

30 Days To Freedom: Abandoned Luna Is Secret Shadow King Chapter 231

Chapter 231: Leo's Choice

(Leo's POV)

I stared at my phone after hanging up with my dad. My hands were shaking.

He wanted me to get Aurora's hair. To prove she was his daughter too.

I blocked his number and threw the phone onto my new bed. The soccer ball sat in the corner, a reminder of Alpha Matthew's kindness.

That night, I couldn't sleep. Every time I closed my eyes, I heard dad's voice through our weak blood bond.

"Don't you want to be with Mom and Dad? Don't you want our family to be reunited?"

The questions echoed in my head like a nightmare. I tossed and turned, sweat soaking my sheets.

In my dreams, dad stood in shadows, his eyes pleading. "Help me, son. Just one strand of hair."

I woke up gasping. My father had become the source of my nightmares.

(Olivia's POV)

When I woke up, Matthew wasn't in my room. I dressed quickly and hurried downstairs.

I found him in his first-floor study, surrounded by documents. Commander Garrett Flint and Tasha moved in and out, their faces serious.

He looked incredibly busy. I hesitated at the doorway, not wanting to interrupt.

Matthew noticed me and dismissed his team with a wave. He pulled me into his arms as the door closed.

His lips found mine in a gentle kiss. I melted into his embrace, feeling safe for the first time in hours.

"Killian received an invitation from Mooncrest Global," I said when we broke apart. "I want to go and take a look."

Matthew released me, his golden eyes studying my face. "Is that all you wanted to say?"

My thoughts were a tangled mess. I wanted to ask where he'd been last night. Was he with Audrey Vale?

But I couldn't. It would make me seem too possessive.

"Where's Leo?" I asked instead, changing the subject.

"On the second floor," Matthew replied simply.

I felt distant suddenly. "They'll only stay for 15 days. Then I'll take them back to the apartment."

Matthew took my hand and led me toward the dining room. I noticed he was wearing the same clothes as yesterday.

A shadow crossed my eyes. I pulled my hand away and went upstairs to get the children.

When Matthew emerged from his room, freshly showered and changed, I was already seated at the dining table. I kept a deliberate distance between us.

As we prepared to leave for the creche, I struggled to lift Leo's heavy backpack. I stumbled backward, losing my balance.

Strong hands steadied me. Matthew's touch burned like silver against my skin.

I flinched away, and we had a brief, tense struggle over the backpack.

"Mom, I can do it," Leo said, taking it himself.

I felt foolish. Matthew's voice followed me as I walked away.

"You need more exercise."

To my surprise, Matthew was in the driver's seat of the armored vehicle. He beckoned me to the passenger seat.

"The Matron called me," he explained calmly. "I need to make a trip."

He added, "The Matron specifically requested to see Aurora's father. Your daughter bit someone at the creche."

I was shocked. "She bit someone?"

In the backseat, Aurora pouted. "Daddy said it would only be me. Who is this brother?"

She had pulled Leo's hair out of jealousy. Her developing instincts made her territorial.

Matthew handled his daughter with gentle firmness. "Apologize to your brother, Aurora."

"Sorry," she mumbled, not meeting Leo's eyes.

The rest of the ride, Matthew and Leo talked about pack training and hunting techniques. I

watched them bond, feeling warmth spread through my chest.

At the creche, the Matron was respectful. She never mentioned the incident, merely showed

Matthew around for courtesy.

Back in the vehicle, Matthew explained his true motive. "By showing my face, I ensure the children's safety at this creche."

I was deeply touched by his thoughtfulness. All the little things he'd done for Leo suddenly made sense.

Seeing the exhaustion under his eyes, I felt a pang of tenderness. I wrapped my arms around his neck.

"Who invited you?" I teased, my heart warming despite my earlier distance.

He kissed me, tenderly at first, then with building passion. I breathlessly agreed to whatever he wanted.

He helped me into my Mercedes, which Beta Tristan had brought over.

"Go ahead if you want to," he said, referring to the Mooncrest Global exhibition. "Just don't reveal your full capabilities as Cipher."

He leaned in for one last, lingering kiss.

(Theodore's POV)

I sat in my black sedan, watching the entire scene unfold. After Leo blocked my number, I'd

come to the creche hoping to see my children.

Instead, I watched them act like a happy family with another Alpha. The sight of Olivia and Matthew's intimate kiss sent sharp pain through my heart.

My wolf Logan howled in anguish. For a fleeting moment, I was consumed by a dark impulse.

I wanted to crash my car into hers. To drag her away and lock her in the Northwood Manor forever.

But I was powerless here in the King's territory. I could only follow her to the Mooncrest

Global tech exhibition.

(Olivia's POV)

Entering the exhibition hall, my eyes widened in awe. On a display stand was a semi-holographic AI projection.

It was my mother, Lyra Blackwood, in her youth. The voice was identical to my memories.

Overcome with emotion, I moved to interact with it. But someone intercepted me.

"Sister! You're finally here!" Caelan Mooncrest exclaimed. He was helping an elderly she-wolf walk.

"Grandmother has been waiting for you."

The old she-wolf, Matriarch Morwenna Mooncrest, grabbed my hand. Her withered eyes were wide with recognition.

"You are Lyra's daughter?" she asked.

After Caelan confirmed it, a fleeting look of kindness in her eyes vanished. Pure venom replaced it.

"You're just like your mother, a promiscuous homewrecker!" she spat. "How dare you steal Cynthia's destined mate?"

Her grip tightened painfully on my wrist. "Do you have any idea how much effort she put into being marked by Matthew Kane?"

Matriarch Morwenna raised her hand, preparing to strike me.

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Chapter 232: She Can Be Completely Erased

(Olivia's POV)

I grabbed Matriarch Morwenna Mooncrest's withered hand before it could strike my face. My grip was firm, my gaze ice-cold.

"Don't you dare slander my mother."

Caelan Mooncrest stepped forward quickly, his face alarmed. "Grandmother, please. There's

been a misunderstanding."

He turned to me with an apologetic expression. "Sister, my grandmother heard some rumors and misunderstood the situation."

But Matriarch Morwenna was unyielding. She scoffed, her ancient eyes blazing with hatred.

"Misunderstanding? I knew my own daughter better than anyone."

She pulled a thick photo album from her bag and thrust it toward me. "This will show you the truth about your mother's character."

Caelan tried to stop her. "Grandmother, this isn't the place--"

"Don't dream of entering the Mooncrest pack and basking in our glory," she spat at me. "You're just like her, a promiscuous homewrecker."

I had never been spoken to with such disrespect. My voice turned cold as winter.

"My surname is Blackwood. I'm not a member of your Mooncrest pack."

I straightened my shoulders. "I was invited to this tech exhibition today, not to see you."

Matriarch Morwenna's face twisted with rage. "Security! Throw this woman out!"

I looked at her with sharp intelligence. "If you detest my mother so much, why would Mooncrest Global use her AI image for your presentation?"

The question hit its mark. Her face flushed with embarrassment and fury.

The confrontation escalated as Caelan tried to salvage the situation. "Sister, you founded Shield Chain Technology. Your contributions to our field are remarkable."

Matriarch Morwenna dismissed his words with a wave. "The computer field is low-class work

for rogues."

In a fit of pique, she threw the photo album at my feet. It fell open, revealing photos scattered

across the floor.

My breath caught in my throat. The images showed a young Lyra at various social events, mingling with different male wolves.

I stared in shock, my mind reeling. These couldn't be real.

