabbed her forearm. Serena hissed and pulled away from him. Logan closed his eyes and sighed. "I want to help," he told her, opening his eyes to look at her again. "You asked me to work on this project for a reason" Serena pointed out. "Either you trust me to handle it, or you don't." Logan winced.

"There you go with the 'trust' thing again," he hissed. A few of the nearby workers stopped what they were doing to watch. When Logan glared at them, they all scurried away, leaving Logan and Serena to face off alone. "Well, it is kind of a reoccurring theme with you, Logan," Serena said. She tossed her clipboard onto a nearby desk and crossed her arms. "This has nothing to do with trust," Logan groaned. "I want to see this center succeed, and I want to help if I can.

"You can't!" Serena snapped. Logan rolled his eyes. "Can you for a moment pretend that I'm your Alpha and not your ex?" he asked. Serena snorted. "Is that a threat?" she asked. Logan shook his head. "Not at all," he said, softening his tone. "Then I stand by what I said," Serena insisted. "I will let you know if I need your help with anything." Logan shook his head. "You can't freeze me out, Serena," he argued. "I am still your Alpha, and you are still a member of this pack." Serena narrowed her eyes at him. "I don't have to be," she threatened. Logan growled. He grabbed Serena's upper arms, giving her a little shake.

"Do not make a threat like that," he hissed through gritted teeth. "If you ever threaten to take my kids away from the pack, I promise you, you'll regret it." Serena's eyes softened. Logan could tell she already regretted making such a threat. She wouldn't apologize, he knew that, but it was clear her threat was an impulsive statement "I won't," Serena said. She stepped away from Logan, picking up her clipboard again. "I've got to get back to work." Logan nodded. Serena disappeared into the area that was going to be the Women's Center office. Logan stared after her for a long moment. He sighed finally, heading out of the center. Arguing with Serena hadn't gotten any less aggravating. He had asked for her help because he knew she had the right expertise, but he had also asked because he wanted a project they could both be involved with. She was trying to avoid him, though. She was doing everything she could to make it clear that there was nothing between them to save anymore. Logan growled to himself as he left.

"Logan!" Serena called after him. Logan spun around, a glimmer of hope in his chest. "What is it?" he asked taking a few steps back towards her. "Can you pick the kids up from daycare?" she asked. "I'm going to be here late. I can come pick them up at your place later." Logan nodded. "I'll take care of it," he said with a nod. "I'll make sure they get dinner." "Thanks!" Serena shouted before ducking back into the center. Logan shook his head. At least he was going to have some time with the twins that evening. Spending time with them would definitely turn his mood around.

"Are you and mommy going to live together again?" Olivia asked while Logan walked the twins back to his house.

"I don't know," Logan admitted.

"We miss you," Oliver said. Logan smiled and ruffled Oliver's hair. "I miss you guys too," he said. "But we still get to spend a lot of time together. Your mom wants me to make you two dinner tonight. And you'll get to see your

grandmother."

"Grandma Flo?" Olivia asked.

"Yes, of course," Logan said with a nod. When they got to the house, the kids broke away from Logan, excited to run in and see their grandmother. Logan chuckled when he entered the front door and found his mother hugging both the kids.

"The two of you have been gone too long," she said kissing them each and then blowing raspberries at them. Logan laughed again. "Go on and play," Logan said. "I'll come up in a few minutes."

The twins ran up the stairs to the bedroom they used to stay in when Serena's house was being rebuilt. It had more or less been turned into a play room for them. "Logan, you look tired," Flo commented. The Alpha nodded.

"I had a spat with Serena today," he admitted. His mother gave him a knowing, sympathetic look. She rubbed his arm comfortingly. "She'll come around," Flo said.

"How can you be sure?" Logan asked. "Because I need more time with my grandbabies," she said with a smile. Logan scoffed and rolled his eyes. That wasn't the type of comfort he was looking for. He was thinking that it was time to let go of Serena. She was his mate and he cared about her, but he couldn't force something that wasn't there anymore. At least he still had the kids. With that, Logan headed up the stairs to play with them while his mother fixed dinner.

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Chapter 154: Parent Trap

When Serena finished up for the day, she headed to Logan's house. Even though she wasn't happy to be around him lately, she knew she couldn't deny him contact with the kids. Her threat from earlier had slipped out before she even thought about it. She knew that she would never part Logan and the twins. They loved him too much and he was so good to them. He had a right to be in their lives. Logan had just made her so mad, talking about being Alpha and everything. She had spoken before thinking, and that had been a mistake. Even if she and Logan couldn't make things work, she couldn't keep his own kids from him.

When she arrived at Logan's house, Flo was waiting for her in the living room. "They are playing out in the yard," Flo told her. "Come sit with me a moment. We haven't had a chance to talk recently." Serena smiled and nodded. "I'm sorry about that," Serena said. "Work keeps me busy, and so does Logan whenever he has a new project." Flo chuckled. "He is just trying to find ways to be around you," Flo said. "Don't tell him I told you that." Flo winked at Serena.

"I won't," Serena assured. "Even so, I shouldn't neglect my other friends. You've always been good to me and the twins." "I'm always here for you, and my grandchildren," Flo promised. "I should go get the kids," Serena said. Flo nodded as Serena departed.

The kids came running up to her on the porch. "Mommy, mommy!" Olivia and Oliver shouted together. Serena bent down to hug them, but they ran right passed her and went into the house. Shaking her head, Serena smiled after them. Logan walked up the steps towards her. "Thanks for taking care of them tonight," Serena said. Logan nodded. "Any time," he said. "I'll help you wrangle them."

"It is appreciated," Serena said.

