Chapter 40

A/N
Here we go.

Serena Lancaster

I fiddled with the new wedding ring on my finger, whistling nervously as we crossed into Alpha Adam's lands. His territory was expansive. Unlike the West, East, and South, which had many different packs under them, the North was one big powerful pack ruled by an Alpha from a ruthless bloodline. Alpha Adam Storm came from a family of fearsome warriors—one of his ancestors Ares Storm was nicknamed the Lycan Slayer back in his day.

Whew.

Jon said it was unsafe to drive by the borderline—even if the borders were well guarded, he still didn't want to risk anything especially since the Alpha was not around. I spotted part of it, thought. It was an impressive wall of concrete dotted with fortified outposts. Once in a while, I'd hear a howl from across the border and I'd shiver—I've never heard a rogue howl before.

I spotted some large houses, which Jon told me were built for the warriors. The normal pack members were safe in werewolf towns miles away from the border. Finally, we pulled into a large A-Frame house.

"This is where we'll be staying, along with Alpha Adam, his new mate, his beta, and the generals." Jon murmured, exiting the car. I went down as well, perusing the sleek, modern looking house.

"And my team?" I asked.

"There's room for them here as well. The only people who will know of your mission will be the people inside this house. We don't want information leaking out that the Queen is crossing the border." Jon said, carrying our entire luggage to the house.

"But what if they ask where I've gone?"

"I sent you home because I feared for your safety." Jon shrugged. We went inside the house, and it was very contemporary with large glass windows, a roaring fireplace, and a sleek kitchen. The house was surprisingly empty, but there were noises coming from the basement—creepy.

"What's down there?"

"A war room. The generals are doing some planning—we'll go down once we've settled and unpacked." Jon said.

"My friends? Darien? Priya?"

"Darien is in one of the border's outposts—he wanted to keep watch for a bit. Your friends are exploring the territory. If you plan on joining them, tell me so I can have one of Alpha Adam's men escort you."

He led us to our room, a large bedroom with a big bed, a wide window overlooking a rustling forest, and a fireplace. It was so modern, unlike the traditional, classic style of Lightwing's interiors—I liked it.

"I love Alpha Adam's style. We should redecorate Lightwing when the war's over!" I said admiringly, rubbing my hands to warm myself. Jon wrapped a warm, fluffy scarf around my shoulders.

There was silence. I looked at the whole room, it looked freshly cleaned. I picked up a fresh apple from a fruit bowl on a table. I smiled—it was nice of Alpha Adam's pack members to prepare all of this for us.

"How long do you think...you know...until my team and I can leave?" I asked, sitting down on the bed. Jon leaned against the window and stared down at the snowy exterior.

"General Ivon learned of a small group of rogues setting up shelters and dens out west. In a week or two we might be able to plan an attack." Jon sighed, closing his eyes. I knew the thought of me leaving to do this mission still did not sit well with him.

"So I have two weeks at most then."

"You leave right after the first battle is over." Jon said. "It's a battle I intend to win. Once we have that victory, Vanir Vanaheim will send more reinforcements to that area, leaving your path safer."

I looked out the window. Just then, I saw Priya, Christopher, Jane, Melanie and Paolo emerge from one of the forest trails and enter the house. They were bundled up nicely, and looked like they had enjoyable time hiking. I gave Jon my pretty please look and he nodded kissed kissing me on the forehead. I grabbed the bouquet from my wedding and ran downstairs.

"SERENA!" They all chorused, hugging me tight. Jane squealed when she saw the bright yellow flowers on my hand.

"What's that?"

"Well, you know how Jon and I took a detour before coming here?"

"Yeah! He told us you had some papers to sign in some other pack." Paolo said.

"Well, we did sign some papers..." I grinned, raising my left hand and wiggled my fingers. They took a moment, but suddenly they all whooped and squealed in happiness.

"OH MY GOSH!" "YOU GOT MARRIED!" "A WEDDING!" "WHY WEREN'T WE INVITED?"

"Calm down!" I laughed, and they all quieted. "We're gonna have a huge ceremony after the war, but Jon insisted we get married just the two of us before everything...you know..."

"Turns to shit?" Christopher offered. I rolled my eyes at him and Melanie smacked him on the shoulder.

"Anyway, I'm gonna do a bouquet toss. Girls, spread out." I squealed. They all chuckled, but did so anyway. I turned back and closed my eyes, tossing the bouquet. There were shouts and scuffles, and when I turned around Priya was holding the bouquet triumphantly.