As I bent to retrieve the album, Ethan appeared beside me. He picked it up first, his movements smooth and controlled.

"Matriarch, this behavior is unprofessional," he chided her calmly.

But my gaze was fixed on my mother's AI projection across the hall. The holographic image of Lyra stood there, beautiful and serene.

Matriarch Morwenna saw my unwavering stare and sensed an opportunity. Her voice turned sickeningly sweet.

"If you

leave Matthew Kane and return him to Cynthia Mooncrest, I'll acknowledge you as my granddaughter."

She leaned closer, her breath hot against my ear. "I'll give you the source code for the AI resurrection technology. I'll even accept you as my personal disciple."

Theodore watched from several meters away. I could feel his intense gaze burning into me.

He knew how deeply this offer would resonate. My profound love for my mother was no secret.

The host's voice boomed across the hall. "Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Matriarch Morwenna Mooncrest to the stage!"

Applause filled the air. Amidst the noise, I spoke quietly but firmly.

“Matthew Kane is not an object that belongs to me. He belongs to himself.”

My voice carried clearly to those nearby. “He doesn’t love Cynthia Mooncrest. No one can force him.”

Matriarch Morwenna was momentarily stunned.

She composed herself and ascended the stage with Caelan’s help.

(God’s POV)

The AI demonstration began, bringing Lyra’s image to life. The holographic projection moved

gracefully, speaking with the remembered voice that had once sung lullabies.

Olivia’s eyes filled with tears. Her beloved mother stood before her, seemingly alive again

through technology.

The crowd watched in fascination as the AI Lyra began to tell her life story.

Suddenly, the presentation took a malicious turn. Matriarch Morwenna announced a new

phase of the technology.

“Now witness the complete integration of historical data,” she declared triumphantly.

The screen flashed with the same slanderous photos from the album. They were now incorporated into the AI’s narrative, painting Lyra as promiscuous and unfaithful.

Olivia rushed forward in horror. “Stop this!”

At that moment, Ethan emerged from the shadows. His fingers flew across a hidden device, unleashing his fury through cyberspace.

As a powerful hacker seeking revenge against his half-sister, he launched a devastating attack on the Mooncrest Global systems.

Computers throughout the hall began to explode. Smoke filled the air with the acrid scent of burning electronics.

The crowd panicked and fled toward the exits. In the chaos, Theodore grabbed Olivia to protect her.

Matriarch Morwenna was struck by shrapnel from an exploding laptop. Her frail form crumpled to the stage floor.

She screamed for her top engineer. “Loric Steele! Stop this attack!”

Loric, along with Lydia Miles and other tech experts, desperately tried to counter the intrusion. Their fingers flew across keyboards, but their efforts were futile.

Olivia instantly recognized the attack pattern through her enhanced senses. “He’s using a devouring algorithm!”

Her voice filled with urgency. “His attack system absorbs your countermeasures to become stronger! You’re not fighting it, you’re feeding it!”

She struggled against Theodore’s protective hold. “Don’t engage directly! Reinforce the defensive firewalls!”

But in the pandemonium, her warnings were ignored by the panicking technicians.

“Let me go!” she pleaded desperately. “He’s going to destroy my mother’s image!”

Theodore held her tighter, desperate to protect her secret identity. “You can’t expose yourself! It’s just data, it can be rebuilt!”

“Do you know how long it takes to develop a system like this?” she retorted, her voice breaking with anguish. “Matriarch Morwenna will never be able to create another one!”

In a final, desperate act, Olivia bit, kicked, and clawed at Theodore with her enhanced strength. She broke free from his grasp and snatched a nearby laptop.

Theodore caught her again, but she had already fallen into his arms with her hands flying across the keyboard with supernatural speed.

In seconds, she entered the system. She deployed a powerful protective shield around the AI projection just as she cut the power.

The chaotic hall plunged into dead, desolate silence.

It was then that Ethan stepped out from the shadows. He had found her system signature, the digital fingerprint of “Cipher.”

He had waited a long time for this moment. To finally erase his only rival and half-sister who had overshadowed him.

He rolled up to Olivia, his eyes dark behind his glasses. “No one is leaving today, dear sister.”

Instantly, shadowy rogue wolves emerged from their hiding places in the darkened hall, surrounding the trapped attendees.

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Chapter 233: Blurred Memories

(Third-person’s POV)

When Ethan’s gaze fell on the laptop in Olivia’s hands, he was deeply astonished. His eyes widened behind his glasses as he recognized the familiar coding patterns flashing across her screen.

He abruptly turned his head, sensing danger in that instant. The shadows where his rogue mercenaries should have been waiting were empty.

Just as everyone’s attention shifted from Ethan, a squad of Alpha King’s Royal Guards marched in uniformly, their synchronized footsteps echoing through the darkened hall. Their silver armor gleamed under the emergency lighting, drawing all eyes.

Ethan’s astonishment deepened. Where were his rogue mercenaries? His carefully laid trap had been dismantled before it could spring.

A tall, slender figure emerged from the ranks of the Royal Guards and walked towards Olivia. The shifting light played across his handsome face, making him look like a deity descending from the heavens.

Matthew Kane had indeed anticipated everything. His intelligence network had tracked Ethan’s movements, intercepted his hired rogues, and positioned his own forces perfectly. Amidst the crowd’s shock, Olivia shook off Theodore’s protective hand and went to meet Matthew. She linked her arm with his, her face glowing with triumph.

She stood on her tiptoes and whispered excitedly, “My protection system is a success! It actually withstood the Zero hacker. It’s even more powerful than I expected.”

Matthew bent down to listen, his gaze fixed on her face, flushed with excitement. Her eyes sparkled with the pure joy of a creator whose work had exceeded all expectations.

Realizing the inappropriateness of the setting, Olivia lowered her hands, though her happiness remained palpable. The destroyed exhibition hall around them seemed forgotten in her moment of victory.

He gently took her hand. "Congratulations, my Queen."

His voice was soft, yet he felt calling her "my Queen" at this moment wasn't quite right. She was her own person—confident, radiant, and proud in her achievement.

But he only wanted her to be his Queen. The possessive thought surprised him with its intensity.

"No, no, you should call me Cipher," she corrected playfully. Her voice carried the confidence of someone who had just proven their worth beyond doubt.

Her gaze shifted to Matriarch Morwenna Mooncrest, who looked disheveled and was being supported by an assistant. The old woman's face was filled with evident disgust and grudging respect.

Olivia, however, was no longer melancholic. The earlier pain of seeing her mother's image slandered had transformed into fierce determination.

"One day, I will be more brilliant than her," she declared, her beautiful eyes sparkling with mischievous light. "I'll defeat her before she dies."

Matthew whispered back, "I hope she lives a long life, to give our Cipher more time." His words coaxed a bright smile from her, the kind that made his chest tighten with emotion. Beta Tristan stepped forward and announced that everyone present was a suspect in the recent cyberattacks. His voice carried the authority of the Alpha King's court.

"All attendees must cooperate with an investigation at the pack enforcement facility," he declared formally.

The announcement caused an uproar among the tech experts. Voices rose in protest and confusion throughout the damaged hall.

"What?! Suspect us?" Lydia Miles exclaimed, her face flushed with indignation. She argued that as a victim of hacking herself, it was impossible for her to be involved.

Theodore's sorrowful eyes moved from Olivia and Matthew's joined hands to her face. He gave a faint "Mm" of agreement to the investigation.

He was lost in a memory of her long-forgotten excitement. There had been a time when she would work all night on her computer projects, her face glowing with the same passion he saw now.