They followed the twins inside, but they weren't in their play room. Serena rolled her eyes. She could hear the twins giggling and playing in one of the secret passageways

they had discovered. "Olivia, Oliver, come on out," Serena said. "It is time to go." "We'll come out in Daddy's bedroom," Olivia said. "Go meet us there, both of you!" Serena looked at Logan. He shrugged. They went into his bedroom together. Serena opened the closet door, waiting for

Olivia and Oliver to crawl out of the tunnel. Neither of them appeared. "Where are you two?" Serena called. She knelt down to look inside. She couldn't see either of them.

Behind them, Logan's bedroom door slammed shut. Serena jumped to her feet. Logan was already at the door trying to open it. From the other side, Serena heard the twins giggling and laughing. "They locked us in?" Serena asked when Logan stepped away from the door. "Looks like," he said with a sigh. Serena went to the door and tested the knob herself. It wouldn't budge.

They were locked in!

"Those little brats!" Serena hissed, pounding her hand on the door. "Olivia, Oliver, you open this door right now!" Her demand was met with more giggles. "No!" they shouted back. "You two need a time out." Serena sighed and turned to look at Logan. "They planned this," she said. Logan smirked and nodded.

"It seems so," he said casually. He went and sat on the edge of his bed. "How are we going to get out of here?" Serena asked, putting her hands on her hips. Logan shrugged.

"We'll think of something," he offered. His laid back demeanor was infuriating to Serena. She groaned and threw her arms up in the air.

"The one time you decide to choose inaction!" she snapped. Logan chuckled humorlessly. "They are just trying to help," he said. "Help with what?" Serena asked. Logan raised an eyebrow at her. "They want us back together," he explained. Serena rolled her eyes. "I know that, but it isn't going to happen," she insisted. "I know," Logan said. "Let them play their games and get it all out of their system. They will eventually accept it." Serena shook her head. Logan wasn't wrong. The twins needed to come to terms with this on their own.

"I guess we can wait it out," she said. She sat in a reading chair Logan had in his room. Where Logan sat, they were facing each other slightly. "I sent my mom a text, she will try to get them to unlock the door, or figure out a way to open it from the outside," Logan said, holding up his phone. "If I had my tools, 1 could remove the knob from this side." "What tools do you need?" Serena asked. "A screw driver and a drill" he said. Serena sighed. She didn't know what could be used in place of those two.

Parent Trap "What about the tunnel into their bedroom?" she asked, "Is that something we could fit through?" She stood up and crouched down at Logan's closet again. She visually measured the opening. It looked big enough for her to get her hip and shoulders

through. "Maybe," Logan said, "The tunnel isn't a uniform width, though. There are areas that are narrower." Serena sighed. She wasn't going to risk getting stuck in the walls of Logan's house.

"Those two are so grounded!" Serena said. She shook her head and went back to the chair, plopping down heavily. Logan laughed at her. "Go easy on them," Logan said. "This is difficult."

"Go easy on them?" Serena asked, crossing her arms. "You've been a parent for what, five minutes, Logan, and you're going to give me advice on what is difficult for them?"

"Serena, we're locked in my bedroom together because the twins thought they needed to take matters into their own hands. I don't need to have your parental experience to understand this is hard for them," he said. He waved his arms around the room.

Serena looked around. She remembered the last time she had been in Logan's room, and her cheeks reddened suddenly. She looked away from the bed quickly

Logan chuckled.

"Remembering something?" he asked her, mockingly. Serena shook her head, her stomach squirming. "Trying not to," she admitted. Logan chuckled again. "Look, we might be at odds now, but I don't want you to think that our time together and our memories aren't worth remembering," Logan said. Serena looked at him, meeting his eyes for the first time. "I appreciate what you are trying to do," Serena said. Logan smiled. "You know, whatever our relationship is like, we are still family. We are still connected through the twins," Logan said, "I know," Serena said with a nod.

"So, please, don't shut me out or be cold to me. I know I messed up, and I know you'll never forgive me for that. But we still have our kids, and it would be better for all of us If you and I could at least be nice to each other," Logan said Serena sighed. When Logan made sense like that, she found it really difficult to hold onto her anger

She letit float away, the tension in her neck and back easing, "Alright, I will try," she said. "Good," Logan said with a nod,

The doorknob rattled and Logan and Serena both jumped up, running to the door

"Olivia, Oliver, is that you?" Serena asked.

"It is me," Flo said. "I've got a screw driver. The twins wouldn't tell me where they put the key. Logan, can you talk me through this?" Serena stepped away from the door. Logan spoke through the wood, telling his mother how to use the screw driver to unlock the door. Serena crossed her arms. Logan was so patient with her and coached her through each moment. She couldn't help but smile as he gave Flo the instructions. Finally, Flo got the doorknob released. The door popped open. Serena was happy to be out of the room. She went straight downstairs to where Olivia and Oliver were sitting on the couch. "What are you two doing?" Serena asked. "Grandma Flo put us in time out," Olivia pouted. "Good," Serena said, raising an eyebrow at them. "Get your things, it is time to go home."

"Mom!" Olivia whined. Serena shook her head. "It is late, and they two of you are in trouble for what you did," she said. Sulking, Olivia and Oliver got off the couch to get their things. "Well, that was an exciting turn of events," Logan said as he walked Serena and the twins out of the house. "Thank you again, Logan, for taking care of them," she said. Logan nodded and waved as they left the porch. Serena held Olivia and Oliver's hands tightly in hers, not giving them the chance to squirm away. She was still upset!

"Mommy, why can't daddy move back in?" Olivia asked on the walk home. Serena sighed. Maybe she was being too hard on them. "Mommy and Daddy need some time apart," Serena said. "Like how sometimes you and Oliver don't want to play together." "How long will that go on?" Olivia whined. Serena shrugged. She didn't know if it would ever end.