Just then, the door from the basement opened and out came General Hassan.

"I heard some shouting is everyone..." He stopped and looked curiously at Priya as she held the flowers. Priya didn't pay him any mind, and proceeded to take a selfie with the bouquet.

"Sorry, I just had to do a bouquet toss..." I sheepishly said. "Jon and I got married in this human town before we got here..."

"Oh, wow!" He chuckled, giving a bow and kissing the back of my hand. "Congratulations, your majesty."

"General, I told you a lot of times to call me Serena." I growled playfully at him, thankful for the friendship I had forged with him throughout the months I had been in Lightwing. Divon Hassan was relatively young as a general, and he was the nicest and most level-headed of them all.

Not to mention how girls just loved following him around because of his extremely good looks, which annoyed him to no end.

"And I told you to call me Divon." He chuckled. "Well, don't let me ruin the party. Where's the King?"

"The King is over here..." Jon called, jogging down the stairs. Everyone immediately looked down and murmured *your majesty*My friends immediately excused themselves to give us privacy.

"I just got a call from one of the guards. Alpha Adam crossed the territory an hour ago so he should be arriving any minute now." Jon said. I bounced excitedly.

"I cannot wait to see a Solterra." I squealed. "Do you think I'll get to see the mark on her wrist? Or will she be wearing a sweater because it's cold? Ooh, maybe I should prick my finger or something and see if she can heal it, or maybe..."

"Slow down, love." Jon chuckled, giving me a kiss on the cheek. "We don't want to overwhelm the poor girl. It'll be her first time in a pack so we have to let her ease into it."

Just then, a car pulled up and parked, and my eyes lit.

"That must be them." General Hassan said. Jon put his arm around me and held me close; maybe he thought I was gonna pounce on the girl. There was some shuffling from outside, and finally, the door opened.

Alpha Adam looked like his father. Gold ranked, tall, well muscled like a Viking and built like a mountain. He had shaggy blonde hair falling haphazardly on his shoulders, a straight slightly crooked nose, and a scruffy beard. His arms and chest were filled with tattoos—I could spot them because he was wearing a simple V-neck shirt.

I was bundled up like crazy—how does this guy not have hypothermia?

Tucked under his arm was a girl, she looked so small next to Alpha Adam who was taller than Jon at around 6'5, and she was around 5'3. She had long, thick curly black hair that reached her waist, and dark brown skin that had been tanned to perfection. Her cheeks were so and round, and she had a cute button nose that was slightly flat. She was wearing a thick wool sweater, but I could see that she had lovely curves.

That's her. The last living Solterra female. The one with the healing powers.

Liesl Piper Solterra.

I saw her wide eyes curiously taking everything in, with her mouth slightly ajar. Alpha Adam didn't look to be capable of gentleness, but the way he held her and led her inside, he was definitely being careful with her. Why shouldn't he be? She was a Luna Solterra—the first in centuries!

I gaped at her, shaking myself when I realize I had been staring. They walked until they were in front of Jon and I. Jon and Alpha Adam looked at each other—it was obvious they were familiar with each other with how warmly Jon looked at him. Alpha Adam nodded at me, before bending to give a deep bow. I saw his Luna look at his actions, startled, before followed her mate's lead and giving a clumsy bow. Jon motioned for them to stand.

"Adam Storm." Jon grinned. "I haven't seen you in ages, my friend. What have you been doing?"

"Keeping the border safe for you, your majesty, what else?" Alpha Adam laughed. It was amusing to see this large, scary alpha be so at ease with my mate. I looked at the Luna from the corner of my eye; she was standing there awkwardly twiddling her thumbs. "And where have you been, Jon? It's been a year since you went up here and killed a bastard rogue! Are you gonna let me have all the fun?"

Jon laughed heartily. Luna Liesl flinched when she heard Alpha Adam say bastard. Oh gosh, she was so innocent! How cute.

"I'm sure you took care of my share." Jon chuckled. "Adam, I'd like you to meet my mate, Queen Serena Lancaster." Alpha Adam smiled and shook my hand.

"Let's see that famous bracelet..." Alpha Adam teased, his eyes gleaming mischievously. "What a pair you make! It's good to meet you, your majesty."

I blushed at his words. Luna Liesl looked at my golden bracelet curiously, as if she had never seen anything like it before. I saw that she had no bracelet—Solterras never got any, the mark on their wrists would always suffice.