He had discouraged her from those all-night sessions out of concern for her health. That decision now felt like the greatest mistake of his life.

Lydia pointed an accusing finger at Olivia. “Why doesn’t she have to be investigated? That’s the computer she was just using.”

Olivia confidently walked to her laptop, her movements graceful despite the chaos around them. “I’m not a hacker. This is a protection system I developed.”

She revealed that the attacker was the top-tier dark web hacker, Zero. Her system had successfully defended the “resurrection” project from complete destruction.

The other experts were shocked and skeptical. Their faces showed disbelief that someone

could create such advanced protection so quickly.

But a quick check of their own systems revealed they had indeed been infiltrated. Every device showed signs of the devastating attack, proving her right.

Ethan’s eyes, hidden behind his glasses, glinted darkly. He couldn’t believe “Cipher” had grown so powerful as to block him with a system she developed herself.

(Olivia’s POV)

Matriarch Morwenna Mooncrest approached, her face grim but no longer dismissive. The destruction around us had forced her to acknowledge reality.

“It was her,” she admitted, her voice barely above a whisper. The words seemed to pain her, but she couldn’t deny what everyone had witnessed.

I immediately unplugged my USB drive, making the protection system vanish from the laptop screen. The demonstration was over, but my point was made.

“If you want my protection for your research, I’ll be the first customer for the projection system,” I demanded. My voice carried new authority born from proven success.

“And I want permission to view the code,” I added. The AI resurrection technology was too important to leave in hostile hands.

Caelan Mooncrest tried to mediate, stepping between his grandmother and me. “Perhaps we can discuss terms-”

Matriarch Morwenna coldly refused the offer, cutting him off with a sharp gesture. “I only need the pack enforcement to catch the hacker.”

Her pride wouldn’t allow her to accept help from someone she’d just tried to humiliate. The irony wasn’t lost on me.

Before leaving with the investigators, she turned to Matthew. Her ancient eyes held decades of political calculation.

“You mated with the wrong she-wolf,” she said, her voice carrying the weight of prophecy. “Cynthia is the one who suits you.”

She glanced at me with obvious distaste. “She... is a lot of trouble.”

Matthew’s response was placid, his voice carrying quiet certainty. “Life is short.”

He acknowledged that a mate like Cynthia Mooncrest would bring him a smooth political alliance. Such a partnership would eliminate many complications.

But such a life would be “truly uninteresting,” he continued. His eyes found mine as he spoke.

“She is my weakness, and my trouble. She is mine. And that’s enough.” The possessive declaration sent warmth through my chest.

As the experts were led away by the Royal Guards, Ethan approached Matthew.

“Your mate’s skills are truly impressive,” he said, feigning admiration. His voice carried just the right note of respectful awe.

Matthew’s gaze was cold and piercing. “You knew my guards were lying in wait here?”

His voice was low and dangerous, repeating Ethan’s earlier confident words. The temperature in the room seemed to drop several degrees.

Ethan deflected by mentioning his desire to mate with Seraphina Kane. “My interests lie elsewhere, Your Majesty.”

“Is that so?” Matthew’s voice was flat, devoid of belief. “But it seems you’re more interested in my mate.”

The unspoken Alpha pressure in his gaze made Ethan’s brow twitch.

While I was enthusiastically pitching my new system to the remaining tech experts, Theodore’s voice cut through the chatter. “It’s needed.”

He walked toward me, his steps measured and deliberate. The crowd parted before him instinctively.

“I’ll buy out your protection system. Name your price.” He stood before me, his dark eyes filled with tender emotion.

“Crimson Pack will provide full support for its subsequent development and upgrades,” he continued. His voice carried the weight of unlimited resources.

“We’ll provide the manpower and financial resources to make your protection system a common product, affordable for everyone.” He remembered my old dream, a shield to protect everyone from digital threats.

“Let me help you achieve it,” he said, taking my hand. His touch was warm, familiar, carrying memories of shared dreams.

And at this moment, the past swirling in my mind grew increasingly blurry, and I took his hand.

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Chapter 234: Thief

(Third-person’s POV)

Olivia reached out and took Theodore’s hand. The moment their skin touched, Theodore’s amber eyes widened in disbelief.

“Livvy...” he whispered, his voice trembling with hope.

It was the first time in three years she had willingly touched him. His heart hammered against his ribs as he felt the warmth of her fingers.

The hypnosis was working. She would return to him soon.

Just as he moved to pull her into his embrace, a large hand wrapped around her waist, yanking her away. The warmth of her touch slipped from his grasp like water through his fingers.

Olivia found herself pressed against Matthew’s chest, her hand resting on the solid muscle beneath his shirt. She blinked, confusion clouding her features.

Why hadn’t she felt her usual aversion to Theodore’s touch? The absence of that familiar revulsion unsettled her.

She turned back to Theodore, her voice cutting through the air like ice. “If you want to cooperate, that’s fine, but anything else is impossible.”

Her mind sharpened with purpose. His company, Apex Dynamics, would provide the perfect testing ground for her new security network.

Lydia Miles stepped forward, her face flushed with indignation. "Alpha Redgrave, we don't need to cooperate with her. We can build our own firewall, and it will be just as good!"

Theodore's voice sliced through her protest, cold and final. "Cooperate with her."

Before he could say another word, Matthew had already led Olivia toward the exit, his hand possessive on her lower back.

Inside the armored vehicle, Matthew immediately pulled Olivia onto his lap. His hands cupped her face, searching her features with worried intensity.

"Are you feeling unwell anywhere?" His voice carried barely controlled concern.

He had seen her touch Theodore. The sight had sent ice through his veins.

Olivia shook her head, her hand moving to rest over her heart. "I'm fine. My heart feels fine."

She felt no distress from seeing Theodore, but Matthew's worry remained etched in the lines around his eyes.

"Dr. Aris will visit you at the Aurora Pavilion tonight," he decided. "Another therapy session."

His hand settled on the small of her back as he buried his face against her chest, pressing kisses over her heart. The touch sent electric tingles through her body.

She pushed playfully at his shoulders, heat rising in her cheeks. "They're waiting for you."

"Don't be like this."

He looked up, his eyes burning with quiet fire. "I can't?"

His voice dropped to a husky whisper that made her heart flutter against her ribs.

As he leaned in to kiss her, his hand slipped beneath her skirt. She gasped, her fingers catching his wrist.

"Matthew—"

But he held his hand there, their bodies pressed intimately close. In that heated moment, he made his decision.

Their first time should be when she truly wanted him, not stolen in a vehicle.

He gently withdrew his hand and smoothed her skirt, pulling her close against his chest.

The tender atmosphere shifted as his voice turned serious. "Who do you suspect?"

Olivia's mind snapped back to the cyber attack, her analytical nature taking over.

"Lydia doesn't have the ability," she said, her voice gaining excitement. "I've fought with Zero before. His system infiltrates like a virus, infecting and paralyzing everything."

Her eyes lit up with the thrill of the challenge. "He's arrogant and doesn't defend his backdoors well."

"With Commander Flint's security center helping, my system has been upgraded. If there's a next time, I can definitely break his system."

Matthew silenced her with a firm kiss. "No. You can't reveal your edge."

She pouted, but her mind still raced with thoughts of defeating the legendary dark web master.

To persuade him, she leaned in, nuzzling his neck and whispering softly, "My King, please?"

The intimate gesture made his pulse spike, but he remained resolute.