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Chapter 155: The Medical Board

"Serena, there is a call for you on the outside line," Adriana said, approaching Serena at the nurse's station. Serena had just finished her rounds for the afternoon. "Thanks," she said reaching for the nearest phone. "You might want to take it in my office," Adriana said. "The outside line means a call from the human world." "Right, good call" Serena said with a nod.

She headed to Adriana's office and picked up the phone. "This is Serena," she said to answer. "Serena, it is Dr. Jensen from the Medical Board," the person on the other line said. "Hello, what can I do for you, Dr. Jensen?" she asked. "I was going over your residency forms, and it looks like you exceeded the amount of time you can for your residency hours where you are," Dr. Jensen said. Serena creased her brow. "I don't understand" she admitted. "The doctor overseeing your residency wrote down that you would be working at a religious retreat compound," Dr. Jensen explained. "While working on religious compounds is acceptable, it can't exceed six months of your residency term. Otherwise, we won't be able to approve your medical license." Serena rolled her eyes. Adriana must have listed the pack as a religious retreat compound so no one would try and follow up with her. If they dug too deep, they might discover that she was a werewolf working in a werewolf pack. "Thank you for the call," Serena said. "What are my options, going forward?" "To complete your residency and get your medical license, you'll have to transfer to a hospital. It can be a teaching hospital affiliated with a school or it can be a hospital with no educational affiliations. It does need to be an accredited facility," Dr. Jensen explained.

"Alright, thank you," Serena said. "Can you email me the transfer forms and I'll get them filled out?"

"Certainly," the other doctor said. Serena passed along her email address and hung up the phone.

She went to find Adriana who was finishing up with a routine exam. "We have a problem," Serena said. She quickly explained the situation. Adriana shook her head and sighed. "That is a problem," she said. "Or, maybe it isn't. You're a doctor in a pack, and you are an amazing doctor. You don't need the human–world license to practice medicines

here."

"That's true," Serena said. She felt strange about not getting her medical license, though, like she had given up or hadn't completed what she set out to do. "Look, if you want me to sign the transfer forms, I will. Just let me know what you decide," Adriana said. "Thanks," Serena said. As much as she didn't want to admit it, she was going to have to talk to Logan about the situation. Even though they weren't in a relationship anymore, Logan still had to know.

First and foremost, he was her Alpha. She had to clear it with him as her Alpha before spending time in the human world. On top of that, he was the father of her children. If she was going to be out in the human world for a while with the twins, he'd have to be okay with the twins being gone from the pack for a while. The twins were at Logan's house and she had planned to pick them up after work. She really wanted to talk to Logan alone, away from his mother and away from the kids. Olivia and Oliver hadn't abandoned their crusade to try and trap their parents back together.

Serena knocked when she arrived at Logan's house. He opened the door and invited her in.

"Is your mother with the twins?" she asked. "Yea, she's making them dinner," Logan said with a nod. "Can we talk, please, out here?" Serena motioned to the porch. Logan nodded and stepped out. "What's going on?" he asked. Serena sighed. "Remember how I transferred back here to complete my residency for my medical license?" she asked. "I don't know the specifics, but I know you still had some work to do before officially becoming a doctor," Logan said with a nod. Serena crossed her arms. She wasn't trying to be confrontational, but she wanted to remain closed off to him. "Well, to prevent the medical board from asking questions, Adriana listed my location as a religious retreat compound. Apparently, I can only do six months of my residency in a

location like that and have to do the rest of my hours at an accredited hospital," she explained quickly. Logan raised an eyebrow at her. She wasn't sure if he understood what she was saying. "That means I'll have to go back to the human world to complete my residency and get my medical license," she said. Logan's eyes narrowed into a glare at her. "This is a good excuse for you, isn't it?" he asked. "The perfect opportunity for you to

leave the pack and take your kids away from me. You can do it professionally, officially, and I can't get mad at you, or I will be holding you back." "Logan," Serena sighed. "I didn't come here to fight. You're my Alpha, and the father of the twins. I need your approval on this." "You don't need a human approved medical license to practice medicine in the pack," Logan pointed out, the same way Adriana had. "It is important to me," Serena said. "Important for me to finish this." "I don't want you to leave," Logan said firmly. "Is that because you still think we can work things out or because I am an asset to the pack?" she asked sharply. Logan scoffed. "Does it matter?" he countered.

"Yes!" Serena snapped. "If you're choosing to keep me here because of selfishly motivated reasons, that is just wrong." "Would you consider not wanting to be separated from my kids selfishly motivated?" Logan asked. "Need I remind you that I have spent a fraction of the time with them as my children as you've gotten to spend with them." Serena rolled her eyes. "That's not fair, Logan, I didn't know you were their father either," she reminded him. "There are a lot of reasons I don't want you to go," Logan admitted gruffly.

"Are you denying my request, then?" Serena asked. Logan sighed, shaking his head. "Let me think about it," he told her. Serena nodded.

When she got the kids home, it was late enough to get them right into bed. They wanted to sleep in the same room together, so Serena tucked them both in Olivia's bedroom.

"How would you two feel about going back to the human world for a little while?" Serena asked

"Where we lived before coming to the pack?" Olivia asked.

Yea, when Mommy was still in school to be a doctor," Serena said,

"I don't want to," Oliver said, shaking his head Olivia shook her head too.