"Now, King Jonathon, Queen Serena, I'd like you to meet my mate, the first Luna Solterra of the Northern Pack: Liesl Storm." Alpha Adam nudged Luna Liesl to take a step forward. She nervously smiled at us before looking down shyly on the floor.

"On behalf of my people, I am thankful you are here, Luna." Jon said, lowering his head respectfully to Luna Liesl. She blushed and smiled hesitantly at us, as if unsure how to act.

"It's nice to meet you, Luna. How was the ceremony?" I politely asked. She blushed, nervously blinking to look at me.

"It was good." She murmured. "I haven't seen that many wolves before...umm...your majesty."

"I had to fight off a dozen wolves for her in the pit. How many did you fight for your queen again, Jon?" Adam chortled. My eyes widened and I feared Jon would take offense. However, Jon just shook his head, laughing alongside his friend.

Was it too soon to laugh about Alpha Theodore's death? Shrug.

"We'll settle the score with rogues, my friend." Jon challengingly said, his eyes betraying mirth.

Just then, Jon's alarm rang and I cringed at the sound. He looked at me apologetically.

"War council in fifteen minutes." Jon growled. Alpha Adam nodded seriously.

"I'll just get my new mate settled in, then I'll join you." Alpha Adam said. "If you'll excuse me your majesties."

He held Luna Liesl with one hand, and the other carrying her suitcase. I watched as they both went up the stairs, hearing Luna Liesl faintly ask her mate "When do I start helping out at the infirmary?"

I turned to Jon and beamed at him.

"Can you believe it?" I whispered. "A Luna Solterra! An *actual* Luna Solterra!"

"I know! I saw her." Jon chuckled.

"Did you? She so shy and innocent though—how is she gonna hold up against all the blood and guts that are gonna spill throughout the territory?" I pouted. The girl looked like a small and fluffy doe caught in headlights.

"She'll be fine. She was born for this." Jon shrugged.

"Are you saying this is her destiny?" I asked.

"Yeah, I guess I am."

"And our destiny?"

"I think we've always been destined for this...but what we're fighting for, it's changed. If I didn't have you, I was going to win this war for glory. But now...I'm winning it so we can have a safe future. I don't care what it takes, you *will* survive this war."

"No, Jon, *we'll* survive this war. We're both too stubborn to lose."

I walked over to the window, and gasped, seeing snowflakes gently fall from the sky. I hated snow with a passion—I felt like it took away all the colors and smells of autumn, my favorite season. Looking out at all the snow, I knew it was going to be a cold winter—harsh like the war we were about to fight.

I didn't want to think about how much I had changed over the past year. I had done enough of that already. I knew I wasn't the same girl that left Eastern Claw a year before. I knew I had changed and I knew it was for the better. Jon wasn't the same man he was too. War was no longer his priority—we had succeeded in forging a new life together and this war was just going to be one small part in the story of Jon and Serena.

Our relationship didn't revolve around this war—we had a connection deeper than that. From our brutal claiming to our private marriage, our journey had brought us challenge after challenge and we had barreled through them together. This war was going to be just another one of those—only it would be the biggest challenge of them all. But I had no doubt we'd successfully push through this because that was who we were. We had an impressive success rate when it came to overcoming obstacles.

That girl who left Eastern Claw was an estranged Alpha's daughter who didn't feel worthy of her rank. The woman I am right now is a Queen.

Queen.

I was ready to become a true Queen. I wasn't just going to sit around and let Jon do all the work. Jon had earned his people's trust and they had crowned him king, but now it was my turn. I needed to prove myself a worthy Queen to them.

My turn.

Just then, a blaring horn sounded loud across the territory. I gasped and covered my ears. The horn blared and blared for a few more seconds before it stopped. I heart loud footsteps thundering, howls, growls, the sound of clothes ripping as wolves shifted. I looked to Jon, my heart beating fast as I saw him quickly speak with General Hassan.

"There's been a breach at one of the western outposts. ADAM!" Jon roared. Thundering down the stairs, Alpha Adam ran towards Jon and they exchanged some quick, hushed words. Luna Liesl clumsily clambered down, running to her mate's side.

"Serena, stay here. Warriors have been posted around this house, they will keep you safe." Jon said, fiercely giving me an embrace. "I have to go."

"WAIT, JON!" I cried.

There was a flurry of activity as I saw wolves outside running west. General Hassan passed Jon a map and Alpha Adam pointed at the outpost.

"Let's go!" Jon shouted. Alpha Adam grinned at him, baring his canines as if accepting a challenge. He took off his clothes to shift but Luna Liesl stopped him.