"Be good," he said, holding her face between his palms. "I will put him in jail,"

Neither of them noticed the tiny red light blinking deep within her large briefcase, hidden beneath layers of documents and equipment.

When Olivia's vehicle pulled up to Shield Chain Technology, a hand suddenly shot through her window. Fingers grabbed her briefcase and yanked it away.

"Thief!" she yelled, jumping from the vehicle.

Her heels clicked against the pavement as she gave chase, but the figure disappeared around the corner.

Around that same corner, Evelyn waited in the shadows. She had orchestrated this scene, desperate to win back Olivia's favor.

Caelan Mooncrest had promised to help her secure a better mating alliance if she helped him reconnect with his long-lost sister.

But the thief who appeared wasn't the rogue she had hired.

This new assailant slapped her hard across the face. His hand closed around her throat, slamming her against the sewer entrance.

"If you mess with her again, I'll take your life!" he hissed.

He pulled a miniature laptop from Olivia's briefcase, then vanished into the shadows like smoke.

(Olivia's POV)

I arrived to find Evelyn crumpled on the ground, bruises blooming across her face and throat.

After checking my bag and finding my main laptop and phone intact, I looked down at her with cold indifference.

"Nothing was missing," I said flatly.

Evelyn's tears mixed with the blood from her split lip. "Olivia, please forgive me. We were once best friends."

Her voice cracked with desperation. "We'll soon be family through Caelan."

I remained unmoved by her pleas. "You have a bad memory."

I pulled out my laptop, the screen illuminating surveillance footage of her conspiring with the first thief.

"Don't let me see you again."

As the ambulance sirens wailed in the distance, Evelyn grabbed at my ankle.

"The one who attacked me wasn't my man! He took a small laptop from your bag, really!"

I ignored her desperate words and walked away, my heels clicking against the concrete.

Back in my office, however, her words echoed in my mind. I re-examined the footage with sharper focus.

The second attacker had indeed been different. A miniature laptop had been taken.

Someone from the exhibition must have planted it. Loric Steele seemed the most likely suspect.

Just then, my screen flickered. A chilling notification appeared, the text blood-red against the black background.

The hacker Zero had surfaced on the dark web, issuing a direct challenge.

"[In the next 24 hours, I will paralyze the entire network of the Sovereign's Citadel. This will be

the feast I have prepared for you all. Everything in the Citadel is yours for the taking!]"

"[Come on, come and stop me.]"

"[Cipher!]"

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Chapter 235: A loaded gun was pressed against her temple

(Ethan's POV)

The conversation between Olivia and Matthew in the armored vehicle had enraged me beyond measure. I slammed my fist against the metal desk in my hideout, the sound echoing through the abandoned warehouse.

"She said she could break my system, that my backdoor defenses are weak? What arrogance!" I seethed into the encrypted communication device.

My father's voice crackled through the speaker, calm but warning. "Son, don't be reckless. The Alpha King's power isn't something to underestimate."

"Father, you don't understand," I argued, pacing back and forth like a caged wolf. "Destroying

Olivia Blackwood would be like severing one of Matthew Kane's limbs. Without his greatest asset, the Alpha King will falter in our power struggle."

Faelan Moonstone's silence stretched for several heartbeats. When he finally spoke, his tone was probing. "Can you truly harm your own half-sister?"

I scoffed dismissively, my lip curling with contempt. "Sister? I never even cared about Lyra Blackwood, let alone a sister I've only met a few times."

The words tasted bitter on my tongue, but they were true. Lyra had abandoned me, left me with that monster Annelise who whipped her memory into my skin every night.

"You are my top priority, Father. I have a scapegoat already in place," I assured him, my voice steady with conviction.

Another pause. Then Faelan's approval came through, weighted with expectation. "Son, I'm counting on you. But be careful. If you're exposed, find a scapegoat."

I smiled coldly at the device. "Don't worry. By tomorrow, the legendary Cipher will be nothing but a memory."

(Olivia's POV)

Back at the Shield Chain Technology office, I was perched on my office chair, trying to fish a hidden surveillance camera out of the sprinkler head. The tiny device had been cleverly concealed, but my enhanced senses had detected its electronic signature.

Bastian Miles burst through my door without knocking, his face pale with panic. "M—Ms. Blackwood... someone is here for you!"

Before I could fully process his words, I looked toward the door and met Matthew's calm golden gaze. He set Aurora down gently, her small hands clutching a stuffed wolf.

Matthew strode over with supernatural grace, effortlessly lifting me off the chair with his Alpha strength. "What are you doing?" he asked in a low rumble.

"Surveillance camera," I replied simply, watching as he reached up to retrieve it himself.

Bastian was frozen in terror behind us. Through the window, I could see the entire company building had been surrounded by a large contingent of the Alpha King's Royal Guard.

Matthew tossed the camera into the trash with controlled fury. "I'm here to pick you up from work. Can we go now?"

His tone was casual, but I could sense the tension coiled beneath his calm exterior.

Something had happened.

As I gathered my things, Matthew sat on the sofa, his commanding Alpha presence filling the small office space. He calmly engaged Bastian in conversation, his voice carrying that unmistakable authority.

“You work for my mate,” Matthew said conversationally, and I saw Bastian’s eyes widen in recognition.

Aurora played with an old puzzle cube from my desk, her little fingers struggling with the complex mechanism. I took it from her gently, solving it with a few deft twists using my enhanced reflexes.

“Pretty!” Aurora clapped her hands, delighted.

The scene quickly clarified the situation for the bewildered Bastian. His boss wasn’t just any she-wolf – she was the Alpha King’s mate.

Once I was ready, I took Aurora’s hand and led the way out. The guards weren’t ordinary pack warriors but heavily armed Royal Sentinels, their faces hidden behind tactical masks.

Our transport wasn’t the usual vehicle but an armored SUV with reinforced windows. Inside,

Leo was happily playing on a tablet, his face bright with excitement.

“Matthew, look! I passed level twelve in the strategy game!” Leo showed him the screen proudly.

“Excellent work,” Matthew praised, ruffling Leo’s hair with genuine affection.

I understood then that this overwhelming show of force wasn’t just protection – Matthew knew about the challenge from Zero. His protective Alpha instincts were on high alert.

At the Kane Estate, Matthew followed me to our private chambers. The moment the door closed, his facade of calm cracked slightly.

“I will find Zero. You don’t need to get involved,” he stated firmly, pulling me onto his lap with gentle but possessive Alpha strength.

I leaned into his warmth, feigning obedience while my mind raced. “I have suspicions about who Zero might be.”

“Tell me.”

“Either Ethan Moonstone or Loric Steele from Thorne Industries,” I said carefully. “Someone planted a suspicious mini-laptop in my briefcase at the exhibition.”

Matthew’s jaw tightened. “Everyone at the exhibition hall was under surveillance by my intelligence network. We’ll find him.”

I cautiously proposed my plan. “I could engage Zero in a digital battle, keep him occupied long enough for your team to pinpoint his location using supernatural tracking.”

“No.” His response was immediate and final. “Your safety is what’s important.”

He explained his strategy – a two-hour city-wide blackout to allow Gina Frost’s tech team to secure the Sovereign’s Citadel’s network.

“Trust me,” he urged, kissing me deeply with Alpha intensity. “When I capture him, I’ll make him hand over his system. You won’t have to show your edge.”

With that promise, he left, taking my laptop with him.

But Matthew had forgotten one crucial detail – my phone also had the Cipher system installed. Moments after he left, the device lit up with urgent alerts.