"I don't want to either," Olivia said. She pouted and crossed her arms "We like it here," Oliver added. "Yeah, we want to stay here with you and Daddy." Olivia said. Serena sighed. She leaned in a kissed them each on the forehead,

"Don't make us leave, mommy!" Oliver demanded "No, we don't wanna gol" Olivia cried out Serena calmed them down gently "Don't worry, babies," she said. "I'll come up with a plan" Serena tossed and turned all night logan had turned against her, Adriana was telling

her she didn't need to go, and her own children didn't want to leave the pack. Since coming to the pack, she hadn't felt this alone! It was a horribly isolated feeling. It reinforced the idea that Serena didn't feel like she belonged in the pack. She wasn't even Luna, and already, her independence was severely stunted. She had to get permission from her Alpha, who happened to be her ex and had a conflict of interest, to finish her career. The whole reason for becoming a doctor in the first place was to step out of the shadow of her brother and her parents. Now, she was finding she couldn't even complete that goal of hers because another Alpha was standing in her way. It wasn't just and Alpha this time, though, it was also her own kids! They loved the pack. It was exactly why she had brought them back to the pack. They needed to know what it was like. Serena felt betrayed by them, even though it wasn't logical. They wanted to stay with the pack more than they wanted to stay with her. Again, she felt a crippling loneliness. She wondered if maybe her parents would have any advice for her. She didn't think they would, they hadn't wanted her to leave and go to medical school in the first place. Tossing and turning, Serena couldn't put her mind to rest. She just kept thinking over and over again how she felt like it was a mistake to have returned to the pack in the first place. She'd gotten her twins attached to the lifestyle, she'd let them get attached to their father! Doing all of that had been the right thing to do for the kids, but now it meant that she wasn't going to get the one thing she wanted to do most.

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Chapter 156: Surprise Encouragement

Serena had to work another shift at the hospital the next day. She hadn't heard from Logan on what his final decision was about letting her go to complete her degree or not.

She worked as if on autopilot throughout the day, slightly in a daze. She still couldn't get over how selfish Logan was being. He clearly wanted her to stay for selfish reasons that had nothing to do with the pack. Whether it was because of the twins of because he wanted her around, his reasons had nothing to do with her status as a doctor in the pack. Other than telling her that she didn't need a human approved medical license to be a pack doctor, nothing he had said had anything to do with her career.

It angered her that even after breaking up, he still wanted to get in her way. He knew how important her career was to her, probably more than anyone else! Logan was one of the first people she'd confided in about it. "Serena," Logan's voice pulled her from her daze. She blinked at the computer screen she'd been zoning out in front of. "Logan," she said with a nod. "I thought about it, and I'd like to talk this over," he said. "We can use Adriana's office," Serena offered. Logan nodded and he followed her in. Adriana was sitting at her desk eating lunch. "Oh, is something wrong?" Adriana asked. "Do you mind if we have your office for a private chat?" Serena asked. Adriana grinned and winked. Serena rolled her eyes. "Sure, take your time," she said, sticking her tongue out. Serena sighed as Adriana left. "She clearly has the wrong idea," Serena said. She turned around and sat on the edge of Adriana's desk. "Adriana has quite the imagination," Logan agreed. "So, what did you want to talk about?" she asked. Logan nodded, rocking back on his heels. "I can't let you go," he said. Serena's jaw dropped open and she crossed her arms. "Logan, why?" she asked, "It isn't necessary for you to go," he explained. "Not to practice medicine here. I don't want you alone in the human world, vulnerable and away from the pack. I don't want the kids out in the human world vulnerable and away from the pack. There is no pack–based reason for you to do this."

"And what about personal reasons?" Serena asked. "You know what this means to me!"

"I do," Logan agreed with a nod. "You're too important to the pack and the kids are too important to me. That's the reality of it. You might think I am being selfish, but I'm thinking about this from a rational point of view, as an Alpha." "Logan, I need this," Serena said. "You don't," Logan insisted. "That is what you aren't understanding!" "No, you're not understanding!" Serena snapped. She threw her arms up into the air. "This isn't about the pack or whether I can or can't practice medicine here. It is about me! It is about reaching my own life goals. That is the reason I left my pack in the first place."

"But you came back!" Logan snarled. "You can't pick and choose when and for how long you are part of a pack. That isn't how this works. You're either here or you aren't. I can't let you choose the latter, because your kids are my kids, which means they are my heirs." Serena shook her head. Anger boiled through her blood and through her skin. She stood up straight and walked away from Logan, her shoulders completely tense and rigid.

"Logan, you have to let me go and do this!" she cried. The office door opened and Adriana came back in. "Okay, I'm stepping in now because the whole hospital is hearing your argument," she said. "Logan, I get it, Serena is an asset and you have strong personal ties so you don't want her to leave. I did it, though. Anyone in the pack who gets a career license from the human world does it. She is in no more danger than the rest of us."

Logan scoffed and shook his head. Serena smiled gratefully at Adriana. "Thank you," she said. "You see, Logan, the twins and I will be perfectly safe and fine out there. It isn't like we haven't been in the human world on our own." "That may be, but Serena, you're being a little insensitive to Logan's concerns. He is Alpha and the twins are his children and heirs. He has every right to be concerned and every right to keep you here," Adriana pointed out. Serena sighed. Of course, Adriana would be the mediator. "Now, I can't tell the two of you what to do, but what I can say is that you both need to come to a compromise," Adriana explained. "The pack needs you both, and that means

you two have to start getting along." Adriana left them alone again. Serena and Logan exchanged a few more quick looks, looking away from each other just as quickly. "She's right," Logan said softly. "Yeah, she is," Serena said.

Chapter 156. Surprise Encouragement "I'm not sure I can come up with a compromise for this one," Logan admitted. "I know what it means to you, but I also know I can't let you and the twins be away from the pack for that long."

"There has to be something," Serena said. "Please, Logan." She gave him an imploring look and Logan's eyes softened. "I'll think about it more," Logan offered. He left Serena alone in Adriana's office. Serena and Logan looked at each other bashfully and looked away quickly. Adriana was scolding them like a mother. Though Serena and Logan didn't reach an agreement in Adriana's office, they didn't get into another argument. When she got home, Serena called her father. "Serena, it is good to hear from you," Thomas said when he picked up the phone. "Dad, I have a question for you," she said. "Go ahead," Thomas said. She quickly explained her situation with the medical board and the arguments she'd had with Logan. Her father was quiet on the other line for several minutes.