"Wait! I want to help!" Luna Liesl cried, the hem of her mate's shirt fisted in her tiny hands.

"Stay here, Liesl. Lock yourself up in the library with the Queen." Alpha Adam growled, prying her hands away. His tone was laced with a strong Alpha command, but I could see he was controlling his strength, careful not to be too rough.

"No! I have to help! There could be wolves hurt!" She whined desperately.

"Not until we know what's happening! You will stay here!" Alpha Adam demanded in a voice that left no room for discussion. She whimpered, her wolf clearly new to such harsh Alpha commands, but I had a lifetime experience dealing with Alpha wolves so I decided to help the poor girl.

"He's not going to budge. You'll get to help once the battle is over. If you go there right now you'll be a target—the rogues might try to take you. Your mate will be too distracted to actually fight." I gently whispered, my voice patient and soft. Her eyes welled up with tears but she nodded and went over to her mate.

"Do you swear you'll send for me when the fighting's over?" She murmured. Alpha Adam sighed, wrapping an arm around her and giving her a kiss at the corner of her mouth.

"Just stay with the Queen for now." Alpha Adam gruffly said, pulling away from her.

I could see Jon was preparing to shift, so I ran to him.

"Come back to me, okay?" I whispered. Jon nodded before giving me a bruising kiss on the lips. That kiss held everything—fear, hope, and most importantly, love.

"I love you." Jon growled. I took a step back and let him shift. Not a minute later, he and Alpha Adam were running out the door in wolf form and guards were locking up the house.

Three warriors quickly ushered Luna Liesl and I into the library, which was heavily guarded and fortified like a panic room. Two of them stayed outside while one brought us in.

"Where are the others?" I asked, worried for my friends.

"In the basement, they are safe your majesty." The warrior said. I breathed a sigh of relief.

"Why can't we stay with them?" Liesl piped up.

"The Queen should be kept guarded in isolation in case of any danger. Attackers will always go where there are more scents so Queen Serena can't be where everyone else is. Same with you, Luna..." The warrior explained. "The Alpha has been very clear that you are to be protected."

"I just want to help everyone...and heal the injured..." She huffed. I looked at her sadly—she was like a fish out of water so unknowledgeable about pack protocols.

"Luna...why don't you read a book or something, to take your mind off things..." I suggested. She pondered my words and shrugged before taking a random book from a shelf.

I walked over to the warrior and whispered to him. I just really wanted to see my friends. Maybe I could bribe him. Did I have a thousand bucks on me right now?

What is it with me and money?

"Okay, name your price. What'll it take for me to get out of here so I could join my friends?" I conspiratorially asked. The warrior looked at me apologetically.

"King Jonathon was explicit in how I would meet my end should anything happen to you, your majesty." The warrior gulped. My shoulders slumped visibly. Jon was so dramatic sometimes. The warrior bowed before exiting. Liesl pouted, continuing to read. I figured that should give her some peace for a few hours at least until the fighting stopped.

I peered nervously through the curtains, my heart beating fast as warrior wolves raced towards the west. I heard all sorts of growls and howls, and I closed the curtains, praying to the moon goddess that Jon would be alright.

Suddenly, I heard a gasp. I looked to Luna Liesl. She was standing nervously, tears running down her cheeks. She put her palm to her lips and raised it to the sky.

"Too much blood is being spilled..." She croaked, her big black eyes looking miserable. I closed my eyes and put my hand over my heart, reaching to focus on my mark so that my wolf could reach Jon.

"Jon...if you can hear me...please come back..."

I didn't know if I was just imagining it, or if our bond really had strengthened to the point that we could communicate across distances.

"You're my light, Serena..."

I stared at my wedding ring resolutely. Jon would come back, and I would as well. All I could do now was trust in Jon's strength, pray to the Goddess, and dream that our hope would be enough for us survive.

FIN.

Don't forget to comment and vote! What did you think of the ending?
What are your expectations for the sequel?

Stay tuned for:
1. TWO epilogue chapters
2. The extended summary of The Alpha's Solterra
3. A sneak preview chapter of The Alpha's Solterra

Thank you all for following Jon and Serena's story from start to finish.

Their story is over (at least, on this end) because they now have a deeper, much better understanding of love, family and duty—and that was my objective for these characters from the start. My goal for the story has always been to *prepare* them to become a King and Queen everyone could love and respect.

Much love.

Continue to next part