Zero had begun his attack. The Sovereign’s Citadel was plunged into darkness.

My phone rang with an unknown number. I answered cautiously.

A disguised voice taunted me through the speaker. “Cipher, afraid to accept my challenge? Does he think a blackout can stop me? Come on, let’s see who’s better. Don’t let me look down on you!”

After a brief shock, my training took over. I instantly used my system to trace the call’s location, my enhanced strategic abilities cutting through his digital camouflage like a blade.

The signal originated from the Mooncrest Global exhibition center.

Without a second thought, I grabbed my keys and rushed out to my vehicle. The streets were dark, but my supernatural senses guided me through the chaos.

I sped through the city, my heart pounding with anticipation and dread. This was exactly what Matthew had tried to prevent, but I couldn’t let Zero’s arrogance go unchallenged.

The exhibition center loomed ahead, its windows dark and empty. I parked quickly and approached the main entrance.

The building felt wrong – too quiet, too still. But I pressed forward, my instincts screaming warnings I chose to ignore.

Just as I walked through the entrance, cold metal pressed against my temple. A loaded gun was pressed against her temple.

30 Days To Freedom: Abandoned Luna Is Secret Shadow King Chapter 236

Chapter 236: Confrontation with Zero

(Olivia's POV)

I turned around slowly, my heart hammering against my ribs. The cold metal of a gun barrel pressed against my temple.

My breath caught in my throat. The person holding the weapon was almost unrecognizable,

but I knew those eyes. Cynthia Mooncrest.

She was supposed to be in exile at a brutal rogue training camp. What stood before me was a shadow of the elegant she-wolf I once knew. Her skin was darkened and weathered, her face a map of fresh scars. Her once-beautiful long hair had been shorn into a harsh buzzcut.

The contrast with her elegant silk dress was jarring. She looked like a broken doll someone had tried to repair with the wrong pieces.

"This is all your fault!" she snarled, her voice cracking with rage. "You made me into this monster!"

I had anticipated trouble. My hand found the electric baton I'd grabbed from the security room earlier. In one swift motion, I struck her wrist.

The gun clattered to the floor. Without hesitation, I struck again at her knees.

Cynthia crumpled to the ground with a cry of pain.

"You should have been sent to the pack dungeons last time you tried to kill me," I said coldly, standing over her. "This state you're in isn't my fault. It's because you're a criminal."

But Cynthia seemed impervious to the electric current. She snatched the baton from my grip and threw me down hard.

I hit the floor with a grunt, my shoulder screaming in protest. She towered over me, her scarred face twisted with years of accumulated hatred.

“Matthew Kane broke our betrothal for you!” she shrieked, her voice echoing through the empty exhibition hall. “My brother, Caclan Mooncrest, sent me to that hellhole for you!”

Her words came out in a torrent, years of grievances spilling forth like poison.

“You’re a Mooncrest bloodline too, yet he wants to welcome you back while he sells me off like cargo to Declan Shaw! Why do you get to steal my destined mate and my brother?”

“Olivia Blackwood! Your very existence is a sin!” Cynthia’s voice cracked completely now.

“Why didn’t you die in exile like my aunt?”

The words hit me like a physical blow. Was my mother Lyra actually a runaway from the pack back then?

I tackled her, desperation giving me strength. We rolled across the floor, fighting for control.

“Why won’t you leave that monster Caelan?” I demanded, remembering how he had once tried to force—mark me. “He’s the one who destroyed you!”

Cynthia’s laugh was bitter and broken. “Leave? And end up dead in rogue territory like her?”

The moment of shock at her words was all she needed. The baton came down hard across my temple.

Stars exploded across my vision. Pain lanced through my skull.

“That’s enough.”

The voice was disguised, electronically altered. A tall figure in a mask descended the stairs with predatory grace.

Zero.

He pulled me to my feet with surprising gentleness. Cynthia scrambled for her gun, aiming it directly at my chest.

“Cipher,” Zero said, his masked face turning toward me. “Let’s see what Lyra Blackwood really taught you.”

My phone rang. The sound cut through the tension like a blade.

Matthew's name flashed on the screen. My mate. My King.

I answered, feeling the weight of his entire kingdom, his territory, pressing down on me through our bond.

"My King," I said, my voice steady despite everything. "I will come back safely."

I hung up before he could respond. With quick movements, I blocked all signals and connected my phone to a nearby laptop.

The duel was about to begin.

Zero moved to his own setup, fingers flying across multiple keyboards. "You know the rules, Cipher. Winner takes all."

I cracked my knuckles, settling into the familiar rhythm of code and combat. "I wouldn't have it any other way."

The power outage timer hit zero. The network came alive around us like a digital battlefield, intending to paralyze Matthew's entire kingdom.

But he met something unexpected. Something massive.

My "minesweeper" rose from the depths of the dark web itself, a system I'd been building and hiding for years. It blocked every incoming attack with ruthless efficiency.

Zero's fingers paused for just a moment. "Impossible."

He pivoted, trying to destroy the AI resurrection data in the Mooncrest Global system. But again, he found powerful firewalls already in place.

"My most important person is there," I said quietly, thinking of my mother's digital ghost. "I was never going to leave her unprotected."

Understanding dawned in Zero's posture. "You tricked me."

I smiled, though he couldn't see it. "I couldn't break into your flawless system. But I could lure you into mine and trap you forever."

As his code invaded my network, my trap sprang shut. His virus was absorbed, replicated, and turned back against him like a reflection in a mirror.

While our systems battled in cyberspace, I hacked into the mall's network. A chain reaction began among the laptops surrounding us.

The first explosion threw sparks across the room. Then another. And another.

Cynthia screamed as the fiery blasts threw her backward. Her gun discharged wildly, the bullet ricocheting off the ceiling.

In that instant, a dark shadow moved to shield me.

Theodore collapsed at my feet, blood spreading across his shoulder where the bullet had found its mark.

I didn't stop. Couldn't stop. My attack spread to the building's central computer core.

The entire structure would come down. Zero would burn with it.

Theodore tried to pull me away from the inferno. "Olivia, we have to go!"

"Done!" I declared, watching Zero's laptop explode in a shower of sparks and flame. "I win!"

The hacker was engulfed in fire, his screams lost in the roar of the blaze.

Theodore held me tight against him, his blood warm on my skin. For a moment, my mind flashed back to our mating ceremony.

A handsome, shy Alpha asking me to accept his mark. Young and hopeful and so very different from the man he'd become.

But then my gaze drifted to the chapel door in my memory. A tall, slender figure in a white shirt had appeared there for just a fleeting moment.

The memory faded as sirens wailed in the distance. I looked toward the mall's entrance, just as I had looked at that chapel door all those years ago.

Back then, the figure had vanished, leaving only a bouquet of red and purple tulips.

But this time, he walked out of the fire and strode toward me.

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: I Lost My Memory

(Third-person's POV)

Matthew pushed Theodore aside and carried Olivia out of the sea of fire. Emergency response teams swarmed the area, the cacophony of fire trucks, ambulances, and sirens filling the air.

Matthew placed Olivia in a safe spot and quickly checked her for injuries. His golden eyes darkened with fury when he found a red mark on her arm.

But Olivia was alight with exhilaration, her eyes sparkling. "I defeated Zero!" she announced, her triumphant smile slowly freezing as she met his gaze.

He wasn't proud or happy for her. His eyes were cold and fierce.

Intimidated, she lowered her gaze and grabbed his hand. "I'm sorry, I left the Sovereign's Club without permission," she explained, rushing to justify her actions.