"Honey, I know how important getting your medical license is," Thomas said. "You do?" Serena asked, surprised that he was being sympathetic towards her, especially since she never thought he cared. "Even if you and Logan never have a future together, but especially if you do, you'll regret not doing this," he said. "Do you really think that?" Serena asked. "Of course!" Thomas assured. "Serena, your mother and I have always been proud of you. Being a doctor is important to you. You still have to follow your own dreams." "But what about the twins and the pack?" Serena asked. She wanted her father's honest opinion. "Serena, if you don't do this, you'll begin to resent Logan. The two of you are tied together through the kids, and resentment will only cause a rift between the two of you that will hurt the kids." Thomas explained to her. "I don't want that for you or for them." "Dad, I don't think Logan and I are going to get back together,' Serena admitted. "That's not what I mean," Thomas clarified. "Even if you work as a pack doctor, he is the Alpha and your kids' father. Because of those two connections, you'll find reasons to resent him if you don't follow through with this." "He doesn't want me and the kids to be away from the pack in the human world," Serena explained. "Of course, he doesn't," Thomas said with a chuckle. "He is an Alpha. He feels

possessive of you and the kids. Even if the two of you aren't together anymore, as the mother of his children, he feels possessive." "That is an Alpha trait I don't enjoy," Serena admitted. Thomas chuckled into the phone again. "Give him time, it will mellow out," he said. Serena laughed lightly. It irritated her that Logan was so possessive sometimes, but she also relied on it sometimes. It would mean he'd always protect her and the kids, even if she and Logan were never together again. Having that kind of protection gave her some peace of mind. "If you want my advice, I say go for it," Thomas said. "It is a once in a lifetime opportunity, and something that is important to you." "You're right," Serena said with a nod. "Thanks, Dad." They said their goodbyes, and she hung up. She hadn't expected to get that kind of support from her father. The

truth was, Serena had always thought her parents resented her for leaving the pack and pursuing other career options. She had thought they felt betrayed. It made her happy that her father was encouraging her to go for what she wanted, but it was also surprising. Serena knew she still couldn't act without Logan's permission, but she had enough support from other sources now, she felt like she had a good leg to stand on.

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Chapter 157: Choices

Logan hadn't heard anymore from Serena about leaving the pack, so he assumed the matter had been put to rest. That was until she showed up in his office so they could have another private chat. Serena marched in. She shut and locked the door, turning hard eyes on Logan. The Alpha dropped his pen and leaned back in his chair. He linked his fingers together and cupped them around the back of his head. "This isn't going to be good," he muttered. Serena rolled her eyes. "Logan, you can't stop me from going," she said. Logan scoffed. "I'll tell you why." Logan arched an eyebrow at her. "By all means, go ahead," he said. He held a hand out to her, inviting her to continue.

"If you don't let me go, I will come to resent you. Whether we remain professional, or give our relationship a try again if you keep me here, that will just become resentment, and we will never be happy with each other," she explained. Logan sighed.

"I know," he said. He didn't like it, but he couldn't deny the truth. "I've been thinking about it a lot, and there are a few options," she said. Logan raised an eyebrow at her. "Like?" he asked. Serena smiled. Logan could tell she was happy that he wasn't just shutting her down. "I could apply at a hospital that is close to the pack rather than going into a big city," she said. "You could come with me. I'll be working busy hours so it would give you more time with the kids, but you would also be close to the pack." "Serena, I can't leave the pack like that, you know that," Logan said. Serena sighed and looked down at the floor. "Think about it, please," she said. "It would mean a lot to me, getting to do this, and having you there. It would mean a lot to the kids too." "I'll think about it," Logan assured. Serena nodded and smiled. "Thank you," she said. Logan nodded. "I'll get back to you soon," he offered. Serena nodded and left. Logan picked up his pen again to get back to work, but he dropped it almost instantly.

The idea of leaving the pack with Serena had never crossed his mind. She had presented a reasonable solution, but he didn't think he could just walk away from the pack so easily. Carson, some see me in my office, Logan said, reaching out through the mental link. Logan stood up and started pacing while he waited for his Beta. When Carson arrived,

he raised an eyebrow at the pacing Alpha. "You're in a mood," Carson stated, taking a seat. Logan scoffed and let his head fall back on his shoulders. "Yeah, to say the least," he said. "Well, what's going on?" Carson asked. He held his hands out to Logan. The Alpha sighed. He resumed his pacing. "How would you feel about being the primary leadership of the pack for a while?" Logan asked. Carson's jaw dropped open. "Uhh...that is a huge responsibility," Carson said. "Why, where is this coming from?"

"Serena wants to finish her medical license in the human world. It is important to her," he explained. "She has asked me to accompany her to a hospital near the pack so I can have time with the kids and help her out while she works. It will still be close to the pack, but I will be temporarily offsite." Carson shook his head. He sighed and stroked his chin. "I don't know, Logan," Carson said. "Are you sure you want to do this?" "No," Logan said shaking his head. "I can't..." he trailed off and sat down at his desk with a frustrated growl. "Logan, I know you want to make things right with Serena, but this is a major sacrifice. The pack needs you, and your Alpha. They come first," he pointed out "I know, I know," Logan said. "Just tell me, will you do it?" Carson sighed heavily. "Yeah," he said. "I mean, of course, I will." Logan nodded. "Thank you," Logan said. "I will keep you posted on new developments. You could probably get Santino to help out too. He's eager to try his hand as Alpha." "I'm sure he will be helpful," Carson said with a nod. At the end of his day, Logan headed home. He still wasn't sure what he wanted to do. He knew that Serena was going with or without him, and based on her resentment speech, he couldn't very well get in her way. He knew he didn't want to be without the kids that long, and Serena had said it would mean a lot to her to have him there. He wanted to do right by her. He felt that if he left

that pack, even temporarily, he'd be failing them. Logan entered his house and went straight to the kitchen, finding a beer for himself, "Ugh, you are stressed," Flo said, catching Logan's attention. He raised an eyebrow at his mother. "That's what everyone keeps saying," he admitted. Flo smiled. "It must be true, then," she teased. "What's going on?" "I'm considering leaving the pack temporarily." Logan said. Flo smiled.