"He called me, he invited me. He knows I'm 'Cipher'! If I didn't accept, he would have kept troubling me. I found his location. I went because I knew I could get out safely."

She pulled his hand to her lower back, looking up at him earnestly. "See? I'm completely unharmed. If Theodore hadn't suddenly shown up and grabbed me, I would have been out already, and you wouldn't have had to risk coming in."

Sensing his grip on her waist, Olivia buried her face in his chest, nuzzling him. "Hold me, okay?"

She felt a profound sense of relief. With Zero defeated, Matthew's inauguration as Alpha King would proceed without a hitch.

Matthew's aura was heavy as he pulled her into a tight embrace, his heart weighed down with worry. "Don't let there be a next time," he warned, his tone leaving no room for argument.

Olivia nodded obediently, her soft hands wrapped around his waist.

As Theodore was helped out of the mall by paramedics, his gaze landed on Olivia and Matthew embracing amidst the chaotic crowd. A post-disaster reunion, yet her eyes were only for Matthew.

Pain radiated from his heart, settling physically in his wounded shoulder. Just then, two bodies were carried out on stretchers—one barely alive, the other dead.

Olivia pulled Matthew over, eager to show him her trophy. "Let's see who Zero really is, she said, pulling the mask off the deceased man.

Her eyes widened in surprise. "Loric Steele?"

It felt wrong. She had a nagging feeling it wasn't him, though she'd never personally faced him

At that moment, Beta Tristan approached. "Alpha King, everyone else was under surveillance. Only Loric Steele suddenly broke from our watch," he reported, presenting a micro-laptop.

"We found this at his residence."

Olivia took the device, and upon accessing it, found the programming code for Zero's system. is it really him?' she murmured.

If not him, who could it be? Zero was undoubtedly caught in the blast and flames; it was impossible to have escaped in just a few minutes.

Nearby, a severely burned Cynthia Mooncrest clutched Matthew's hand with all her might. "Matthew, can I have a word with you?" she pleaded.

Olivia released Matthew's hand, and he leaned over Cynthia's stretcher. In a voice only he could hear she whispered, 'Let me go. I can give Olivia a heart. I can save her. She's a

Mooncrest bloodline, she won't live long."

A shadow fell over Matthew's eyes. He motioned for the paramedics to take Cynthia away before turning back to Olivia.

Just then, Theodore intercepted Olivia. "My pack tracker... saw Zero's big operation, and I followed Cynthia to the mall," he explained urgently, grabbing her wrist.

"Olivia, I don't know why Zero isn't Cynthia, but Cynthia is a very dangerous person. You must stay away from her."

Olivia's gaze fell on Theodore's bleeding shoulder, and flashes of him repeatedly risking his life for her surfaced. She crouched to meet his gaze, studying his handsome but haggard

face

The memories of his affair with Clara Thorne felt disjointed, a stark contrast to the man before her. "What did you do to me?" she demanded, her nails digging into his arm. got into your vehicle, I drank the moonlight wine you gave me, just one sip, and I fell into darkness. What did you do to me! Now I..."

Why didn't she hate him anymore? Why were only the good memories left?

She knew he had betrayed her for five years. That was the truth! But her memories felt fragmented.

Theodore looked at her, stunned, a flicker of intense emotion in his amber eyes. “My Luna, what about me now?”

Matthew walked over. Olivia snatched her hand away from Theodore.

“I was thanking Alpha Redgrave for taking a bullet for me,” she said coldly. “But it would have only grazed my head. I hope Alpha Redgrave won’t do such a superfluous thing again.”

Theodore clutched his shoulder, watching her walk away with Matthew without a backward glance. A sliver of hope that she might return to him tempered his pain.

Back at the Sovereign’s Club, Dr. Aris Lowell waited in the living room. Matthew had to leave to manage the aftermath, but he paused at the doorway.

Olivia stood on the steps, meeting his gaze. “Have a healer look at your injuries later.”

“Okay.”

She took his hand, feeling the warmth of his dry palm. She studied his indifferent eyes, so distant when he looked at people.

“You went to my mating ceremony, didn’t you? You left a bouquet of red and purple tulips.”

Matthew remained silent, the memory vivid: seeing her so happy, hearing her say, “I accept your mark.”

“But I didn’t invite you,” she pressed, her hands sliding from his to wrap around his neck. His Adam’s apple bobbed.

“Why was the Alpha King at my mating ceremony back then?”

Cynthia’s words echoed in her mind—that Matthew had broken off their betrothal for her thirteen years ago. It made no sense.

She had only met him three times back then. Their two years at the Shadow Syndicate were also marked by distance; she was closer to Killian Vance.

He was always busy, surrounded by people. He had even accepted her resignation without question.

Olivia threw herself into Matthew’s arms, and he held her securely. “My King? Tell me, why?”

Matthew looked down at her, the urge to confess everything, to tell her and perhaps keep her from ever leaving him again, stirring within him.

“Alpha King?” a subordinate’s voice urged from behind, “We have to go.”

Olivia clung to him, her beautiful eyes smiling. “Tell me, then you can go,” she coaxed, her voice dropping to a whisper, her face flushing.

“My King? Come on. Why...”

The playful, cat-like teasing made his heart itch. “Mm,” Matthew cupped her face and kissed her lips.

“I’ll tell you when I get back.”

He needed to prepare, to do it right. His kiss was restrained and gentle, his faint cedar scent enveloping her.

As Matthew sat in the back of the car, his gaze lingered on Olivia. “Beta Tristan, get me the moonstone pendant,” he instructed.

“And a bouquet of red and purple tulips.”

Her favorite. A smile spread across his lips, lighting up his eyes, his heart filled with a honey-like sweetness.

“Rest assured, Alpha King,” Beta Tristan replied.

(Olivia’s POV)

I watched Matthew leave before walking into the club to face Dr. Aris Lowell. My face was terribly pale, my hands twisting together.

“I’ve lost my memory,” I said, my voice strained. “It must be something Theodore did. When I woke up in his manor, that pack healer was there. She must have done something to me.”

“I know the Alpha King had her interrogated, but they must not have found anything. Aris, can you help me, please?”

I clutched the moonstone ring on my right hand. “Not to recover the memories of Theodore and Clara’s betrayal. I don’t need those memories; I just need to know they existed.”

“I want you to awaken my memories of Matthew.”

A tear fell from my eye, splashing onto the moonstone ring. My eyes were red-rimmed and unfocused, filled with a desolate sorrow.

"I... I feel like I'm about to forget him too. I don't want to forget him."

My voice broke as I whispered the words that terrified me most. "I haven't even told him that I love him."

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I'm Like a Bird in His Cage

(Third-person's POV)

Dr. Aris Lowell held Olivia tightly, her own heart aching as she watched her friend's sorrow. Having been by each other's side for years, she had witnessed Olivia's suffering—the painful attempts to conceive a pup, the heartbreak of Theodore's betrayal with his mistress.

Even now, Dr. Aris couldn't comprehend why Theodore would betray someone so wonderful. Thankfully, Olivia had found a good Alpha again.

"Olivia, I will definitely cure you," she vowed.

"Yes," Olivia replied softly.

"What do you remember about your time with the Alpha King?" Dr. Aris asked.

Olivia opened her laptop, revealing a file that was a digital record of all her memories with Matthew Kane. "Some of it... I'm already starting to forget," she sighed, "but I know it all happened."

Her fingers trembled as she scrolled through the entries. Each memory felt like sand slipping through her fingers.