"Why?" she asked. Logan groaned and sat heavily at the kitchen table. "Serena and the kids," he said. Flo nodded. "Yes, I heard about her medical license;" Flo admitted. "Honey, she asked you to go with her. That is a good sign that she wants to make things work, that she wants you involved. You shouldn't discredit that so easily." "I'm not," Logan assured. "I want to go with her, but I don't want to fail the pack." Flo shook her head, placing her hand on Logan's shoulder. "You wouldn't be failing the pack," Flo said. "You have Carson to handle things." "And Santino," Logan added. "And me" Flo added. "We can handle it all." "Serena said she would look for somewhere close by," Logan added. *"Then it is settled," Flo said. "You can't pass up this opportunity, Logan. This is about

your family." "The pack is supposed to come first, though, always," he said. "That's true, and it isn't like you are abandoning the pack. You've made plans so that it is in good hands, and you're not going to be far," she said. "You made the plans for the good of the pack. Now you have to make plans for the good of your family." Logan smiled and tilted his head back so he could look up at his mother. "Thanks," he said. She had put everything in perspective, and he knew that he could do it now. Flo left him alone, and Logan took out his cell to call Serena. When she answered, he could hear the kids screaming in the background and she sounded flustered. "What is going on?" Logan asked. "The twins aren't happy about leaving the pack, or you," Serena said. Logan chuckled into the phone. "They don't have to worry about that," Logan assured. "I've made arrangements for the pack, and I can go with you to the human world." Serena let out a long sigh. "Logan, you have no idea...thank you so much," she said. Logan smiled, even though she couldn't see it. "Look, I know how important this is to you," he said. "I know how important the twins are to both of us. I want to do whatever I can." "And the pack?" Serena asked. "I know they are important to you too." "Of course," Logan said. "But I've made arrangements, and it is temporary." "Thank you," Serena said. "You know my mother is going to want to throw a going away party," Logan said with a chuckle. Serena laughed into the phone too.

"It will be a good send off," she said. "I could use your help convincing the twins this is not going to be forever."

"I'll talk to them," Logan promised. They said their goodbyes.

Logan sighed and hung up the phone. He was a little nervous himself about living in the human world for an extended period of time. He'd visited the human world now and then, but he had no where near the same experience as Serena. She would slide in comfortably. He was looking forward to the new experience, though, and having time with the kids. There would be plenty of parks to explore and places to go with them. He'd be worried about the pack, but without the responsibilities of Alpha, he might actually get to enjoy the time without worrying that he'd be called away any moment. Logan scratched his eyebrow. He was more concerned about leaving the pack because of his own anxiety rather than feeling like he would have failed the pack. He'd have to get over that, and not let Serena see it. He didn't want to ruin this for her. She had given him the choice, she had offered him a way to help, and she had come up with a rational solution. He had to make the best of this, for her.

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Chapter 158 : Birthday Party Part 2

"Oh, those rotten little..." Alexandra groaned as she tried the door again.

"What's wrong?" Santino asked. It was the first direct thing he'd said to her since he'd returned from his Damon hunt.

"The kids locked us in. They seem to have hidden all the keys, too," Alexandra said. She looked out the window and saw all three of them huddled together in the yard, laughing. Alexandra knocked on the window to get their attention. They all looked at her, pointed, and then ran off into the woods, laughing. "Well, they are clever," Santino chuckled.

*Not really the time for that," Alexandra grumbled. There had to be another way out of the house. She tested all the doors, but the kids had clearly planned ahead. She tried the windows too. The only one she could get open didn't open enough for her to slip out, not with her slightly engorged belly. Santino definitely wouldn't be able to get out. "Alex, you might want to calm down. The stress isn't good for you or that baby," Santino said.

"Oh, now you care!?" she snapped. Santino immediately threw his hands up in surrender. Alexandra scoffed and shook her head, heading up to the second floor. The balcony door wasn't locked, so she went out where she could see the kids in the yard. "You three better unlock a door and let us out!" she cried. "No, not until you and Daddy are happy again," Sophia yelled back. "Open a door, or so help me! I will jump off this balcony and spank the three of you," Alexandra shouted. She climbed up to the balcony rail but Santino grabbed her arm and pulled her down. "You're not jumping! That is an insanely bad idea, Alex. You're pregnant!" Santino said harshly. She tried to pull away from him, but he tightened his grip on her arm. "What are you doing?" she asked, desperately trying to pull away again. "The kids are right, we should talk," he said. He gently tugged her back inside.

Alexandra relented. The kids weren't going to let them out and Santino wasn't going to let her do anything extreme. They might as well use the time constructively.

"What do you want to talk about?" Alexandra asked. She took a seat in the kitchen and Santino put on a pot of

"Us," Santino said. "That's what the kids want. It is really the only thing we need to talk about." "What's left to say?" Alexandra asked moodily. "That I'm sorry," Santino said. He brought her tea and sat down across from her. "That doesn't change what happened," Alexandra pointed out, staring at her tea so she didn't have to look at him.