"I can feel them fading," she whispered. "Like watching a movie where the sound keeps getting quieter."

Dr. Aris squeezed her hand. "We'll find a way to restore them."

At the Stonehaven Council Hall, Matthew listened to reports from Tristan and his team after a long day. He idly toyed with a ruby necklace, his expression calm.

"Alpha King, should we withdraw the surveillance team?" someone asked.

Matthew looked up. "Continue the surveillance."

His gaze swept over the room. "And," he added, his eyes dark, "replace this team of pack enforcers."

Tasha asked, "Alpha King, what did they do wrong?"

Matthew's cold gaze silenced her. She knew instantly it was because they had allowed Olivia to leave the estate.

A wave of resentment washed over Tasha. It seemed unfair that they should pay the price for Olivia's reckless behavior.

To her, Olivia was nothing but a disaster.

"I'll handle it immediately," Tasha conceded, turning to leave.

She ran into Tristan, who was carrying a bouquet of red and purple tulips. "Are you the Alpha King's Beta or Miss Blackwood's caregiver?" she scoffed.

Tristan, noticing her foul mood, didn't rise to the bait. He knew of her feelings for Matthew and that she needed to wake up.

"Some people are the brilliance itself, and I am the one who helps create that brilliance," Tristan said, his voice filled with passion for his work. "Just thinking that the Alpha King will one day reach the pinnacle... assisting him, helping him achieve it, whether as a Beta or a caregiver, it's all worth it."

He then reminded her of Olivia's value. "She blocked Hacker Zero, resolving the cyber crisis." "Without her, the Alpha King might have had to sacrifice the entire tech division. Do you know how great that cost would have been?"

"She's always causing trouble for the Alpha King," Tasha retorted, unconvinced. "He's replacing the pack enforcers because they couldn't stop her, but what could they have done?"

Tristan's expression darkened. "There was an informant among the enforcers," he revealed, shocking Tasha.

He handed her a bouquet of tulips. "Don't gamble with your future, Tasha," he said softly. "The Alpha King doesn't just like Miss Blackwood. He loves her."

He paused, his voice low and serious. "I suspect... if one day his kingdom and Miss Blackwood were on opposite ends of a scale, he would choose Miss Blackwood without hesitation."

“That would be the real trouble, the real disaster. Don’t push things in that direction.”

His eyes bore into hers. “Let go of your obsession.”

“Destroy the mate bond severance papers.

Tasha looked panicked. As Tristan walked away, he saw her toss the tulips into the trash.

He sighed, knowing she was beyond reason.

Inside the office, Matthew was on the phone. On the other end, Leo stood on the staircase, watching his mother cry while Dr. Aris held her hand.

“Alpha Kane, my mom is losing her memory,” the boy whispered into his phone. “She’s forgetting about Dad and Clara, and she’s slowly forgetting you too.”

The words ‘betraying father’ were foreign to him, but he couldn’t bear to see his mother suffer. He knew his father wouldn’t let her go.

The thought of Clara Thorne and her daughter, Rosalie, made his own heart ache. He didn’t want his mother to return to that pain.

He trusted Matthew.

“Will you handle it?” he asked, relief flooding him at the affirmation. “Thank you, Alpha Kane.”

After the call, Matthew was enveloped in gloom, hurt that Olivia hadn’t told him about her deteriorating condition. He handed the ruby necklace to Tristan.

“Put this in the safe.”

(Matthew’s POV)

It was late when I returned to the Sovereign’s Club. I found Olivia at her desk, typing.

She was creating an electronic memoir of our time together, the final entry marked with a countdown: 14 days.

I reached over and closed the laptop, plunging the room into darkness, save for the dim light from the hallway.

“So late?” she smiled, getting up to turn on the lights, but I caught her hand and pulled her into a tight embrace.

She worried I was in trouble for the mall explosion she caused. "I'm sorry, I can pay for it, but I don't have much right now," she offered, gently massaging my temples.

"You should sleep. You can use my room. Shall I get your clothes?"

In the darkness, my possessiveness flared. I lifted my head, cupping her face.

I had never dared to compete with her past, with the ten years she shared with Theodore. But now, a desperate sense of rivalry ignited within me.

"Did you ever get clothes for him?" I asked, my voice low.

I expected a painful silence, but she answered, "No. I never got his clothes. We had too many pack servants."

She touched my face. "I never helped him with his formal wear either."

"He never let me do anything. I wasn't like his mate, more like his caged canary."

She recalled her past, a gilded cage where every move was monitored by the pack. "I don't know how to be a proper Luna," she admitted softly, but then her tone shifted.

"I can learn. I want to be good to you."

She gently pushed me away and walked toward the door, then paused. "Why did you come to my mating ceremony all those years ago?"

I coming to stand before her. I said, "If I had asked you to come with me back then, would you have?"

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Chapter 239: Forgetting Theodore

(Matthew's POV)

Olivia's eyes widened in astonishment. "You mean, you don't want me to complete the mating ceremony, but to go back to the Shadow Syndicate and take over as the head of the Cipher Division?"

"Did something serious happen after I left? If something serious happened, I'll go with you."

I realized she had completely misunderstood my question about her past mating ceremony. But seeing the determination in her eyes, I could only follow her lead.

"I'll go with you," she said firmly. "I can postpone the mating ceremony."

As she walked away, her fragmented memories surfaced. She paused at the doorway, confusion clouding her features.

"I remember feeling like a guest at my own mating ceremony," she murmured. "All the pack blessings were for him, not for us. Everyone celebrated Theodore, not our bond."

The clarity of these painful memories lingered even as her more recent ones continued to fade. Her hand trembled against the doorframe.

A short while later, she returned to the master bedroom with a pile of my clothes. As I sorted through them, I noticed my underwear tangled with my shirts and pants.

"Which of your female subordinates handles your personal laundry?" she asked suddenly.

The question revealed her shifting emotional focus. While she once accepted a pack omega washing Theodore's undergarments without thought, the idea of someone else handling mine clearly bothered her.

"I handle my own," I replied, watching her shoulders relax.

After I went to the bathroom, Olivia climbed into bed, pretending to be asleep. When I emerged, I sat beside her, my gaze falling on a stark bruise on her arm.

The mark left by Cynthia Mooncrest's silver-laced weapon stood out against her pale skin like an accusation.

Olivia opened her eyes, abandoning her pretense. "Were you waiting for me?" I asked softly.

She didn't answer, simply burrowing under the covers. I turned off the light and lay beside her, pulling her into my arms.

"Thank you for your help today," she whispered, her facade finally crumbling.

"You were brave today," I said gently. "I'm sorry for being harsh on you after the mission."

My acknowledgment broke through her defenses. She wept uncontrollably in my embrace, releasing all the pent-up fear and trauma.

“The equipment I destroyed... it was worth a hundred million, wasn’t it?” she sobbed.

“You won’t have to pay for it,” I assured her, stroking her hair. “And Tasha serves as my Beta, nothing more.”

The strange jealousy in her voice when she’d asked about female subordinates now made sense.

Feeling a sense of peace, Olivia grew bold. She wrapped her arms around my neck and kissed me.

I recognized this tender, obedient behavior as a sign she was hiding something or planning to act on her own. But I gave in to the moment, returning her kiss with a passion that overwhelmed her.

After she fell into a deep sleep, I rose and made a phone call.

“The artificial heart project using moonlight herb essence has entered clinical trials,” the she-wolf on the other end reported.

“Good. Continue the research,” I said curtly.

“Alpha King, about your personal-”

“Focus on the project,” I cut her off, dismissing her attempts to pry into my life.

My focus remained solely on the multi-billion-dollar research and the woman sleeping in my bed.

The next morning brought immense pressure. With only fourteen days until my official coronation as Alpha King, negative public opinion weighed heavily on my team.

I observed Olivia’s clumsy attempts to help in the kitchen. She struggled with preparing venison, pricking her fingers repeatedly.

“Gina,” I quietly instructed Beta Frost, “remove her from any upcoming public relations events.”

I needed to shield her from the media scrutiny.

Finding Olivia still struggling with the meat, I gently took her to the bathroom to wash her pricked hands.

“You are what you are, and my mate is what you are,” I told her softly, looking at her reflection in the mirror. “You don’t need to learn from others.”

Once again, I sensed her “well-behaved” act. It was always a prelude to her doing something rash.

(Olivia’s POV)

Later, I took Leo to the Royal Infirmary to visit Theodore. As I faced my former mate, I realized with strange detachment that the memories of his betrayal had been sealed away. My subconscious was protecting me from reliving the trauma, just as Dr. Aris had explained.

I felt no pain, only an empty void where those memories should be.

Yesterday, I had asked Aris to help me seal away Theodore’s memories. If Theodore could make me forget Matthew, then I wanted to forget Theodore too.

“I’ll wait for you outside,” I told Leo, turning to leave.

Theodore endured his pain to grab my hand. “Number Zero is Ethan,” he said urgently. “He lives here too. I came because you wanted to see Ethan.”

His words meant nothing to me now. The sealed memories left me feeling nothing but hollow indifference.

(Matthew’s POV)

At the end of the corridor, I was surrounded by reporters. Beta Tristan had arranged this visit to build my public image.

I had heard Leo’s phone call with Isadora Redgrave. Even after breakfast, when Leo discussed pack training with me, he had personally told me he was going to the infirmary with his mother to see his father.

He had asked me not to be angry.

My mate was even less considerate than my stepson

When Olivia saw the reporters, she panicked and fled in the opposite direction.

I strode towards her, no longer wanting to consider her wishes. I was going to forcefully introduce her to everyone as my Luna.

I grabbed her hand, trapping her forcefully in my embrace.

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: The First Family Photo of Four

(Matthew's POV)

The reporters and my team were stopped by Tristan at the end of the corridor, but there were always disobedient reporters taking pictures of the other end of the corridor. Trapped in my embrace, Olivia desperately tried to hide from the flashing cameras, burying her face in my chest.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, her voice muffled against my shirt.

"What about you?" I countered softly, my hand gently stroking her messy hair.

She explained she was accompanying Leo to visit his father and then had to go to the security center to work on her system. I simply held her, my presence a silent, unyielding claim.

I leaned in as if to kiss her, and she panicked. "You can't! Matthew, you can't. Pay attention to your image!"

Her flustered reaction only made me smile. The way she worried about my reputation while completely ignoring her own safety was so typically her.

At that moment, Tristan approached. "Friends from the press would like to ask the Alpha King and his Luna for a photo together."

I stepped back slightly, my gaze shifting to Theodore, who stood nearby, clutching his shoulder with a defeated expression. The bandages around his torso were visible beneath

his shirt.

"Aurora is my daughter, and Olivia will soon return to my side," Theodore taunted, his voice laced with a bitter challenge. "We, a family of four, will be reunited. Matthew Kane, thank you for raising my mate, my daughter, and my son for me?"

Unfazed, my gaze moved past him. I had always been taught to be tolerant and forgiving, and Theodore was no different from anyone else in my eyes—unworthy of my time.

But now, a rare hint of a smile touched my lips as I extended a hand towards the boy behind Theodore. "Leo, how about taking a picture with Alpha Kane and your mother?"

The provocation bounced back, stunning Theodore. His own son looked past him, his eyes

ea with the same hope as mine, and asked, "Would Mom be willing?"

(Olivia's POV)

Tristan gently persuaded me, reminding me how long it had been since I'd had a photo with Leo. My heart ached at his words.

My phone, filled with our memories, was destroyed, and my new one only had pictures of Aurora. I saw Leo's hopeful face and felt the weight of my promise to Victoria Kane to leave Matthew in fourteen days.

But when Leo called out, "Mom?", my resolve crumbled. I walked over, pried Theodore's hand from my son's arm, and said coldly, "Let go. Stop pestering him."

I agreed to the photo, a keepsake before my departure. Matthew immediately pulled me into his arms.

"Smile," he whispered against my ear. "You look beautiful when you smile."

As we posed, a family unit with Leo holding Aurora, Theodore was left behind, blocked by Tristan. The cameras flashed, capturing what felt like a perfect moment.

Leo beamed as he carefully cradled his baby sister. Aurora gurgled softly, her tiny hand reaching toward the bright lights.

Matthew's arm around my waist felt protective, possessive. For a moment, I allowed myself to imagine this was real, that we truly were a family.

(Theodore's POV)

"Alpha Redgrave, if I were you, I wouldn't keep pestering her," Tristan said calmly. "Luna Olivia is very happy now."

He then revealed a long-buried secret that shattered my world. "Matthew attended her mating ceremony nine years ago, leaving a bouquet of pink tulips at the pack grounds, a silent blessing for the woman he loved but couldn't have."

My blood ran cold. Pink tulips. Olivia's favorite flowers.

"He put himself after her. If you truly love Luna Olivia, you should let her go, not entangle her."

Added to the library

rora, completely shattered my The words, combined with the sigh world. Nine years. He had loved her for nine years, even when she was mine.

After the photos, Matthew invited Leo to visit his office at the Council Hall. Leo, excited, went to inform me.

Inside the hospital room, fury consumed me as I grabbed my son's arm. "You are my son! You carry the Redgrave bloodline!"

For the first time, Leo stood up to me, tears streaming down his face. "Dad, I'm begging you, don't hurt Mom anymore. Do you know how sad she is?"

He revealed the devastating truth that made my world collapse. "Mom cried for two hours with Dr. Aris... she doesn't want to go back to you. Mom asked Dr. Aris to seal her memories of you. Mom wants to forget you."

The words struck me with terror. "Your mother wants to forget me?" I choked out, my Alpha authority crumbling as I faced my son's defiance.

"Yes!" Leo sobbed. "She said remembering you only brings her pain. She wants to forget everything about you, Dad. Everything!"

My grip on his arm loosened as the full weight of his words hit me. Olivia wanted to erase me completely from her mind.

(Olivia's POV)

Outside, I watched my son's retreating back, marveling at how completely Matthew had won him over. He wasn't just fulfilling a duty; he was genuinely trying to be a father figure.

I felt the warmth of his hand on my waist, holding me tight. The reporters had dispersed, but his touch remained constant.

Putting together the pieces—Cynthia Mooncrest's claims, his presence at my mating ceremony, and now this—a question began to form. The pink tulips at my ceremony. he looked at me even then.

The way I turned to him, my hands resting on his chest. "Back then, after my mother met you, she changed her mind," I said softly.

His eyes darkened, but he remained silent, waiting for me to continue.

"My mother's original plan was for me to mate with Theodore at eighteen, not just get engaged. After seeing you, my mother didn't want me to mate with Theodore anymore."

The fragments of the past were slowly forming a picture I hadn't dared to imagine. Could it be that Matthew had feelings for me, too? And had for a very long time?

I looked up at him, searching his face for answers. "Do you know why?"