"Alex, you're pregnant again, with my baby, and I promised you wouldn't go through that alone. I don't want some past argument to come between that promise," he admitted.

"Maybe you should have thought of that before you accused me of dating someone else, and having pictures taken of me," she muttered.

"I wasn't having anyone take pictures of you. Honestly, I didn't want to believe it. I knew Tatiana was trying to stir up trouble, and she knew exactly how to do that. I'm ashamed to say I bought into her meddling," he explained. That was such a strong admission from Santino. Alexandra looked up at him, creasing her brow. Was it possible that he

was owning up to his mistakes? "I know I have a lot to prove in regards to trusting you, but I want you to know that it isn't you I don't trust," he said.

"Then what is it?" Alexandra asked, raising an eyebrow.

"I guess I always think the worst. It is obviously something I need to work on. I want you to know I am working on it and it doesn't change how I feel about you or are family. It doesn't change that I want to be married to you and raise our baby together," he said.

Slowly, Santino reached across the table and took Alexandra's arm. She swallowed hard, letting him touch her. Tears pricked the corners of her eyes. It was so good to hear him admit his shortcomings and take responsibility for what he said and did.

The fact that he also said he still wanted to be married and raise their baby... Alexandra was ready to give in. "I've been waiting for you to say that," she admitted softly. Santino smiled. "I'm sorry I made you wait so long." He stood up and pulled her with him, wrapping his arms around her. Alexandra sighed, leaning against Santino. She was so happy and moved she thought she'd break down in tears, but all she could do was laugh and hug Santino back. "Okay, think the kids will let us out of here now?" she asked, laughing again. Santino opened the kitchen window. "Hey, you three! We are ready to come out now." "I want to see you kiss, just to make sure," Charlie insisted. Santino glanced over his shoulder at her. Alexandra smiled shyly. Santino took her in

Chapter 158 Birthday Party Part 2 his arms and bent her over backwards, kissing her passionately on the lips. Alexandra closed her eyes, holding the back of his head.

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Sophia, Charlie, and Gabriel all cheered and jumped up and down, high fiving each other.

"I'll get the keys," Gabriel said. He ran to the swing set and dug up the keys. As soon as the door was open, their parents ran out. Sophia and Charlie winced, ready for their mom to be mad. Instead, she hugged them both tightly and kissed them. "I should be mad at you, but this time, I think the three of you did the right thing," their mom said, touching Sophia's cheek. "Time to go camping," Charlie insisted.

"Best birthday ever!" Sophia said holding one of her mother's hands and one of their father's. She stayed right between them all the way to the tents. Their dad lit a fire and they all sat around it, getting our marshmallows, chocolate, and graham crackers for s'mores. "We should do this every birthday," Charlie said, licking sticky marshmallow off his

fingers.

"Yeah, instead of a cake, we can just have lots of s'more's," Sophia said. She smiled at her parents.

They were sitting really close together. Their dad had his arm around their mom's waist and she rested her head on his shoulder. It was the perfect romantic picture. "Here Mommy, I made this for you," Sophia said, handing over a s'more. "Thanks, baby," she said. The marshmallow stuck to Sophia's hand as her mom took the treat. "Oh, look up there," Their dad said, pointing to the sky. "Whoa," Charlie gasped. The kids all looked up to see streaks of light in the sky, like glowing rain falling on the mountains. "What is all that?" Sophia asked, craning her neck to see better. "It is a meteor shower," their dad explained. "So pretty!" Sophia said.

"Will they hit us?" Gabriel asked, looking concerned. Their parents laughed. That kind of laugh the kids knew meant something they said was only funny to adults. Sophia, Charlie, and Gabriel all exchanged looks. "No, we are safe," their dad assured.

"Small little rocks floating up in space burn up in earth's atmosphere," their mom explained. "The light streaks are the rocks burning up."

"They're on fire!?" Charlie asked.

"Yes, but they are so far away, all we see is a little light. The rocks burn up before they get close enough to hurt anyone," their dad assured.

"Wow," Sophia gasped. "Definitely the best birthday ever."

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Chapter 159

Chapter 159 : The Future

"Why are we going to the doctor, Mommy?" Sophia asked, tugging her mother's hand. " The doctor is going to show us what the baby looks like," she explained. "We'll see the b aby?" Charlie asked. "But how?"

Their mom laughed lightly. Sophia and Charlie rolled their eyes at each other. "There's a machine that allows doctors to see inside my belly while they baby is still growing. We will see the baby on a screen, like a TV screen," she told them. "That's so cool!" Sophia said. "Is the baby going to see us too?" Gabriel asked. "No, the baby can't see us. But t he baby can

hear and feel." Their mom stopped walking and took each of their hands, putting them on her belly. "The baby knows who is who and they you're their siblings." "Really?" Charli e asked, eyes nearly popping out of his head. "Really," their mom said, laughing again. The doctor put their mom on

a table, laying her down. Their dad held her hand as the doctor squeezed some blue gel on her stomach. She was getting rounder. The kids noticed it but now they could see h er big belly with her shirt lifted up. "Ready to see what's cooking in there?" the doctor sai d. "Our baby isn't cooking!" Sophia cried, horrified at the idea of the baby 'cooking! "Hon ey, it is just an expression," her mom assured, patting her hand. "I just meant that there' s a baby growing in there," the doctor confirmed, nodding at the kids.

She pressed a little wand on their mom's belly, and the screen flickered with a black and white image of lines and blobs. "That's the baby?" Charlie asked, wrinkling his face. "Ye s, that's the baby," the doctor said. She pointed to some of the lines. "There's the head, and you can see the little heart beating. It looks like you're having a girl." "A girl?" their mom gushed. She looked at their dad, starry eyed. "A girl?" Sophia asked, crossing her arms. "Yay! No more boys!" Charlie cried. "Two boys and two girls," Gabriel said, "That's perfect." "Yeah, I guess," Sophia grumbled. She liked being the only girl, but everyone else was really happy. "What do you think, is a girl good?" their mom

Cheet1 The Future to answer. He hadn't smiled at all yet, Sophia hoped that he thought of her as his only princess No room for another girl,

"I think a girl is the perfect addition to our family." their dad said. He leaned in and kisse d their mom's head, then put his hand on the back of Sophia's. "I want to be the only princess," Sophia insisted,

"You are a princess," her dad assured. "This new baby won't be a replacement. Just an other princess for our family." Sophia smiled. As long as she was the original princess, s he could be okay with a younger sister "We're going to have a girl!" Charlie cried.

Gabriel, Charlie, and Sophia started running around the room. "We're going to have a girl, we're going to have a girl," they sang as they ran around, [Flash Forward

When all his kids were grown, Thomas finally decided to step down as Alpha, handing o ver the reins of Starseeker to Santino. They were going to have a formal ceremony for b oth Starseeker and Moon Seeker to become one pack. Serena and Logan were there with their kids. Oliver had grown into a strong prospective Alpha and Olivia w as always pushing him out of his comfort zone.

Sophia and Olivia had become best friends and had recently become roommates in their own house

Charlie, Gabriel, and Oliver had arranged similar living conditions for themselves. Sophi a and Olivia were on the Moon Seeker side of the territory line while the three boys wer e on the Night Sky side, Santino and Alexandra's youngest daughter, Viki – short for Vic

toria in honor of her great grandmother – wasn't ready to move out yet and still lived in t he big house with her parents

Life had been good for Santino and Alexandra the past fifteen years. "Are you ready for this?" Alexandra asked, slipping her hand into his. Santino smirked and nodded, "I've be en ready for this for a while." "Just waiting on the old man to make up his mind about ret irement," Thomas said, laughing and clapping Santino on the back. Santino rolled his ey es but laughed. "Yeah, it only took

you fifteen years." "Well, you had four young kids to take care of, and a pack to rebuild. I didn't want to throw more responsibility at you," Thomas admitted, "Thanks, ev er 30" Santino said, rolling his eyes. "I, for one, am grateful that you only had one pack t o focus on while we were raising our kids," Alexandra said, kissing his cheek.

"Dad!" Sophia called, waving to him. "Hey, you, I'm glad *y*ou could make it," Santino sai d, hugging his eldest daughter. She hugged her mother too. "Of course, I'm here. Charli e and Gabriel are on their way with Oliver. This is a pretty big day," Sophia said. "It's not like I haven't been Alpha of my own pack for years," Santino grumbled. "Yeah, but this i s the first time two packs in the Federation have merged," she pointed out.

To no one's surprise, Sophia, Charlie, and Gabriel were

beyond smart. "Oh, I've got to go say hi to Uncle Logan and Aunt Serena. See you guys !" Sophia ran off.

"Do you have your speech prepared?" Alexandra asked. She nodded out at the gathere d crowd, a huge collection of Moon Seeker and Starseeker members. "I'm ready, don't worry about me," Santino assured. Thomas took the microphone first. "Settle down, eve ryone. I am happy to be here today, as the long–

time Alpha of Starseeker. I always knew that when I stepped down, my son, Santino, wo uld take over for me. When I leave this stage tonight, I will no –

longer be Alpha, and Starseeker will no longer be Starseeker."

It was a short speech, and there was a ripple of clapping through the crowd. Both packs knew this day was coming eventually, it wasn't a big surprise. Thomas handed the micr ophone over to Santino.

"It's all up to you now, my son," he muttered.

Santino chuckled nervously and cleared his

throat. "Thank you everyone, for gather today. As you all know, the Federation has strug gled in the past few decades to remain strong and cohesive. It is with great honor and humility that I take on the role of Alpha for a newly merged pack. Under one Alpha, i n a combined territory, with one name, *w*e are all Moon Seeker now." Another short spe ech. Santino bowed as everyone clapped, a little louder than before. He smiled and wav ed to everyone as he left the sage. Alexandra was waiting for him. She wrapped her ar ms around his neck and squealed. "Okay, okay, guys, that's enough with the public disp lays," Viki's voice said, breaking them apart.

"You're

late," Alexandra chastised. "I heard the speeches. What else is there?" she asked, still o wning that teenage attitude. "Viki!" Charlie called. He ran up behind his sister and pounc ed on her in a hug. "Hey! You're messing up my hair," Viki whined.

Gabriel and Sophia wandered over, laughing. "That's not too hard, you know," Sophia te ased, flipping a lock of Viki's hair. The youngest girl glared

at her older siblings. She'd always been the one to get teased most, but Viki had really I earned to hold her own. She was so strong and independent. Sometimes, Santino envis ioned her as the one taking over the pack for him when he was ready to step down. "Oh , we've got you all here together," Alexandra said, her voice cracking with sentimentality . "Come on, mom. This isn't a teary moment," Charlie said, rolling his eyes. "Yes, it is. C ome on, give me a hug," she demanded, holding out her arms. The kids, thought they w ere grown now, ran in and hugged their mom. Santino chuckled. It was so good to see h is kids all together and getting along. "Get in here, Dad<" Gabriel said. Santino smirked and moved closer to his family, hugging them all in his

wide embrace. The tangle of bodies and arms swayed dangerously, causing them all th e laugh and try to hold onto each other tighter. When the kids departed to mingle and enjoy the party, Santino put his arm around Alexandra's shoulders. "Well, we finally did it," he mused. "And this is the start of the next chapter of our happy life," she said. S antino smiled and nodded. The next chapter of their life was going to be just as perfect as all the others, he decided right then and there.